Meeting Struggling First Grade Writers’ Needs

PDS Inquiry 2009

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Description of the Teaching Context

As a Professional Development Intern with The Pennsylvania State University, I have worked in a self-contained first grade classroom at Gray’s Woods Elementary School in the State College Area School District during the 2008-2009 school year. My first grade class is composed of twenty-one students including ten boys and eleven girls. Most of the students in my first grade classroom started the year at the same age, approximately six and a half years old.

Academically, there is a wide range of abilities in my classroom. There are five high-achieving students in the class who are reading above grade level, in addition to other subject areas. Twelve students in the class are meeting classroom expectations and first grade standards. Of these students, there are six students reading at grade level benchmarks for the end of the year and six students who are progressing and will meet these benchmarks by the end of the year. The other four students in the class are at a below basic level for reading, and are below basic in meeting standards and grade level expectations.

Several students in my class receive additional instructional support services. Seven students receive additional reading instruction through the Title I program, two of whom are English Language Learners. Those English Language Learners also receive an additional thirty minutes a day of English Language Support. We also have one student who meets with a speech therapist two times a week.

In a writing assessment given in late February, students were given three fiction prompts. The students were assessed on whether their story had a complete thought. The students’ written responses were scored as either advanced, proficient, basic, or below
basic. The writing benchmark for the end of February is basic. By the end of the school year, students are expected to score proficient. In my class there was one student who scored advanced, three proficient, thirteen basic, and four below basic. Of the four students who scored below basic, two are receiving support through ESL and all four are receiving additional instructional support through Title I.

Overall, the twenty-one first grade students in the class behave age-appropriately. All of the students are very cooperative, eager to learn, enthusiastic, and interact positively within our classroom community. (See Appendix B for full Inquiry Brief)

**Wonderings and Questions**

**Main Wondering**

My inquiry question focuses on differentiating writing instruction to meet first grade writers’ needs. I am seeking to discover whether differentiating writing instruction can increase the proficiency scores of first grade students. During Writer’s Workshop, I planned an intervention with four students in my class whom I saw struggling with certain writing aspects. My main wondering is the following:

*How does differentiated writing instruction increase the proficiency skills in struggling writers’?*

**Sub-Wonderings**

- How does the use of expectations relate to the desire to write?
- How can I give the students the skills to self-edit their writing and assist a peer in editing?
- How can I involve parents/guardians in students’ writing instruction?
- What role does repetition play in enabling students to become proficient writers?
• How do student-made writing goals influence students’ confidence in writing?

Data Collection and Analysis

Clear Description of Data Collection

I collected many different types of data in order to fully explore the benefits, drawbacks, and the successes of differentiating writing instruction in a first grade classroom. I collected information in several different ways: student surveys, partner classroom survey, parent surveys, student take-home folders, student work, writing goals, and interviews with both teachers and students.

Student Surveys

Collection

The survey, which I designed for my first grade students before my intervention, focused on their attitude toward writing and how they judge their own writing skill. My intention on conducting this survey was to see if first grade students could express their feelings about writing, as well as, judge their own writing skill. (See Appendix C for Student Survey #1)

I also designed and conducted another writing survey to administer after my intervention was completed. I was curious to discover how the students would describe their feelings toward following my intervention, and if their attitude would change. I also wanted to see if they felt like they could benefit from extra attention during Writer’s Workshop. (See Appendix D for Student Survey #2)

Analysis

I analyzed the data from these surveys by creating a table to organize and display the students’ responses both before and after my intervention (Appendix H). I wanted to
look at perceptions of their own growth and whether they could judge their own writing ability. To do this, I created a table that would organize the students’ answers in comparison to their reading level. I organized the students’ answers on whether they think they are good, okay, or bad writers based on their recent writing assessment scores. Looking at the students’ answers to the survey questions, I noticed that there was no correlation between writing ability and attitude toward writing.

Parent Surveys

Collection

As part of my data collection, I developed a parent survey and sent it home to the parents of all of my 21 students before I started my intervention. The survey focused on students’ writing outside of the classroom setting. I also focused on how the parents would categorize their child’s interest in writing. My intention in conducting this survey was to obtain information regarding student exposure and desire to write outside of the classroom. (See Appendix for Parent Survey #1)

After completing my intervention, I sent home a parent survey with the four students who participated. I focused on changes in enthusiasm and improvements in writing that the parents have noticed at home. My intention in conducting this survey was not only to obtain information regarding how the students’ interest in writing carries over into the home, but also to keep the lines of communication open with parents. (See Appendix for Parent Survey #2)

Analysis

Of the twenty-one surveys that I sent home before my intervention, I had sixteen returned. I analyzed this information by compiling the information in a table, which
allowed me to see how much writing students were doing at home and how the parents would categorize their child’s interest in writing. This gave me the information that I needed to narrow down and select the students I wanted to work with. It also gave me ideas of what would spark students’ interest in writing such as fictional writing and writing about an illustration.

All of the four surveys that were sent home were completed and returned. I analyzed this information by reading through the parents’ comments and compared them to one another. The parents commented that they noticed a change in their students writing ability. They also noted that their children seemed more confident and enthusiastic about writing and sharing their writing with them. I noticed similar patterns emerging between the four surveys, based on what the parents were saying about their child’s writing at home.

*Partner Classroom Survey*

*Collection*

I designed and conducted a survey with my fourth grade partner classroom students. In this survey, I asked questions to get information on the students’ feelings about writing and what they thought were their strengths and weaknesses. I also asked the students how they felt their attitude has changed since first grade. My intention on conducting this survey was to see how older students perceive themselves as writers and see if their writing ability relates to their attitude towards writing. (See Appendix G for Partner Classroom Survey)

*Analysis*
The steps that I took to analyze this information were somewhat different than the other surveys. I was really wondering if students’ feelings toward writing related to their writing skills. So I talked to my partner classroom teacher, and we discussed the students’ writing abilities and compared them to their feelings about writing that they expressed on their survey. I put this information on a chart to see if there was a correlation between feelings and skill. I did not see a correlation between the two based on the data I collected. The chart showed that students’ writing at grade level expectations felt the same or about the same as students who are writing at a below basic level.

**Student Take-Home Folders**

**Collection**

I created student take-home folders for the four students that were involved in my intervention. In the students’ folders, I placed a communication sheet so that I could communicate with the parents about their child’s writing abilities (See Appendix I for Writing Goals Sheet). The implementation of this communication folder enabled the students to take home their work to share with their families. Each week I would send the folders home with the students with my comments, their individual writing goals, and their work from that week for the parents to view. The parents included their comments and returned the folders every Monday.

**Analysis**

This form of open communication between the parents and myself allowed me to get to know the students better as writers. I was able to hear from the parents as to how they view their child’s writing abilities and just how much they see their child engaged in
writing at home. It also served as a way for me to answer the parents’ questions and inform them of the type of instruction I was providing in the classroom in order to help their child be successful!

**Student Work**

**Collection**

From the four students I have been working with throughout my inquiry, I have collected numerous samples of work. I set up a system of using stickers to track how much they accomplished each day. We used a different sticker to mark their progress that day. This work was then sent home to share with their families.

**Analysis**

I used the student work as a way to track how much more the students were doing during my intervention than before. The students enjoyed marking their progress with stickers, which encouraged them to write as much as they could during each writing session. They were motivated to have distance between their stickers! I used this to keep track of their individual goals.

**Writing Goals**

**Collection**

At the beginning of my intervention, I sat down with these writers in my classroom and developed ten writing goals they wanted to achieve. Each week the students chose three of these goals to focus on for that week. Each week I made up a goal sheet for each student that included his or her writing goals. They used this as a reminder during Writer’s Workshop time. (See Appendix I for Student Writing Goals)

**Analysis**
To analyze whether the students were progressing with their goals each week, I had the students determine whether they accomplished that goal or not. At the end of the week if the student felt that he/she accomplished one of the goals, I would have them check off that goal and pick three new goals for the upcoming week.

**Student Interviews**

**Collection**

Each week I individually interviewed each student in my writing group. While recording our conversation using GarageBand, I talked with the students regarding how they felt about meeting or not meeting their writing goals, as well as, elaborating on what ways they did or did not meet them. I also asked them if they could provide examples of their improvement in their writing. (See Appendix L for Student Interview)

**Analysis**

I evaluated the students’ interviews from each week by listening to the recordings and analyzing students’ responses. I was looking to discover whether or not each student had met his or her writing goals for that week. I also checked to make sure that there was evidence in their writing to prove that they were working on their writing goals. The students were very capable of discussing their work and judging whether they met their goal or still needed to continue to work on that particular goal.

**Teacher Interviews**

**Collection**

I created and conducted two teacher interviews with Gray’s Woods Elementary teachers. During the interview, I asked the teachers questions that I had further
wonderings on or questions that went along with the claims that I was thinking of making at that time. (See Appendix M for Teacher Interview)

**Analysis**

With the feedback I received from the teachers, I was able to further develop my claims. I also used their answers to clear up some further wonderings that I had about having struggling writers in my classroom. Their answers covered such aspects as other ways to deal with struggling writers, noticing struggling writers in the classroom, and involving parents in students’ writing. This feedback from veteran teachers proved to be invaluable.

**Explanation of Findings: Claims and Evidence**

After analyzing my data through the methods explained above, I identified patterns and trends that allowed me to make four strong claims regarding differentiating writing to meet struggling writers’ needs.

**Claim #1: Students’ attitude toward writing does not reflect student writing skill.**

*Evidence 1A:* As I began to collect baseline data through surveys on my students’ feelings toward writing in my room, it was clear that my first grade students were not aware of their writing skill. When I conducted my survey, which was on students’ feelings toward writing and Writer’s Workshop, the students who are in the top reading group were more critical of their writing skill than the students who are struggling and receiving additional support. (See Appendix H for Survey Results)
Evidence 1B: Curious about the results of my first grade survey, I wanted to see if it were solely first graders who are not perceptive of their writing skill. To answer this question, I surveyed a random selection of a fourth grade class as well. I surveyed the students on their feelings about writing and what they consider to be their strengths in writing as well as their weaknesses. I then met with the fourth grade classroom teacher and discussed my findings with her. Similar to my first graders, I discovered that the fourth grade students’ feelings toward writing did not reflect their writing skill, as well. (See Appendix H for Survey Results)

Claim #2: Differentiating writing instruction leads to more productive and motivated students.

Evidence 2A: When looking over my first grade class, I saw some students who were struggling not only with conventions of writing but also with motivation. I chose these students as my writing group so that I could begin exploring differentiated writing instruction in my classroom. These four students went from being unmotivated and unproductive to developing into excited writers. Each day during Writer’s Workshop, these four students would be seated at our table waiting for me to show up and talk with them about their writing. Each week I kept the students on a schedule that allowed time for teaching a mini lesson, individual writing goals, editing by self and peer, and sharing time. The difference in the students was remarkable. Not only did I notice this change, but also my mentor teacher also commented on how well the students were doing in writing. The following are her remarks:

“I have noticed that your four writing students are very eager and excited to work at the table with you each day. They often arrive at that table
before you and watch to make sure that you are going to join them. I have also observed that the four students are more willing to write and they are producing more writing. The goals have helped them stay focused and be more productive. They seem to be learning from each other by working in this small group. Their conversations about writing appear to help keep them motivated and they are learning from each other.”

Evidence 2B: One of the students that I worked with during my intervention is a good first grade writer however; she was unmotivated during Writer’s Workshop time. I knew that she was able to write but needed motivated to show her potential. In the last writing assessment done in my classroom, she was the only one who scored advanced on the assessment. This was shocking to me because she needed constant reminders during writing to keep quiet and work on her stories. This inspired me to put her in my differentiated writing group. During my intervention I saw great improvements in her writing. In a sample of her work collected from October, she had written only one sentence. During my intervention she wrote a seventeen-page story and was the most eager of the four to come and write with me. (See Appendix J and K for Student Sample; October and April)

Claim #3: Student made writing goals give students a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

Evidence 3A: After observing how my mentor used student made goals for parent teacher conferences, I was curious whether my students could come up with their own writing goals that they would like to accomplish. On the first day of my intervention, I sat down with my four students and talked with them about what it took to be a good first grade writer. I then asked them what they would like to accomplish in writing while in first
grade. To my surprise, my four students came up with ten great writing goals that they wanted to work on and accomplish this year. The students were very pleased with themselves and were eager to work on those goals. Each week the students would choose three of the ten goals that they wanted to work on that week. The students were very eager to work on their goals, and after accomplishing nine of the goals, the students wanted to come up with more so that they could continue working on them. (See Appendix I for Writing Goals Sheet)

Evidence 3B: Each week I wanted to check in with each student individually so I interviewed students using the following questions:

- Your writing goals this week were…. How do you feel you met your goals?
- In what ways did you feel you met your writing goals?
  - Can you prove that in your work?
- How did this improve your writing?

The students were very aware of their progress in meeting their goals. When I talked to the students, they expressed their feelings as to whether they met their goals or not. Each of the four students were very eager to talk about their goals and were willing to do whatever it took to meet the challenge of becoming a better writer. In a particular interview that I had with one of my students, I could tell that she was very aware of her writing process and was working hard to meet her goals (See Appendix L for Student Interview).

Claim #4: Collaboration between teacher, students, and parents leads to increased communication, which fosters a positive learning environment.
**Evidence 4A:** Each week, I sent home the students’ writing folders with a comment sheet that had the students’ writing goals and my comments on their progress. The students would take home the writing they had been working on that week so they could share it with their families. This was motivating for the students because they enjoy sharing their work, especially with their families. In addition, this folder allowed communication between the parents and myself. I received comments and questions from the parents weekly on their child’s progress and writing. (See Appendix N for Student Take Home Folder Sheet)

**Evidence 4B:** At the end of my intervention, I sent home a parent survey to the parents of the four students working in my writing group. This allowed me to get information from the parents regarding changes or developments that they have been seeing at home. This also allowed parents to be part of their child’s writing instruction. I used this information to determine what specifics each students may still need to work on. By applying this method of sharing with the parents, I not only fostered communication for myself, but also for the students. This communication allowed me to get to know the students better and provided the parents with a way to be involved in their child’s learning. (See Appendix F for Parent Survey #2)

**Reflections and Implications for Future Practice**

In conducting this inquiry, I have made discoveries from which I have learned a series of valuable lessons. I have learned that differentiating writing instruction is more effective for struggling writers. Student-made writing goals are both motivating and
purposeful for students. Also, communication is the most important key to fostering a positive learning environment.

Differentiating instruction in a small group setting is essential to meeting individual needs of students. This method of instruction would be effective and beneficial in other subject areas other than writing as well. The students I worked with felt special working with me and also worked better with individualized help.

Before beginning, I was skeptical about whether first grade students could make their own writing goals but the students were very able to make his or her own goals. Each student worked hard to meet each of his or her goals and would even get out their goal sheet to look at during Writer’s Workshop. The goals gave the students a sense of purpose and they were challenged to meet their own goals.

I have learned that communication is key to being an effective teacher. Through organized communication with the parents, I found that they were very willing to share and help in any way they could. I also received many comments thanking me for giving their child this opportunity.

In my future practice, I will make sure to keep the lines of communication open with parents, set high goals for my students not only in writing but other subject areas as well, and differentiate instruction as much as possible to meet each student’s learning needs. I strongly feel that communication is important for having a positive learning environment; therefore, I will do as much as possible to keep the lines of communication open in my own classroom. I will hold high, but reachable, expectations for each of my students in all subject areas. Students work well when they know what is expected of them, and I want to make sure that each of my students works to his or her greatest
potential. Throughout this year of student teaching and my completion of this inquiry progress, I have learned that, as a teacher, I need to make sure that I differentiate to meet each of my students’ needs no matter what they may be!
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Annotated Bibliography

**Books**

1.) Calkins, L. (2003). *The nuts and bolts of teaching writing*. Portsmouth: FirstHand

This book is part of the writing curriculum used in my first grade classroom. I found this book to be very useful in my project because it gives information on how to teach beginning and struggling writers. This will provide me with information on how to teach students who have particular needs.

I would recommend this book to any teacher in the State College Area School District because it goes along with the curriculum. It also goes into more detail of how to teach beginning writers about different components of writing.


This books includes: daily journal prompts, management tips, assessment ideas, conferring tips, links to standards, and a reproducible planning sheet. This will give me ideas on how to progress students through the writing process and see another approach on how to develop a writing curriculum that meets first graders’ developmental needs. This book also talks about how to work with students struggling with fine motor skills, which will help with a few students in my classroom.

I would recommend this book to any first grade teacher who is looking to enhance their writing curriculum and progress students through with weekly lessons. This would also benefit a teacher how has students who struggle because of fine motor skills.


This book gives ideas and explanations on how to instruct emergent writers progress. This book gives examples of emergent writers as well as rubrics to follow. This book will be a great tool for me to get ideas of how to come up with writing activities and genres that first grade students are capable of doing. This will also help me to come up with activities to teach the writing process.

I would recommend this to any primary teacher who is looking for a way to enhance their writing program and meet the needs of different writers in their classroom.

lessons that help your students write happily ever after. New York: Scholastic.

This book is composed of various mini-lessons to enhance writing in kindergarten through second grade. It has fifteen mini-lessons that have literature connections that can get your students engaged in their writing. This book has lessons but also gives interesting ways of how to have your students share their written work. I will use this book as a way to come up with ideas of how to engage students in writing as well as tips in sharing with their peers and families.

I would recommend this book to any first through third grade teacher that wants to enhance their writing time by making literature connections.


This book is composed of 75 mini-lessons to teach first graders the essential skills and strategies that beginning writers need. This will benefit me when working with struggling writers because it provides ideas on how to teach basic skills that these students need to work on.

I would recommend this book to any first grade teacher who is teaching writing. This book is composed of every mini-lesson that a first grade teacher would need to teach in the area of writing.


The Language Arts Continuum provides expectations for students at each developmental level. It provides mini-lessons and teaching strategies that will be helpful in teaching beginning writers. This also contains the rubric used by State College Area School District to assess students’ written pieces and their writing abilities. This gives me an idea of where the students I’m working with should be. I will know what the students work should contain and look like to meet first grade benchmarks.

I would recommend this book to any teacher in the State College Area School District because it provides the curriculum prescribed by the district.

Journals
This article is about case studies that were done to see how teachers could instruct writing during writer’s workshop. This provides me with evidence that shows what worked in these case studies compared to how writer’s workshop is taught in my classroom. This article has given me ideas about how to approach working with my struggling writers. I know the steps that these researchers took to progress with their struggling writers and I plan on using some of the same strategies like sharing more.


This article talks about how they surveyed students about their feelings towards writing. It gives various surveys that were given across different grade levels and explanations of the results. This relates to the survey that I gave to fourth and first grade students on their feelings about writing. I will use their findings to relate to what I found out about students feelings about writing. I think that getting the students comfortable and confident with writing is the first step to get them writing more.


This journal article is very similar to the intervention that I plan to do in my classroom. The researchers worked with students on the conventions of writing. They focused on getting students motivated to write along with self and peer editing. This will be useful to me because I can see how their interventions helped those first grade students and I can use their research to strengthen my intervention.


This article is about the components of writer’s workshop and how it is useful to first grade writers. The author goes into great detail on how to make writer’s workshop successful in a first grade classroom and she also talks about how to instruct your students so that they become successful writers. This article benefits me because I wasn’t
familiar with writer’s workshop until this year. I now know more about first grade students writing and the expectations that are reasonable to set for them.

**Interviews**

11.) Jennifer Lawrence, First grade teacher at Gray’s Woods Elementary

I plan to interview Jennifer Lawrence, a first grade teacher and former PDS intern. I will observe her writer’s workshop and ask her questions about how she differentiates her writer’s workshop to meet the needs of struggling writers. I plan to talk to her about struggling writers she has had and strategies that she has used to benefit them. This will give me another first grade teacher’s perspective on writers workshop.
Inquiry Brief

Emily Stephens

Context

As a Professional Development Intern with The Pennsylvania State University, I have worked in a self-contained first grade classroom at Gray’s Woods Elementary School in the State College Area School District during the 2008-2009 school year. My first grade class is composed of twenty-one students including ten boys and eleven girls. Most of the students in my first grade classroom started the year at the same age, approximately six and a half years old.

Academically, there is a wide range of abilities in my classroom. There are five high-achieving students in the class who are reading above grade level and also above grade level in other subject areas. Twelve students in the class are meeting expectations and meeting first grade standards. Of these students, there are six students reading at grade level benchmarks for the end of the year and six students who are progressing and will meet the end of the year benchmarks. The other four students in the class are reading and meeting standards at a below basic level and below grade level for first grade.

Several students in my class receive additional instructional support services. Seven students receive additional reading instruction through the Title I program, two of which are English Language Learners. Those English Language Learners also receive an additional thirty minutes a day of English Language Support. We also have one student who meets with a speech therapist two times a week.

In a writing assessment given in late February, students were given three fiction prompts. The students were assessed on whether their story had a complete thought.
Based on the students writing, they were scored as advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. The writing benchmark for the end of February is basic. By the end of the school year, students are expected to score proficient. In my class there was one student who scored advanced, three proficient, thirteen basic, and four below basic. Of the four students who scored below basic, two are receiving support through ESL and all four are receiving additional instructional support through Title I.

Overall the twenty-one first grade students in the class behave age appropriately. All of the students are very cooperative, eager to learn, enthusiastic, and interact positively within our classroom community.

**Rationale**

Throughout my experiences in the Professional Development School program, I have had a growing interest in writing instruction. I started to wonder what type of instruction could be provided or re-taught to benefit students who are struggling with writing conventions and who are not meeting grade level benchmarks. This particular wondering speaks to me because I have a great interest in teaching literacy skills. First grade teachers have the pleasure of teaching and reinforcing literacy skills to beginning writers. Throughout the first part of the year, the students have been provided with a wealth of writing instruction. My mentor and I have worked with the students on their conventions of writing as well as motivating them to write. Despite our best efforts, there are still a few struggling writers in my classroom. These students are not yet writing with the appropriate conventions to meet grade level benchmarks. I want to pursue my wondering because I want to help struggling beginning writers to become proficient in
writing. I want to know if re-teaching the writing process to these struggling students will enable them to improve these conventions that they tend to struggle with or don’t use in their day-to-day writing. My intentions are to help these students develop conventions of writing that they are still struggling with and instruct them on how to properly use them in their everyday writing. I am pursuing this wondering because I also want to better myself as a writing instructor. This will benefit me greatly in the future, because I hope to learn about how to effectively teach beginning writers the process of writing and the best approach to take to enable these writers to feel successful.

Main Wondering

• How does differentiated writing instruction increase proficiency skills in struggling writer’s basic writing?

Sub-Wonderings

• How does the use of expectations relate to desire to write?

• How can I give the students the skills to self-edit their writing and assist a peer in editing?

• How can I involve parents/guardians in students’ writing instruction?

• How do student made writing goals influence student’s confidence in writing?

Timeline

_February_

• Week of February 8th:
  o Survey partner classroom students (fourth grade) on their feelings about writing.
Meeting Struggling Writers Needs

- Prepare first grade survey.
- **Week of February 16th:**
  - Survey students during reading stations on their feelings towards writing.
  - Work with students on brainstorming. Create a brainstorming activity and do it with the students.
  - Interview the four students I’m working with about what they feel they need to work on and come up with their goals for writing.
- **Week of February 23rd:**
  - Create and send home a parent survey that will give me more information on the student’s writing background.
  - Compare student surveys to writing skills in both first grade and fourth grade.
  - Conference with the students about how they feel they are going to meet their writing goals.

*March*
- **Week of March 2nd:**
  - Teach a mini-lesson catered to the students needs.
  - Have students pick out three goals that they would like to work on that week.
  - Conference with students about their writing pieces.
  - Have students self-edit and peer-edit writing pieces.
  - Have students take home a copy of their work to share with their parents with evidence of how they worked to meet their writing goals.
  - Conference about how they are working to meet their writing goals.
- **Week of March 9th:**
  - Spring Break
- **Week of March 16th:**
  - Teach a mini-lesson catered to the students needs.
  - Have students pick out three new writing goals that they would like to work on this week.
  - Conference with students about their writing pieces.
  - Have students self-edit and peer-edit writing pieces.
  - Have students take home a copy of their work to share with their parents with evidence of how they worked to meet their writing goals.
  - Conference with students about how they are working towards their writing goals.
- **Week of March 23rd:**
  - Teach a mini-lesson catered to the students needs.
  - Have students pick out three goals that they would like to work on that week.
  - Conference with students about their writing pieces.
  - Have students self-edit and peer-edit writing pieces.
  - Have students take home a copy of their work to share with their parents with evidence of how they worked to meet their writing goals.
Conference with students about their feelings towards writing and how it has changed in the past few weeks.
Conference with students about how we met our writing goals.

April
• Week of March 30th:
  o Finish compiling data and start to compose formal inquiry paper.
• Week of April 6th:
  o Continue composing inquiry paper.
• Week of April 13th:
  o Continue to work on inquiry paper and prepare for presentation.

Data Collection Ideas
• Student Survey: I surveyed both my classroom and my partner classroom to find out students feelings toward writing.
• Parent Survey: I will survey parents to gain more information on their child’s exposure to writing at home and in other places other than school.
• Student Interviews: I will interview students once a week to see if their feelings and understanding has changed while working with them.
• Teacher Interview: I will interview other teachers to gain an understanding of other writers across first grade and how other teachers work with struggling writers
• Student Writing Samples: I will collect samples of students writing throughout the weeks I am conferencing with them.
Student Survey #1

Name ____________________________________________

1.) How do you feel about writing?
   
   ☺️  ☐️  ☯️  
   Good   Okay    Bad

2.) I think my writing is ________________.

   ☺️  ☐️  ☯️  
   Good   Okay    Bad

3.) I find it ______________ to check my own work?

   ☺️  ☐️  ☯️  
   Easy   Okay    Hard

4.) I ______________ writer’s workshop.

   ☺️  ☐️  ☯️  
   Like    Dislike
Student Survey #2

Name ____________________________________________

1.) My feelings towards writing are ____________?
   Better     Have Stayed the Same     Worse

2.) I think my writing is ________________.
   Better     Has Stayed the Same    Worse

3.) I feel like I _______ need help during writer’s workshop?
   Better     Stayed the Same     Worse

4.) I ________________ writer’s workshop.
   Do         Might          Don’t
**Parent Survey #1**

What kinds of writing experience(s) does your child engage in at home?

- [ ] Lists
- [ ] Stories
- [ ] Letters
- [ ] Other: _____________________________

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

- [ ] On a daily basis
- [ ] Once a week
- [ ] A couple times a week
- [ ] Not at all

Does your child talk about writing, in or outside of school experiences, with you?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

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

- [ ] Very Interested
- [ ] Somewhat Interested
- [ ] Not Interested
Are there any activities that you think might increase your child's interest in writing? If so, please add more here:
Parent Survey #2

1. Is your child enthusiastic about sharing his/her work at home with you?  
   Absolutely!

2. What types of improvement do you see in your child’s writing?  What he is thinking about. It seems Lucas is creating the stories he wants to write about in his mind well in advance of the actual time he writes, as he shares these with me and then I see them later in his writing.

3. Do you see a change in your child’s confidence and attitude towards writing?  Yes. This particular project has encouraged Lucas to ‘plan ahead’ about what he is going to write about next.

4. Have you noticed an increase in writing at home?  
   Not really. The changes I have seen are mostly in his eagerness to share and his “idea making” for the next time he writes.

5. Any other comments and/or suggestions?  
   Thanks for this opportunity for Lucas!
Partner Classroom Survey

Name __________________________________________

1. How do you feel about writing? Do you like writing? Do you not like writing?

2. Why?

3. Do you ever do writing just for fun? What kind of writing?

4. What do you feel is the hardest part about writing?

5. What topics do you like to write about?

6. Has your feelings about writing changed since you were in first grade?

7. What do you feel is your best strength at writing?
Survey Results

How do you feel about writing?

- Below basic
- Will meet end of year benchmarks
- Meeting benchmarks
- Above grade level

I think my writing is ____.

- Below basic
- Will Meet End of Year Benchmarks
- Meeting End of Year Benchmarks
- Above Grade Level

Fourth Grade Writing Survey

- Struggling Writer
- Average Writer
- Above Average Writer
Writing Goals Sheet

Name: __________

My Writing Goals!

1. illustrations ✓
2. reading my writing ✓
3. sounding out words
4. coming up with ideas ✓
5. handwriting
6. getting our ideas on paper ✓
7. sharing our work
8. checking our work
9. Upper case and lower case letters ✓
10. illustrations that match ✓
   our story
Student Work: October

[Image of a drawing and text]

Student Work: April

[Image of a drawing and text]
Student Interview
Miss Stephens: Your writing goals for last week were illustrations, reading your own writing and coming up with ideas. How do you feel you met those goals?

Rachel: I really don’t know cause I’m not really good at these and now I am. When we made the goals I knew I wasn’t good at these (pointing to writing goals) so I took out the things that I’m not really good at.

Miss Stephens: Well that’s great! That’s why we’re doing this.

Rachel: Well last time I wasn’t really good at illustrations and reading my own writing cause it was sort of hard at the beginning of the year.

Miss Stephens: So you have gotten better at your illustrations. What have you done to get better at your illustrations? Or in what ways have you gotten better?

Rachel: Well I just picture what I did that day in my mind and I see it and I get the idea of the picture that I want to put on paper.

Miss Stephens: Okay great! So you pictured it in your mind and used that. Great! In what ways did you get better at reading your own writing?

Rachel: I used better sound spelling and better handwriting.

Miss Stephens: What about coming up with ideas? What strategies did you use to come up with ideas to write about?

Rachel: I came up with ideas by thinking of the day that I was at a place and I thought of a day that was really really exciting.

Miss Stephens: Great so your writing small moments stories!
Teacher Interview

1.) Can you easily identify struggling writers in your classroom? Yes.

2.) In what ways do you see students struggling with writing in your classroom (ideas to write about, conventions, etc.) Topics, conventions of writing, spelling, organizing information, sequencing events, trying to write too much into one story, etc.

3.) Do you see any correlation between motivation to write and skill level? This is really dependent on the student and not skill level. Sometimes my most able writers struggle more than my more challenged writers. They know what they want it to sound like (from authors they read) and when they are not successful, it is discouraging for them and if not handled properly can be a factor in motivation.

4.) Do you see a correlation between struggling writers and their reading skills? In what ways? Many times yes, but not always. The most obvious here is spelling and decoding. When kids have a difficult time decoding, they are not able to distinguish sounds well and this will show in their writing. But with stronger
readers, they want their writing to look/sound like what they are reading.

5.) How do you help struggling writers? Offer lots of positive reinforcement...use poetry to begin - less writing and focus is on meaning; check-in with these students first; keep private journal with the student; constantly look for ways to highlight student work authentically - often sharing is quite motivating to many!; accept any attempt that is made; offer graphic organizers to help - four square writing, etc.; allow them to write with markers, dictate once a week, give special spot on my cushy chair, etc. anything they like to do just to get them writing!

6.) Have these interventions typically been helpful to the struggling students in terms of progress being made? Yes, once they overcome the fear and gain confidence, they are able to focus on small aspects of their writing. Only focusing on one goal area at a time also helps! Sometimes that means forgetting about conventions or spelling until they are comfortable just writing down their ideas.

7.) Do you involve parents/guardians when students are struggling in writing? If so, how? Yes, it's
always a group collaborative effort. I may ask for their help with writing for meaning and provide graphic organizers, student/teacher journals, etc. It just depends on what strategy we’re using in class.

Take Home Folder Sheet
Lucas’ Writing Goals This Week

1.) Sounding out words
2.) Handwriting
3.) Reading his writing

Miss Stephens’ Comments:

I really think Lucas is starting to feel more comfortable and confident in his writing. The phonetic representations are very age appropriate. First graders are still using sound spelling, for example they would spell ‘great’ as ‘GREAT’ because he is using the dominant sounds. You will see Lucas’ writing progress as his reading skills increase. Writing skills allow reading ability.

Family Comments:

We continue to read with Lucas at home, and he enjoys this one-on-one time reading. He still likes to be read to, but often chooses to read his favorite parts. I’m happy Lucas is participating in this activity, and he is really enjoying himself and really likes showing his work with us.