“Are We Using Positive Work Habits?”

Developing Positive Work Habits and Gaining Confidence in Writing.

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Description of the Teaching Context

As a Penn State student I have spent the 2008-2009 school year as a Professional Development Intern. I have worked in a second grade self-contained classroom at Radio Park Elementary School in the State College Area School District. This second grade class consists of twenty-one students, twelve female and nine male students. This class has a rather large range of students academically, behaviorally, and socially. Of these students there is one African-American male, a Korean male with English as a second language, a female from Kazakhstan with English as her first language, and eighteen students identified as White or Caucasian. The majority of the students come from middle to upper class families, while a small portion of the students come from families with a lower socio-economic status. There are currently nine students participating in interventions for my inquiry.

In our classroom we have literacy stations with the students grouped by reading ability level. The students range from below basic and receiving additional support (Title I), working at grade level, and slightly above the benchmark for this time of year. In writing there are 8 students who scored proficient and 12 students who scored basic. I am working with students from each of the ability levels. Their writing levels vary as well, in both the number and the complexity of the sentences, which the students can generate in a twenty-minute station. In the group of students I am focused on, there are 3 who are proficient and 6 who are basic. In second grade basic is the expected benchmark for the January writing test. The three Title I students will likely fall short of the benchmark at the end of the year. (See Appendix A for full Inquiry Brief)
Wonderings and Questions

Main Wondering

My inquiry question focuses on students’ writing habits and how to improve their work habits throughout school. I am seeking to discover whether students who gain positive work habits in writing will become more productive in school. I am looking for a positive correlation between on task time and the amount of writing students complete. These second grade students set goals and I recorded their progress at the writing station from February- April 2009.

*How can I help my second grade students develop positive work habits as writers to remain on task and to complete assignments with quality writing during a daily writing station?*

Sub-Wonderings

- How will interventions that increase positive work habits in writing affect the quantity of writing completed during the daily writing station time?
- How will students’ attitudes change about writing as they develop positive work habits?
- How will a student’s positive work habits change when the teacher he/she is used to working with is not present?
- How will students on task time change after the interventions have been put in place?
Data Collection

Description of Data Collection

Student Surveys:

After reviewing my sub wonderings I decided to focus my data collection on surveys and observations. Before beginning any interventions, I chose to begin with a survey to see what my second grade students thought about writing. This first survey was given to the 20 students who participate in the writing stations in our classroom. I looked for any common trends in my class and focused on the nine students I worked with. A few weeks into the interventions, I gave the top part of the first survey to the nine students I had been specifically working with. The two questions I gave them focused on their attitude toward writing and the writing station. In April I gave the final student survey, again to all 20 students who participate in the writing stations, to look for both second grade trends as well as trends in the specific group of students. When the nine students I had been focusing on completed their survey, I also asked them additional questions in an interview and recorded them on i-movie (sound only) to refer back to. In the final survey given in April, I added additional questions focusing on student’s attitudes about how they feel about various adults work with them. (See Appendix C for student surveys)

As I reviewed the surveys, I used the whole class responses to see if there was a general change in attitude about writing for second graders at this time of the year, then I looked specifically at the nine students. These surveys provided a starting point as well as a second comparison point. I used these surveys to see if the attitudes they say they have toward writing and the writing station match the behavior and attitude I was seeing. The information obtained from these student surveys directly relates to the following sub-wondering: How will students’ attitudes change about writing as they develop positive work habits? The before and after surveys, given to all of the writing station participants, asked students how they felt about
writing. Students chose from the following options: excited, happy, okay, nervous, and unhappy. Students were also asked how they feel when they are writing at the writing station. Students chose from the following options: enjoy it, somewhat enjoy it, do not enjoy. The data from these surveys were compiled into two graphs, one showing the entire classes responses and another only showing the nine students that I have focused on.

I also added an additional question to the Student Survey #3, to address how student’s attitude changed as the adult helping them changed. The students were asked: When you are at the writing station who do you prefer to have helping you? They were given the following options: Teachers (Miss K or Mrs. Robert), Anyone/Does not matter, and A parent volunteer. I asked that students think of the parent volunteer as someone other than their own parent because each parent may only visit our classroom a few times each grading period. This data was used to address the sub-wondering: How will a student’s positive work habit change when there are new adults working with them or the teacher they are used to working with is not present?

Parent Surveys:

Throughout my inquiry process I also sent home two parent surveys (See Appendix E for Parent Surveys). Prior to using any interventions with students and choosing specific students to work with, I wanted to see more of the whole picture. Many of the students in my classroom act one way with us in school and another way with their parents. I was interested to see which students were similar in work habits at school and home, to try and determine the students who would benefit from the interventions the most. The data obtained from these parent surveys directly relates to the following sub-wondering: How will a student’s positive work habits change when there are new adults working with them or the teacher they are used to
working with is not present? The information from the before and after parent surveys allowed me to see the amount of time it takes the students to complete their work with someone else working with them, as well as the attitudes and behaviors their parents see as they complete homework. (See Appendix F for comparison results).

Goal Graphs:

I chose to use a graphing system to record the number of sentences each student completed at the writing station each day. I used a 100 Chart (Math resource) to graph the number of sentences. Along the bottom of the graph I wrote the date along with the type of writing the students did at the writing station (See Appendix G for student graphing example). Each square on the graph represents one complete sentence. I used these graphs to show student goals and the number of sentences they completed. On days that I asked students for goals, I used marker to outline the number of sentences they wanted to try and complete at the writing station. After their time at the writing station, I colored in the number of sentences they actually completed to see if they met their goal. On days when I was either not at the writing station or did not ask for goals, I simply colored in the number of sentences they completed on their own.

These graphs were a way to give students a visual cue for how many sentences they were writing and compare them from day to day. Over time we increased student goals on an individual basis. Some students goals increased by the number of sentences they needed to complete at the writing station (all based on the type of writing: letters, creative, Student of the Week, etc). As students became more comfortable with the types of writing we either increased the number of sentences or decreased the number of mistakes allowed, meaning we increased what they needed to self edit for before showing a teacher; this too was at an individual basis. This data was used to also address the sub-wondering: How will interventions that increase
positive work habits in writing affect the quantity of writing completed during the daily writing station time? (I used Student Survey #1 for student writing preferences See Appendix C).

**Video Coding:**

In order to address the amount of time students were on task and how they worked with the interventions, I chose to use a variety of observations. At least one day a week, some weeks as many as three times, I videotaped myself working with the five writing station groups. I went back and analyzed the time spent with the nine children, using Studio Code and a recording sheet. I used a Video Coding Sheet (See Appendix H for examples of the Video Coding Sheet) to record the activities of those nine students. With this sheet I recorded the number of times the students left the station (pencil sharpening, bathroom breaks, etc), the number of times they asked for help, positive teacher comments, number of times they are prompted to work, off task time, number of times the teacher checked in with the student (but not prompting), the number of times they distract others in the group, total time at the writing station and the number of sentences completed. At the bottom of each recording sheet I dictated teacher comments and student quotes demonstrating their attitude as they worked. As I coded each video, I was able to create mini-movies highlighting each student’s behaviors, teacher comments, and students on and off task time.

**Anecdotal Notes and Tally Sheets:**

On days I did not record at the writing station, I took anecdotal notes highlighting behaviors, attitudes, things I noticed in their work, and any new additions to their daily goals. I also used a tally sheet to record the number of times the students asked questions regarding their writing and the number of times they were prompted to work. On these days I kept track of two main pieces of information: how many sentences did they complete and how many times were
they off task. This type of observation was also very helpful when parent volunteers were at the writing station because I did not want to videotape parent volunteers but still wanted to track student progress. (See Appendix I for Anecdotal Note recording sheet and Tally sheet)

The data obtained from the video, tally and anecdotal note recording sheets directly relates to the following sub-wonderings: How will students on task time change after the interventions have been put in place? How will interventions that increase positive work habits in writing affect the quantity of writing completed during the daily writing station time?

**Explanation of Findings**

**Claims and Evidence:**

After analyzing my data through the methods outlined above, I identified patterns and trends that allowed me to make three strong claims regarding how students positive work habits as writers affect their attitude toward writing and the number of sentences they can complete.

**Claim A: Students positive work habits were not consistent with new adults.**

**Evidence A1:** When students completed the third student survey one of the questions asked them: “When you are at the writing station, who do you prefer to have helping you?” Out of the 20 students in the class, 10 students said that they prefer a teacher and 10 students said it did not matter who helped them. Out of the 10 students who said they prefer a teacher to help them, 7 of them were students I had been working with at the writing station. The two students in the group did not prefer a teacher are also very independent, ask for the least amount of help, and need the least amount of prompting overall. One of these independent workers scored proficient on their January writing assessment and the other missed proficient by one point.
While these two students write at a slower pace, they have increased the number of completed sentences with all adults at the writing station. The other 7 students who said they prefer a teacher are the students who ask for the most help and in the interviews said things such as the following:

Student G: “You help me when I need you but I don’t like asking people I don’t know.”

Student F: “I like it when you are there, cause you edit with me and you help me with my writing.”

Student A: “You always help me by making list and charts other people just tell me to write all the time.”

**Evidence A2:** Each day we record student goals and the number of sentences they have completed on their goal graphs. While the number of sentences completed varied by the student, there was a trend that on days when I was not present at the writing station, the students either just met their goal or fell short. Out of the nine students and ten recorded times with a parent volunteer only three of the nine students exceeded their goal, each only doing so once. At the following station or the next day, I asked the students who did not meet their goals why they thought they did not meet them. Here are come examples of the responses:

Student D: “Well I wasn’t entirely sure what I was supposed to be writing and so I just kept writing to have something…. It took me a lot longer to go back and edit because they didn’t edit with me.”

Student I: “I don’t know, I didn’t feel like writing.”

Student A: “No, I wrote more than I sometimes do…. They didn’t help me the way you do.”

Student B: “I was talking to JD.”

Students F, G, and H: “We were talking a lot.”
The responses given by the students matched what I saw as I observed from other stations and what parent volunteers commented about.

**Evidence A3:** When reviewing parent surveys I found that the amount of time it took for the students to complete homework with sentences decreased. There was one parent who commented that their child had shown changes in his work habits at home as well. This student was one of the students I had been working with and was also one of the more independent students. This student had previously had difficulty completing his work on time because he wrote at a slower pace and needed to spend more time editing. Over the past weeks I have worked with this student to stop and go back and reread your sentence before you move on. He now reads his sentences out loud and edits before moving on.

On March 27, 2009 as he worked at the writing station (seen in video from that day) and showed me his work he made the comment, “This is so much easier now that I don’t have to go back and change things. It used to be so frustrating.” Here is what his parents put in the parent survey as well: “He’s been much more positive in the last 2-3 weeks. He use to hat it, but now he’s neutral. His spelling has improved a great deal. We spend less time editing because of this. I have definitely noticed an improvement! Thank you!” (See Appendix E for copy of Student D’s parent survey)

The parents who responded to the April survey noted a decrease in the time needed for their child to complete homework, requiring sentences. I found this to be consistent when they visited our classroom. Students who chose to use positive work habits for me at the writing station also did so when their parents came. When a different adult stepped in to help, they became uncomfortable and were off task. In the April student surveys and interviews, these students expressed their discomfort with adults that were not “their teachers or their parents.”
Claim B: There is a positive correlation between the amount of time students are on task and the amount of work they are able to complete.

Evidence B1: As I compared the number of sentences completed at the writing station and the amount of time the students were on task, I found a positive correlation between them. Looking at the video coding sheets on days when students were off task less than three minutes they were all able to complete a minimum of seven sentences, and eight out of ten times completed the assignment. Many wrote 8-10 sentences but those who were on the lower end were working on self-editing or writing additional expanded sentences. On days that students were off task for more than 5 minutes at the twenty-minute station they did not write more than 6 sentences.

There were a few occurrences where student’s work and on/off task time did not correlate. With these occurrences, I looked at anecdotal notes about behavior and quality of writing that day, and video coding when available. I found that students who were off task more than five minutes and had more than 6 sentences also had notes next to their names indicating that their work was sloppy or was not to the caliber we have come to expect from them. In the Title I group this is extremely common, because the students tend to rush through work trying to get sentences done and doing sloppy work. On the days students were on task longer, they had neater handwriting, less errors in their writing from editing, and higher quality sentences.

Overall, the extra time on task has shown higher quality work from students with fewer mistakes, or they have written additional sentences fulfilling expectations. On days where they have lower on task time their work either does not meet their goals, is sloppy, or they did not go back and edit for no excuse words, holes in their writing, and common personal mistakes.
Evidence B2: While working with these nine students I have found that while the students create better work the more time they are on task, their time on task does not regularly increase. I had hoped to see an increase in the amount of time either daily or weekly. Looking back over the student’s graphs, the amount of on task time increased for some students, but not for all. I found that this aspect is completely individualized. Some students were on task consistently while doing one type of writing and were less on task for another. Out of the nine students, eight students increased both their on task time and the quality or quantity of work when looking at one type of writing (letters, creative writing, etc). The other student was consistently inconsistent from day to day. Some days or weeks I would find he was more on task when writing letters, but the next week would go back to being on task for 10-12 minutes and writing 2-3 sentences in a writing station for the same type of letter. This student, when on task, was able to complete assignments but still seemed to have different factors day to day determining whether or not he is on task.

I have a variety of anecdotal notes when things were successful such as: where he sat in relation to others in his group, whether he was facing the class or windows, whether I sat on his left or right, if I was standing when helping him, etc. Looking over the anecdotal notes it seems that some days he prefers me standing and so I would when helping him, other days it seemed to distract him depending on where I was sitting. This student is the only student who seemed to have issues day to day with other people and where they were, as well as not having one scenario work more than twice in a row.

Evidence B3: Some of the interventions I used with the students were simple to change, such as when and how often they left the writing station for a variety of reasons. There were three particular students who seemed to use sharpening their pencil, getting a drink, and using
the rest room on a regular basis as a way to leave the station. As I coded videos and kept track of the number of times the students left the writing station, I found that it went from anywhere between 2-5 times to only 1 time for some students and others did not leave at all. As I worked with the students at the writing station, I used ideas from *Finding the Spark* *(See Appendix B for additional information)*. This resource suggested ideas such as having pencils and erasers readily available for the students so as they are writing they can grab one to use and keep their ideas flowing. I used this at the writing station and tried to have 2-3 already sharpened pencils and erasers at the station. As pencils broke or as students felt they needed to sharpen their pencil, I gave them a sharpened one so that they could keep writing. While they continued writing, I sharpened theirs if needed and returned it. Over time, as students realized they would not be leaving the station to sharpen their pencil, less students asked to and less students needed to use one of my pencils.

I also had students who regularly needed to use the bathroom, do so during the transition time so that they did not miss any writing time or when they asked I said, “If this is not an emergency I need you to write at least two more sentences.” While most students no longer left or asked to leave for the bathroom, there were two who did. With these two students I would ask them to write a few more sentences. I would then check in with them as they completed and point out good things I was seeing in their writing. When doing this they kept going back to writing and seemed to forget that they needed to use the bathroom.

The third reason students wanted to leave the station was for a drink. We have a water fountain in the hallway, however it is still time consuming for students to leave their work to get a drink. I told the students who generally asked for a drink to get one during their transition time or to bring a water bottle, which we allow in our classroom. Over time the students no longer
left the station for water and only one brings a water bottle with them. On days that a parent volunteer or someone the students were not used to working with helped them at the writing station, the students would try to revert back to their previous habits. I still tried to give cues from the other station when possible, by looking at students so they would go back to work.

**Claim C:** *There is a positive correlation between student’s attitude about writing and the amount they are able to write.*

**Evidence C1:** The students who showed an increase in time on task and an increase in the amount of writing seemed to show the most growth in the types of writing they had picked as one of their top three choices in their first student survey *(See Appendix C for Student Survey #1)*. As part of the first survey, students ranked various types of writing we have done throughout the year from their favorite, number 1, to their least favorite, number 8. Students were also asked what they liked or disliked about the types of writing they ranked as their favorite and least favorite. Students gave a variety of responses; however the students in the group I had been working with ranked their writing based on what was easiest for them. The writing they chose as their least favorite was the writing they struggled to create. The other students in the class had reasons such as: “It was boring,” “I don’t like writing about peoples lives,” “I like it better to write when I can pick the characters.” The students I focused on chose their least favorites not because they were boring but because they were hard. It seemed these students equate how easy or difficult writing is to whether or not they like it. Similarly, the students who struggled as they worked on writing Jack and the Beanstalk Stories were the same students who put creative writing as their least favorite because: “Its too hard,” “I have trouble coming up with good ideas,” and “Once I have an idea I like I don’t know how to use it.”
After the last few weeks, many of the students became more confident about their own writing. These students have asked to increase their goals when they feel comfortable with a new style of writing. These students also ask for help more when it is a writing activity they do not feel as comfortable writing. After the last couple weeks, the last day for letters, seven of the nine students met or exceeded their goals for letter writing. I also saw that as we began the Jack stories many of the students were struggling, but after writing them for a week and getting a good start, they were meeting or exceeding their goals by the end of the week.

**Evidence C2:** I have also chosen to compare student attitudes about writing from the February and April Student Surveys (See Appendix D for graphed survey results and Student 1-9 Comparison graphs). As a whole class we went from having a range with unhappy to excited to now seeing nervous to excited. Then looking at just the group I focused on a shift from seeing okay, excited, unhappy and happy to just seeing okay and happy. The student who had previously said excited switched to happy and the student who had previously said unhappy switched to okay. Overall there was a positive shift in attitude and students are no longer feeling unhappy or nervous when they think about writing.

**Reflections and Implications for Future Practice**

Throughout this inquiry process I have learned valuable insight into children’s learning as well as a teachers constant growth as a learner. As a teacher in the future, I can choose to accept things as they are or take a closer look and think about the problem to find a new solution. This inquiry process has shown me a new way to look at challenges I will face as a teacher not as a problem but as a learning opportunity. If it had not been for this inquiry project I would have continued to teach the writing station as I had done for the first half of the year and would have never seen these nine students show me what they are truly capable of producing.
This project has allowed me to see what students can do when they see someone believing in them and helping to push them to take risks in their writing, while knowing someone is there to catch them and help them if they fall. I have seen how far these nine students have come and will continue to give more positive feedback to the others in the class to help encourage them as well. This project has also showed me that each student is an individual learner and it is important to set goals and expectations on their ability. If I had expected all nine of the students to be at the exact same point in their writing, I may only have one or two successful students. By encouraging each student to meet their own achievable goal they were all able to increase the number of sentences and the caliber of writing. The one student in the group who has not been consistent has still shown what he can do and continues to meet his goals on occasion. At the beginning of February it was difficult to get him to start writing at all and now he is successful at least one day a week. If nothing else, this has increased his confidence that he can meet the expectations when he tries and as he becomes more comfortable with the different writing styles we will see him meeting his goals more often.

In the future I would love to do something like this in my own classroom. Without small stations and multiple adults in the classroom, this will definitely be a challenge. I would like to incorporate goals in the future and have students keep track of when they meet their goals. For this, I could have a writing station before guided reading and as students come to me, we can review what they have done at the station. I felt that the graphing system really helped students see a visual of when they met their goals and when they fell short. Without a visual, I think it is easy to walk away and forget how you did at the station, but with a visual you can look at it the same day or come back to it the next day. It helped me to quickly look to see who was working
hard and who was not being as productive as they could be at the station. As long as it is effective and helpful to students to increase their learning, I would like to use it.

Some of my future wonderings are: Does confidence affect writing ability or does writing ability affect confidence? How would students work habits have changed if we started this in the beginning of the year? Over time, would these interventions cease to work? Is it common for girls to feel more uneasy or nervous about writing than boys? These are things I would like to further explore in my future classroom.
Appendix A: Inquiry Brief

Inquiry Brief

Context:

As a Penn State student I have spent the 2008-2009 school year as a Professional Development Intern. I have worked in a second grade self-contained classroom at Radio Park Elementary School in the State College Area School District. This second grade class consists of twenty-one students, twelve female and nine male students. This class has a rather large range of students academically, behaviorally, and socially. Of these students there is one African-American male, a Korean male with English as a second language, a female from Kazakhstan with English as her first language, and eighteen students identified as White or Caucasian. The majority of the students come from middle to upper class families, while a small portion of the students come from families with a lower socio-economic status. There are currently nine students participating in interventions for my inquiry.

In our classroom we have literacy stations with the students grouped by reading ability level. The students range from below basic (Title I), working at grade level, and slightly above the benchmark for this time of year. In writing there are 8 students who scored proficient and 12 students who scored basic. I am working with students from each of the ability levels. Their writing levels vary as well, in both the number and the complexity of the sentences, which the students can generate in a twenty-minute station. In the group of students I am focused on, there are 3 who are proficient and 6 who are basic.

Rationale:

As a Professional Development Intern teaching second grade throughout the school year I found myself particularly fascinated by what motivates my students to write without any prompting some days while other days they can be hesitant to begin. My fascination began in the beginning of the year as we used behavior management strategies with particular students and found the need to use reinforcement strategies like praise in order to get some students to begin or complete their work. We found that we were using these behavior management strategies across all subjects.
In our classroom we use stations for our language arts time, I spend 2-3 days every week at the writing station and 1-2 days in the book corner. As I worked with the students at the writing station I found that there were certain students in each of the groups that required more prompts and specific praise to get them to begin writing, as well as for them to remain on task for the twenty minutes. These students seemed to have one or two strategies that helped but overall, there seemed to be no rhyme or reason to the success of failure of their writing time on task. Two of the students particularly fascinated me because they seemed to not have any one thing that motivated them throughout the day or at the writing station.

I continued to become interested in what seemed to motivate some students and not others. I began to wonder if the students’ confidence in writing could be a factor. If the students confidence in their own writing is lacking, I wanted to work with them one on one to implement strategies to increase their confidence and their work habits. By helping create positive work habits, it will hopefully improve the quality in their writing as well.

At the writing station I have been working on increasing the number of sentences each student can generate in the twenty-minute time frame. In third grade, the students will need to be more independent and will use writing across all subjects. With writing being crucial in explaining processes, assessing their prior knowledge, and reviewing what they have learned across subjects, I felt an increased desire to encourage students to complete their writing assignments in the given time as well as improve the quantity and quality of sentences used.

I will be collecting data as I implement a variety of new strategies. I will begin by having individuals select a goal for themselves to complete during the twenty-minute writing station. Over time and as they continue to meet their goals I will help them choose when to increase their goal and encourage them to write more. I will graph student goals and the number of sentences they complete; their sentences must be edited and revised to be complete.

As students become more comfortable at the writing station I will bring a camcorder to record them as they work. I will then use Studio Code to mark the on and off task time of each student. Looking over the clips with the specific students we can talk about what they completed in the given time and discuss what might happen if we were on task for two additional minutes.

It is crucial throughout this process that I continually point out the strong parts of student writing. These students use body language and sigh when they come to writing station, they tend to need to use the rest room or sharpen their pencil, and are more distracted by things going on in
the classroom than the other students. My purpose is to increase their confidence and create positive work habits while in turn increasing the number of sentences they are able to complete in a given time.

**Wonderings:**

**Main Wondering:**
How can I help my second grade students develop positive work habits as writers to remain on task and to complete assignments with quality writing during a daily writing station?

**Sub-Questions**
- How will interventions that increase positive work habits in writing affect the quantity of writing completed during the daily writing station time?
- How will peer conferencing affect establishing self-editing skills?
- How can graphing student writing effect students perception on their ability to write a number of sentences in a given time period?
  - How will students be motivated by a visual representation of the work they have completed and will it work for all students?
- How will a student’s positive work habit change when there are new adults working with them or the teacher they are used to working with is not present?
- How will students spend their time at the writing station after they have been working with an intervention? How long will it take the students to create each sentence compared to before the intervention?

**Data Collection:**

- Student survey (whole class) and some interviews about their confidence in writing and what they enjoy or do not like about writing (ask additional questions to students to clarify if they are vague in their responses).
- A student survey half way through the interventions to see if they have a change in confidence toward writing.
- A follow up interview with all students in the middle of April to see how many students in the class feel differently about writing.
- A parent survey about what motivates their child at home, if their students seem to be more confident or comfortable in specific subject area, and if any homework takes more time for their child to complete? (Parents may add additional information if they would like to)
- Graph student goals and outcomes, of the number of sentences (free from error) they produce at the writing station
- Use anecdotal records as I see students working at the writing station.
- Video tape students working and code it using studio code to determine time on task at the writing station
- On the days “out of character” for a student (either less writing has been produced, or more writing has been produced) ask them what was different today.
Timeline:

Week 1: January 20th
   - begin graphing goals and actual number of sentences completed with title I girls, and the two boys.

Week 2: January 26th
   - continue goals and graphing

Week 3: February 2nd
   - continue goals and graphing
   - add boy from light blue group
   - increase goals on writing assignments students have done before (SOTW, letters)

Week 4: February 9th
   - continue goals and graphing
   - increase goals on all writing by at least one sentence
   - watch and take anecdotal notes on what happens when I am not present at the writing station and a parent volunteer is instead

Week 5: February 16th
   - add male from dark blue group
   - increase goal for SOTW day
   - continue goals and graphing
   - send home parent survey
   - continue recording what happens when someone else is leading the writing station (are they still maintaining their goal or falling behind)
   - student survey on confidence and likes/dislikes about writing

Week 6: February 23rd
   - continue goals and graphing
   - evaluate how interventions are going… increase or decrease in writing
   - increase student writing goals
   - begin video taping students work at the writing station while I am there and then tag in studiocode.

Week 7: March 2nd
   - student will fill out graph and color in on their own as a reward for themselves
   - Finding the Spark: keep materials at hand: extra pencils that are already sharp so that students do not need to get up to sharpen them and you can instead sharpen for them, celebrating student achievement, consistent seating (those in the study with backs to the window
   - video: what is not working and pay attention to specific praise you are using
   - anecdotal notes on what I am seeing in students work
   - when we edit together do they catch mistakes reading aloud or are they skipping over them?
   - videotaping and coding (on task time)
Week 8: March 16th
- students will graph goal and color in the number of sentences they have completed!!
- try to give each student 3-5 positive comments each day about their writing or how they are working.
- continue video taping/coding
- anecdotal notes
- second follow up interview with students- has confidence increased at all with their writing (just the study group) using the same survey
  - Finding the Spark: techniques ~ see details above

Week 9: March 23rd
- students to graph and set goals
  - Finding the Spark: techniques ~ see details above
- praising students, especially with Title I, does this help prevent a melt-down?
- continue video taping/coding
- begin creating a follow up survey for parents to send out the following week

Week 10: March 30th
- students to graph and set goals
  - Finding the Spark: techniques ~ see details above
  - add use humor, this will help put the students at ease and make them feel more relaxed, however do not use too much humor or it could make them silly.
- continue video taping- is time on task and number of sentences increasing
- send out parent follow up survey, have they noticed changes in the amount of time it takes their child to complete homework
  - introduce peer editing and sharing work

Week 11: April 6th
- students to graph and set goals
  - Finding the Spark: techniques ~ see details above
  - continue video taping: looking at body language, is it different from previous weeks, and what are they doing when my back is to them or I walk away- are they still working or do they become distracted.
  - follow up with student interviews
  - editing and sharing work

April 11, 2009- rough draft

Week 12: April 13th
- student goals and graphing
  - continue video taping see above for details
  - Finding the Spark: techniques ~ see details above
  - review with mentor
  - editing and sharing work

April 22, 2009- final copy
After final copy:

- student goals and graphing

Finding the Spark: techniques ~ see details above

- add additional students as is necessary

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER:

- when reviewing film look if students are more on task when sitting in a particular seat, who is next to them, are other students more talkative on a certain day

- what can we see when it is something they have done before compared to something new- are they completing more, look at body language, are they asking more questions, taking longer to get started.

Appendix B: Annotated Bibliography


This source has been very beneficial as a background research source. I also chose to read this source before I began introducing any interventions. I am worried about setting expectations too high for some of the students in the study, primarily the Title I students. This site is a reminder that lower-achieving students may need altered expectations for their work. It is also helpful in choosing goals with the students that are reachable, but still require more on task time than previous expectations.


This source is helpful especially when working at the writing station. While the main focus of the report is to improve students editing skills and increase the number of complete and correct sentences this source also offers suggestions for introducing new topics in writing, grammatical errors, and what to look for when you are self editing. This source is a teacher resource that offers ideas for working with individual groups and students.

As I developed my wonderings and questions I had not considered how I might use publishing student work on great work walls and showcasing the students best work to increase student motivation. This is something I would like to consider and continue reading about in order to help increase student motivation, as well as confidence, in their writing.


This source is a culmination of teacher suggestions and ideas for increasing student motivation in writing. This source also talks about increasing student interest in reading. The more students read and enjoy reading the more examples they will have when they begin writing. Similarly, student writing ability and how in-depth they get with description, characters, and story line should increase the more they read it and hear it in other books. Each book they read and hear is an example of how their writing can become clearer.


This source is useful while considering ways to improve students reading and writing ability. It offers suggestions and research on ways to group students as well as expectations in students writing. As students reading level increases we should see a correlation in their writing. Their level of writing should increase; this may cause a decrease in the number of sentences and an increase in the level of difficulty each sentence provides. This is especially helpful because I was planning on using the number of sentences completed as my guide, now I am also looking at the level of student writing. According to the research in this article, the lower level students should produce several simple sentences, while the highest level group should have several complete and expanded sentences.

February 12, 2009, from Utah State Office of Education: LRBI Resources Web site:

http://www.noodletools.com/noodlebib/defineEntryAPA.php

This source is a great website with video that show how to use different behavior management strategies. This site also offers checklists while observing and working with students. I have used this site to help me create student and parent surveys, as well as interview questions for the school psychologist. This site has also offered additional strategies for working with students and data collection.


This interview was very helpful to me. Sarah Rochetter is the School Psychologist at Radio Park Elementary, State College Area School District. She was a particularly valuable resource because she has worked with some of the students who I am working with one on one. This interview also gave me additional information on how long I can expect an intervention to work as well as how students with multiple management systems may react in the classroom. This source is also helpful because I was able to ask specific questions that connect to my students and she has also worked with them so she was able to direct me further.


This power point is very helpful because it outlines different behavior management strategies and is a quick resource to look at before teaching a small group. This power point offers suggestions of praise, reinforcement, and reward systems. If I find that a particular intervention is not working as well as I would like, this power point is a quick reference that allows me to come up with an alternative idea.


This source is a specific resource for motivating students academically. I have used this site for background information before I began an intervention to help me decide how I wanted
to focus on the students and how they can be encouraged to write more. This source gives an overview of some suggestions along with links to additional and more in-depth information.


I chose to use this source as I began thinking about ways to increase motivation in the classroom. This site provides ideas for increasing motivation throughout the day and through several kinds of activities. Some suggestions are for the whole class, others are for groups, and the specific ones I am interested in are focused on individuals. This is another source that has several links to additional sites offering further information and suggestions for how it can be adapted for the classroom.
Appendix C: Student Surveys

Student Survey #1

Name:                     Date:

1. When I think of writing, I feel...
   Excited  Happy  okay  nervous  unhappy

2. When I am writing at the writing station, I...
   😊😊😊 enjoy it  😊😊 somewhat enjoy  😊😊 do not enjoy

3. Please put the following types of writing in order from your most favorite to your least favorite by writing the letter next to each type of writing we have done.
   1= MOST favorite  2= second favorite
   3= third favorite  4= fourth favorite
   5= fifth favorite  6= sixth favorite
   7= seventh favorite  8= least favorite
   _____ Student of the Week
   _____ Letters to parents or teachers (personal journal, family message journal)
   _____ Pen Pal Letters
   _____ Make believe letters (Jolly Postman: Three Little Pigs)
   _____ Creative writing (The Snowman who came to life, The Lost Puppy, Magic Crayon)
   _____ Small moments (narrative about something you have done)
   _____ Biographies (Abraham Lincoln and George Washington)
   _____ Research: Wetland Riddles

4. What made your number 1 choice your favorite?

5. What made your number 8 choice your least favorite?

Student Survey #2

Name:                     Date:
1. When I think of writing, I feel...

   Excited      Happy okay      nervous      unhappy

2. When I am writing at the writing station, I...

   😊  😊  😊
   enjoy it   somewhat enjoy   do not enjoy

Student Survey #3

Name:                Date:

1. When I think of writing, I feel...

   Excited      Happy okay      nervous      unhappy

2. When I am writing at the writing station, I...

   😊  😊  😊
   enjoy it   somewhat enjoy   do not enjoy

3. What is your favorite thing about the writing station?

4. When you are at the writing station who do you prefer to have helping you?

   Teachers       Anyone/Does       A Parent Volunteer
   (Miss K or Mrs. Robert) not matter

5. What is your least favorite thing about the writing station?

6. What is one thing you are proud of that you have done at the writing station?

7. What is one thing you would like to work on at the writing station (a goal)?
Appendix D: Graphs with student survey results

February Whole Class Graphs:

When I think of writing I feel...
(February 2006 - Students #1-20)

When I am writing at the writing station I...
(February 2009 - Students #1-20)

February Group Graphs:
April Whole Class Graphs:
April Group Graphs:

When I think of writing I feel...
(April 2009 - Students #1-20)

When I am writing at the writing station I...
(April 2009 - Students #1-20)
When I think of writing I feel...
(April 2009 - Students #1-9)

When I am writing at the writing station I...
(April 2009 - Students #1-9)

When you are at the writing station who do you prefer to have helping you?
(April 2009 - Students #1-9)
Appendix E: Parent Letter and Survey (survey is the same both in February and April)

February 20, 2009

Dear Parents,

I am gathering information for my teaching inquiry project this semester and am hoping for you help! Over the following weeks I will be working with students to motivate and increase their confidence in writing. I am interested in things you find helpful at home to motivate your children when they are doing homework. If you could please fill out and return the short survey attached.

If you could please complete and return by Monday February 23, 2009!!

Thank you,
Miss. Catherine Kennerknecht

April 3, 2009

Dear Parents,

Over the past two months I have been working with the students at the writing station to increase their confidence in writing and to help them identify and use positive work habits. Overall, I have seen a big improvement in both the quantity and quality of the students’ work.

I have attached a survey to see if you have noticed any differences in your child’s work habits at home. If you are willing, please complete and return this survey by Monday April 6, 2009.

Thank you,
Miss Catherine Kennerknecht

Please circle the smiley face that best describes your child. If you have addition information you would like to share please add it at the bottom or on the back!

1. When your son/daughter has spelling homework they are typically?

😊 🌟 😊

2. When your son/daughter has math homework they are typically?

😊 🌟 😊
3. On average how long does it take for your child to complete homework requiring them to write sentences?

__________

4. When your child is working on homework what have you found to be motivating?

5. Tell me about what your child is like when they have homework requiring them to write sentences.

Student D survey:

5. Tell me about what your child is like when they have homework requiring them to write sentences.

He's been much more positive in the last 2-3 weeks. He used to hate it, but now he's neutral. His spelling has improved a great deal. We spend less time editing because of this. I have definitely noticed an improvement. Thank you!
Appendix F: Graphs with parent survey results

Comparison Graphs showing February and April Survey Results:

1. On average how long does it take your child to complete sentences?
   (Students #1-9)

2. When your son or daughter has spelling homework, they are typically...
   (Students #1-9)
Appendix G: Student graph example
### Appendix H: Video Coding Sheet (coded example)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pencil/Bathroom break</th>
<th>they ask for help</th>
<th>Positive Teacher Comments</th>
<th>Prompted to work</th>
<th>Off task 10 seconds or more</th>
<th>Teacher checks in without being asked for help</th>
<th>Distract others in group</th>
<th>Total time at writing Station</th>
<th># of sentences completed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 26, 2009</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student G</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student H</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Student I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Students if necessary</td>
<td>NA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Student H: laying head down on desk while writing only for first 3 min.
Student G: continually throughout station repeatedly standing up.
Student F: "I can't do this...I don't know how to tell which way my b and d should be facing." (holding head in hand)
"I can't spell." "I just don't know what to do." (begins crying)
Student H and F both finished during "rollover" station.
Student C worked through entire "rollover" station.
Appendix I: Anecdotal notes/tally sheet examples
*names have been replaced with student identification letters

# of times they ask for help  - # of times they are prompted to work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th># of times they ask for help</th>
<th># of times they are prompted to work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>H</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- Increased/decreased in # for spellings
- Writing has increased/decreased
- Needs to go back and edit
- Needs to edit work before turning in