

Peer Reviewed

The Effects of Writing Workshop on Abilities of First Grade Students to Become Confident and Independent Writers

Joanne Jasmine^{1,2} and Wendy Weiner¹

Writing Workshop is an interactive approach to teaching writing as students learn and practice the importance of rehearsal, drafting/revising, and editing their pieces of writing (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983). This study implemented a mixed methodology design incorporating qualitative and quantitative analysis (Mills, 2007) by administering a pre survey to each child before he/she began the Writing Workshop and a post survey after the intervention; systematic observational research as a checklist (Glanz, 2003) to record observed practices of students during peer revising conferences; portfolios to assess student writing and graded via a rubric; and lastly interview of students regarding confidence and ability in writing. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the writing processes of drafting/revising and editing to support first grade students to become independent writers.

KEY WORDS: writing workshop; peer conferencing; peer editing; mini-lesson; drafting; revising.

PRIMARY STUDENTS CAN LEARN THE WRITING PROCESS

Writing Workshop is an interactive approach to teaching writing in which students learn and practice the importance of rehearsal, drafting/revising, and editing their own work (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983). Through the context of their own writing, children select topics of personal interest, write for authentic audiences, and learn conventions and mechanics of writing. Teacher and peer conferencing guide students through the processes of this program (Willis, 2001).

Need for the Study

Through their research, Graves (1983) and Calkins (1986) found that primary students are capable of learning the routines and practices of the

writing process and have shown measurable gains in these skills. Throughout children's academic years, students are expected to perform on classroom assignments and on a variety of standardized tests that include open ended questions and essays. Additionally, with the advent of state testing, benchmarks, and standards, elementary school teachers are pressured to prepare students with proper writing skills. In the state in which the study occurred, the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) for language arts/literacy require that students write in a clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes (NJDOE, 2005). Standardized testing in language arts/literacy begins in the third grade with the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge. Thus, students need to be introduced to the process of writing at the primary level.

An examination of the effects of first grader participation in the Writing Workshop needs to be studied to validate whether this process has enabled them to become independent writers fulfilling future expectations in writing. Consequently, elementary school teachers have not focused on the ability to

¹Caldwell College, 9 Ryerson Ave., Caldwell, NJ 07006, USA.

²Correspondence should be directed to Joanne Jasmine, Caldwell College, 9 Ryerson Ave., Caldwell, NJ 07006, USA., e-mail: jjasmine@caldwell.edu

edit, revise, or peer conference because of the belief that first grade children have limited revising skills. Most times teachers remained at the drafting stage of the writing process because writing conferences were difficult to manage, but these one-to-one interactions are crucial. Writers need response not only from the teacher, but also from their peers as well (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998). Calkins (1994) refers to teacher-student and peer conferences as “the heart of teaching writing. Through them, students learn to interact with their own writing” (p. 223). This study is unique because it demonstrated that primary students were capable of improving their own writing pieces, and revising and editing with peers through conferencing.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the complete writing process of primary school children and support first grade students in becoming independent writers. A classroom organized according to the Writing Workshop model should allow this teacher to effectively and efficiently guide children’s growth in writing.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The teaching of writing has changed over the years. In the past, writing was not taught; it was assigned and corrected. Teachers emphasized the final product of writing, not the process it produced (Calkins, 1986; Willis, 2001). By the late 1970’s, the shift in emphasis had changed and the process writing movement began (Willis, 2001). The process writing approach, first developed by Graves in 1983, focused on instruction, which allowed teachers to help students brainstorm ideas, solicit feedback, revise their work, then edit and proofread the final product before publishing (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983; Willis, 2001). This type of writing process provided children with numerous opportunities to practice and internalize what goes into a piece of writing just as a professional author does (Wong-Kam & Vasquez, 2003).

Calkins (1986) extended the concept of writing workshop to include a more student-centered approach in the classroom by implementing peer conferencing to assist in the organization and practice of writing. Calkins’ Writing Workshop included extensive modeling by the teacher during whole group mini-lessons, time for children to work on their own writings, constructive feedback in the context of teacher and peer conferences, and sharing and celebrating through various forms of publishing (Calkins, 1986; Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996; Pinnell &

Fountas, 1998). Calkins (1994) further suggested that Writing Workshop must be kept “predictable and simple” so the students can anticipate and plan for their writing (p. 183). Atwell (1987) adapted Writing Workshop to middle school children by creating a classroom environment as a place that gave students regular, frequent periods of time to consider and reconsider what they had written.

The Writing Workshop classroom is also built on the foundations of literature (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998). Reading and rereading quality children’s literature to students provides them with the ability to make connections to their own lives. Also, they can select a favorite author’s style and imitate it in their own writing (Calkins, 1994). Teachers can ensure that their lessons are making explicit connections between reading and writing by focusing on the components of author’s craft (Rickards & Hawes, 2006).

Mini-lessons

One component of the Writing Workshop is the mini-lesson. The mini-lesson is a brief 5 to 10 min lesson which is taught at the beginning or at end of the process. Mini-lessons focus on improving one aspect of writing, such as classroom procedures, prewriting strategies, revision strategies, editing, and writing skills (Au et al., 1997; Calkins, 1986). The ideas for developing mini-lessons evolve daily in response to the needs of the students by careful examination of the children’s written products (Calkins, 1986; Pinnell & Fountas, 1998; Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996; Wagner et al., 2001). Effective mini-lessons are multilevel, short, focused, gentle in tone, and responsive to the needs of the children (Avery, 1993; Calkins, 2003). Students who master the mini lesson will immediately apply it during writing workshop. Those who are still struggling with the lesson will experience exposure to the concept that will be reinforced through continuous writing and teacher-student conferences.

Writing Process/Conferencing

The second component of Writing Workshop is the writing process and conferencing. Calkins (1986) divided the writing process into four subtopics: rehearsal, drafting, revising, and editing. Rehearsal is the gathering of ideas and raw materials (Graves, 1983). For some young writers, rehearsal is writing through drawing (Calkins, 1986). Ultimately, drawing allows children with limited writing ability to

further explore and organize their ideas as well as construct meaning from experiences (Baghban, 2007). However, it is only used for a limited time. Calkins (1986) stated that it is imperative for teachers to observe signs when drawing is no longer an effective form of rehearsal. Conversely, sometimes the picture will inhibit the child's choice of writing topics due to the limitations of the child's artistic capabilities or it may become a stalling tactic of a reluctant writer (Avery, 1993). Teachers must then guide the children away from their drawings and involve them in other forms of rehearsal such as brainstorming, creating lists and outlines, reading literature, and conversing with their peers (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983).

While rehearsal prepares the students for writing, drafting, the second step, is the time where writers focus on putting thoughts on paper. Drafting implies that writers will return to a piece of writing more than once to shape it into something different. Revision, the third step, is a continuous process (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996). In this stage Calkins (1986) recommended teachers to encourage children to focus on the content of their first draft and later concentrate on spelling. Because teachers are naturally drawn to editing issues, Atwell (1987) had her students read their drafts aloud forcing them to focus on content. This placed an emphasis on student involvement and less emphasis on teacher editing and revision (Avery, 1993).

As the children are engaged in these various steps of the writing process, the teacher observes and confers with the students. The responder's role is to listen, tell back, and ask questions to help students discover meaning and build on what they know (Atwell, 1987). Students must also be encouraged to take an active role during conferencing because writers know more than what appears on the page they draft (Avery, 1993). Calkins (1994) described the responder's role of listening during a conference as a "magnetic force between the writer and the audience" (p. 232). After a question is asked, the force of listening will draw words out of the writer and they will find themselves saying things they did not know they knew (Calkins, 1994). The 6 + 1 trait writing process (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation) is a model that focuses on common language used during revision and editing conferences (Hoover, 2005, para. 2; NWREL, 2005, para. 2, 3). This common language between teacher and students is necessary to expedite conferences and make them effective.

Sharing

The final component of the Writing Workshop is sharing. During Author's Chair, the author sits in a special chair and the entire class gathers to listen as he/she shares the writing piece (Parry & Hornsby, 1985). The Author's Chair is a form of group conferencing, which develops audience awareness through feedback from peers. This is a time to help students improve writing while they listen and respond through a purposeful dialogue (Atwell, 1987).

Publication, the displaying of work in the classroom, is another form of sharing (Parry & Hornsby, 1985). Publishing contributes strongly to the writer's development by providing personal reasons for students to revise and edit their work (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996). Authors' Day celebrations provide deadlines, an impetus to finish dangling pieces, a chance for students to review what they have written and learn from it before they continue, and most importantly, it gives young writers a sense of authorship (Calkins, 1994). Rhodes and Dudley-Marling (1996) and Graves (1983), however, stressed that though sharing is an important component of the Writing Workshop, it should be limited to the students' most noteworthy pieces of writing. An overemphasis on publication could send the message that every piece of writing is equally important and skilled.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research project was to determine the extent to which Writing Workshop enabled first graders to become confident, independent writers. According to Glanz (2003), Employing qualitative and quantitative measures through various data source and data collection methods is necessary before research can be properly examined. Therefore, a mixed methodology design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analysis was used in this study to allow close examination of a multitude of data (Mills, 2007) in the form of pre and post Likert surveys, observation checklists, rubrics, interviews, and portfolios.

Sample

In this study, the 5 and 6-year-old participants were members of a first grade classroom. The heterogeneously mixed academic class consisted of 12 boys and 9 girls. The participants attended an elementary

K-5 school, comprised of 361 students, in the Northeastern section of the country.

Research Materials

Quantitative analysis is an approach to asking questions that can be best answered by collecting and analyzing numerical data. The three basic methods of quantitative research include descriptive research, correlational research, and group comparison (Glanz, 2003). This study employed the descriptive research approach by using surveys in the form of questionnaires, observations, and portfolios.

Surveys, in the form of questionnaires, are useful tools to collect data because they are easy to analyze and they provide a keen insight (Glanz, 2003). In this study, a pre-writing survey was administered prior to each child before he/she began the Writing Workshop and a post survey after the intervention. The pre and post surveys consisted of 12 closed-ended questions regarding child attitudes toward writing. Some questions were similar on each survey; other questions were changed to reflect student knowledge of the writing process.

Each survey was meant to measure student attitudes and confidence levels by using a four-point Likert scale. The survey attempted to achieve content validity by measuring broad concepts from a sampling of narrower constructs (Patton, 2005). However, because the participants were 5 and 6-year-olds, the terminology used in Writing Workshop would have been too challenging. Therefore, the survey was redesigned to adhere to face validity where the instrument appears to be valid as it measures what it purports (Patton, 2005).

Internal consistency of reliability was implemented using positive and negative questions to avoid a response set (Glanz, 2003; Writing.colostate.edu, 2007). This is the extent to which tests or procedures assess the same skill or quality. However, this may have been somewhat compromised as the students struggled to understand the statements in the surveys. Therefore, a triangulation approach to research was used to enhance the credibility of the data (Glanz, 2003). Because various sources may provide similar information, the data can be corroborated (Patton, 2005) and compared with another to cross check data (Mills, 2007).

Systematic observational research is the second descriptive quantitative approach that was used in this study. Glanz (2003) described systematic observations as a formal process of collecting data, aided by predetermined observation forms or checklists. Systematic observations, when reported quantitatively, measure the behavior of an individual by reporting what is seen in a numerical way. In this study, this researcher used a checklist to record observed practices of the students during a peer revising conference (see Table 1).

Portfolios of student writing samples were also analyzed. Glanz (2003) stated that portfolio data collection is an excellent data source because it provides information about the subjects and captures student work samples over time, examining the relative growth of that work (Mills, 2007). Portfolios also provide teachers with outcome data that they may use as a starting point for conversation with students (Mills, 2007). In this study, each child submitted one piece of independent writing from his/her journal before the intervention, and the final piece of writing

Table 1. Observation checklist

| | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|-------------|---|--|--|--|
| Compliments | The reviser told the writer that he/she liked some parts of the story. | The reviser told the writer that he/she liked the writing and/or the picture. | The reviser told the writer that the story was good, no specific compliments | The reviser could not think of anything to tell the writer. |
| Questions | 5 The reviser asked a good question so the writer could add one or two sentences to his/her story. | 3 The reviser asked a question so the writer could add one sentence to his/her story. | 2 The reviser asked a question so the writer could add one or two words to his/her story. | 1 The reviser could not think of a question so the author could not add any words to his/her story. |

was submitted after the intervention. This teacher/researcher evaluated the final writing piece by using a rubric (see Table 2). In 6 + 1 writing, each trait is aligned with a rubric making expectations clear and the conferencing between student and teacher or student and student more effective (Hoover, 2005, para. 3).

Qualitative approaches are also useful in action research. Qualitative methods rely on detailed verbal descriptions by the participants or by the observer in the study. According to Glanz (2003), the goal of the qualitative approaches is to understand participant experiences and perspectives (Mills, 2007). Glanz described interviews as an effective data collection method to learn about participant experiences from his or her point of view. This researcher used student interviews at the conclusion of the study as part of its qualitative data analysis. The interviewer asked seven, randomly chosen participants six open-ended questions. The researcher audio recorded the interview and subsequently transcribed all information verbatim.

Framework of the Study

The following study was developed to increase first graders' writing independence by incorporating the writing processes of drafting/revising and editing, and to increase confidence in writing abilities. This study began January 26, 2004 and was completed March 8, 2004. The strategies used in the action plan were implemented as part of the language arts curriculum. The Writing Workshop was devoted to writing individually selected topics through journaling.

The Writing Workshop was held on a weekly basis, 2–3 times a week for a 35–40 min period.

During this time, the children were engaged in the writing process, while the teacher observed and held conferences with the students. Writing topics were generated by the use of personal journals. Each workshop began with a mini-lesson where the children were introduced to the specific area of writing. One individualized skill was introduced for each particular mini-lesson. This skill was then integrated into the workshop activities for that day. Topics included writing a rough draft, revising through peer conferencing, editing through peer conferencing, and various writing skills such as proper punctuation, capitalization, and grammar.

Once the mini-lesson concluded, the actual Writing Workshop began. As the children began to write, the teacher circulated around the room and worked with individual children. She held mini-conferences to monitor the topics, addressed any questions or concerns that the children might have had, and helped the children sound out difficult words. During this time, children also had the opportunity to hold peer conferences with their classmates to give and receive feedback.

The first week of the study occurred during January 26, 2004. During this week, mini-lessons focused on developing a rough draft. After each mini-lesson, the students returned to their desks and composed a rough draft. Sharing followed writing time. Throughout the first week, each student shared his/her piece of writing in the Author's Chair. Approximately 20% of the class shared their piece of writing each day. During sharing time, the entire class gathered to listen as each child scheduled read his or her journal entry. After each child read his/her entry, the class practiced giving positive compliments and asking questions to the Author.

Table 2. Pre and post writing rubric

| Teacher scoring rubric | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| 5 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Student added two or more sentences to the story. | Student added one sentence to the story. | Student added one or two words to the story. | Student did not add any words or sentences to the story. |
| Student uses complete sentences using capital letters and ending punctuation correctly. | Student wrote some complete sentences using capital letters and ending punctuation with a few minor errors. | Student wrote some complete sentences with frequent errors in capitalization and punctuation. | Student made frequent errors in capitalization and made no attempt at punctuation. |
| Student spelled all word wall words correctly. | Student spelled most of the word wall words correctly. | Student spelled some of the word wall words correctly. | Student did not spell any word wall words correctly. |

Table 3. Pre and post surveys*

| <i>N</i> = 19 | Pre writing mean | Pre writing standard deviation | Post writing mean | Post writing standard deviation |
|--|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Likes writing | 2.39 | 1.08 | 2.89 _b | .83 _b |
| Views writing as easy | 2.34 | .96 | | |
| Likes to choose topics | 2.68 | 1.24 | _b | _b |
| Words come easy | 2.37 | 1.08 | _b | _b |
| Like to share their writing | 2.37 | 1.28 | 3.32 | .93 |
| Views themselves a good writer | 2.58 | 1.08 | _b | _b |
| Knowledgeable of the writing process steps | _a | _a | 3.32 | .77 |
| Enjoys peer revision conference | _a | _a | 3.08 | .96 |
| Enjoys peer editing conference | _a | _a | 2.71 | 1.27 |
| Enjoys helping revising and editing | _a | _a | 3.24 | .93 |

* Significance level is .05

^aNot part of post survey

^bNot part of pre survey

The second week of the study occurred during February 2, 2004. Throughout the week, mini-lesson topics included peer conferencing and revision. Each student composed a rough draft in his or her journal, participated in a revising peer conference, and made changes in their journal entries. The teacher addressed any questions or concerns that the children might have while drafting, peer conferencing and revising.

During the weeks of February 9–16, 2004, mini-lessons focused on editing. Mini-lesson topics included capitalization, correct punctuation, and grammar. Students were required to compose a rough draft, participate in a peer conference on revising, make changes in their journal entries, and participate in a peer conference on editing. The teacher addressed any questions or concerns the children might have during teacher–student conferences.

During the weeks February 23–March 1, 2004, students independently composed a rough draft, revised with a peer, made changes in their journal entries, edited with a peer, and made editing changes in their journal entry. This researcher observed and evaluated the students revising through peer conferences by using a checklist.

The final week of the study occurred during March 8, 2004. This week was devoted to the last step of the writing process, sharing and celebrating the children's work. Throughout the week, each child shared his or her writing piece in the Author's Chair. In addition, the teacher published the children's writing pieces in a class news bulletin, which was shared at home with their parents.

Limitations of the Study

This study had some limitations. Due to the nature of the study, generalizations were difficult to achieve since this researcher was the teacher and the study was limited to 19 children. In addition, due to the age of the children, the data from the pre and post surveys were limited when compared with the outcomes of the observations and student interviews. Many questions required verbal repetition by the teacher before most of the students could answer them. Some questions appeared too complex for the students to comprehend. Lastly, this study did not include a control group. Therefore, it was difficult to determine if Writing Workshop was the sole reason for student improvement in writing ability, enjoyment, and confidence.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

A total of 19 students completed a survey at the beginning and end of this research project. The scores of pre and post surveys, as well as a 3-month participation in a writing workshop program were studied to determine whether a first grader's participation in writing workshop enabled them to become more independent writers and revise and edit their writing pieces with peers. The results from the pre and post surveys revealed a slight increase in the enjoyment of writing, as the mean scores increased from 2.39 in the pre survey to 2.89 in the post-survey (see Table 3). In addition, standard deviations decreased from 1.08 to .83 respectively, thus, suggesting that more students did like the process of

writing. Consequently, data from the pre and post surveys supported the outcomes of this researcher's observation and student interviews. Based upon these data, the workshop experience created a great deal of enthusiasm among the students in the classroom. Many students frequently asked for Writing Workshop to be extended and/or scheduled more often. Students would often get upset when Writing Workshop was not included in the daily schedule. "...there's no writing workshop on the schedule! I was going to conference with the Master Editor today." Due to time constraints and the demands of the curriculum, Writing Workshop could not occur on a daily basis.

Pre survey data indicated that many students did not find writing easy with a mean of 2.34 and a standard deviation of .96 nor did words come easy with a mean of 2.37 and a standard deviation of 1.08 respectively. However, post survey results showed students felt knowledgeable of the process with a mean of 3.32 and a standard deviation of .77. These changes may suggest that students became more comfortable with process and, ultimately, may have found writing easier. The survey data also revealed an increase in student enjoyment of sharing their writing with peers, as the mean scores increased in the pre survey to the post survey from 2.37 to 3.32 respectively (see Table 3) and standard deviations decreased from 1.28 to .93. This may indicate, along with increased knowledge of the process, a comfort level that students acquired with writing. In addition, this researcher observed most students choosing to participate in the Author's Chair, as they discovered sharing to be a positive experience. Many students felt a particularly strong sense of pride and accomplishment when their final piece of work was published in the class newspaper. The class newspaper motivated most of the students as they asked, "When are we going to publish another newspaper?"

The post survey data slightly favored peer revision, with a mean score of 3.08 over peer editing with a mean score of 2.71 and standard deviations of .96

and 1.27 respectively possibly suggesting that some students may did not favor peer conferencing (see Table 3). However, when asked if they enjoyed helping others revise and edit, data showed a mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of .93. These conflicting responses may be part of the problem that such young children have when responding to a survey. Limited reading skills and comprehension of the difference between editing and revising may have affected the outcomes. However, all the children stated that they enjoyed working with a partner during both peer revision and peer editing conferences. During student interviews, the children stated that their partners helped add to their stories to "make my story sound good" and "they were good at helping me find uppercase mistakes and periods that I forgot." During peer conferencing and editing, peers determined if the story made sense, not the teacher; thus, students began to value classmate suggestions.

Some students did experience difficulty in developing a quality question for their revising partner, therefore, making it difficult for their partner to improve sentence quality. Revising partners asked questions such as, "How old was she?" and "What day did you go?" which resulted in only minor revisions. Ultimately, some authors were only able to add a few words or possibly one sentence.

Student writing samples were scored based upon the variables of revision and editing. The writing samples were gathered twice during the study and were evaluated using a rubric (see Table 2). In the category of "adding sentences" with a five being the highest number for each category, the pre and post writing data revealed a mean score of 2.11 and 3.84 respectively (see Table 4). While the mean did increase, a standard deviation did as well, 1.10–1.38 respectively, thus, indicating some students still struggled. In the category of "capitals and punctuation" the mean increased from 2.0 to 3.95 respectively indicating improvement in editing techniques (see Table 4). However, the standard deviation still remained high, 1.39, possibly indicating the varying

Table 4. Teacher scoring rubric comparison of pre writing and post writing rubric results*

| <i>N</i> = 19 | Pre writing mean | Pre writing standard deviation | Post writing mean | Post writing standard deviation |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Adding sentences | 2.11 | 1.10 | 3.84 | 1.38 |
| Capitals and punctuation | 2.0 | 1.70 | 3.95 | 1.39 |
| Spelling | 4.12 | 1.17 | 4.56 | .856 |

* Significance level is .05

writing abilities among the students. These high standard deviations may be coupled with the high standard deviations revealed when students were asked if they enjoyed peer revision and editing, .96 and 1.27 respectively. Some of these first graders may not have been able to effectively revise and edit because of limited experience or knowledge of grammar and implementing supporting details.

Students, however, expressed themselves more coherently during interviews. When they did not understand the researcher's question, this researcher was able to rephrase any unclear questions and encourage the students to elaborate on their answers.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the writing samples and student interviews, this teacher has continued using the Writing Workshop program in helping students increase independence and enjoyment of writing. The Writing Workshop approach contributed many factors to creating a positive writing atmosphere. These included opportunities for students to choose what they wished to write, to work with peers, and to experience individual time with the teacher. When students were asked if they had become better writer, one student responded, "I'm a good writer now. I'm a good writer because I add more details to my story after my friends ask me questions. I'm a good writer because my friends really liked my story when it was my turn to go on the Author's Chair. They clapped and they said it was good." More improvement may have been seen if Writing Workshop was implemented throughout the entire school year.

Throughout the process this teacher modeled writing by designing mini-lessons to promote the steps of the writing process and the conventions of writing. The topic of each mini-lesson was derived from this teacher's observations of student needs. For example, many first graders have the habit of not inserting periods at the end of sentences. To demonstrate the importance of punctuation in a mini-lesson, this teacher/researcher displayed her piece of writing without punctuation and read the story without taking a breath. The students were able to determine that the story was read without pausing. Peer and teacher conferencing also gave students the opportunity to apply mini-lesson topics to their writing.

Lastly, participation in the Author's Chair provided students an audience and feedback, while promoting a greater commitment to writing. One student

asked if she could share her writing piece on the Author's Chair even though she was not finished. "I want other people to ask me more questions so I can add more details to my story." The number of students choosing to participate in the Author's Chair increased as students found it to be a positive experience.

As students began to gain an understanding of the purposes of writing and became more comfortable with the process of Writer's Workshop, their enthusiasm for writing grew. Students also asked to extend Writer Workshop times and were disappointed when it was not scheduled. At the beginning of the implementation process, students seemed to struggle to find topics for writing and had difficulty getting started. As the study progressed, students became more confident as they were able to begin their writing more quickly. The comments, "I can't think of anything to write about," or "I have nothing to say today," which were common at the beginning of the study, were rarely heard at the end. Many students were observed writing in their journals during free time and during literacy centers, with the writing center as the most popular one. At the early stages of the project, this teacher/researcher observed that few children shared their writing during the Author's Chair times. By the end of the 7-week period, more students seemed to gain confidence and began to share their work.

The Writing Workshop model has proven to be an effective instructional method to support first graders in learning the writing process by choosing a topic, revising and editing drafts, and sharing their work. At the end of this study, students were working independently and helping each other add detail and edit through student/student conferences. Students also enjoyed sharing their stories with peers in the Author's Chair and publishing their work. As students became more confident in their writing abilities, enthusiasm for Writing Workshop increased.

Currently, Writing Workshop is practiced on a daily basis and has become an essential part of the curriculum in this researcher's first grade classroom. Every morning the children are involved in self-selected writing endeavors within the genre of study. While content is the main focus during writing workshop, a great deal of mini-lessons are devoted to teaching writing skills. The Writing Workshop program provides the opportunity to support the students in their growth as writers through mini-lessons, individual conferences, publishing opportunities and whole class sharing.

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