Doctor Zebra and Grandpa Joe:

Prescriptions for Better Writing

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2010-2011 Radio Park Elementary School Interns

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**Background Information**

During the 2010-2011 school year, as Professional Development School Interns through a partnership between the State College Area School District and Pennsylvania State University, we have had the opportunity to teach in first and second grade classrooms at Radio Park Elementary School. Maria Dissen spent the year in a second grade, self-contained classroom. Allison Reich was in a first grade, self-contained classroom.

**Description of Teaching Context**

*Maria Dissen’s Class:*

My second grade classroom consists of a total of twenty students. There are twelve girls and eight boys that bring a diverse characteristic to our room. Children from American, Russian, Egyptian, Indian, and African descent make up my culturally diverse classroom.

Writing instruction is done as a whole group in my classroom with thirteen children who are not receiving special services. One student who receives learning support for reading, joins our class during writer’s workshop. Writer’s workshop occurs for one hour each day after guided reading. Due to implementations made in the classroom for writing, students are currently working independently unless one of the three teachers in the room is conferencing with them.

To begin writer’s workshop, there is generally a mentor text that is read aloud to the students that has examples of the focus area for that writing assignment. For
example, the story *All the Places to Love* by Linda Williams was read to the class. After
the read aloud, there was a lesson on prepositional phrases and similes. The students then
wrote and edited a paper on a special place they love that incorporated their own similes
and prepositional phrases. Students generally spend about two to three weeks writing,
revising, editing, and adding on to a specific story. If a student completes an assignment
before the majority of the class has finished, s/he works on a story of his/her choice. This
new story still gets revised and edited by the author and by a teacher through regular
conferencing. The district benchmark is for each student to be able to write and edit a
clear, detailed story by the end of the year.

Allison Reich’s Class:

This first grade classroom has twenty students, with thirteen females and seven
males. Each student in the classroom has unique characteristics and needs, which impact
his or her learning needs from day to day.

The classroom consists of mostly Caucasian students with a few minorities.
Three students are of African American descent, two are of Chinese descent, one is of
Japanese descent, and one is of Indian descent. A majority of the students come from
middle to upper class families; however, there are also two whose families are considered
economically disadvantaged. I know this because they received money to buy two books
each at the Book Fair. Most of the students are reading at grade level. Three students go
to the learning support teacher for reading, and writing, and two go for math. Two
students go to Response to Instruction & Intervention for reading (RTII). One student is
an English Language Learner (ELL) and goes to the ELL teacher for reading and writing.
Writing is one subject that my class as a whole struggles with the most. On assessments, and from student samples, many students use random capital letters, lowercase when letters should be capital, and use punctuation incorrectly. In my first grade classroom, writing is done through writer’s workshop. For writer’s workshop, we use a mentor text for a mini-lesson, then follow up by having students write for the rest of the lesson.

**Rationale**

We noticed early in the year that the students in our first and second grade classrooms responded really well to using organizers before beginning a story. Seeing the difference in student writing before a graphic organizer was used and after one was used was inspiring to the both of us. This made us wonder what other strategies and techniques were available to assure skill development in writing for our students. We also noticed that our students were dependent on teacher instruction during writing time. Without a specific prompt and a teacher walking the students through a paper, the students struggled to complete a story. It seemed especially important in Maria’s second grade classroom that her students become independent writers as they are approaching third grade. The last paper written before any implementations were made was titled “Snowmen at Night”. The writing process to complete this story took about four weeks in which the students had practice in editing skills with a great deal of teacher assistance, guidance, and revisions.

Learning how to produce good quality, descriptive writing can potentially be really fun for students, so we began to wonder what initiatives could we take to stimulate
student excitement and investment in improving writing skills. We found two teachers to consult with who have a passion for writing that are also former second grade teachers, along with endless books and resources on creating better writers in elementary school. With such great resources available to us, we became immediately motivated to initiate new techniques and strategies for our current writer’s workshop in order to fully engage all students.

Of the thirteen students in Maria’s classroom for writing, she chose five students for this study. These five students have solid writing backgrounds but have areas in need of skill development. By analyzing completed written work, I came to the conclusion that each student has a specific area that needs improvement in punctuation, descriptive writing, editing, or spelling.

Allison’s class consists of sixteen students for writer’s workshop, four of whom she is focusing this study. The four students are average writers who, like the rest of the class, need to improve in several areas. Two of the students scored basic on the district writing assessment, and two scored proficient. These students need improvement in either descriptive writing, punctuation, editing, or letter reversals along with capital and lowercase letters. Based on notes that were taken from the writing samples from the district assessments, these were the areas that students showed that they needed the most improvement.

Overall, we are interested in helping our students become better writers. Specifically, we would like to concentrate on helping our students become authors who focus on descriptive writing, editing, and expanding vocabulary so that it becomes natural for the students to write with richness. Although much of our focus is on writer’s
workshop, it’s our goal to have our students become natural writers across all subject areas. Our resources provided us with several ideas for mini-lessons, arranging special spots in the room for writing, different ways to focus on writing, and fun ways to create lessons through “expert writers”. Our inquiry study is intended to enhance our writer’s workshop instruction as well as provide opportunities and instruction to build a love of writing as a life-long skill for our children.

**Main Wondering**

What strategies and techniques can we implement in our writer’s workshop instruction that will enhance our students’ writing to include more descriptive language and expanded vocabulary as well as increase interest in being writers?

**Sub-questions**

- How will spelling accuracy be affected by this process?
- What makes writing more interesting for students?
- How will strategies used help students become natural editors?
- How will independence be affected by this process?
- How will student engagement be affected by this process?

**Data Collection**

*Professional Interviews*

In order to gain insight on how two former second grade teachers set writer’s workshop up in their room, we interviewed Susan Lunsford and Cynthia Cowan. These
two interviews were before any implementations were made in either classroom and gave us insight on what worked in their classroom to better students’ writing while increasing their successes. From these interviews, we had a much better understanding of the steps we could take to help improve our students’ writing. Mrs. Cowan and Mrs. Lunsford taught together in the primary grades in the State College Area School District. They designed and implemented an eight-week writer’s workshop program in connection to the Jump Start Program in Ferguson Township elementary for at least five years. Mrs. Cowan continued to use the program for ten more years. From working together, they planned writer’s workshop in a way that inspired their students and taught them to be better writers. We took their years of experience and made it fit into our classroom. (See Appendix A for Interview Questions)

Student Artifacts

In order to compare, analyze, and understand the effects of the techniques implemented in our classrooms, we both collected before, during, and after writing samples from our students. These writing samples showed the improvements our students have made throughout the inquiry process. By examining the students’ work “before data” and “during data”, we were able to see the effects of implementations on their writing skills. We also were able to see how much they edited, revised, and added to their stories from student artifacts. (See Appendix B1 and B2 for Student Work)

Student Interviews
We interviewed students after all implementations were made in our classrooms for writer’s workshop. These interviews allowed us to see what the students currently thought about writing and how our implementations affected their thoughts. Valuable information about why they like the puppets, editing pens, checklists, and other implementations was found through these interviews. We also had a whole class discussion after the individual interviews to gather all students’ thoughts on writer’s workshop and the changes that have been made this year. This data helped us gain understanding of the students’ perspective on the strategies and techniques added to writer’s workshop. (See Appendix C1 and C2 for Student Quotes and Survey Questions)

Checklist on student progress

A checklist was made in each class that noted the progress of students and how they are writing. This checklist allowed us to see the growing independence in our classroom by seeing how many times a teacher had a conference with each student a week. The checklist also had information on what story each student was working on for the week and their time on task. All of this information made the patterns on student independence apparent. (See Appendix D1 and D2 for Checklist on Student Progress)

Notes from Professional Development Associate (PDA)

Any notes that our PDAs wrote about writer’s workshop were used along with data analysis to reflect on the process. PDAs observed and took notes on the classroom
environment, student engagement, and on-task behavior several times throughout the inquiry process.

**Anecdotal Notes**

To systematically observe our students, we made brief observations on what students did on a specific day and how they were acting. These observations gave us precise details on how independent students are, how much progress was made in a week, and whether or not students were on task. These notes were also useful when analyzing data to determine how the students were feeling. Students were continuously making comments about their feelings towards writing, so we recorded their remarks. This allowed us to measure students’ feelings objectively during the writing activity and provided us with meaningful information about our students’ preference for our interventions.

**Data Analysis**

To begin analyzing the data that we collected throughout our inquiry process, we took a look at each form of collecting data and categorized them into student artifacts, student interviews, checklists on student progress, notes from PDAs, and anecdotal notes. We were able to make concrete claims from our different methods of data collections. The following is our analysis from our data collection.

**Student Artifacts**
Student writing samples were an important part of collecting and analyzing data in our inquiry journey. Our student artifacts are writing samples from before interventions, and during interventions.

While analyzing our data, we found patterns in our students’ writing after interventions were in place in our classes. As we looked through their stories from when the interventions were in place, we noticed black ink from their special editing pens were all over each of their papers. Students added more description to their story and adjectives throughout their paper. They also added periods, commas, quotation marks, and other forms of punctuation, as well as marking capital letters where appropriate. (See Appendix B1 and B2)

Student Interviews

Student interviews provided us with student input after implementations were made on their general thoughts on the new writer’s workshop. We sampled all writers, not just the study groups, for this data since all of the writers were able to participate in the interventions we designed. We found from our interviews that in our two classes combined 30 out of 36 students like writer’s workshop and all implementations made. In Maria’s class, 12 out of 20 students kind of liked the checklists that they used with the puppets and editing pens. In Allison’s class, 16 out of 24 students liked the checklists that they used with the puppets and editing pens. 32 out of 36 students said if given the chance, they would not change anything about writer’s workshop, and did not have a least favorite thing about writing.
Checklist on Student Progress/Anecdotal Notes

This data allowed us to see how much interaction we had with each student before and during interventions. Our data shows that before implementations were made, we met with every student a minimum of two to three times a week, working with them on descriptive language, spelling, capitalization and punctuation. After implementations were made, our data shows that the majority of the time, teachers only met with students when they had completely edited and revised their first copy of their story. Our data also indicated less student to teacher interaction and more teacher observation during writer’s workshop. See Appendix D1 and D2.

During writer’s workshop, we made a point to observe our class and take notes on the environment of the classroom, student interaction, student opinions, and their progress. From these notes, we were able to confirm the overall mood of the classroom during writer’s workshop, as well as student achievement. Throughout the months that we implemented the different strategies, our mentors, PDAs, paraprofessionals, as well as ourselves came to the professional consensus that the volume in each classroom was significantly lower. We can see from our dated checklists that students got a lot of writing done during each writer’s workshop. (See Appendix D1 and D2)

Explanation of Findings

After careful analysis of the data through the methods summarized above, we identified patterns and trends. These patterns and trends allowed us to make strong claims regarding our main wondering:
What strategies and techniques can we implement in our writer’s workshop instruction that will enhance our students’ writing to include more descriptive language and expanded vocabulary as well as increase interest in being writers?

Claim 1: Students referred to our new routine of editing as a means of becoming more independent as writers rather than needing the one on one assistance of the teachers.

Our Findings:

One of the most surprising elements about this claim is the improvement on student independence. “When I enter the room, it is obvious that you have set the students up to work independently on their writing tasks. It is apparent to me that the students are spread around the room with their writing materials, some working in areas with a puppet, others spread about the room at tables with folders up for privacy, others with illustrations going and still others with pencils in hand in writer’s mode” (Cowan, personal communication, April 7, 2011).

Before implementing Dr. Zebra and Grandpa Joe into writer’s workshop in our classes, teachers met with each student at least one to three times a week to go over their writing. Dr. Zebra and Grandpa Joe took the place of editing and revising with the students. Before meeting with Dr. Zebra and Grandpa Joe, the last step before having a “Healthy Paper/Congratulations Slip” (See Appendix F1 and F2), students have to complete several steps. First, students write a story independently. When they think they have finished their story, they pick one of several puppets to help them edit and revise their story. This puppet is there to listen to the student’s story as well as to be
constructive at the same time. Because the puppet does not know the story like the author does, when details are missing, the puppet lets the writer know. This works because the puppet has helped the students focus and pay attention to detail to self-evaluate and self-edit. This is the key to them developing independent, productive work. The puppets are also great listeners because they catch mistakes such as misspellings, errors in punctuation and capitalization, and lack of detail. When the puppet catches these mistakes, the author uses the editing pen to fix their errors. The students have a “Story Writing Checklist” (See Appendix G2) with them while revising and editing their paper to remind them of the components to a well-written paper. The puppet and author go over their paper two to three times before meeting with Dr. Zebra and Grandpa Joe. Dr. Zebra and Grandpa Joe are extremely picky about stories and do not look at papers full of mistakes. If a student comes to Dr. Zebra or Grandpa Joe after editing several times and still has mistakes, Dr. Zebra and Grandpa Joe fill out a prescription pad letting them know what steps they need to take in order to receive a healthy paper/congratulations slip. (See Appendix H2) When Dr. Zebra or Grandpa Joe approve a paper, the author gets a “Healthy Paper” or “Congratulations” slip, and may begin to write their final copy. (See Appendix B1 and B2)

Claim 2: The use of puppets, editing pens, and checklists encourage students to edit conventions.

Allison’s Findings:

When working in the primary grades, it is always important to incorporate fun and unique activities whenever possible to engage students. I found, that by introducing a
new “special” pen, students enjoyed writing with them and became better editors. When comparing student work from before the inquiry, to after, I could see many more carrots and arrows with several words and grammar corrections made. The checklists showed students exactly what they were looking for in their writing. If they did not include something, they knew exactly what to change so they could then include all of the components of the story. My students enjoyed working with the puppets and could hear their story from another perspective, encouraging them to edit their stories. Students showed an improvement in editing conventions. In the writing sample of one student before implementations, she had 6 mistakes. After implementing the puppets, editing pen, and checklists, this student went back and fixed 4 of those mistakes. (See Appendix B1 for before and after student work).

Maria’s Findings:

By looking at student work before and during the interventions made in my second grade classroom, I found that my students corrected the majority of their conventional mistakes using their puppets and editing pens. While editing their paper, students used the puppets to help them read the paper the way it sounded before editing. The puppets allow them to hear the paper from a different point of view, while the editing pens help them see all of the progress made while editing. The checklists the students use, help remind them of areas that need looked over while revising and editing with the puppets and editing pen. Areas such as using action words, capitalization/punctuation, descriptive language and spelling no excuse words correctly are all included on the checklist. After looking at one students before and after work samplings, I found eight errors in conventions in the before work and only one in the after work. This student
corrected six mechanical errors while editing with the puppets, editing pens, and checklists. This shows me that the implementations that were put into my room for writer’s workshop were successful and valuable. (See Appendix B2 for student work before and after implementations. See Appendix E2 for pictures of students working independently with editing pens and puppets.)

Claim 3: Using puppets, editing pens and checklists encourages students to independently revise content.

Allison’s Findings:

Before introducing editor’s pens, checklists, and puppets, students edited their work by crossing out and using a pencil. They also had conferences with a teacher and other students for more suggestions. Now, students resort to the puppets first to edit and revise on their own. A special checklist is used just for students working independently with a puppet. The pen and puppets allow students to make changes on their own, by doing so independently. By looking at the before and after checklist, I noticed that I met with fewer students. Instead, I was able to observe their exact progress as students and have a good handle on where each student was in the writing process. (See Appendix B1).

Maria’s Findings:

Before using the puppets, editing pens and checklists, students revised their stories with a teacher while conferencing with them. When reviewing data, I noticed a pattern in the students writing. After implementing editing pens, puppets, and checklists, each student’s first copy was significantly revised by adding descriptive words to make
their story more interesting and exciting on their own. For example, one student used two adjectives in their paper before any implementations were done in writer’s workshop, while thirteen were used in a paper written after editing with the puppets, editing pens, and checklists. Adjectives used in the first paper were more and bigger. In the paper written after interventions this student used adjectives such as, exciting, fun, delicious, grumbling sound, and burry. Looking at the different papers, I can see that not only has the number of adjectives increased, but the words used were more descriptive and exciting. *(See Appendix B2).*

**Reflections and Future Practices**

As eager learners, we found the opportunity to complete a teacher inquiry to be a motivating experience. We learned so much about implementing new and exciting strategies in our first and second grade classrooms. Finding something new and becoming life long learners has become second nature to our teaching practices. We began by simply observing our classroom and finding an area that lent itself to adding new tools to encourage and build upon better writing skills. After careful consideration, we both decided that writer’s workshop was an area in our classrooms that we both became passionate about finding something that would really make a difference in our classes. After finding our focus area, we became surrounded in endless resources for writer’s workshop. We were hoping that the strategies and techniques we implemented would inspire our students to become natural writers who are engaged, motivated, and increasingly independent. Upon completion of our data analysis, we can confidently say our implementations positively influenced students during writer’s workshop. Because of
our findings, we are eager to implement all strategies we used in our classes in our future
classroom. In addition to adding the strategies we implemented already in our class, we
plan to incorporate other strategies that will enhance writer’s workshop.

To begin our inquiry process, we came up with our main question “What
strategies and techniques can I implement in our writer’s workshop instruction that will
enhance my students’ writing to include more descriptive language and expanded
vocabulary as well as increase interest in being writers?” In order to find answers to our
questions, we immediately began researching strategies we could implement in our
classrooms. Although we wanted to implement everything we heard about, time got in
our way. In the future, having signs around the room encouraging and reminding young
writers of mini-lessons would be ideal for students to have as constant references. We
also like the idea of having a “favorite book bin” for students to have access to when they
need inspiration from an expert writer. This encourages students to model their writing
and learn new strategies through their favorite stories. We began the process of having
the students become completely in charge of their writing by becoming independent
writers, but we prefer to begin implementations earlier in the year in our future practices
and wonder if student improvements would increase even more. This will take some
modeling, especially in first grade, but our goal is to have students take complete
ownership of writer’s workshop by the end of the year in June.
Timeline
Week of February 14, 2011
- Begin collecting BEFORE baseline data of students’ writing with current writing procedures
- Search for sources for annotated bibliography
- Finish brief and annotated bibliography
- Brief and annotate bibliography due Friday, February 18 by midnight
- Plan for next week’s writing
- Take before pictures of classroom
- Make checklist for data observations

Week of February 21, 2011
- Begin collecting BEFORE baseline data of students’ writing with current writing procedures
- Finish brief and annotated bibliography
- Plan for next week’s writing
- Begin checklist for data observations

Week of February 28, 2011
- Begin collecting DURING data while implementing new writing strategies
  - Read alouds connected to writing
  - Editors pen and puppets
    - Prescription pad to fix punctuation (with puppet)
- Introduce editing pen and puppets to help fix errors
- Plan week of writing
- Continue data observation with checklist
- Add items to checklist to look for in student writing
- Analyzing data
- Final brief due March 2
- Prescription pad to fix punctuation, descriptive language, and expanded vocabulary (with puppet)
• Remind students of no excuse words and word wall

Week of March 7, 2011
• *Spring Break!!*

Week of March 14, 2011
• Read aloud to show expert writing then mini lesson (book and Cindy/Candy)
• Introduce new instructions for writing
• Introduce private writing spots in the room
• Make observations on writing after lesson through student work and observation notes
• Analyze student writing from last week
• Continue with editing pens and puppets
• Remind students of no excuse words and word wall
• Prescription pad to fix punctuation, descriptive language, and expanded vocabulary (with puppet)

Week of March 21, 2011
• Look over writing from last week and make notes
• Read aloud/mini lesson on writing a letter
• Remind students of no excuse words and word wall
• Prescription pad to fix punctuation, descriptive language, and expanded vocabulary (with puppet)
• Video tape students using editing pen and puppet for inquiry presentation

Week of March 28, 2011
• Collect student work from writing stations
• Introduce how to write a letter
  o Read aloud, PowerPoint, mini lesson
• Analyze data
• Work on inquiry paper

Week of April 4, 2011
• Continue analyzing data
• Begin inquiry paper
• Mini lesson on punctuation with read aloud
• Write a letter for students to edit

**Week of April 11, 2011**

• Continue analyzing data
• Make claims and evidence from data
• Interview selected students on their thoughts about writing after changes in our writers workshop
• Inquiry paper draft due Sunday, April 17
• April 30 Inquiry Conference
• May 1 final paper due

**Appendix**
Appendix A: Professional Interview Questions

Interview Questions

• What grade did you teach?
• Could you first begin by explaining to us how writing was set up in your classroom?
• How long was writing workshop each day?
• How did you lay the ground work for writing workshop in the beginning of the year?
• How did you get your students to think about descriptive writing and expanding their vocabulary?
• How did have students edit their work during and after writing?
• How could I add things or rearrange my room to make writing more fun or motivational?
• How did you approach those students who do not think they enjoy writing?
• How long did students spend writing and editing one paper?
• Do you have any ideas for making our inquiry successful, fun, and motivational?
B1: Student Work

Student Writing Sample Before and After Implementations:

Before implementation:

I went to Grandma.

After implementation:

one day I asked my mom if I could play in the back yard the art. Yes, I went to go. When we went, I was afraid. I sat the brushes moving. I moved the brush. It was my my my my.
Student Writing Sample Before and After Implementations:
B2: Student Work

Student Writing Sample Before and After Implementations:

B2: Student Work

Student Writing Sample Before and After Implementations:
Student Writing Sample After Using Descriptive Language with Editing Pen and Puppet:

One fine day of the big rainstorm, I went outside to take my dog for a walk. The mud was squishy. When I stepped in it, my feet were barefoot as soon as I looked down I noticed my dog's reflection in the water. He barked and barked and barked to help me laugh.
Sample Student Writing of Punctuation and Capitalization Before and After Using the Editing Pen and Puppet:
Dear Joe,

I told you that you don’t like trees. Let me tell you why.

I do. First of all, you can put a rope on them. Do you like no rocks climbing? I will feel as if you were actually doing it! And the beauty of trees beh"myther so beautiful.
C1: Survey Questions

Questions About Writing

1. Do you like Writers Workshop now using puppets, editing pens, and checklists?
   😊😊😊

2. Did you like Writers Workshop before using puppets, editing pens, and checklists?
   😊😊😊

3. Does the editing pen help you edit your paper without a teacher?
   😊😊😊

4. Do the puppets help you add descriptive words and details to your paper?
   😊😊😊

5. Do the checklists you use with the puppets and editing pens help you remember everything that you need to put in your story?
   😊😊😊

6. How have you become a better writer?

7. What is your favorite thing about writing?

8. What is your least favorite thing about writing?
C2: Survey Questions and Student Quotes

Questions about Writing

Circle the faces below to tell if you like writing ☺️, kind of like writing ☺️, or do not like writing at all 😞.

1. Do you like Writers Workshop?

   ☺️ ☺️ ☞

2. Does the editing pen help you edit your paper without a teacher?

   ☺️ ☺️ ☞

3. Do the puppets help you add descriptive words in your paper and add detail?

   ☺️ ☺️ ☞

4. Do the puppets help you add capitalization and punctuation?

   ☺️ ☺️ ☞

5. Do the checklists you use with the puppets and editing pens help you remember everything that needs to go in your paper?

   ☺️ ☺️ ☞

6. How have you become a better writer?

7. What’s your favorite thing about writing?

8. What’s your least favorite thing about writing?
C2: Student Quotes

“Aww I want to finish my writing! Can I do it during recess?”

“Using the puppet helped me understand what someone else might not understand what I am writing about.”

“The cow was much more helpful than the horse. The horse was lazy. He kept saying I want to go to bed. He was laying down so I got the cow instead.”

“The puppet made me add more detail because he didn’t understand at first.”

“The bunny puppet didn’t understand how the mud when through my dogs paws so I had to explain it to him and then he understood and I added it to my story.”

“I like the elephant way more than the possum.”

“The alligator was way too judgmental of my paper, I wanted him to help me but he was grumpy so I picked a new one.”
D1: Checklist on Student Progress

Checklist of Student Progress Before and After Implementations:

[Image of a checklist with handwritten notes]
D2: Checklist on Student Progress

Checklist of Student Progress Before and After Implementations:
E1: Pictures of Students Working Around the Classroom
E2: Pictures of Students Working with Editing Pens and Puppets
Congratulations!
You have an awesome story!

~Grandpa Joe
F2: Healthy Paper Slip and Dr. Zebra

congratulations!
You have a healthy paper!!

~Doctor Zebra
G1: Story Writing Checklist

Story Writing Checklist

Working with your puppet to check that...

_____ Every sentence ends with punctuation ( . ! ? )

_____ Capital words at beginning of sentence and for people’s names.

_____ I used interesting words and sentences to describe the people, places, and events in my story.
Story Writing Checklist

Working with your puppet to check that...

_____ Every sentence has punctuation (! ? .).

_____ Capitalize words at beginning of sentence, names, and places.

_____ I used interesting words and sentences to describe the people, places, and events in my story.

_____ I use action words.
H1: Grandpa Joe’s Story Writing Checklist

Notes from Grandpa Joe

_Grandpa Joe says: Your story looks great! You may need to add a few more things to make it perfect._

_____ I checked my story for a beginning, middle, and end.

_____ I checked my story for some kind of problem and solution.

_____ I checked my story for interesting words and sentences to describe the people, places, and events in my story.

_____ I checked my story for spelling words that I know correctly.
Doctor Zebra Prescription List

Doctor says: Looks Great!!! You may need to add a few more things to make it perfect!

_____ I checked my story for a beginning, middle, and end.

_____ I checked my story for some kind of adventure or problem and solution.

_____ I checked my story for interesting words and sentences to describe the people, places, and events in my story.

_____ I checked my story for action words.

_____ I checked my story for description words-- show don’t tell.

Areglado and Dill offer numerous examples of graphic organizers for the students to use to organize their thoughts before writing. For example, we will use the “I Can Write About…” on page 139 in our first lesson. The point of this worksheet is to help students organize their thoughts before starting a story. This book also helps us to understand what to look for in assessing student writing both informally and formally. On page 144 is a Grading Criteria Chart that we will hang in the classroom for students to reference. This book also helps us to understand what to look for in assessing student writing both informally and formally. This will be a great source to use to better gauge assessing our students’ work. We will use this book when analyzing data to see their results more clearly.


This website is a simple guide to writing a friendly letter. This resource is kid friendly with an audio and written explanation of how to write a letter, including the format and different variations that go along with writing a letter. This website was used in Maria's second grade classroom to teach students how to write a letter. Students were engaged and able to easily understand the context.

Calkins and Bleichman introduce to the readers how to teach revision to a primary classroom. The authors also provide ideas for creating descriptive writing through stories and mini-lessons. This source will be used as a guide to teach students the importance of punctuation, revising and editing their work while writing. We would like to have students work on revising their endings and work with partners to revise each other’s work. Through this book, we came up with the idea of using a special editor’s pen to increase student excitement about editing. Also, bringing in an expert writer to model their own writing came from Calkins and Bleichman. These two components alone should increase student interest in writing.


This interview was conducted with a second-grade teacher on how she set up writers workshop in her classroom. Questions on how her classroom was run on day-to-day basis, ideas for mini-lessons, and ways to engage students were answered. Mrs. Cowan also gave us a realistic idea of how to set up our classrooms to engage the students. We will use the information from this interview by implementing suggestions in our own classrooms. We will also be contacting her regularly for new ideas and suggestions throughout the whole process.

Cynthia Cowan’s unit book is a step by step guide to setting up writing in a first and second grade multi-age classroom. Cynthia’s writers workshop unit book contains professional articles about improving primary writers, a list of read alouds and corresponding lessons, and lesson plans from when she was a first/second grade teacher. This unit book was used throughout the entire inquiry process. Lessons in Mrs. Cowan’s book were used and tweaked to fit our classrooms. Implementing these new strategies also allowed us to expand and come up with new ones for our classroom.


This resource book includes several graphic organizers that we used during writers workshop. Not only does this book include graphic organizers, but it also includes charts and posters that are great resources for students. If a student is stuck on what to write, this source provides small charts and blacklines that students can fill in to help them produce and organize their ideas. Student feedback forms are also in this book. These forms are great resources for students to use while peer editing, as well as for teachers to use while conferencing with students.


This book focuses on the basics of how to write a story. It provides ideas to teach
the beginning, middle, and end of a story using general and specific details throughout. The author also includes step-by-step guides on how to teach each mini-lesson. Ideas are given for each lesson on additional resources that could be used. We plan on using this book as another guide to teaching mini-lessons on specific parts of a story. Both of us plan on teaching how to make a good ending to a story, and this book will help us do so.


This book is based on setting the reader’s classroom up for students to be successful writers. Lunsford gives several examples of mini-lessons that could be easily implemented into an elementary classroom. Along with mini lesson examples, Lunsford provides ideas to set up a student friendly writers workshop. The author uses a unique approach to incorporate children’s books as a model to teach specific writing skills such as; descriptive writing, interesting beginnings, and good endings. We plan on using *Literature-Based Mini-Lessons* in our first and second grade classrooms as a guide to making our classroom a more exciting learning environment. We also plan on taking the mini-lessons in the book and applying their ideas to our classrooms.


This source has mini-lessons designed to improve specific aspects when it comes to primary students and their writing. One mini-lesson in this book is a lesson on
periods. Many primary students struggle with putting the periods in the correct place, so this lesson is excellent for our inquiry. There are mini-lessons about when to use capitals and lowercase letters, as well. This source provides several mini-lesson ideas about how to teach many different types of writing such as narrative writing, friendly letters, invitations, and much more. This book also has information about the editing process, and suggests ideas for how teachers can go about using this process.


This website is a great resource for finding lessons, mentor texts, worksheets, and more. Almost any kind of lesson can be found in this website and each lesson is organized by the traits that are focused on in that specific lesson. For example, we found specific read alouds that focus on teaching voice and word choice. We will use this website as a valuable resource for lesson ideas, read alouds, worksheets and graphic organizers.