Stretching Student Writing: Using Mini Lessons to Take Kindergarten Writing up a Notch!

Amanda Hood
Intern: Gray’s Woods Elementary
Kindergarten
amh5393@psu.edu
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Description of Teaching Context

I am a kindergarten intern at Gray’s Woods Elementary School, which is one of eight elementary schools located in the State College Area School District. This school, which educates roughly 390 students, is primarily composed of Caucasian students. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Gray’s Woods has fewer than 40 special needs, English Language Learners, and economically disadvantaged students. Gray’s Woods thrives in creating a welcoming and accepting learning environment for its student population.

Located on one wing of the building is my kindergarten classroom, which is one of three kindergarten classrooms in Gray’s Woods. It is composed of 13 boys and 8 girls. Overall, my class can be characterized as having students who are at or above grade level in academics. This academic characteristic was determined based on students AIMSweb performance. There are three students whose academic performance would be characterized at below grade level. These three students receive RtII support everyday. Within this group of three children, there is one student who also receives speech support. There is also an additional student, outside this group of three, who receives speech support. There is one student in the class who has been diagnosed with Autism. This student has a TSS for four hours each day. My class is made up of Caucasian students and one student who is Caucasian and African American.

All of the students in my class express an interest in learning and take pride in the work that they do. These students show excitement towards learning new things and are anxious to show others their work. For the majority of instructional time these students work in a heterogeneous environment, where they intermingle with students of varying social and academic characteristics. During language arts, however, these students are grouped based on achievement levels. There are four groups that comprise the larger cohort of 21 students: one
group of students achieving below grade level, two groups achieving at grade level, and one achieving above grade level. Students work in these groups during guided reading, guided writing, and phonics instruction. The full inquiry brief, containing similar information, can be found in Appendix A.

**Wonderings and Questions**

I became inspired to further enrich my students writing experiences after I attended a literacy training session on kid writing. When I took a closer look at the students’ needs in my classroom, along with the kindergarten snapshot, I noticed there were some writing behaviors my students could improve upon. I categorized some of these behaviors under the idea of ‘expanding student writing.’ Under this category I filtered certain writing behaviors that needed the most improvement -- using descriptive words, revising drawings and writing to sequence events, adding details, and writing about a variety of topics including people, places, and things. This category includes topics that were addressed during the literacy training session that I attended.

After systematically assessing my students’ writing, I would characterize the majority of the students in my class as emergent writers. Emergent writers rely on the pictures they have drawn to tell a story. These writers do, however, use their sound spelling to compose one or two sentences about their illustrations. This complete thought relates to one aspect of their picture, but often lacks specificity and descriptive language. These emergent writers are beginning to understand the conventions of writing, but often interchange upper and lower case letters and periodically omit punctuation. One aspect of writing, which is currently being introduced to these students, is the idea of revision – going through a second time and adding more details to your illustrations and written work. By the end of kindergarten it is my goal for each student to proficiently elicit these emergent writer characteristics.
When conversing with other kindergarten teachers, at the literacy training session, I became aware of the different approaches there are towards writing. One common thread throughout these different stylistic approaches was the foundation of a mini lesson. Regardless of the topic being taught, these teachers would start by presenting the information using the format of a mini lesson. Mini lessons are ideal for quick instruction and focus on a specific topic. In a mini lesson the teacher instructs students in a large or small group and provides time for individual practice. It was intriguing to hear success stories among the teachers as they shared some of their lessons. It appeared as though with every story I thought to myself, ‘I wonder how my students would respond to this?’ One teacher, for example, shared how she implemented mini lessons on the topic of beginning, middle, and end of a story. This method of presentation provided knowledgeable insight to the students on the conventional structure of a story; it also granted them time to practice and implement this technique in their writing. The student writing examples the teacher shared proved the success of these mini lessons. There were expansive ideas written on a single topic and a meaningful structure that added to the interest of the story.

Currently in my kindergarten classroom there are two designated times each day when students specifically work on writing. When students first enter the classroom in the morning they are given 25 minutes to write and draw independently. At this time my mentor teacher and I filter through a few students, conferencing with each student to assist them with revisions. The other designated writing time is during language arts stations-- there are four stations that each span 15 minutes in length. One of these stations typically has students respond to a book or continue the end of a prompting sentence. This requires the students to draw upon previously heard information or to reflect upon their own thinking.
After reflecting on the literacy training session I attended and reading related educational resources, I was inspired to change the format of writing instruction during language arts stations to better assist my students expand their writing. I believed with the addition of mini lessons during this time, I could focus writing instruction on different techniques that would assist my students’ development as expansive writers. This format also provided the platform needed to introduce a specific technique to a small group of students and then gave them time to implement and practice these skills in an authentic task (Graham, MacArthur, Fitzgerald, 2007).

**Main Wondering**

- How does the implementation of language arts mini lessons in a kindergarten classroom, affect students in expanding their writing?

**Sub Questions**

- What type of language arts mini lessons elicits an expansion in writing?
- What type of correlation exists between student reading achievement and writing achievement in relation to expanding their writing?
- What do kindergarten students acknowledge as details in their writing?

**Data Collection**

In order to assess the overall development of my students’ writing in relation to specificity, description, and focus, I developed a rubric, which I used throughout the entire inquiry process ([Appendix B](#)). For the purpose of my inquiry I used these aspects to define expanding student writing. The use of specific language means the student writes using topic specific words- words related to the subject of the paper. The use of description means that the student uses adjectives or adverbs when writing about a topic. When a
student writes with a focus, he or she is staying on one relevant topic throughout his or her entire written piece.

This rubric I developed was used before, during, and after the implementation of mini lessons. It consisted of standards taken directly from the kindergarten snapshot for emergent writers, and also included additional statements I devised specifically for this study. The standards I chose from the kindergarten snapshot measured student writing ability in the areas of specificity, description and focus—words I used to define expanding student writing. To quantitatively assign a score in each of these categories I devised a measurement scale from 0-3, which allowed me to provide a numeric value in each category. In addition to the standards, the statements I created measured additional aspects not directly addressed in these standards. These statements addressed a quantitative aspect of expansive writing I was interested in analyzing: number of sentences in the story and number of descriptive words. Also included in these three statements is a statement addressing specificity of language used in the students’ overall written piece. I used the measurement scale from 0-3 to assign this category a numeric value. Altogether, these standards and statements included in the rubric offered a collective measurement of a student’s writing achievement addressing focus, specificity, and description.

In order to collect baseline data on each of my student’s writing performance or achievement I collected one independent writing sample from each student during a specific time of day. Every morning students in my class are allotted 25 minutes to write and draw at their individual pace. During this time my mentor teacher and I would conference with 2-3 students, assisting them with the conventions of writing and offering
ideas to further assist story development. Before I implemented my planned sequence of language arts mini lessons, I collected and scored each student’s initial writing sample using the rubric I developed. By doing this I created a baseline ‘score’ for each student in the given categories.

I designated three overarching topics to guide the mini lessons I implemented:

1. **Topic one: Poetry**
   
   *Taught during the week of February 20th*
   
   I introduced students to different poetic forms, focusing on the descriptive language incorporated by the author. I used visualization strategies to help the students ‘see’ how the use of descriptive words could paint a picture in the reader’s mind. I also modeled how to write a poem via guided writing and then gave students the opportunity to choose their own topic and write a poem following a simple poetic format—two words to describe what the topic looks like, two words to describe what the topic feels like, and two words to describe what the object does.

2. **Topic two: Pictures and prompts**
   
   *Taught during the week of February 27th*
   
   I focused on the importance of including details in a picture, specifically crafting details in your background, including characters with clothing, and creating characters with facial expressions. To further encourage students to include these aspects in their drawings, I created prompts that encompassed these ideas.

3. **Topic three: Descriptive words**
   
   *Taught during the week of March 12th*
After modeling to the students how to make a web of ideas on a specific topic, they were given the opportunity to create their own web. Students were asked to list things that described their topic or things associated with their topic. After completing a web they were encouraged to use it as an assistive tool in their writing.

These mini lessons were designed to elicit an expansion in writing during an instructional period of 15 minutes. I collected five pieces of writing from each of my 21 students. I scored each of these pieces of writing using the same rubric I used to measure the initial baseline data (Appendix B). I scored each writing sample on a consistent scale, which allowed me to later compare and track the affects of each mini lesson.

To capture insight into my students understanding of descriptive writing, I had my students choose a magazine page and list descriptive words they saw or felt. From this information I categorized the words they used into three categories: people, places, things, feelings, verbs, adjectives, and other words. I totaled the type of words listed and represented it with a numerical value. I interviewed 10 students, at random, about each of their five writing samples I collected throughout my inquiry. I specifically asked them to define what ‘adding detail to your story meant’ and to point out specific words they thought were descriptive. I collectively totaled these words, as I did the others, to allow me to see a numeric relationship on the type of words students selected. These two forms of data collection provided me with meaningful insight into students understanding of descriptive words and descriptive writing.
Data Analysis

To analyze my data and to track the progress of each mini lesson, I grouped my students into four groups based on student achievement levels in reading: low achieving (red group), average achieving (green group and yellow group), and high achieving (blue group). These pre-established reading groups were used for language arts centers and were the groups used to instruct these mini lessons. The red group had three students and the green, yellow, and blue group had six students in each. The data used in my inquiry are often referred to by these colors, as categorical names.

After I collected student artifacts and scored each of the students writing samples using the rubric, I calculated a total score for each group for each of the five writing samples. I took the average of these scores based on the number of students in that particular group; this allowed me to compare data across groups of varying sizes. I used these averages to create comparison charts to track the progress, both across groups and within groups.

I first created bar graphs comparing scores among each group for each of the five writing samples. This allowed me to see how each group responded to each lesson in comparison to other groups (Appendix C). I created line charts to depict the growth within each achievement group based on the group score for each writing sample (Appendix D). I was able to track the growth of each group through the span of the intervention.

To analyze data on students’ overall understanding of descriptive words, I created two types of bar graphs to collectively represent the type of words students acknowledged
and listed as descriptive. The first bar graph represents words students acknowledged as descriptive in their writing (Appendix E). The second bar graph collectively shows the type of words used when asked to describe a person, place, or thing of their choice (Appendix F). From here I was able to see which types of words were more dominantly used and thus make a claim about the type of words students acknowledge and use as descriptive.

**Explanation and Findings**

*Claim #1: The implementation of language arts mini lessons, on the topic of poetry, pictures/prompts, and descriptive words, elicited an expansion in student writing across achievement groups.*

As I analyzed student-writing samples throughout my inquiry, I began to notice a pattern emerging from my data—an increase in specificity, descriptive language, and focus was present in writing samples from each achievement group. This led me to my main wondering: How does the implementation of language arts mini lessons in a kindergarten classroom, affect students in expanding their writing? The evidence, which supports this claim, comes from scored student writing samples. Each achievement group collectively projected an increased score, compared to their baseline score, over the span of these three language arts mini lesson topics (Appendix D). These scores were derived from comparing each writing sample to the emergent writing standards for kindergarten, encompassing ideas surrounding ‘expanding student writing’. These standards, which served as a constant measurement variable throughout my inquiry, projected a numerical growth from the initial writing samples taken during the week of February 13th and the last samples collected during the week of March 12th. Each
achievement group showed an increase of three points, or 25%, from their initial writing samples to their final writing samples collected (Appendix D). At one point during the intervention, the green group showed an increase of 41% from their initial writing sample. This growth conveys that the mini lessons served as useful tools in expanding student writing across achievement groups.

During the implementation of the language arts mini lessons, students progressed in their ability to draw and write with focus, to depict specific experiences with people, objects, or events, and to include descriptive words and verbs in their sentences. Student 1 from the yellow group (average achieving) elaborated on his idea and included more descriptive words in his final writing sample, compared to his initial writing sample (Appendix G). This growth is shown by the inclusion of adjectives, specific language, and a more thorough discussion of a topic. In the initial writing sample the student simply stated what was occurring from an objective point of view. He placed more details and description in his writing by including facts as well as his personal interpretation of the topic. This can be attributed to the web of ideas the student made; it was used as a means to assist the student with ideas related to his topic and to further develop and expand his writing.

Consistent with this evidence is that of student 2 (Appendix H). His initial writing sample, although specific, lacks elaboration and expansion. In his final writing sample he includes adjectives and ideas specific to the topic. The reader is able to take away more meaningful and significant ideas in the final sample, compared to the first. This student also included sentences in his story directly relating to the web he created. These two students exemplify the success of the mini lessons as a tool to expand student writing.
Claim #2 A relationship exists between student achievement in reading and student achievement in writing.

When I created data charts comparing student progress across mini lessons, I noticed a pattern occurring on the performance of each achievement group (Appendix C). While each group was showing a progression in their writing over the scope of the intervention, there was a separation of scores repeatedly occurring. The red group, achieving below grade level in reading, scored at or below the second lowest score on each of the five writing samples collected. While this number was not always significantly different, its consistency implies that the red group’s achievement level in writing is correlated to their reading ability. This is also demonstrated through the opposite analysis. The other three achievement groups (all average and above average in reading) interchangeably scored at or above the red group. This reading-writing relationship was also present in study investigating the effects of interactive writing on students’ acquisition of early reading skills. Jones found that there was a relationship that existed between students reading and writing ability (Jones, 2008).

This correlation also became apparent during the process of writing with students in each achievement group. It became visible that the high achieving group, compared to the low achieving group for reading, wrote more easily and naturally included more elaborative ideas in their writing. For example Student 3, in the high achieving reading group, took the challenge of including a question in his final writing sample (Appendix I). This question provides further insight into the story and adds a more complex structure. This student also chose one specific event, a robbery, and stated where it happened, the effects of its occurrence, and information foreseeing a possible question a reader may
have—“Where is the robber?” In comparison, Student 4, in the low achieving group for reading, writes with less depth and specificity (Appendix J). This student had chosen a specific event, going to the beach, and told in one deliberate line the people that went with her. The student omitted extending details to the story—what they were doing, the name of the specific beach, and possible occurrences that took place. This correlation between reading achievement and writing performance became apparent when I assessed each students writing on multiple qualities of ‘expanding student writing’.

**Claim #3: Kindergarten students’ predominately acknowledge adjectives as descriptive words and use adjectives when asked to describe a person, place or thing.**

There were similar results projected by the data I collected on students’ use and acknowledgement of descriptive words. When analyzing the results from this data it became obvious that the most frequent types of words students’ used/acknowledged as descriptive words were adjectives (Appendix E, F). When asked to identify descriptive words in their writing, 31% of students identified adjective. When asked to list descriptive words to describe a picture, 68% of students wrote adjectives. When students worked independently to create a list of descriptive words they included names of people, places, and things, as well as adjectives and verbs. When I asked students to identify descriptive words in their own writing, they included these as well as feelings. In addition to this, students also pointed to words unrelated to descriptive words. This led me to believe that students have a stronger ability to use descriptive words than to identify them in their writing. While they may not have the skills to articulate their understanding of adjectives, their use of adjectives provides insight into their ability to use them.
It was surprising to take a closer look at the type of adjectives my students recorded when describing their pictures. These adjectives were not limited to the physical appearance of the picture but grew to account for other aspects. Students included adjectives that described the sense of touch, smell, and taste. Student 5 (Appendix K) described a picture of a house on a shoreline in Maine by addressing the colors of the surrounding area, the texture of some plants, the deliberate setting of the picture, and features of sky and water. This activity, which was completed independently, provides evidence that the student took on two different perspectives when describing this picture. He addressed what he saw while looking at the picture, but also what he might see and feel if he were there.

When I interviewed students on their writing and asked them to identify some descriptive words, I noticed there was a lack of understanding among the majority of students. While the majority of words identified were adjectives, there were also words identified as descriptive words which were unrelated to descriptive writing: because, it, was, don’t, and let. These types of words were not included when students were asked to list descriptive words of a picture. This led me to believe that kindergarten students do not have a full understanding of descriptive words when asked to identify them in the context of a sentence.

Reflections and Implications for Future Practice

It was very motivating and encouraging watching the students in my class develop as early (emergent) writers throughout the inquiry process. I believe the implementation of language arts mini lessons proved to be a successful tool in helping students expand
their writing. Each mini lesson unit was designed to encompass a slightly different aspect of descriptive writing, all of which had varying degrees of effectiveness. One particular quality of mini lessons, which aided in student success, was the structure of the lesson. Using a mini lesson allowed me to target one specific idea or skill and immerse my students in that thinking for 15 minutes. It also provided time for me to model a set of skills to the students and provided them with authentic opportunities for practice.

One obstacle I faced throughout my inquiry was trying to define what I believed ‘expanding student writing’ to mean. This developed as a curiosity for me as I began brainstorming ways to collect data on the progress of my students writing in relation to the implementation of mini lessons. This question, which was initially one of my sub questions, played a major role in the complete understanding of my inquiry. I feel that I still do not have a firm grasp on the characteristics that completely define this idea. I have grown in my personal understanding since the beginning of my inquiry; I defined expanding student writing as simply including more adjectives and the number of sentences in one’s writing. I have come to understand that this statement encompasses many other aspects, such as descriptive language, specificity of ideas, and the ability to depict specific experiences. I came to this realization when I was scoring student-writing samples. When I only looked at the number of descriptive words and number of sentences, I was assigning a low score to a writing I thought was very expansive. I took a step back and asked myself, “What qualities of this writing am I not accounting for?” This is when I realized that there were numerous aspects, which define expanding writing. I turned to the kindergarten snapshot for guidance to define this idea and selected goals/objectives which have shaped my current
understanding. I still believe there is more to this definition that I have not fully accounted for and it is something I plan to further explore through the remainder of the school year.

During the time period of my inquiry, when I immersed myself in student writing and took an inquiry approach to my own learning, I developed some additional curiosities surrounding student writing. When I implemented the mini lessons, I often used questioning as a tool to spark students’ ideas and to extend their thinking further. I wonder to what extent the use of questioning can help students expand their writing. I believe this is something that can be carried out by the teacher, but also by the students. It would be interesting to see how a structured list of questions could help students regulate their writing and monitor the quality of their work. In conjunction with this, I also became curious about the effects that peer conferencing could have on student writing. I wonder to what extent a dialogue between students would improve and assist students in expanding their writing. I became curious about these two strategies after working first hand with my students during writing. It appears that these two techniques would provide a developmentally appropriate approach to writing which would provide structure and student interaction.

The inquiry approach to learning is one that I will forever use as an educator. It provided me with the mindset of someone who views teaching as an ever-growing process. I have acquired the skill necessary to focus on an occurrence or happening in my classroom that interests me and to take steps to enrich my understanding of the topic. I believe that a great educator is someone who is always seeking growth; establishing an inquiry approach to my own learning in the classroom has pointed me in this direction of endless growth.
References


Appendix A
Inquiry Brief

Context:
I am a kindergarten intern at Gray’s Woods Elementary School, which is one of eight elementary schools located in the State College Area School District. This school, which educates roughly 390 students, is primarily composed of Caucasian students. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Gray’s Woods has fewer than 40 special needs, English Language Learners, and economically disadvantaged students. Gray’s Woods thrives in creating a welcoming and accepting learning environment for its student population.

Located on one wing of the building is my kindergarten classroom, which is one of three kindergarten classrooms in Gray’s Woods; it is composed of 13 boys and 8 girls. Overall, my class can be characterized as having students who are at or above grade level in academics. There are three students whose academic performance would be characterized at below grade level. These three students receive RtII support everyday. Within this group of three children, there is one student who also receives speech support. There is one student in the class who has been diagnosed with Autism. This student has a TSS for four hours each day. My class is made up of Caucasian students and one student who is Caucasian and African American.

Generally, all students interact very well with one another. They demonstrate an understanding of sharing and working together cooperatively. During recess, the students mix among one another as they play. There is one student, in particular, who is cautious about jumping in and interacting with other students at recess. After a few minutes of observations, he will join the group and contribute to play as other members do. There are also three students who appear to be class leaders. These leaders can influence other students in positive or negative way.
For example, these leaders may continue talking while the teacher is talking, or they may invite students to play with the larger group.

All of the students express an interest in learning, and take pride in the work that they do. These students show excitement towards new things, and are anxious to show others their work. The students are hard working at nearly any task they undertake. Another characteristic, which describes these students’ behaviors, is that they are very concerned with following the rules. The majority of the time this has a positive effect on the class, however there are times when this leads to tattling. Students are concerned when others may not be following the rules, and feel as though it is their job to report that to the teachers.

**Rationale:**

I became inspired to further enrich my students writing experiences after I attended a literacy training session on kid writing. When I took a closer look at the students’ needs in my classroom, along with the kindergarten snapshot, I noticed there were some writing behaviors my students could improve upon. I categorized some of these behaviors under the idea of ‘expanding student writing.’ Under this category I filtered certain writing behaviors that needed the most improvement -- using descriptive words, revising drawings and writing to sequence events, add details, and to write about a variety of topics including people, places, and things. This category includes topics that were addressed during the literacy training session, at which I became inspired.

After systematically assessing my students’ writing, I would characterize the majority of the students in my class as emergent writers. They rely on the pictures they have drawn to tell a story. These writers do, however, use their sound spelling to compose one or two sentences about their illustration. This complete thought relates to one aspect of their picture, but often lacks
specificity and descriptive language. These emergent writers are beginning to understand the conventions of writing, but often interchange upper and lower case letters and periodically omit punctuation. One aspect of writing, which is currently being introduced to these students, is the idea of revision – going through a second time and adding more details to your illustrations and written work.

When conversing with other kindergarten teachers, at the literacy training session, I became aware of the different approaches there are towards writing. One common thread, throughout these different stylistic approaches, was the foundation of a mini lesson. Regardless of the topic being taught, these teachers would start by presenting the information using the format of a mini lesson. Mini lessons are ideal for quick instruction and focus on a specific topic. In a mini lesson the teacher instructs students in a large or small group, and provides time for individual practice. It was intriguing to hear success stories amongst each teacher as they shared some of their lessons. It appeared as though with every story I thought to myself, ‘I wonder how my students would respond to this?’ One teacher, for example, shared how she implemented mini lessons on the topic of beginning, middle, and end of a story. This method of presentation provided knowledgeable insight to the students on the conventional structure of a story, and also granted them time to practice and implement this technique in their writing. The student writing examples the teacher shared proved the success of these mini lessons. There were expansive ideas written on a single topic and a meaningful structure that added to the interest of the story.

Currently, in my kindergarten classroom, there are two designated times each day when students specifically work on writing. When students first enter the classroom in the morning they are given 25 minutes to write and draw independently. At this time my mentor teacher and I filter through a few students, conferencing individually with each student to assist them with
revisions. The other designated writing time is during language arts stations-- there are four stations that each span 15 minutes in length. One of these stations typically has students respond to a book or continue the end of a prompting sentence. This requires the students to draw upon previously heard information, or to reflect upon their own thinking.

After reflecting on the literacy training session I attended, and reading related educational resources, I am inspired to change the format of writing instruction during language arts stations to better assist my students expand their writing. I believe with the addition of mini lessons during this time, I can focus writing instruction on different techniques that will assist my students’ development as expansive writers. This format will also provide the platform needed to introduce a specific technique to a small group of students, and then provide them time to implement and practice these skill in an authentic task.

Main Wondering:

How does the implementation of language arts mini lessons, in a kindergarten classroom, affect students in expanding their writing?

Sub-questions:

2. What do kindergarten students acknowledge as details in their writing? Interview the students and ask them for their personal opinions.
3. What type of language arts mini lessons elicits an expansion in writing? Use systematic observations to document the lesson taught and student progress. Collect student artifacts as evidence.
   a. Does poetry serve as a tool to assist students in this expansion of their writing? After I teach lessons on poetry and writing, collect student work and systematically document their writing.
   b. What significance do characters have in expanding writing? After I teach a lesson on characters, collect student work and systematically document their writing.
   c. Is there a correlation between details drawn in a picture and details included in writing? On the week I teach lessons on detailed pictures, collect student work and systematically document their pictures and written work.
d. How does including a beginning, middle, and end in a story affect the expansion of a student's writing? After the week of teaching beginning, middle, and end, collect student work and systematically document it.

Timeline:

Week of February 6th, 2012
- Start collecting baseline data/student writing samples to categorize student writing into three ability levels.
- Start planning topics to use for mini lessons.
- Make a set of writing goals for the class—this will be used to assess their development.
- Read relevant articles for annotated bibliography.
- Continue writing inquiry brief and annotated bibliography.

Week of February 13th, 2012
- Continue collecting baseline data/student writing samples to categorize student writing into three ability levels.
- Continue planning topics to use for mini lessons.

Week of February 20th, 2012
- Work on revisions for annotated bibliography and inquiry brief.
- Implement mini lessons into instruction.
- Collect data on student writing with implementation.
- Contact Susan Lunsford for possible interview

Week of February 27th, 2012
- Continue collecting data on student writing with implementation.
- Implement mini lessons into instruction.
- Create survey to handout to kindergarten teachers—get approval from principal.
- Create questions to interview students.

Week of March 5th, 2012
- Spring break—Work on analyzing data

Week of March 12th, 2012
- Hand out survey to teachers and interview students
- Continue implementing mini lessons and collecting data.

Week of March 19th, 2012
- Continue analyzing and collecting data and implementing mini lessons.
- Start to organize data sheets and make an outline for inquiry draft.

Week of March 26th, 2012
Work on compiling data and making conclusions for inquiry draft

*Week of April 2nd, 2012*

- Complete a draft of the inquiry paper.

*Week of April 9th, 2012*

- Seek people to read over the inquiry paper and offer suggestions.

*Week of April 16th, 2012*

- Analyze data and continue working on inquiry paper.
- Create presentation for inquiry conference.

*Week of April 23rd, 2012*

- Make any final revisions on inquiry paper.
- Make final revisions on inquiry presentation.

**Data Collection Ideas:**

**Artifacts:**

- Collect student writing samples before and during the implementation of mini lessons
- Videotape a lesson being taught
- Videotape students as they work through their writing

**Systematic observations:**

- Use a chart to categorize each writing sample
- Use the class goals as a rubric to assess student writing

**Anecdotal Records:** Observations/ Judgments

- Observe students as they work and examine the approach they take towards writing

**Interviews/ surveys:**

- Interview students on different aspects of their writing
- Hand out a survey to the other two kindergarten teachers
- Interview Susan Lunsford at Park Forrest Elementary
Annotated Bibliography


Bender suggests that in order to support students in their endeavor to create detailed, focused stories, the revision stage of writing is key. This element of the writing process provides assistantship to students by establishing writing behaviors, essential in furthering their development as writers. Furthermore, the instruction Bender presents is taught via mini lessons, which create an instructional focus. I plan to implement similar lessons, in this format, within the scope of my inquiry. Bender’s instructional philosophy is also in alignment with that of my inquiry project -- in order to produce high quality writing the student must edit, publish, and then celebrate. I plan to use ideas from this resource to enrich the language arts mini lessons I implement.


*Kid Writing* provides an integrated approach to writing, which combines phonics instruction into the broader curriculum of the school day. In addition to this, the book focuses on writing specific pedagogy and provides insight into successful ways to instruct students in their writing process. These techniques, which are currently employed by my mentor teacher, will be important for me to fully understand and enforce during my mini lesson intervention. This knowledge will also be important for me to have in order to best analyze my students’ work and to attempt to understand their thinking.


Diliberto acknowledges the struggles many students face when learning how to write. First time writers are overwhelmed with the major functions of writing, such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, handwriting, grammar, sentence/paragraph structure, and critical thinking. These challenges are ones that all of my kindergarten students are facing. Diliberto suggests that in order to help students with this stress, a questioning model could be implemented to provide structure and a way for students to self regulate their writing. I am interested in incorporating questioning into my inquiry and to see the effects it has on students and their writing.


Fletchers and Portalupi crafted a book of mini lessons on various aspects of writing for students in grades K-8. Regardless of the specific aspect each lesson focuses on, there is a central theme of revision present in each. This book offers countless mini lessons, which can be implemented to help students in the process of expanding his or her writing. I plan on using this book to sequence mini lessons throughout the time period of my inquiry.
The lessons in this book offer specific writing techniques that I will employ as an attempt to help students expand their writing.


This book provides evidence-based practices for enhancing student writing. The authors conducted research to find effective, engaging elementary instruction by focusing their study on classrooms producing high achieving literacy students. They found that these high achieving writers received small group writing instruction, where the teacher modeled writing, or reading, and provided opportunity for independent practice with scaffold support. This book provides research-based practices and findings I can use to support the claims I am making. This data also provides research-based evidence to support my rationale on the success of small group instruction and the important relationship between modeled and independent writing opportunities.


Students flourish with the opportunity to think creatively and to use their curiosity to problem solve. It is necessary to spark curiosity in a student in order to elicit meaningful connects to the content. The use of pictures can interest a student and take their thinking places beyond the scope of a blank piece of paper. In my inquiry it will be essential for me to motivate students by using their interests. I plan to incorporate this ‘creative/interest’ factor into my lessons as I provide for student choice.


This study focused on the reading-writing relationship present in students’ literacy development. Cindy investigated the effects of interactive writing on students’ acquisition of early reading skills. She found that instruction grounded in a reading-writing relationship, specifically interactive writing, writers’ workshop, and reading instruction, led to a growth in kindergarteners early reading skills. This research study provides evidence for the reasons why I chose to analyze my data and to teach my writing mini lessons in student achievement groups for reading. I plan to use this study as data to support my claims and to further understand the data I collected throughout my inquiry.


Coker conducted a study, which focused on three components of writing: the task environment, cognitive writing process, and the writer’s long-term memory. He found that these factors play a crucial role in a students writing ability, as well as student background, vocabulary knowledge, reading skills, classroom literacy environment, and teacher. These factors are ones I need to consider when analyzing
my student’s work and looking at the effects of my inquiry. While I am implementing one intervention, there are multiple factors that can affect the outcome of my inquiry. Insight into these factors will be important for me to have when assessing the success of this intervention.


This resource has a collection of 50 book titles that can be used as read alouds in the classroom in order to promote growth in important literacy skills developed in kindergarten. The instructional focus of this resource is creating discussions around literacy and giving students the opportunity to use their oral language to develop and build vocabulary. These titles were selected based on their rich language and detailed illustrations, and provide a tool for educators to help students enrich their writing. Accompanying the title of each book is a mini lesson, each with a specific focus. Many of these lessons are in agreement with the ideas I plan to implement during my inquiry project, and I believe that they will serve as an affective tool. This resource also provides insight into a discussion based approach to assist students with their writing; these strategies are also ones I wish to employ.


According to Routman, kindergarten students can easily write free verse poems about their lives and their interests. She claims that poetry is a powerful tool to help students expand their writing, in comparison to strictly journal writing. This book offers instructional plans to implement poetry into daily writing for kindergarten students. I plan on implementing poetry as a tool to enhance and expand student writing and will reference this source when implementing lessons. Along with providing lessons, this book provides rationale for why poetry is such an assistive tool for students to expand their writing.
Appendix B

Rubric to Assess Student Work

Student/Group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Writing Sample</th>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Writing 1</th>
<th>Writing 2</th>
<th>Writing 3</th>
<th>Self Developed Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Specificity of language (rated on scale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of sentences written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of adjectives written</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criteria for Rating

3- Performance is exemplary to the standard and exceeds the expectation.

2- Performance meets the standard but does not surpass the expectation.

1- Performance comes short of meeting expectation.

0- Performance fails to meet expectation.
Appendix C

Overall Group Score on Each Writing Sample

Initial Writing Sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Sample 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Average Score for Writing 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red Group</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Group</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Group</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Group</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Writing Sample 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Average Score for Writing 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red Group</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Group</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Group</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Group</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Writing Sample 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Score for Writing 3</th>
<th>Red Group</th>
<th>Green Group</th>
<th>Yellow Group</th>
<th>Blue Group</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Series 1
Appendix D

Growth of Each Group Across Writing Samples

Average Scores for Blue Group:

Average Scores for Yellow Group:
Average Scores for Green Group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Writing Sample</th>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Writing 1</th>
<th>Writing 2</th>
<th>Writing 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Scores for Red Group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Writing Sample</th>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Writing 1</th>
<th>Writing 2</th>
<th>Writing 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Types of Words Student Acknowledge as Descriptive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Words Student Acknowledge as Descriptive</th>
<th>Values</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Places</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>18</td>
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</table>
Appendix F

Types of Words Students Use as Descriptive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Words Used to Describe Pictures</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Places</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Student 1 Writing Sample

Initial Writing Sample:

This is a Bakugan. This is a Bakugan battle.

It is Drago and a gray Drago.

edit
312
Final Writing Sample:
Salamanders

Salamanders are... red and black. Erin has small... and big. Salamanders have four legs and small. Have four legs. Erin has a tail. Is cold blooded.
Appendix H

Student 2 Writing Sample

Initial Writing Sample:

My friend Eli is holding a balloon.
Final Writing Sample:

Shark

Eats fish

Shark

Eggs on land

Shark's

Teeth
Sharks
They have sharp teeth. They eat fish and lay their eggs on land. Sharks
like Catsharks

41
Appendix I

Student 3 Writing Sample

The forest has a robber on the loose. All of the alarms at the police station are going off. Where is the robber? She snatched some money.

Selene
Appendix J

Student 4 Writing Sample

I went to the beach with my friends, they're Meredith and Rachel. They are my friends.
Appendix K

Student 5 Writing Sample

I moved our whole family to Maine from Florida.
So I moved a piece of Florida to Maine.
Sunny Beach
Blue Grass
Roe staff
Worry sooth
Brown cans
Green leaves
White house
Sunny house