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How Young Can You Write?

Application of Kid Writing in Combination Pre-K/ Kindergarten Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This study tested the effects of the Kid Writing method on the ability of kindergarten students to express themselves through writing. Kid writing is an instructional method that incorporates journaling, meaningful educational activities, phonetic spelling, and teacher scaffolding to teach correct spelling, sentence structure, and writing conventions. Feldgus and Cardonick (2000) brought these pre-existing elements together and published a book detailing their methodology. In addition to incorporating the Kid Writing method into the kindergarten curriculum, I also partnered it with fine motor training activities such as beading, weaving, and parquetry to support the physical aspect of writing development.

I applied the Kid Writing method in a low-socioeconomic status Kindergarten/ Pre-Kindergarten combination classroom of 30 students with the following needs: four students receiving speech therapy, six students receiving ESOL intervention, one student newly diagnosed with diabetes, and one student with an IEP which included Speech services, PT and OT services, and counseling.

Students' progress in fine motor development and journaling were assessed using rubrics. Students' oral language and early literacy skills in terms of letter knowledge, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and phonological awareness were assessed using a computer-based, standardized assessment and intervention program called Istation (istation, 2009). Student progress in letter knowledge was tested by both the Istation program and via a rubric. Student interest surveys were administered at the beginning and end of the study. Data

were also gathered through double entry journals, observations, and interviews and conferences with the head teacher, the students, and their parents. Parents completed a questionnaire given verbally during parent-teacher conferences throughout the study to elicit children's home literacy experiences. Parents were given the opportunity to request clarification and a translator was provided during all conferences.

Student data were analyzed for improvement in written communication, and its correlation to age, language background (English proficient vs. English support), and home literacy experiences. Although all of the children demonstrated an increase in all skills (e.g., PA, written expression) over time, I found that student achievement was most effected by their chronological age, with older children whose fifth birthday occurred before September 1st 2016, performing better overall and making greater gains throughout the study than their younger peers whose fifth birthday occurred on or after September 1st 2016. The younger children also showed more gradual gains in ability across all forms of testing following Thanksgiving break in comparison to their older peers.

Students with home literacy support achieved marginally higher scores than their peers. English proficient students performed slightly higher on average than their English support peers. Both English support and English proficient students performed comparably to one another, with the English proficient group gradually exceeding the gains of the English support group, leaving a slight achievement gap at the end of the study.

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RESEARCHERS STANCE

Throughout my life, I have seen many types of pedagogy. My first example of teaching was my mother. My mom is a kindergarten teacher. She has been teaching since before I was born and I have always helped in her classroom and tutored students, primarily those in elementary school. I began teaching dance, trumpet, and singing to various students when I was in 8th grade and continued to teach throughout high school. It has always brought me great joy to see students' progress and to observe their delight when they hone a new skill.

I found a passion for reading when I was in the third grade and loved to share that passion with my younger siblings and later, my tutees. I began my professional career in speech pathology, using the Lindamood Bell (Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes, 2017) and Wilson (Wilson Language Training, 2017) programs with students who had reading difficulties. I sought a general education method which would truly begin to differentiate instruction, and was drawn to the Montessori method (Montessori, 1965). Every skill was completed in context: arts and crafts, and too many manipulatives to count allowed students to strategically play their way to academic success. I studied the application of some Montessori techniques in my mother's classroom two years ago and presented my findings of my pilot study at the ARNA conference before getting a job as a first grade teacher.

My mom had always included journal writing in her classroom. The students found such joy and success in expressing themselves through picture journaling, that I tried it in my own classroom with great success. All of my

students saw some improvement and they enjoyed conferencing with me, getting feedback, and sharing what they wrote during circle time afterwards.

Two years before beginning the current study, I sought hands-on activities and methods to improve reading and writing in a similar group of low SES, kindergarten students with some special needs and a majority of simultaneous bilingual students. Through research, I discovered the Montessori Method. I observed briefly in a Montessori school and applied aspects of the Montessori Method from my observations and extensive research in a pilot study the same year as an intervention for special needs, simultaneous bilingual students. The students demonstrated success with this multi-sensory approach to literacy. I found Kid Writing to be an excellent method for facilitating practical application of writing. Creating meaningful, practical learning experiences for students is a core facet that connects Montessori, Kid Writing, and multisensory learning through play.

With these experiences in mind, I reviewed the literature and found that Feldgus and Cardonick (2000) had combined journal writing and phonics-based spelling and created a program called Kid Writing. It combined everything that I was searching for and was so flexible that I decided to make it the basis of this study. I wanted to see what would happen if a young/ new teacher with minimal experience with the program tried to apply it for the first time in an urban, low-SES private school with a high population of ESOL and simultaneous bilingual students. Nearly half of the students (N = 13) were preschool age, as they would not be turning five years old until October or November, and the class contained

30 students with one head teacher, an aid, and myself. These unique circumstances made for a very enriching experience, one that I could not have imagined. In this study, I will identify the observed behaviors and reported experiences of kindergarten students when implementing Kid Writing in conjunction with multisensory instruction and shadow writing to increase their ability to express themselves through writing.

Literature Review

Introduction

Kid Writing is a method by which children participate in a combination of self-directed, scaffolded journaling activities, interactive learning experiences, and explicit phonics instruction to enhance writing and spelling abilities.

Vygotsky supports the idea that children learn best through experimentation and play to develop superior self-control (Gray, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978). This principle holds true across many methods of teaching, including Kid Writing (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000; Lombardino, Bedford, Fortier, Carter, & Brandi, 1997).

Kid Writing, also known as invented spelling, phonics-based spelling, and phonetic spelling (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000) can be added to the experience of free play, and free play can be added to the experience of writing. Vygotsky (1978), Gray (2013), and Feldgus & Cardonick (2000) note that interactive methods such as Kid Writing move writing into the realm of play, thus alleviating anxieties and concerns fostered by the typical educational model.

Within a typical general education classroom, activities and daily plans are pre-determined through the implementation of structured teaching manuals (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; Greenberg, 1974). Children benefit from a structured model, but thrive in a learning environment powered by free choice. Most children will independently choose to work within their zone of proximal development, at the correct level to promote growth (Freeman & Freeman, 2014; Gray, p. 153, 2013). When children have the opportunity to choose activities that foster skill growth, they are more engaged and successful in the classroom.

Children are capable of creating their own educational structure through choice when provided with quality examples of self-directed educational structure by their teacher before beginning self-selected tasks (Gray, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978).

Kid Writing and Play

“Free play is not free.” (Gray, 2013) Play is defined as “the primary way by which children learn to control their impulses and emotions.” (Gray, 2013, p. 40; Vygotsky, 1978). Free play is actually a structured exercise of cultural norms and expectations. Children create a complex structure of rules to explore different aspects of their known world. The children choose to apply those social norms and conventions. Because it is their choice and their structure, they are able to practice appropriate responses to various observed social interactions without fear or judgement and rehearse responses deemed appropriate by all parties at play. This is one method by which children develop socio-emotional skills that are later applied in the classroom setting and throughout life. According to Gray (2013), free play is an effective means of reinforcing learning in activities such as writing when students of multiple ages and levels of experience contribute to the end product.

Kid Writing is a version of play. Kid Writing is a writing instruction method developed by Feldgus and Cardonick (2000), in which the physical act of writing progressively develops in conjunction with the phonological processes underpinning written expression. This is done by creating the opportunity for children to apply the oral skills of their target language. They also learn the tools to express themselves in written form. These tools include the letters, their sound

associations, and common spelling patterns as well as the dexterity to form the letters correctly on the page (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000).

Through use of props in the dramatic play center, Paley (1992) provided a setting for motivation and engagement. She also modeled target behaviors such as ways of writing and interacting with the text, through conferences with individual children. Dramatic play has shown to increase student engagement and support language development throughout the school day during activities such as center time, journaling, art, and recess. (Barth, 2008; Leigh, 2015; Lillard, 2005; Murray & Ramstetter, 2015; Van Ness et. al. 2013) Vygotsky (1978) proposes a parallel between play and school instruction. Both create a ‘zone of proximal development.’ “In both contexts children elaborate socially available skills and knowledge that they will come to internalize” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 130).

Kid Writing transforms journaling into a fertile experience of learning to write because it mirrors free play. The children participate in a learning experience such as a read-aloud, nature observation, or other interactive activity. They then draw and write freely about their experience following a small group or whole class discussion. Writing, especially journal writing, becomes a natural occurrence in the students’ environment instead of an imposed structure (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000).

Journal writing functions most affectively when applied in a meaningful context. The students have the opportunity to choose what they want to write about, and are provided experiences to express through journaling. These

experiences can be presented in multiple forms: dramatic plays, field trips, science projects, and other interactive learning experiences are most common. As in free play, all children are invited to participate in the writing activities. Read-alouds and write-alouds are key aspects of the Kid Writing method. Read-alouds include the reading of an age-appropriate, instructional level text to a group of students, during which the reader provides instruction and discussion to facilitate student comprehension of vocabulary, predicting outcomes, characterization, story sequence, and other aspects of reading (Johnson, 2009, p. 44-46). A write-aloud is when the students engage in storytelling and sentence writing as a group with the guidance of the teacher and a new writing skill is modeled. Read-alouds and write-alouds are used to scaffold new skills and review old skills before completion of the daily journal entry. Teachers model phonetic spelling and standard spelling for the children to achieve the goal of expressing themselves even when they are still learning how to physically create the alphabetical symbols. During writing time, children have the opportunity and encouragement to put pencil to paper. Through the use of free play and Kid Writing, children can grow as writers and enhance their ability to formulate and express their thoughts and opinions. (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000). **Free play and oral language development.**

Free play guides children's language development. Successful free play involves the use of oral language for an engaging purpose, as well as active listening and comprehension of the language of others. Free play provides the repetition essential for skill growth, and can include songs, rhymes, and word

play, storytelling, and dramatic play. Students can draw from circle time experiences and shared book reading for free play inspiration. Storytelling develops children's word knowledge, active listening and oral expression (National Institute for Literacy, 2010; North East Florida Educational Consortium, 2017). Children often incorporate songs and rhymes during free play, which increase their sensitivity to speech sounds, alliteration, initial sounds, and final sounds (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2009). Strong oral language skills positively correlate with reading comprehension skills (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002).

Dickinson (2001) states that the success of dramatic play, or free play, is dependent upon the teacher's participation and modeling of language used during play. Teachers can develop oral language during free play by modeling dialogue and problem solving. Teachers must also ask open-ended questions to encourage the continuation of free play. (North East Florida Educational Consortium, 2017). Children dramatize what they observe in older peers and adults of their culture to "rehearse future roles and values" (Gray, 2013, p.129) In this manner, children begin to develop the motivation, socio-emotional and oral language skills, and attitudes necessary for their social participation, which can be fully achieved with the assistance of their peers and elders (Gray, 2013). In the school or classroom, students learn from peers and teachers by observing a read aloud, then participating in a free play activity such as acting out the book the class read. In another case, students can participate in a math lesson involving money, then

rehearse roles such as clerk and patron, and review the math lesson by acting out a trip to a grocery store.

During the past few decades, American schools have gradually increased the amount of structured learning time, both mental and physical, and decreased the amount of time children are permitted to engage in free play each school day (Barth, 2008; Murray & Ramstetter, 2013). Free play activities are child-centered and include events such as dramatic play and peer-organized games. Many researchers argue that free play is essential to child development (Gray, 2013; Greenberg, 1974; Lillard, 1996; Montessori, 1965; Paley, 1992; VanNess, Murnen, & Bertelsen, 2013). As of 2015, United States preschool students demonstrated “lower problem-solving and critical thinking skills and less motivation,” which directly correlates with decreased time for child-directed play in preschool classrooms (White, 2015, p. 24).

Free play is intrinsically motivational. Children do not earn stickers, toys, snacks, or prizes of any sort when acting out a story with their friends in the recess yard or the dress-up center. They act out the story for their own amusement or to find the best method for solving an observed social crisis or personal dilemma. Children’s repetitive use of engaging activities such as role play, educational manipulatives (i.e. letters, blocks, pattern puzzles), stories, and educational games allow opportunity for personal discovery that encourages use of critical thinking and development of social-emotional and oral language skills

essential to the formation of the whole child (Gray, 2013; Lillard, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978; Montessori, 1968; Paley, 1992).

Vivian Paley (1992) used free play to foster oral language development in her classroom. Paley recognized that children need a supportive, accepting environment to practice self-expression. She described in her book *You Can't Say You Can't Play* how she developed a classroom culture of caring, acceptance, and freedom to choose and share with one another. By enforcing common class rules such as 'all children are our friends' and 'each child is responsible for being kind to one another and sharing physical space, items, time, and skills in a respectful way,' Paley developed a culture of kindness, openness, and peer support, exemplified by the nurturing and guidance she shared with her students (Paley, 1992). Paley uses the culture of sharing to create space for oral language development; the growth of one's ability to express themselves verbally (Paley, 1992).

To develop the students' ability to express themselves through speech, Paley (1992) assisted the children in creating personal narratives. Through use of various classroom materials, including a dramatic play center, the students would interact with stories read to them in a way that was meaningful and more easily accessible. The students would also receive conference time with the teacher, during which they would work together to record the stories the students would practice writing in their journals. Paley facilitated comprehension of reading material through multiple modalities - acting, drawing, writing, using props - like

Montessori (1965), and facilitated growth of writing through development of oral expression and modeling writing, as in the Kid Writing method.

For special needs and ELL students, play is an essential part of the learning process. Through the use of dramatic play, free play, storytelling, read-alouds, and other oral language activities, children develop the linguistic proficiency necessary to improve their reading and writing. (Dickinson, 2006; North East Florida Educational Consortium, 2017; Roskos, Tabors & Lenhart, 2009; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). Children with special needs, low SES, and ESOL students are most in need of opportunities for oral language development in the classroom using modeled free play and explicit instruction in reading comprehension and writing through methods such as read-alouds and shadow writing. (Hart & Risley, 1995, 2013; Gunning, 2014; Torgesen, 2005).

History of Kid Writing

Eileen Feldgus and Isabell Cardonick are primary school teachers who synthesized current literature and developed the Kid Writing method while seeking a way to increase their students' motivation and ability to write. In reviewing current research, they found repetition to be the most effective means of acquiring skill, and play the most effective method of increasing and maintaining engagement (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000; Gray, 2013; Montessori, 1965; Paley, 1992). The repetitive writing practice found to be most engaging and formative for their students was journal writing. In journal writing, the children have the opportunity to write about what is meaningful to them, providing authenticity and purpose for practicing specific skills. Journal writing can also be

molded to fit the needs of the students (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000; Paley, 1992; Saad & Ahmed, 2015; Schultz & Bonawitz, 2007). For instance, Saad and Ahmed (2015) noted that of three consecutive graduate classes studied, the two classes in which journal writing was implemented scored better on the final Arabic aptitude tests than the class that did not use journal writing. The final Arabic aptitude tests measured improvement in English speaking students' fluency in reading, writing, and speaking standard Arabic, just as students in a classroom that incorporates Kid Writing are expected to attain proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking English.

Participants included college students with a bachelor's or master's degree and at least three courses in basic Arabic, comparable to the level of English oral language proficiency displayed by entering simultaneous bilingual kindergarteners. The students were instructed to complete short writings, one page in length, that were reflective and intrinsically motivational, where they could incorporate new phrases and vocabulary as well as organize their thought processes in the target language (Arabic). This process parallels that of Kid Writing for emergent writers with its short length, the level of knowledge of the target language presented by the Kid Writing group and the Standard Arabic group, and the goals presented for each journal entry.

The goals that were met in Saad and Ahmed's (2015) higher education classroom journal entries are the same goals that Kid writing meets through journal writing. These goals include: (1) Producing content that reflects their own views, (2) establishing connections through personal experiences and

observations to the writing topic and context, (3) Define, rephrase, record, reproduce, repeat, or memorize words, sentences or paragraphs for journal assignments (4) Utilize higher order thinking, such as reflection and speculation, and problem solving skills to produce linguistically accurate, expressive journals.

Goal number three was met through Kid Writing with use of walking to environmental text to practice writing new words. Children also participated in shadow writing during conferences, during which children dictated their journal entry, the entry was written for them, and then students traced over or copied their words directly next to the model (Gunning, 2014).

In accordance with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development concept, the journaling provides writing skill practice at a level which is challenging, but students still experience success. Invented spelling, phonetic spelling, developmental spelling, and temporary spelling are all terms used to describe a stage in the development of writing in which the student expresses the sounds they hear spoken through use of writing. The student is encouraged to use this stage as a bridge to conventional spelling. Phonetic spelling is when students select appropriate orthographic symbols and combine them on paper. In order to combine sounds to letters, however, young children need to have an understanding of and use phonological awareness skills. Phonological awareness skills such as identification of initial and final sounds, and phoneme segmentation typically develop gradually and sequentially through the late preschool period, ages five to six years (Gillon, 2004; Williams, 2010). As such, children entering kindergarten should have already acquired some of the phonological awareness

skills necessary to begin writing. In many schools, however, this is not the case. Children who are learning English as a second language, who are of low socioeconomic status and may have limited exposure to reading and writing at home, and who are entering kindergarten at an earlier age may need more time, opportunity, and support to develop the phonological awareness skills and dexterity to express themselves via writing. Research investigating various aspects of early spelling and Kid Writing has shown to support the development of these essential skills (Craig, 2006; Feldgus and Cardonick, 2000; Ouellette, Senechal & Haley, 2013; Ouellette & Senechal, 2008; Ramos-Sanchez & Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2004).

Ramos-Sánchez and Cuadrado-Gordillo (2004) have demonstrated the importance of using the students' knowledge of oral language and ability to hear sound patterns in words to explicitly link their speaking to their written expression in a young population of children who are ELLs. Findings from this research suggest that students with limited exposure to the English language can struggle with Kid Writing due to lack of familiarity with English sounds and common spoken phoneme combination patterns. By helping the children build their phonemic awareness skills, the students' spelling proficiency has been shown to increase. In fact, invented spelling has been shown by researchers to be a critical step in the development of children's writing abilities (Craig, 2006; Ouellette & Senechal, 2008; Ouellette, Senechal & Haley, 2013).

Feldgus and Cardonick (2000) developed the Kid Writing method to incorporate the best aspects of journal writing to scaffold the development of

writing and provide differentiated instruction to address the needs of all of their students. Independent conferences are key to differentiated instruction for writing development (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000; Gillon, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Leigh, 2015; Lombardino et. al. 1997; Oullette, Senechal & Haley, 2013; Paley, 1992). Conferences are defined by Feldgus and Cardonick (2000) as “meetings between a student and the instructor, at which the student is provided with guidance needed to improve their application of explicitly-taught strategies for writing” (p. 131).

Best Practices

Kid Writing method.

In their Kid Writing method, Feldgus and Cardonick (2000) note that children learn best through practicing the act of writing in a non-judgmental, supportive, engaging environment. Their program provides a great deal of structure, which the children are taught to use to facilitate the growth of their own writing.

Feldgus and Cardonick (2000) coined the term “Kid Writing,” while other literature refers to this approach as “phonetic spelling” (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000). The use of modeling during writing lessons guides children to discover use of materials and written language in a classroom culture which promotes equality and sharing, develops in the children a sense of ownership and responsibility to their classroom, their thoughts, and eventually, their writing (Feldgus and Cardonick, 2000, Freeman & Freeman, 2014; Gray, 2013; Paley, 1992).

Teachers provide time for the children to develop their own journal entry with minimal interruption. First, the class participates in a learning experience, such as a read-aloud or science project. Next, the teacher models a verbal response to that activity and invites the children to participate. For example, if the teacher completed a read-aloud with *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (1996), the teacher would then initiate a discussion and guide the children to class sentences such as “We liked the caterpillar. He ate blueberries.” The children would express their opinions of the pictorial representation while the teacher drew it on the board. The teacher would then complete a similar written modeling task, encouraging child participation appropriate to their ability level. For example, the teacher would model use of phonetic spelling to find the beginning, middle, and end sounds in words and the children would write the accompanying grapheme on the board. If the children did not know the grapheme, a child would draw an underscore, called a “magic line,” which the teacher would fill in after the sentences were completed. Finally, the children would turn to their journals to express their thoughts on paper, using the techniques modeled by the teacher. These thoughts frequently begin as pictures with crude attempts at letters, but gradually develop into full, written journal entries. The teachers also use journaling time to conference with students (Carpenter, 2014; Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000). Cooperation within and between students and teachers, as well as environmental awareness, were identified as key aspects of Kid Writing when reviewing the Feldgus and Cardonick (2000) method.

If a student would get stuck when they were eager to write a specific word, the student could draw a picture, use “magic lines” as place holders for specific letters, look for the word or similar sounding words on the word wall, look in the class pictionaries, and ask a friend how they might spell the word. After all of these strategies had been tried, the student may underline the word and bring it to conference, where the teacher would help them spell the word. Through this explicit, regimented, yet fluid protocol, teachers create the opportunity for children to express themselves more fully and independently, using only tools the children find necessary to complete an engaging, intrinsically motivated activity (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000).

The Kid Writing Environment.

The learning environment is critical to the success of early learning. The classroom environment should be created for the children based on their background, needs, and available funds of the school. Much like Paley (1992) and Feldgus, and Cardonick (2000), the social environment created by the teacher with the students should be one of openness, where children are taught to rely on each other as well as the teacher for formation and refining of new skills. This creates a supportive system in which children rely on teacher relationships as well as peer bonds to aid in the expression and modification of ideas both verbally and through the act of writing. There should also be a great deal of structure; much of it modeled by the teacher and then student-imposed (Feldgus and Cardonick, 2000; Gray, 2013; Greenberg, 1974; Montessori, 1965). Children in the Kid Writing program are given the freedom to choose what to work on, and invited by

peers and instructors to practice things that may be challenging. This approach is aligned with the philosophy that learning is both experiential and social.

Children remember best what is learned through experience, and the social dynamic of the classroom must reinforce the learning goals at hand. This social reinforcement increases practice time which directly correlates with skill improvement across all groups such as ESOL and low SES (Vygotsky, 1978; Petursdottir, McComas, & McMaster, 2007; Montessori, 1965, p.10-38; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008 Saad & Ahmed, 2015). Repeated practice is necessary to attain skill mastery (Brabeck, Jeffrey & Fry, 2017; Johnson, 2009; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009). Young children require consistent practice and repetition to attain and maintain skill mastery (Johnson, 2009).

Dr. Maria Montessori (1965) establishes how manipulatives provided as part of the learning environment can facilitate skill development necessary to foster the growth of written expression. The physical act of writing includes use of all related tools such as pencils and paper. It also includes the skill of recognizing the correct form and meaning of the letters and being able to reproduce them in the correct order to express thoughts and opinions (Montessori, 1965; Lillard, 2005).

It is important to treat the physical act of writing as a tool and build oral language skills separately through the art of retelling. (Charlotte Mason, 2003, Montessori, 1965, Paley, 1992) Composition is commonly treated as “a transfer of already conceived ideas in the mind of the author [from brain to paper]” (Moberg,

2015, p.8) in a program that puts mastery before writing, as opposed to treating writing as a tool for self-expression. By expecting children to write immediately and accurately or achieve mastery prior to application of writing to express thoughts, teachers fail to recognize the disparity between the level of development of the child's thought processes and the physical writing ability of the novice author. To remedy this disjointed aspect of pedagogy, I offer a view of composition, or writing, as an "expression of language" (Leigh, 2015, p. 2) much like music is expressive. Writing is one tool by which children express their intellectual compositions. The study and production of literature is widely considered a liberal art. As such, composition of literature should be taught using the same principles as those used to teach the visual arts (Lamp, 2016).

Dr. Montessori's Structure.

Dr. Montessori (1965) established that it is the instructor's job to provide an ordered system to facilitate the naturally occurring learning process for the child. The teacher's role in this process is to demonstrate tools such as manipulatives and metacognitive games, very systematically, using no verbal cues, and played with by the children with minimal intervention from educators. (Montessori, 1965; Lillard, 2005; Lillard, 1996). This method capitalizes on the children's natural drive to work with manipulatives and develop the fine motor coordination necessary for success in the physical act of writing (Freeman & Freeman) during their "formative period of life," age three to seven years (Montessori, 1965, p.36). Development of dexterity needed for writing through

the use of games and manipulatives naturally elicit speech within a relevant context (Vygotsky, p. 28-29).

Oral Language and Writing Development

Oral Language acquisition theory.

The processes of speech and the practical intelligence associated with use of tools such as crayons and erasers are, according to Vygotsky, entirely interwoven. There are many theories of language acquisition. One such theory is the socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1976). According to Vygotsky (1976), symbolic activity, such as dramatic play, has an essential role in organization of practical thought processes. Vygotsky (1976) observed that children naturally use language to explain their actions when using tools (crayons, pencils, toys with levers or buttons) to accomplish a task. As problems became more complex, child participants' demonstrated greater reliance on use of speech in structuring their thought processes to complete the task. A trend developed in which participants demonstrated incapacity for completing tasks of increased complexity when not permitted to use oral language (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky also noted that children's narration of thoughts, mental processes, and actions directly influence their behavior. This first person narration, called egocentric speech, is considered the transition between external and internal dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978). Alderson-Day & Fernyhough (2015) note that this transition from external monologues to internal monologues occurs between the ages of five and seven years. Paul & Norbury (2012) assert that

during this stage of development, children display reorganization of lexical knowledge, the emergence of complete narratives, large increase in vocabulary, comprehension of past tense, and the emergence of phonological awareness skills in terms of segmenting and blending. All of these new skills, which emerge at age five and are fully formed at age seven, are critical for Kid Writing. Therefore, children do not come into Kindergarten ready to apply Phonological Awareness skills. The Phonological awareness skills of segmenting, Blending, and awareness of initial and final sounds are emerging at this time.

Socio-economic status (SES) has been shown to impact oral language development. Hart & Risley (1995) conducted a longitudinal study of children in three different groups: welfare, working class, and professional. During this study, they found that students in the welfare and working class groups enter the school system having significantly less opportunity to participate oral language at home that included higher level vocabulary, modeling of scholastic grammar, and affirmations. The working group had greater quality interactions than the welfare group, while the professional group had the highest quality interactions, as measured by the following factors: the number of minutes of interaction per hour, the number of interactions initiated by the child per hour, the number of words spoken to the child per hour, and the quality of interactions between caregiver and child (number of affirmations and prohibitions per hour). All factors were analyzed by group. Most of the children in my study fall in the welfare or working class group.

Hart and Risley's study in 2013 reaffirmed these findings and found that the education of the parents directly relates to parent scores on the Peabody picture Vocabulary test (PPVT) and the parent vocabularies related to the language scores of the children by age three. The children's language scores by age 3 successfully predicted the trajectory of their language development and the children's scores on the PPVT-Revised and the Test of Language Development-2 (TOLD-2) at age nine to ten.

“Simply in words heard, the average child on welfare was having half as much experience per hour (616 words per hour) as the average working-class child (1,251 words per hour) and less than one-third that of the average child in a professional family (2,153 words per hour)” (Hart & Risley, 2013).

The participants in this study are from the groups which have demonstrated limited language experience and difficulty increasing vocabulary and oral language development over time. It is essential that teachers maximize student exposure and participation in language activities during the school day to help mitigate the effects of the students' home environment on their language learning trajectory.

Internal dialogue is the voice we create when we solve problems, draw conclusions, read, and write without speaking aloud (Freeman and Freeman, 2014; Moerk, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). Internal dialogue is developed gradually. Internal dialogue is the internalization of oral language. The development of egocentric speech of which internal dialogue is comprised is accomplished through play and participation in discussion with peers and instructors. Children participating in Kid Writing are provided the opportunity and scaffolding to

express themselves socially and organize their thoughts prior to utilizing egocentric speech in the writing process. Egocentric speech is used in the processes of thought composition and sounding out words independently or with assistance, followed by writing. These findings support the theory that development of audible and egocentric speech must necessarily precede orthographic development, or at least develop in conjunction with the ability to write. He makes no distinction between the physical and metacognitive developmental processes. Vygotsky (1978) supports the theory that fostering oral language development precedes development of writing skills.

Phonological awareness.

Phonological awareness skills include identification of initial, medial, and final sounds and manipulation of sounds through segmenting, blending, and identification and creation of rhyme. Children acquire the beginning skills of PA, syllable segmentation and rhyming at the age of five. Later PA skills, including identification of initial and final sounds and sound segmentation and blending, emerge closer to the age of six. The success of Kid Writing depends heavily on the presence of these phonological awareness skills (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000; Paul and Norbury, 2012). If the students struggle with basic phonological awareness skills, they will also struggle to sound out words they desire to write, match letters with the sounds that comprise the target word, and write down those corresponding letters in sound-order. To develop written language skills, children must first develop oral language skills such and phonological awareness skills. Gillon (2004) states that phonological awareness develops innately in native

language speakers of alphabetic languages and then is applied to their writing. In some cases, children with reading difficulties or children learning a second language may require explicit phonological instruction to spell accurately (Gort, 2012; Hecht & Close, 2002; Hu & Commeyras, 2008; Lombardino et. al., 1997). Children whose native language is alphabetic, but not English, can be expected to carry over phonological awareness skills in their home language to the English language (Hu & Commeyras, 2008, Midgette & Phillipakos, 2016). Children with an alphabetic first language other than English can benefit from phonological awareness training in English and their native language (Hecht & Close, 2002). Furthermore, children with a logographic first language will benefit from explicit instruction to develop phonological awareness (Furnes, & Samuelsson, 2010; Hu & Commeyras, 2008).

The process of language development may be delayed in cases of low SES (Hart & Risley, 1995, 2013) and simultaneous bilingualism (Korkman et. al., 2012; MacLeod et. al., 2013; MacLeod & Stoel-Gammon, 2010) Simultaneous bilinguals are identified as students who had exposure to two languages from birth to age three, and who had become proficient at speaking at least the majority language, the language that is most often used in their home environment, or both languages present in the student's environment (Korkman et. al., 2012; MacLeod et. al. 2013; MacLeod & Stoel-Gammon, 2010; Midgette & Philippakos, 2016).

Kid Writing supports the development of phonological awareness skills through explicit instruction. As recommended by Ritchart et. al. (2011), for children who struggle with writing due to learning English as a second language

or special needs, the children need explicit instruction to acquire necessary PA skills for writing. Kid Writing also supports oral language development and PA skills in children with limited experience with text and minimal opportunity to observe more mature speech patterns, such as those with low SES. Kid Writing's incorporation of multiple support systems such as "walk to the word" where students use environmental text to enhance spelling, and "turtle talk" where children draw out all of the sounds in a word to facilitate isolation of each sound for phonetic spelling, along with individual journal conferences supports application of phonological skills and promotes writing independence regardless of an individual student's level of proficiency.

Carson and colleagues (2013) studied 129 New Zealand five-year old children in terms of the phonological and linguistic development of Typically developing students in comparison to students with specific language impairments in the first year of school. All socioeconomic statuses were evenly represented in their sample. Activities included whole-language reading program activities such as, guided reading and phonics instruction on letter-sound correspondences, segmentation, and blending. Additionally, the researchers implemented ten weeks of PA training. The phonological awareness training yielded a significant decrease in reading and spelling difficulties in the children. The children with reading difficulties showed a great deal of improvement, but responded to the lessons in a different pattern from their typically developing (TD) peers. The children who were TD and significant language impairment (SLI) demonstrated gains in phonemic awareness skills such as phoneme blending and segmentation.

SLI participants demonstrated significant increases in phonemic awareness skills in rime oddity and initial phoneme identity, while TD participants began the study with near mastery or mastery of these skills. TD participants also demonstrated progress in phoneme deletion, an untrained skill (Carson et. al., 2013). Students with learning disabilities or a lack of opportunity to attain basic phonemic awareness skills improved over the course of the study began mastering required skills for writing. The students who began the study with most skills already mastered naturally applied those skills to new tasks not explicitly taught. The primary difference between both groups is that the SLI group required explicit instruction for all concepts, while their TD peers continued to progress beyond the explicit lessons.

Writing development and language.

Children naturally progress through multiple stages of writing development that parallel their oral language development (Bernthal, Bankson, & Flipsen, 2013; Stage & Wagner, 1992). For instance, first children express themselves verbally using 3-5 word sentences, while creating journals consisting of an image of squiggly lines that is both their writing and their drawing. Then, their speech increases in complexity. With the addition of adjectives to their oral language, pictures become more detailed and students begin to add environmental text to their entries. Their pictures and stories often remain in the present and students may begin to include verbs in their oral language. Lastly, students are able to describe complex narratives and journal about them using detailed images containing verbs and recent past events. Natural phonology (Stampe, 1969,1979)

is the phonological development model that is typically used and states that children innately develop the ability to hear sound patterns – phonological awareness – and then they apply sound pattern awareness to their writing. To develop this skill, children must hear the patterns of oral language and apply them in their own speech before they use these patterns in their writing. Nonlinear phonology elaborates on natural phonology to a great extent. “Nonlinear phonology is a collection of theories that focus on the hierarchical nature of the relationships of phonological units.” (Bernthal, Bankson, & Flipsen, 2013, p. 63). This emphasizes that children actively discover individual phonemes of language and develop knowledge of how they are ordered within the language through experimentation. For instance, a child would hear the ending –ed used to describe a past action, and would then generalize use of –ed anywhere that past tense is desired, such as in the sentence, “I bounce/ded the ball.” The child will learn over time that only the syllable /t/ should be added to the end to make “bounce” past-tense in speech, while the letter “d” is added to the end of the word in spelling. Children gradually explore the various patterns and orders in which you can use phonemes in a language. Kids have to learn to put these oral phonemes into words and sentences before they can write them. Writing is one tool for oral expression. (Montessori, 1965).

Conclusion

Multiple educators and researchers have found journal writing to be an effective means of providing writing expression in the classroom (Feldgus &

Cardonick, 1999; Oullette & Senechal, 2008; Oullette, Senechal, and Haley, 2013; Williams, 2010; Saad & Ahmed, 2015; VanNess, Murnen, & Bertelsen, 2013). To prepare students to utilize journal writing as a tool for self-expression, children must first have the foundations of oral language and phonological awareness. However, for children who are ESOL or with language disabilities, explicit instruction of oral language and PA is critical to bridge those skills to the writing process (Gunning, 2014; Oullette, Seneschal, & Haley, 2013; Ramos-Sanchez & Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2004; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008).

At an early age, development of oral language, phonological awareness, and writing is best achieved through a combination of direct instruction and interactive, experiential activities such as read-alouds, discussions, and other engaging visual and auditory activities such as art and music (Freeman & Freeman, 2014; Furnes & Samuelsson, 2010; Hu & Commeyras, 2008; Keilty & Harrison, 2015; Ramos-Sanchez et. al., 2004). Social interaction and experiential learning are essential to child development and skill development (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). Free play and exploration are means by which social interaction and educative experiences can be achieved following direct skill instruction (Feldgus and Cardonick, 2000; Gray, 2013; Lillard, 2005; Montessori, 1965). To develop excellent writing abilities, educators must create an environment for children to foster both verbal expression and fine motor development (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000; Lillard, 2005; Montessori, 1965; Gray, 2013; Vygotsky, 1985; Paley, 1992).

To write effectively, children must begin by connecting their well-developed oral language (words and sentences) with the written letters and individual sounds of the target language. To bridge the gap between verbal expression and written expression, it is effective to allow children to demonstrate their knowledge through use of drawing and add the written word as the tool becomes more refined using explicit instruction based on average and specific student ability level as exemplified in their writing (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000; Williams, 2010). Free play provides the children with the opportunity to practice all necessary skills for writing, including verbal expression and dexterity. (Montessori, 1965; Lillard, 1996).

Kid Writing is one way to provide children with engaging experiences and a reason and method to express themselves using pictures and the written word. (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000; Williams, 2010) Drawing pictures facilitates comprehension and thought formation as well as developing fine motor coordination necessary for writing (Ritchhart, Church, & Morrison, 2011). Students learning English in conjunction with other languages benefit from the structure and resources provided through Kid writing, including methods for sounding out words and association of written, activity specific vocabulary with pictures and actions to increase memory and comprehension. Free play and conferences provide opportunity for repetition and support of oral language development and the chance to provide individualized support to help students reach their writing and language goals.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

For this research study, 30 students participated in a classroom of 31 students, ages four to six years (see Table 1). Most of the students are from low SES households, and their families would fit the Hart & Risley (2013) classifications of working class and welfare. As shown in Table 1, thirteen students celebrated their fifth birthday during the course of the study and post-assessment period (September 1st – December 23rd), and three students turned six during the same period. The students whose fifth birthdays fell between September 1st and December 23rd were included in the “young” group for the purpose of this study. The class included twelve students who had previously participated in an early learning program. Students who received special services included six students who received ESOL intervention, four participants who received speech therapy, and one student who received physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and social-emotional support, in accordance with the participant’s individualized education plan (IEP). One participant was diagnosed with diabetes during summer 2016 and required constant supervision and testing throughout the day, which effected the scheduling of Kid Writing Activities.

Table 1: *Participant data.*

Age		
Older (turned five years old before 9/1/16)	Younger (turned five years old on or after 9/1/16)	
16	14	
Gender		
Male	Female	
14	16	
Language Background		
Simultaneous Bilingual	ESOL	Monolingual
21	4	5
Home Literature		
Supported	Less support	
17	13	

Classroom Environment

All of the furniture pieces were designed to be fully-functioning miniatures of standard school furniture, and tools (e.g. pencils, scissors, paint sets, puzzles, and games) were designed to be more easily held and manipulated by tiny hands. The physical workspace was appropriately sized for the students. The shared maintenance of common property and respect for the property of others remained key rules of the learning environment, just like in Montessori’s and Paley’s classrooms. To facilitate Kid Writing, the classroom contained 2 rotating boards of information; the “super star board” on which all students got a turn to display their hard work, and a “picture vocabulary board” displaying picture vocabulary cards relating to the topic of the week. A word wall and the alphabet

above the chalk board remained throughout the study, with sight words consistently added to the word wall and student names above the alphabet, arranged according to the initial letter of their first name (eg., John is above the letter J, Mary is above the letter M). Journal entries were stored in folders in a cabinet in the classroom. Journal paper was kept in a bin close to the students' journal writing space, and pencils, erasers and crayons were kept in student pencil cases easily accessed in the center of the table.

Procedure

The general procedure for the “Kid Writing” time of this intervention is displayed in Table 2. The procedure was completed on 3-5 days per week, for approximately 45 minutes per morning. Both the lead teacher and myself received training in the Kid Writing method. As shown in Table 2, the head teacher or I would introduce an activity or complete a read-aloud in whole group. We would then demonstrate how to create a Kid Writing journal entry on the chalk board, a piece of writing paper attached to the chalk board, or on oversized post-it pages. The students participated in the example writing process by coming up to the board and adding letters to our message. We focused on initial sounds, then moved to initial sounds and sight words, then initial sounds, final sounds and sight words, then whole phonetically spelled words and short sentences. Students' journal entries were then supplemented with transcribed dictation. Children were also encouraged to use environmental text such as labels, their schedule board, and sight word wall to find words for their sentences.

Table 2: *Kid Writing Activity Procedure.*

Journaling lesson steps (in order)	Lesson Format	Activity	Times
Direct instruction	whole group or 4 small groups	Letter of the day; how to create the letter's strokes; identification of environmental text containing letter of the day.	10 minutes
Interactive activity	Whole group or 4 small groups	Whole group: read-aloud Small groups: science exploratory (make a leaf with real leaves, insect viewing, etc.)	10-15 minutes
Journaling example	Whole group or 4 small groups	Students and teacher share the pen (10 minutes
Independent journaling time	Whole group or 4 small groups	Students draw their answer to the writing prompt and attempt to write at least one simple sentence.	15 minutes
Conferences (students <i>with phonological awareness skills</i> of segmenting and blending)	One-to-one	Student does the following with the teacher or aid: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. describes what they drew 2. reads their sentence (states what they tried to write within or around the writing space, labels they used, etc.) Teacher or aid reviews skills such as finding the word (environmental text) and sounding out words (if child has demonstrated instructional competency of segmenting and blending). Teacher or aid reads student sentence together. Teacher or aid underwrites certain words in standard English if needed. Student traces or copies underwriting if desired by student.	5-10 minutes per student; weekly or bi-weekly, as schedule allowed.
Conferences (students <i>still developing</i>)	One-to-one	Student does the following with the teacher or aid: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. describes what they drew 	5-10 minutes per student; weekly or bi-

<i>phonological awareness skills of segmenting and blending)</i>		<p>2. reads their sentence (states what they tried to write within or around the writing space, labels they used, etc.)</p> <p>Teacher or aid reviews skills such as finding the word (environmental text) and sounding out words (if child has demonstrated instructional competency of segmenting and blending).</p> <p>Teacher or aid underwrites in standard English.</p> <p>Teacher and student read underwriting together.</p> <p>Student traces or copies underwriting.</p>	weekly, as schedule allowed.
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Kid Writing in conjunction with explicit phonological instruction and journaling practice in a meaningful context has been shown to improve students’ spelling and grammar abilities. (Feldgus and Cardonick, 2000) Shadow writing had been shown to support writing development in children with limited literacy background and children who are learning English as a second language (Johnson, 2014). As lead researcher, I acted as “detective” to discover the most probable causes of improvement in students’ writing over the course of this fourteen-week study – September 6th, 2017 to December 2nd, 2017, with post-testing throughout the month of December. I worked in conjunction with the lead kindergarten teacher, Mrs. L. Boyer, and the kindergarten aid, Ms. Romero, to establish a classroom environment that fosters creativity and collaboration within a supportive structure.

Trustworthiness Statement

To eliminate any influence of biases and presuppositions in the final results of my research, methods to increase the level of trustworthiness in this study included

extended fieldwork, low-inference descriptors, data triangulation, and participant feedback. Data was gathered during extended fieldwork completed over twelve weeks – from approximately the beginning of September through the beginning of December. Extended fieldwork helped to ensure that the chosen instructional intervention had enough time to impact teaching and learning, to increase the chance that meaningful themes emerge, and to lessen the possibility that any observed phenomena were not mere coincidences.

As I catalogued the story of my study in writing, I made use of low-inference descriptors whenever possible. Separating all of my field notes into two columns – factual observations and impressions of those observations –ensured that the events I described in my research story are as close an account of what actually happened as possible. I also made use of frequent quotations to remain true to the students’ voices.

To protect the privacy of my students, pseudonyms were used when describing the students. An outline of research procedures and all permission forms were submitted to the Human Studies Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) and approved before beginning the research process (see Appendix A). Alterations to the original study outline were re-submitted to the HSIRB during the first four weeks of the study and approved. Parent permissions were printed in Spanish and English and proofread by a staff member fluent in Spanish to ensure that the parents were fully aware of the study and able to give consent. The principal and co-teachers also signed permission forms to ensure that they were prepared and willing to participate in this study.

Peer debriefing and inquiry support groups provided professional guidance and feedback throughout the study. Inquiry support group began with sharing questions and concerns with seven colleagues and then discussing them in greater detail in subgroups of up to four colleagues. I remained open to evidence that runs counter to my hypothesis through use of low inference descriptors and data triangulation.

To help ensure trustworthiness in this study, I employed data triangulation, meaning all data and findings must be corroborated by three different data sources. Cases that arise during my study and do not correlate with my hypothesis were deliberated, evaluated, and noted as observations in my research story.

Finally, I also sought participant feedback to maximize trustworthiness. Types of student feedback included small group or individual interviews on their attitudes toward reading and writing, activity preference surveys, and student reflections on participation in class activities.

Data Collection Methods

Observations.

Observations formed the base of my research data. I observed the kindergarten class three to five times per week, usually when the students were working in small groups or independently so that I could observe more carefully. I typed up all informal observations in a double-entry journal following each classroom visit. The left column included factual accounts of what I observed. The right column included correlating reflections on what I saw and heard. I made note of my personal reactions, thoughts, and potential implications of observed behaviors. When possible, I planned Kid

Writing time for a period followed by snack time or another planning period when I was able to type notes in a double-entry journal (Appendix M) as soon as possible, while the situations were still fresh in my memory.

This study aims to provide further understanding and support of developmentally appropriate writing strategies, including Kid Writing, shadow writing, and fine motor development activities that can be applied by myself and others in the teaching community to enhance the writing abilities of children who are bilingual, monolingual, low SES, and who have a specific learning impairment. Therefore, I shall provide a “thick description of setting, study, and participants” (Hendricks, 2009, p.115) to ensure that all possible variables are considered when methods and results are reviewed by those wishing to implement these methods in their own classroom.

Interviews.

The students were encouraged to offer feedback at regular intervals throughout the study through the use of interviews and journal conferences conducted in small groups and independently following completion of Kid Writing activities. I inquired about activity preferences, perceived and actual use of writing outside the classroom, desired activities and read-aloud stories, and other similar lines of inquiry. Individual interviews were also conducted orally with selected participants – chosen to represent a range of ability levels and backgrounds – and focused upon similar issues. All of this information was recorded by the student in the form of survey answers, and by the head researcher in a double-entry journal.

Students participated in small group read-alouds and a combination of guided and independent response-to-text activities to encourage personal connections to journaling

projects, assess skill mastery (Appendixes I, J, and K, and L), and identify areas of interest for future writing projects (Appendixes G and H).

Surveys.

The study began and concluded with student surveys (Appendices G and H) distributed in small groups of three to six students during free periods such as lunch and snack time to ascertain their level of experience and engagement in reading and writing, as well as their interests. All questions were multiple choice, yes or no, or provided orally in a small group setting to allow the best opportunity for students who are still learning to write to answer the questions with as much detail as possible.

Parents provided home language information and information regarding their child's previous learning experience through completion of a school-distributed home language survey. Parents completed a questionnaire (Appendixes N and O) given verbally during parent-teacher conferences throughout the study to elicit children's home literacy experiences, and to obtain clarification regarding the language status (simultaneous bilingual, ESOL, monolingual) and previous learning experiences of the children. Parents were given the opportunity to request clarification, and a translator was provided at the request of the parent for the duration of their conference.

Student artifacts.

Student work samples formed the third type of data used for this study. Student work included samples from their writing journals and student inquiry projects in which writing was incorporated as part of the journaling lesson. The Conventions of Writing Development Scale created by Feldgus and Cardonick (Appendix K), and the Kindergarten Writing Rubric created by Susan See (Appendix J), were used to score

student journal entries at the conclusion of each week.

Each week, I used the Kindergarten Copying Rubric (Appendix I) designed by Mrs. Boyer and I to assess progress in students' fine motor skill development. Copying allows the students to focus specifically on attention to print and fine motor coordination in writing while minimizing the literacy and phonological awareness components. It also provides a standardized task for more accurate assessment. The assessment was administered by the kindergarten teacher and aid during whole-group time.

Student letter knowledge was tested at the beginning and conclusion of the study using the Teacher-Administered Letter Knowledge Test (TALKT) designed by Mrs. Boyer and I, in which students were shown a card with an uppercase or lowercase letter on it and required to name the letter and supply at least one associated sound independently. The score sheet is included in Appendix L.

Standardized test measures.

Istation (2009) is a computer-based assessment of listening comprehension, letter-sound association, and phonemic awareness, also listed as phoneme blending fluency in some literature (Mathes, 2007). This program has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure of skill growth in areas such as identification of initial, medial and final sounds in words, segmenting, and blending (Istation, 2009, Mathes, 2010, 2007). The Istation program was developed as a reading intervention tool for use in grades Pre-K through 8th grade. It provides computer gaming style skill practice for each child based on their score on monthly testing in the areas of letter-sound association, letter naming, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and listening

comprehension at the Pre-K and Kindergarten levels. Children complete tasks such as selecting the letter when its name or sound is presented from a field of five letters, or selecting images that represent an idea (eg. above, inside, sentence) or a physical object (eg. cat, ocean, pen) to demonstrate skill competency. Difficulty is increased incrementally as student skills increase. For example, skills such as reading comprehension and spelling are added. Also, difficulty is increased through incorporation of longer text passages and higher level vocabulary as students progress. Research has shown that Istation is a valid method of assessment and intervention for typical students and students with reading challenges (Istation, 2009; Mathes, 2007, 2010; Patarapichayatham, 2014).

Conclusion

Participants included 30 kindergarten students in a class of 31 students, age four to six years. This included twelve students who had previously participated in an early learning program, one student with an IEP, three students who received speech therapy, and, six students who received ESOL intervention throughout the course of the study.

Measures of student writing development included the Conventions of Writing Development Scale created by Feldgus and Cardonick (Appendix K), and the Kindergarten Writing Rubric created by Susan See (Appendix J). The Teacher-Administered Letter Knowledge Test (TALKT) and Istation reports (Figure 11, Table 4) were used to assess the students' phonological awareness development. The Kindergarten Copying Rubric (Appendix I) was used to assess the students' fine motor development. The parent questionnaire (Appendixes N and O) and the school-administered home language survey were used to identify which children were

simultaneous bilingual, ESOL, or monolingual, and which children had previous learning experience before entering kindergarten this school year. The parent questionnaire was also used to identify the home literacy experiences of the children.

Teachers constructed an environment in which children developed the physical and cognitive tools necessary to express thoughts through writing. These tools included fine motor skills, oral language, and phonological awareness skills such as rhyming, segmenting, and blending. Skills were addressed explicitly during mini lessons, and continually applied during journal writing, as detailed in Table 2.

Foundation skills were taught using interactive activities such as science projects, read-alouds, and field trips that were used as inspiration for journal writing. Observation, interviews, surveys, student artifacts, rubrics, and standardized test measures provided a wide array of information to cross reference when compiling and analyzing study data.

RESEARCH NARRATIVE

It's Harder Than It Looks

Kid Writing provides tools to shape students' writing abilities as they develop. Using students' phonological awareness skills and their letter-sound knowledge as they develop, Kid writing provides techniques for incorporating all developing skill sets to practice creating journal entries. Shaping moves from thoughts to scribbles to actual letters and spelling phonetically. Many of the students in my study are in our school's ESL program and/or qualify for financial aid due to low SES, and may have not had prior experience with early literacy such as read-alouds and print awareness. Some children were at the beginning stages of alphabet and phonemic awareness skills. Some children could recite the alphabet song and name letters and their sounds.

I had never used Kid Writing before. I had learned from my mother, a kindergarten teacher, and from some of my co-workers how to implement a form of journaling in my classroom the academic year prior to execution of this study. I was unfamiliar with many of the tools essential to the Kid Writing curriculum before beginning planning for this research study. One of those tools was "magic lines," an underscore used to mark the place in a word, on your journal page, where a sound or letter would be written on paper. For instance, a child would write a "magic line" when they are unsure of a particular letter. During conference time, the child would ask the teacher for the missing grapheme.

In order to ensure fidelity of the Kid Writing process, I had to be fully trained in the method, as well as the staff that was also executing this program in

the classroom before it could be effectively incorporated into the classroom routine. My training included reading the Kid Writing method by Felgus and Cardonick (2000) and observing internet videos of Kid Writing implemented into a classroom. On October 18th, I was able to enter another classroom in which the teacher used Kid Writing and received formal training. I met with the staff (the lead teacher and assistant teacher) and reviewed the methods of the program. For the first 2 weeks, they observed my implementation of the program before beginning to assist me during conferences. Some of the most difficult hurdles were simply getting the supplies needed for to implement Kid Writing. Materials such as bound journals, journal paper and interactive materials such as multiple copies of the same book were necessary to do this program. We ordered journals through the school at the beginning of summer and they arrived right before the school year started. The journals contained the wrong paper, despite our providing samples. We had to rely on photocopied pages for the kids' journaling.

Teaching methods used for Kid Writing included: story circle, retelling and narration journals, small group and independent conferences, independent spelling protocol for journal writing, use of spelling strategies such as “walk to the word,” “turtle talk,” magic lines,” and shadow writing. Please see Appendix P for a brief description of each of these strategies. I explained these strategies through use of a tool analogy. Students were encouraged to use all of the “tools” at their disposal when writing. They “filled their tool box” with the word wall, phonics skills, finding words in literary sources, and using the grip and fine motor skills acquired during center time.

September 2016 - Introducing the Children to Kid Writing

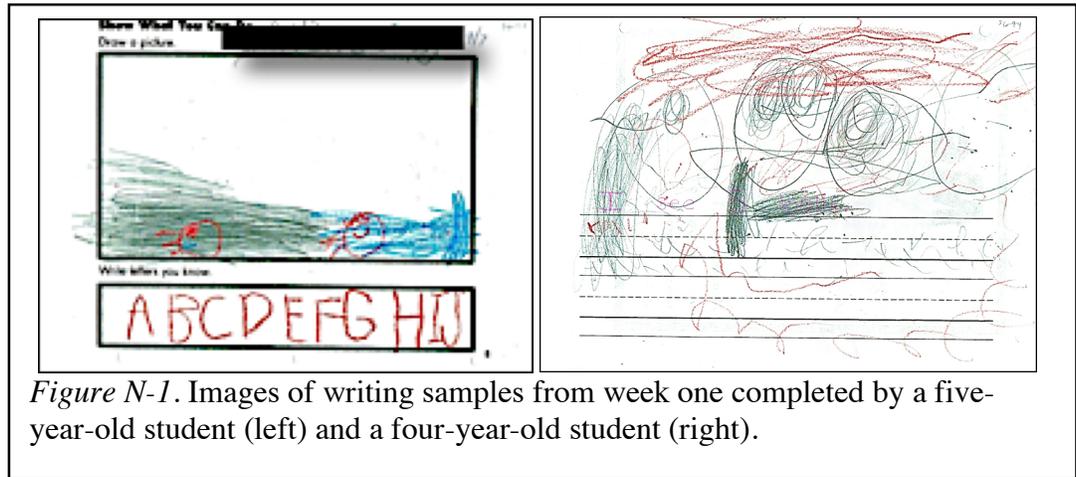
Kid Writing is based on the use of phonetic spelling, which reinforces students written expression (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000). To introduce Kid Writing in the classroom, I first provided the students with a mini lesson addressing a specific skill, such as using environmental text to write a thought. Then, we would complete an interactive activity such as a read-aloud, followed by a discussion of what we read and relating the book to their experiences. The discussion would end with the writing prompt. The students would then participate in creation of an example journal with me, using the skill from the mini lesson, such as using environmental text to spell. Afterwards, the students would create their own journal entries based on the discussion and the example. Finally, the students would meet with a teacher in conference time. In conferences, the students would dictate their desired journal sentence, and the teacher would enhance the student's writing experience using one of multiple methods. For example, if a student spelled the word *pick* as "pik," I would say, "Good job! All of your sounds are there. This is great Kid Writing. When grown-ups spell *pick* it looks like this: 'pick.'" I would then write the word in light colored pen or highlighter near their original word. The students would then shadow write over that word or add the "c" into their own word. If they had used the word "pick in a previous entry, or it was in their story or on a word wall or poster, I would refer them back to that occurrence of environmental text and they would use that to correct their own spelling. The students learned the benefits of phonetic spelling as well as receiving model text, or as we called it, 'adult

writing.’ These methods were used to reinforce proper spelling, while allowing them to make mistakes.

We also would show the students their paper from the previous week and their current paper to compare progress and boost morale. We also had a “super-writers” board, where students who were showing exceptional progress would have their work displayed for the other students to see and emulate.

I always began lessons with a plan that was well-organized and prepared. For instance, I consistently followed the same writing lesson model, as described above. Depending on the number of instructors and volunteers available, I would alter between small group and whole group instruction, following the same structure. I moved between students, co-teachers, and occasionally student aids from older grades. The 8th grade students frequently acted as student volunteers, called “helpers,” during different projects. They would demonstrate how to cut an art project, how to draw or paint different shapes and lines, and all 8th grade helpers were taught how to shadow write. We provided activities for the children who finished writing early, support systems for the children who struggled, and consistently introduced scaffolding for all of the strategies in the same order no matter which student was receiving help. The children’s writing showed improvement, the 8th grade helpers provided support in accordance with the Kid Writing protocol with minimal intervention. Therefore, the students most likely experienced a fluid, complete lesson.

Week 1: September 6th – 9th



It was the first day of school. After two weeks of seeking resources, we had acquired one new pack of crayons for each child, labeled pencil cases, one pencil and eraser per child, extra pencils and erasers and journal papers. We had also organized the room with many things stored under sheets or drop cloths to eliminate the desire for the four-year olds to pull out all of the more advanced learning materials. We felt ready to begin.

The students were four and five years old at the beginning of the school year. Some of the students were nearly six years old. When I asked, “Would you like to help Miss Boyer do science projects, read stories, draw pictures, and write using the alphabet letters?” the children expressed excitement and eagerness to get started. From the first day of school on the 6th of September, I was leading activities within the kindergarten classroom. Kid Writing was incorporated as part of the general curriculum. I planned and helped to facilitate activities. I was able to organize my work schedule in the computer lab and go in to teach Kid Writing two or three days per week, depending on special events, family illnesses and

schedule changes. Usually, the days were non-consecutive; occasionally, Kid Writing days were consecutive.

With the whole class sitting in front of me, I gave the introductory lesson. I assured the children that they were already writers because they could all draw wavy and curly lines, short, straight lines, and some students could even approximate letters. I demonstrated how to use a pencil to create wavy lines, straight lines, and “sloppy letters,” a compilation of lines which resembles letters yet is not quite arranged neatly enough to be recognized immediately as a specific letter. All examples were completed on a large sticky pad on the easel aside of me. Then, we talked about what we did this summer. I demonstrated the pictorial aspect of journaling by drawing a simple stick picture on the top half of a second sticky note. The children were all watching intently, but we identified our first stumbling block when one child said, “I can’t draw that.” I replied, “this is just one thing you could draw. If you went to the movies this summer instead of the beach, then you would draw something else. What would you draw?” I pointed to the students, indicating it was their turn to reply.

Jamie: “Popcorn.”

Alison: “Candy.”

Jenny: “I went to the beach this summer. It was really hot and my brother and I, we played in the ocean.”

Ms. Boyer: “Jenny, I like your story about the beach. You will have a lot to draw, but what about the kids who were at the movies? What might they have seen, heard, or smelled?”

Jenny: “Popcorn.”

Ms. Boyer: [*Draws popcorn on the board.*]

Jason: “I can’t draw that. It’s too hard.”

Jenny: “All of your pictures will be great as long as you start with a picture in your mind of what you want to draw.”

The last part of this introduction, already lengthier than I had planned, was to introduce magic lines and using letters to express thoughts. As a group, we identified a sentence that expressed the beach picture on the sticky note. I wrote on the sticky note, “We were at the movies.” It took what felt like an eternity to get through the process of sounding out words and writing down the letters. Children came up to the board, I showed them what letter to put next to form the class sentence.

Only one student, Aiden, was truly engaged in the entire process. He was repeating kindergarten to allow him the chance to mature and grow in one more year with children his age. He was one of the youngest students in the previous class. As one of the oldest with the most school experience in the current kindergarten, he was able to use phonological awareness skills the rest of the class may have not developed yet to announce what letters needed to go on the page. I then wrote our target sentence correctly on the line beneath their Kid Writing sentence. I defined this writing as “adult writing,” writing that grown-ups can do because they practiced writing what they hear for a very long time.

The introductory lesson concluded with some words of encouragement and a writing prompt.

Ms. Boyer: “I want to see your best Kid Writing. I know you can all be great writers. Now let’s go back to our seats and draw a picture about *what we did this summer.*”

Everyone except Jobe and Marilyn responded with at least one picture to that writing prompt. Marilyn refused to pick up a writing utensil during the first week. Tabitha cried and responded well to nap time each day around 11:00am. The four-year-olds drew squiggles, and teachers transcribed their descriptions of their pictures during conference time. When journaling, the children thought of what they would like to journal, drew a picture, and attempted to write about the picture independently, before teacher conferencing and transcription began. Transcriptions often included details students added via their oral language that were not present in their written sentence. Meanwhile, the five-year-olds and some of the children who attended Pre-Kindergarten the previous year approximated or copied both the words and the pictures, from our whole-group example.

Jamie was unique. She wrote her own make-believe story about a dragon attack on the beach with approximated letters. She used one of the independent reading books in front of her as inspiration. I took a step back after that first introductory lesson to collect baseline data by evaluating students' work samples in both journaling and copying using rubrics included in Appendixes I, J, and K; using a computer-based evaluation program called Istation (for a description, see p. 39); and by analyzing observation notes collected during Kid Writing activities. During this period of time, Ms. Boyer, Ms. Romero, and I reinforced Kid Writing procedures during center time.

During the first week, I circled the room helping students sound out words to find the initial sound in each word, writing that in place of a whole word with a

magic line representing the rest of the word. As I was doing so, one of my “little perfectionists” began to cry. I came over and calmly asked him what was wrong. He said, “I can’t.” and pointed to the page he was drawing on. After he stopped wailing he was able to articulate that he was trying to draw a puppy, but it didn’t look like a puppy. I assured him that however his puppy looks, it is a great picture and “he will be able to draw more real life pictures with practice.” He crumpled up the paper and threw it in response. I picked up the paper, laid it out in front of him, and said “tell me your story. What do you like about your story?” He dictated a thought to me, changing his topic to “trucks”. I wrote a simple summary of his thought, “I like the blue truck.” using dotted lines to create a tracing paper. He drew a picture of the blue truck. I then taught him how to trace, demonstrating with the first few letters. I left him, helped other students, and when I returned he had traced three more letters. We read the sentence together and he handed in his journal entry. This was how Jobe started writing.

As we continued to review the alphabet with some students, and teach the alphabet to others; one of the major stumbling blocks we encountered was that the kids did not express comfort in making mistakes. The kids saw grown up writing as something they had to do now. They expressed an immediate need to be correct. Comments such as “Miss, is this good?” and “Teacher, look at what I did. Is it right?” exemplified their need for immediately achievable accuracy. One of the hardest things was demonstrating to the kids that it is ok to make mistakes.

I learned from presentation of the first lesson, that I would have to slow my pace. Pre- testing showed that the students were missing phonemic awareness

skills. Many of the students were not able to identify or produce a rhyme. This was especially true when we started, but held true for some students until the study concluded in December. By the end of week 1, I received the Istation data, which confirmed that their phonological awareness was very lacking at the beginning of the year.

I was available to work with the kindergarten students for one class period, up to two hours long, two or three days per week. Fifteen students were considered in the “young group”. I noticed a lot of them were seemed to really enjoy read-alouds. They demonstrated this by their full attention on the storybook and their answers to my questions. Many of these same students were at the beginning stages of writing development. Their written work contained some scribbles. Some of the students could not attend to a writing space and had some difficulty with pencil grasp. All students were able to verbalize a story or scene for transcription except seven. Six of the seven students had birthdays that fell after September 1st, while one student was older, but received ESOL and Speech Therapy intervention for the duration of the study.

Marilyn refused to hold a pencil all week, and spoke minimally. I learned that ten students struggled to effectively grip a pencil. Five of those students were older, while five students had birthdays that fell after September 1st. Non-writing tasks such as tweezer activities and beadwork were incorporated to address pencil grip and fine motor skill development. One insight this week was that the students need to build confidence and skill through constant exposure and frequent practice.

Week 2: September 12th – 16th

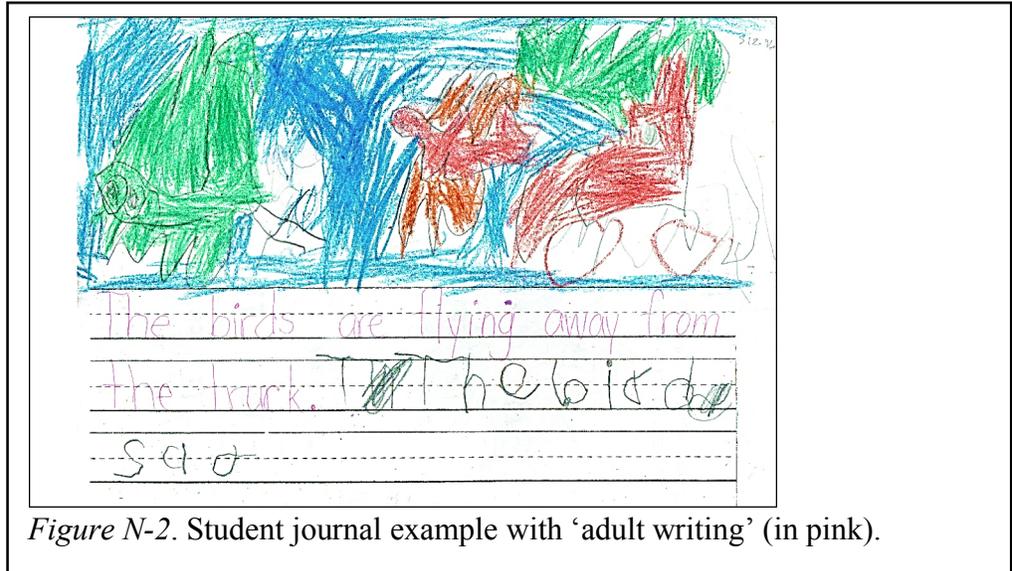


Figure N-2. Student journal example with ‘adult writing’ (in pink).

On September twelfth, I gave another introductory lesson. The students gathered in the back of the room in the only section of floor where we all fit. I demonstrated different ways kids write, and how grownups use writing. I showed them their picture books, a letter I wrote to my friend, and I pulled out my phone and read a text message I sent to my mom “Please pick me up in an hour.” The aid, Nancy, The Kindergarten teacher, Ms. Boyer, and I began implementing journaling and guiding the students to use the letters we had taught them. At that point, the students demonstrated the ability to shadow write the word “I.”

We presented magic lines again on September 13th. Many students could not differentiate between picture and text. To address their needs, we introduced and practiced the concept of journaling using scribbles where the text should be and pictures where the picture expresses their thought. In some select cases with the very young students or students with special needs, both the pictures and the words were scribbles.

The next Kid Writing lesson was on September 14th. We finished baseline observations during week one using class curriculum and added Kid Writing week two of the school year that far more closely resembled the Feldgus and Cardonick method, as described on page 5. I made four posters with a picture and the corresponding word for the following nouns from the book “Hand, Hand, Fingers, Thumb” by Dr. Seuss. We acted out the sounds with hand motions during the read-aloud. Our discussion linked the text to their life experience. Each team had a copy of the book to reference as they shared about their favorite part of the book.

Marilyn attempted to write for the first time. It turns out she was embarrassed about not being able to hold a pencil correctly or express her thoughts accurately using writing. She expressed willingness to try writing a journal entry when using shadow writing. Marilyn drew a simple journal picture independently, expressed her sentence verbally, and then traced over the sentence she dictated to one of the teachers.

Jobe and Tabitha cried on numerous occasions. Their strong reactions of crying and avoidance behaviors appeared to be triggered by feelings of exhaustion or inadequacy. Often, either of them would cry and physically separate themselves from a task or group, and state that they are were tired. Occasionally, the students would find a quiet spot and take a nap. Other times, Jobe told me that he cried because he was unable to execute a task such as drawing or writing at his perceived level of required competency. Tabitha frequently cried to avoid activities she was disinterested in such as direct instruction of a variety of topics.

Their behaviors often required the undivided attention of at least one teacher. By being supportive and positive and using different techniques such as hand-over-hand and creating tracing papers for them where they work on a specific stroke, the younger students made progress.

I learned that the Kid Writing method was designed for older students, approximately ages six to eight, who are emergent writers. Children at this developmental level may have the social-emotional, cognition, and fine motor abilities to use Kid Writing most efficiently. Some students, especially younger students between ages four and six seem to, need more time to adjust to school routines and more academic areas. Although I used many of the components of the Kid Writing method, such as meaningful activities, journaling, and conferences, I adapted the program for the younger children by introducing more manipulatives and fine motor activities to strengthen hand-eye coordination and pincer grasp necessary for handwriting. I introduced support structures such as the use of environmental text (e.g., word walls, labels, and picture vocabulary cards) in conjunction with Kid Writing mini lessons to address specific phonological awareness skills weekly. For example, one mini lesson focused on eliciting verbal description of something they saw. Many students began the school year using one-word responses. When writing their journals following this mini lesson, the students shadow wrote their one-word response to the journal prompt that day.

By Friday, September 16th, I discovered that exposure to print and a longer journaling period were beneficial. I chose to continue to demonstrate different uses of print, through read-alouds and contextual mini-discussions of the uses of

print on our environment, such as on lunch bags, cubbies, doors, and posters. This also taught print direction. I also used scaffolding during class discussion and student journal conferences by utilizing open-ended questions to increase verbal narration.

I began to observe the younger students drawing recognizable pictures with the exception of three young students. The three younger children were at the beginning stages of writing (i.e., marks on a page). Some students were writing letters backwards or incompletely. Six students were using one to two word utterances to express their ideas about pictures. Two of those six students received ESOL intervention. Some students were beginning to verbally label their journal pictures. A few students wrote journal entries using letter-like forms. Students who were writing with letter-like forms had previous schooling. Students who had previous schooling also demonstrated a grasp of basic phonological awareness skills such as segmenting and blending simple words, often copied the example sentence and added phonetically spelled new words to their copied pieces. Students who presented with limited phonological awareness skills would choose to write the example sentence exactly and add independent thoughts verbally during conference time.

Week 3: September 19th – 23rd

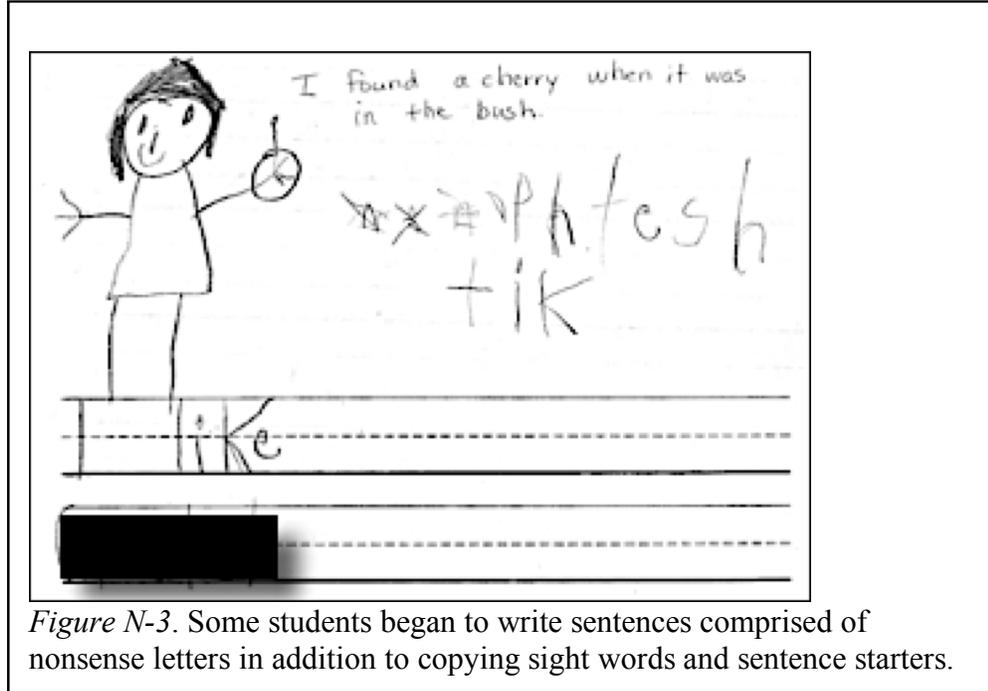


Figure N-3. Some students began to write sentences comprised of nonsense letters in addition to copying sight words and sentence starters.

The class continued to focus on learning one letter of the alphabet every one or two days. We also aimed to increase the students' comfort in drawing pictures and scribbling in place of letters, depending on their ability level. We focused our direct instruction time on basic oral language skills such as rhyming, segmenting and blending, as well as basic orthographic awareness skills such as writing environmental text and text-image association. These skills were reinforced through journaling and conferences using whole group or small group discussion, followed by modeling of strategies such as finding letters that look the same, and finding nouns in their environment, naming the beginning sound, and writing the corresponding letter. To minimize distractions and create a quiet working space, journal time and conference time were conducted in a separate half-classroom adjacent to the kindergarten room in small group. Small groups included an average of seven students per group.

The students were given extended time to complete journal entries. My modeling was based on the procedure outlined in *The Kid Writing* text by Feldgus and Cardonick, where the students participate in each stage of the process of responding to a writing prompt with the teacher, and then respond independently in their journals. Each day, I would repeat the process to assist the children in retaining activity details to effectively journal about them. We would revisit topics such as “Insect viewing,” which they attended to easily. Their kindergarten teacher reinforced language skills over the course of the unit with stories, songs, YouTube videos, and opportunities to participate in interactive activities.

For one of the lessons, we gathered four jars of insects, grass, dirt, and leaf litter together and placed the jars in the middle of each team. The children then had to pick something in the jar, draw about it, and write one thought about what they saw. Using one of the jars and other materials, I modeled a drawing and a thought (one simple sentence) to demonstrate how to write a journal entry. Then the children had the opportunity to work on their own journal entries.

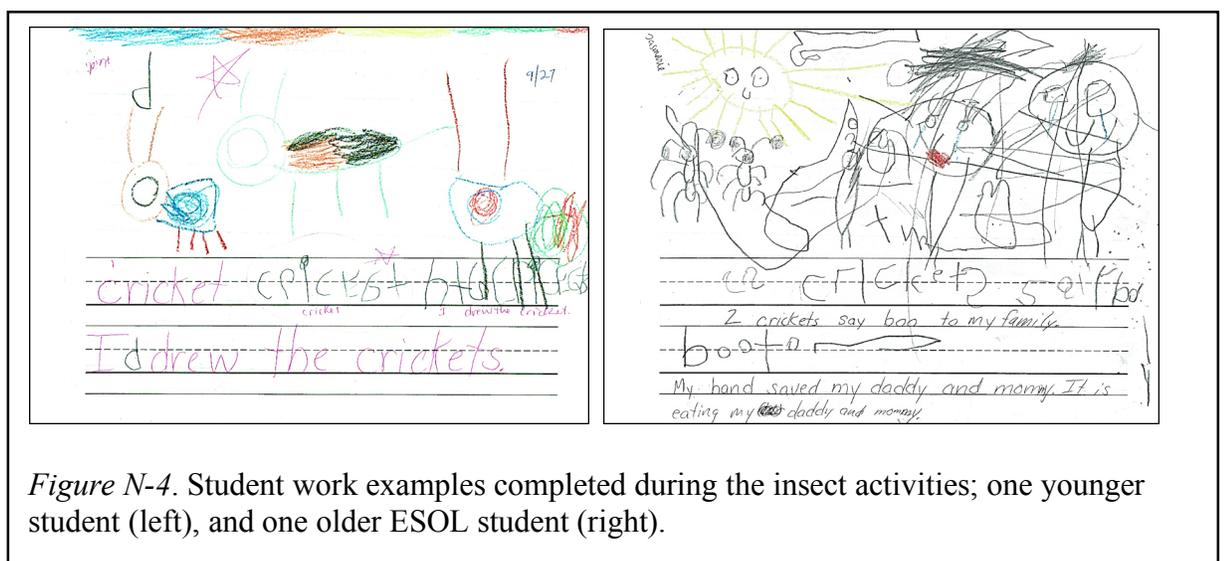
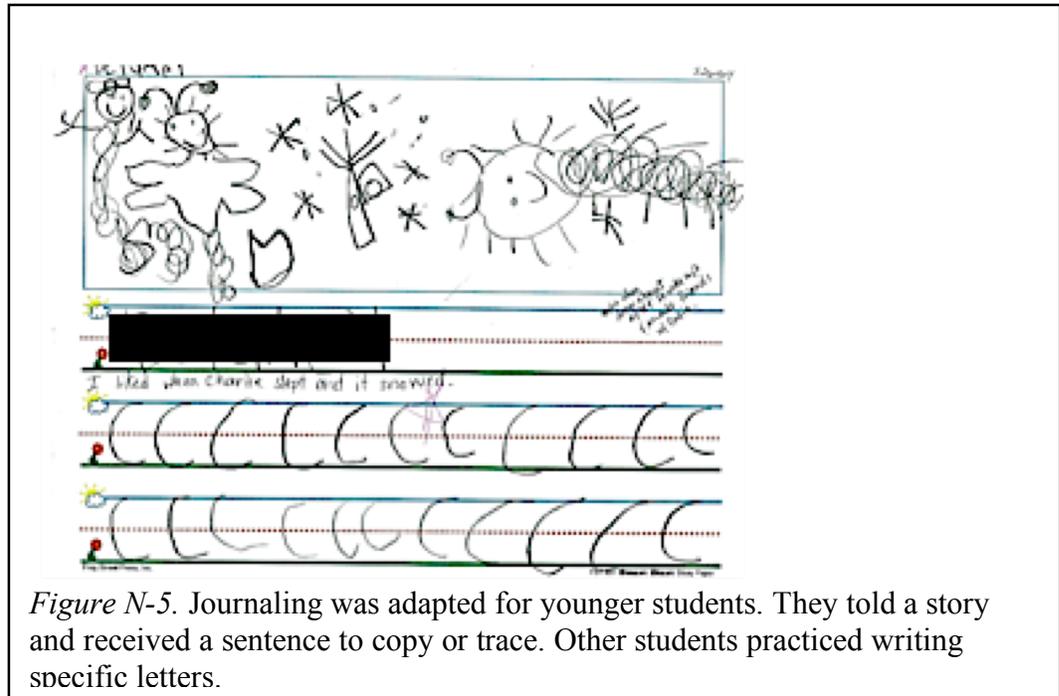


Figure N-4. Student work examples completed during the insect activities; one younger student (left), and one older ESOL student (right).

On September 19th, Jobe (age 4) was still crying when he wrote because it was not identical to adult writing. Celebrating tracing letters and using dots for start and end points helped to alleviate his negative reactions to writing. Joshua, Jason and Peter all copied well. Delia was hesitant to talk or put anything on paper despite looking at pictures in the read-aloud story. Many younger students such as Jenny, Delia, and Jamie needed to participate in discussions to understand the main idea of a story. These students also needed to review letter-sound associations. Daisy (age 5) sat next to Jobe and watched my mini lesson on the letter of the day. She copied my tracing paper for herself and practiced independently. Jobe struggled to hold a pencil at this point. While I helped a nearby team, I looked across to the table where Jobe and Daisy were working. I noticed that Daisy was writing her letters within the writing space using proper spacing. When Daisy saw Jobe struggling to create new tracing letters for himself, she wrote tracing letters for him. I learned that students who would not or could not kid write would shadow write. All students needed lots of letter-sound association drill. Some students, like Jobe, still benefited from fine motor activities. Some of these fine motor activities included the game Don't Spill the Beans, parquetry, and bead stringing.

On September 20th, Aurora and Jobe struggled due to a lack of sufficient fine motor skills, as measured by their scores on the Copying Assessment. Both students were four years old at this time, which may contribute to their level of fine motor development. When Jobe refused to kid write, I had him shadow write "C's" for letter sound association for the Carl the caterpillar story. He worked

diligently to complete his writing activity, but when his independent “C” was inverted, he began to cry again.



Alison began her journal entry after I instructed her to face the board. She began writing a duplicate of our model journal entry when asked to change seats to face the board. Luke’s rapid rises and decreases in blood sugar seemed to affect his ability to participate in Kid Writing activities, even though he was older with preschool experience. His best writing samples were frequently achieved immediately following snack time and lunch. Two students’ fine motor skills showed improvement on their Copying Assessment. Delia demonstrated hesitancy to share her response to the prompt “What animals do you like?”, even when looking at picture prompts from read-aloud story books. She needed help forming thoughts and visualizing before writing or drawing. Other student challenges that I observed this week during read aloud discussion and creation of the example

journal entry were to associate letters with the sounds they hear in words; to summarize a story and express the main idea; and, to comprehend the main idea.

Jason and Peter were both older at this time and they copied well. They demonstrated interest in learning letter sound associations and playing association games. Jamie was very verbal at this point. She enjoyed pretending to read. Jamie needed to work on turn taking and develop patience along with letter-sound association. She held the book correctly and flipped pages independently.

By the end of week three, the eight students with the latest birthdays and two students with special needs were still working on pencil grip and shadow writing. All students except three of the youngest could write words from the board and reproduce their name from their pencil case or nametag. Many students were still writing backwards or incompletely.

Rhyming lessons had been completed daily during the past two weeks. Letter-sound association tasks were completed daily, but few students applied these skills in their journal writing that day, or used letter-like forms. A few students wrote curvy lines to represent words within or around the writing lines. We decided to continue Letter Knowledge drill through picture matching activities, songs, and flash cards. Older students and students with more schooling seemed to be progressing faster than the other students based on observations of student responses during discussions and their scores on their Conventions of Writing Development Scale and the Kindergarten Writing Rubric.

Week 4: September 26th - 30th

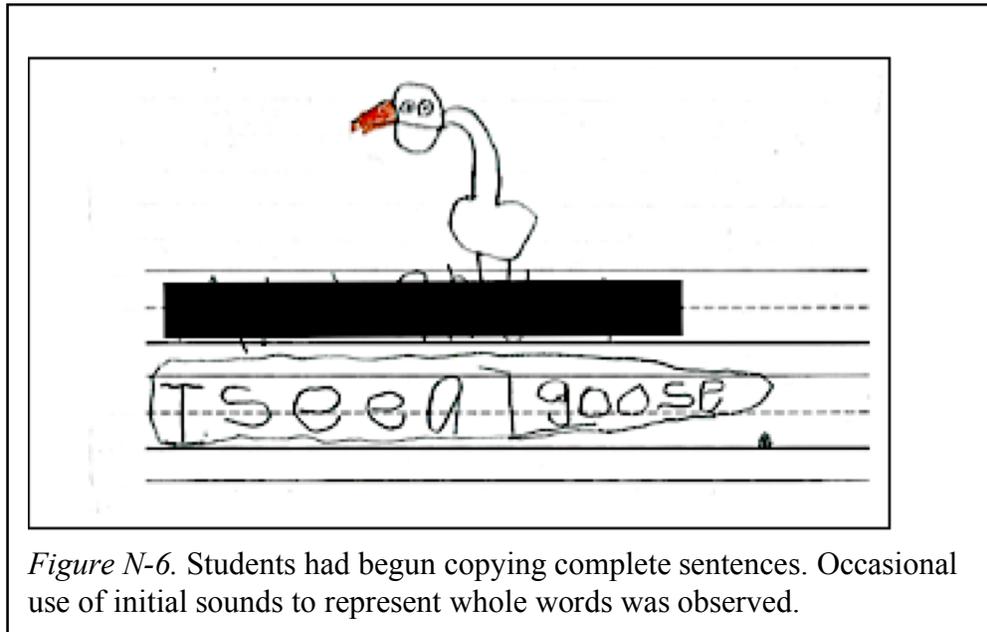


Figure N-6. Students had begun copying complete sentences. Occasional use of initial sounds to represent whole words was observed.

The children attended to images and items within their immediate field of vision (approximately 0-6 feet in front of them). We handed out their nametags with a reference alphabet on them during Kid Writing time. During Kid Writing center time, I found the four year olds responded well to seeing the example of the older kids. They needed the alphabet in front of them to approximate letters.

Beginning this week, we employed rhyme training during our small group read-aloud. Our rhyme training cued the students to touch their ears for rhyme words, then tilt their head side-to-side as they recite a rhyming pair such as: “bed, head, bed, head, sounds the same they rhyme.” Some students needed to practice segmentation to sound out words. To review two-syllable words, the children clapped once for each syllable and “hit a baseball” as they blended the syllables together again.

The students benefited most from shared writing and independent drawing. Both age groups chose to reproduce our model entry. Some students helped each other to sound out nouns to label their images. They used common words with pictures posted around the room to refer to when writing, essentially a simplified picture dictionary, which I added to with drawings on the board when needed. All students required scaffolding: rhyme pairs and verbal discussion of writing prompts (rhyme word pictures). Most students picked one picture as a prompt and all stories included an aspect from home. Students began to add more detail and description to their journal entries.

One opportunity for children to add journal details was our insect viewing activity. Each group sat around a computer, watched a video about grasshoppers and crickets (how they hear and what they eat and a clip of a real grasshopper eating a leaf.) The first video had cartoons and clip art images. We then reviewed the sounds and letters they already went over in class by singing the ABC song and playing letter-sound guessing games using chalk, paint, or crayons to shadow write letters in the words “grasshopper” and “cricket.” Children slowly verbalized the sound as they wrote each letter – called “turtle talk” by Feldgus and Cardonick. The children then shared the pen, writing a sentence about my brother and a grasshopper, then they wrote journal stories about grasshoppers. The students met one-to-one with an instructor to discuss and complete their journal entries. Following discussion of their drawing and the story the child attempted to write, the story was transcribed their stories using shadow writing. The children dictated what they wanted to say, the other instructors or I wrote down the child’s

words on their journal page, and then the child traced their own words as we read them aloud.

Many students needed more letter-sound matching practice. All the letters we had learned were posted in the room, but the children were not paying attention to them. At this point, I decided to implement a game where the students could practice their letter-sound connection using a textured medium. We tried tracing alphabetic letters in sand in small group, but the sand got everywhere and the students could not practice this way independently. We increased the meaning of the alphabet board and brought students' attention to it by creating one in small group to practice letter-sound association and initial sound isolation. I continued to reference these pictures each time they identified a sound in a word.

After a month of exposure to text and journaling, it is important to note that some students were beginning to attribute meaning to text. Three children in the older group corrected me when I wrote their dictated stories during conference time, delineating attachment to the words that represented their thoughts.

Most students automatically copied what was written in dictation. As they began to recognize that text held meaning, exchanges such as the following occurred more frequently:

Nina: *[Nina dictates story. Nina points to her dictated story and asks Ms. Boyer] "What does this say?"*

Ms. Boyer: *[reads the story back to Nina]*

Nina: *[smiles broadly, exclaims] That's what I said! [Nina copies her story on the next writing line]*

The four year olds were still learning to recall letter sound associations using the alphabet on the board and demonstrated limited ability to separate words within one thought, or sounds in one word during conferences and small group journaling activities. So far, they can name letters a-j and some students know M, T, and one student knows L in addition to the other letters. Direct instruction focused on the purpose of writing and letter-sound associations.

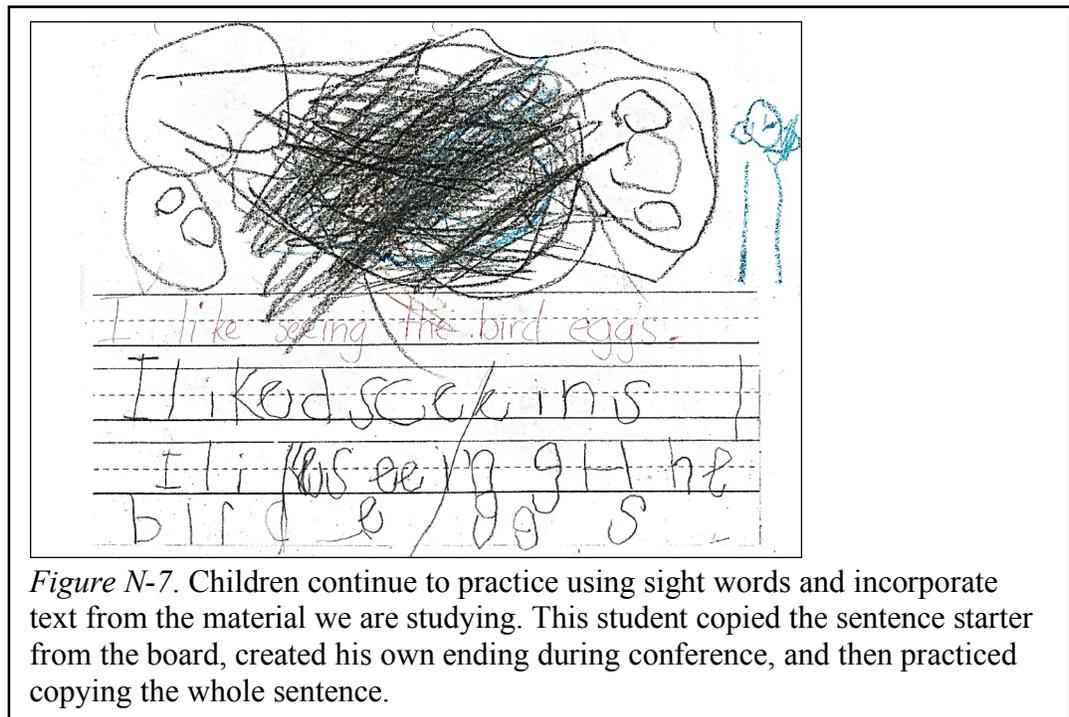
The oldest students from team blue are distinguishing sound patterns, as evidenced in their recognition of “tiny” and “today” both starting with T. The youngest kids did a lot of shadow writing and tracing. The youngest children are now comfortable shadow writing and tracing, with hand-over-hand assistance at times.

On September 30th, the students continued to write, draw, and watch videos about crickets and grasshoppers. They requested the live video of the grasshopper eating instead of the cartoon. Nina displayed limited fine motor coordination when writing her name. She wrote backwards and missed letters. The students copied sight words and sentences from the example journal and word wall to facilitate writing sentences independently. They touched and read shadow-written sentences left to right with direction with some success. The students with more exposure to reading from home or school demonstrated more ease and confidence following along in large group, as demonstrated by their attentiveness and discussion participation. Students who were younger, ESOL, or did not previously attend school required consistent reminders and explanations of how to follow directions. Insights include that tracking print needs to be

demonstrated in read-alouds and practiced in small group to be applied in large group. Large group demonstration is insufficient for some students.

By the end of the month, all students completed four journals. Two full days were needed to complete journal conferences each week, which is in keeping with the method described by Feldgus and Cardonick and the size of the class. The process of discussing writing topics and taking dictation would need a full three days in a class this size if not for my co-teachers completing journal conferences with me.

October 2016 - Week 5: October 3rd - 7th



In October, we focused on patterning to support children's recognition of letter patterns in words. During week one, we focused on color patterns. Tools used to address patterning with two or three colors in a-b or a-b-c sequences included coloring worksheets, bead stringing, plastic shapes on a flannel board,

numbers, letters, and toy automobiles. These exercises also promoted dexterity and fine motor development. I observed many of the small groups in each of these activities creating patterns and matching each other's patterns, which indicated that all students seemed to have grasped the concept by the end of the week. The students were smiling, chatting, and laughing while working, indicating that they enjoyed bead stringing in small group and discussion of patterns with the kindergarten aid. Felt shapes on the flannel board were a useful tool to elicit patterning from pairs of students working independently. Students with limited letter-sound association background were able to express themselves through pictures and copied text.

Letter Knowledge testing was completed during the first week of October. All of the students had been taught letters A through M at this point, and so we tested specifically on letter-sound matching for capital letters A through M. Students who displayed a high level of proficiency were tested on the entire alphabet. If they seemed proficient, then we tested the rest of the capital letters of the alphabet. We decided to only test capital letters because we found that although both capital and lowercase were taught, most students chose to write exclusively in capital letters.

During testing on the 5th of October, I observed that the ESOL students were the most aware of their struggle to identify sounds and names of letters. Joshua said "I don't know them. I speak Spanish at home." The English speaking students with an early birthday who did not attend preschool or Headstart programs and the ESOL students demonstrated a similar degree of difficulty

during testing. The older children did better overall with letters learned, with the exception of Jamie, who knew very few letter names and fewer sounds. Giselle was the exception for the younger group. She learned all of the letters presented up to that point. All of the younger students who attended a preschool program completed the letter-sound matching task with a degree of proficiency that warranted testing of the rest of the alphabet, while it was observed that many of the older students and students who did not attend preschool could only name the letters and sounds taught in class during the month of September.

During the first week of October, the students read books about farms, watched a video about a day on the farm in the computer lab, and sang songs. On October 7th, another journal writing project was completed. The children learned about different healthy foods that come from a farm by observing real fruits and vegetables brought in by the teacher. They were instructed to use their senses of sight, touch, smell, and hearing to discuss different attributes of each fruit or vegetable. After discussion, the students answered the journal prompt, “What do you like to eat?”

The youngest students added more detail to their journal pictures. Most children wrote their name correctly with 50% accuracy (missing letters, wrong direction). Nina wrote her name in the correct direction more frequently, still missing letters. Javier wrote very large, but showed improvement in his pencil grip. They copied sight words and sentences from the board or sight word cards. They touched and read shadow-written sentences left to right with direction. I found that all children were showing some progress. The youngest students

needed extra support. Small group activities such as read-alouds provided reinforcement of directionality of text, and craft projects were used to reinforce fine motor development.

While observing their writing this week, I found that students who came to kindergarten from home (n=15) were answering letter-sound association questions with a comparable amount of accuracy as compared to students who attended a Pre-K program. However, both groups of children who could tell me letter sound associations verbally, were not necessarily readily applying them in their writing.

Week 6: October 10th – 14th

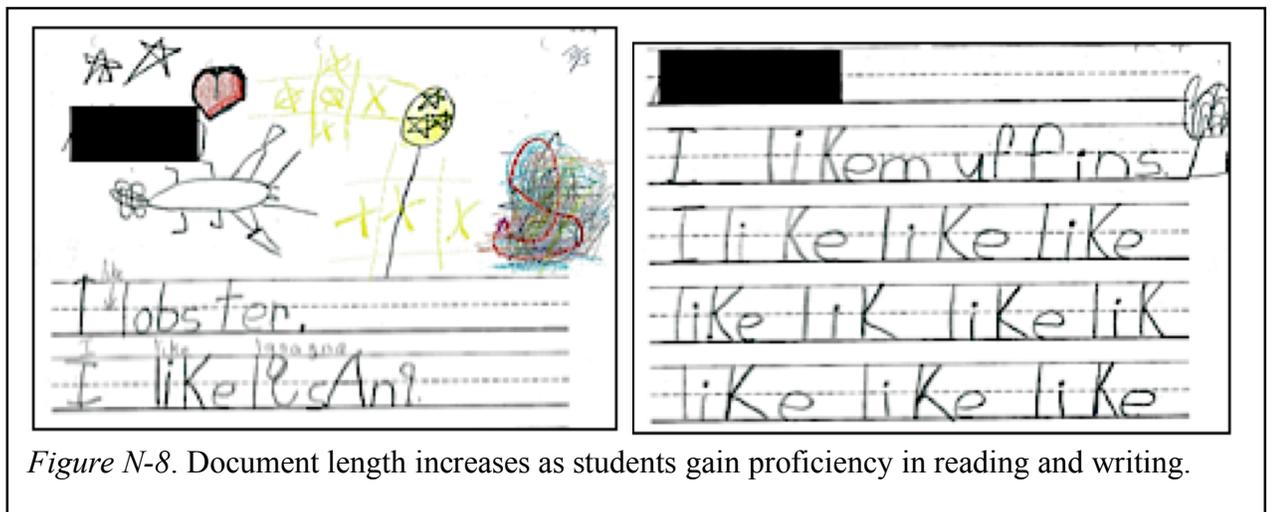


Figure N-8. Document length increases as students gain proficiency in reading and writing.

During week 6, the teachers taught lessons and read storybooks around the topic of leaves. They also did a “letter Q” worksheet and watched a quail video. With limited technology resources (e.g., only one working laptop, no projector, no television, and one or two bars of internet access out of five in the right-side back corner of the room), we borrowed headphone splitters from the 5th grade teacher and the children watched the videos in that corner. During the videos, the children learned the sounds quails make and that they travel in family groups called

coveys. The students got to add this information to their Q worksheet. What did the teacher do? Then the children had the opportunity to write about quails in their journals.

On October 11th, I worked mostly with the older students. Peter was the most responsive during our letter knowledge review, and applied letter knowledge minimally in his journal writing. During our direct instruction time, we reviewed and wrote many sample letters by sounding out words syllabically and illustrating them. Peter connected “m” with the initial sound in “my.” Students receiving special services such as Speech intervention and health services support for diabetes needed additional time and assistance to gain letter-sound association skills and apply them in kid writing.

On October 12th. I “read” the children a book that contained only pictures (no words) in a whole group to demonstrate the use of whole sentences, build the children’s vocabulary exposure, ask open-ended questions, and show the students how readers can create detailed stories from pictures. This lesson was designed to increase the detail in their independent journaling. During the “read aloud”, the students answered higher-level open-ended questions such as how do you think the girl felt? Why do you think she felt sad? The kids connected this particular story to a lesson on being kind and forgiveness from the day before. We also read a story about birds and how they used leaves to build a nest. Our example journal entry was about a time I saw a bird build a nest outside my window. I modeled the process of drawing pictures and sounding out words to create a journal entry, while having the student participate in each step of the process by “sharing the

pen” with me. The students took turns coming up to the example journal and added details to the drawing or letters that we sounded out together to the journal sentence.

Some children still copied everything that was on the board, such as Arthur. Arthur re-traced everything he wrote. His penmanship was impeccable. He had not asked me what the words meant or asked for help sounding out words. These are indications that he may have not yet made the connection that text represents specific ideas.

Jenny demonstrated Kid Writing for her classmates. She came up to the board and wrote out a nonsense sentence with a lot of B’s in it and said that it meant “The bird had babies and flew everywhere.” She re-wrote a very strong approximation of her Kid Writing shared on the blackboard on her paper and restated the exact same sentence as the meaning of her writing when prompted with “tell me your story.” She also pointed to the words she wrote as she spoke. These are indications that Jenny may have made the connection that text represents specific thoughts.

Many older students were able to associate initial sounds of words with letters. They helped each other begin spelling out initial sounds in their journal entries independently. The younger students were able to practice letter-sound association by making a game with letter puzzle pieces. They mimicked the Letter Knowledge test they took last week, working as a team to figure out letter names and sounds presented to each other on flashcards. I sought out letter pieces that

are more tactilely distinct to match our textured foam number cut-outs, and found enough to make one sight-word game.

More kids, overall, began to write this week. Multiple students from each team added letters to their journal entries. These students did not inquire as to the meaning of letters or strings of letters, but they did recognize that letters have a place in the story telling process. Christian and Tabitha cried while working in small group. I comforted them by congratulating them on what they had added to their journal so far: Christian – a mildly detailed bird picture; Tabitha – a scribble picture. I helped both of them write some letters on the page though use of shadow writing. Tabitha was able to trace her name. She was proud of her work and her classmates followed my lead and congratulated her. Afterwards, Tabitha added squiggles that more closely approximated letters. Christian pointed to his drawing and expressed that he “couldn’t do it right”. With extra guidance and encouragement from his classmates and I, he completed his drawing. He expressed a story that accompanied the picture during conferences.

Luke put squiggles on the page in his writing space. When he concentrates, he has shown that he can write his letters legibly. I had him label things in his picture and helped him sound out words. He demonstrated little patience to sound out whole short sentences, but he successfully sounded out the word mom, then dad; when each was treated as a complete project. The kids also practiced tracking print and reading their journal entries with me and with 8th grade buddies.

On October 14th, Luke demonstrated that he can write legibly. His handwriting practice for the letter “Q” was excellent. Luke typically displayed behaviors such as standing up and pacing about the room, looking at everyone’s paper but his own when seated, throwing crayons under the table and crawling underneath to pick them up, which could have impeded his focus, as evidenced in his constant fidgeting, requiring directions repeated numerous times, leaving self-directed tasks after about 60 seconds and choosing something else, and finding it necessary to talk with his neighbors when he felt his work is done, regardless of its quality.

October 14th, the students reproduced sight words and sentences from the board or sight word cards. They touched and read self-copied sentences left to right. Many of the younger students were still putting scribbles on the text lines, shadow writing, and slightly overlapping pictures and text. When asked, all students differentiated between image and text, except for five students; all of which were young, and three of which received ESOL intervention during this study. Insights included that the younger students needed to continue receiving a separate curriculum for Kid Writing. They were progressing by working on different skills at a slower pace than their older peers. At the end of the week, the students went on a field trip to the pumpkin patch. They got to pick a real pumpkin, they saw apple trees, bee hives, and rode in a wagon. After we got back, we gathered in whole group and discussed their experience while filling out a senses chart using labeled pictures. The students took turns adding images to the chart. We then went to our teams and they wrote journal entries about their

experience at the pumpkin patch. They were the most elaborate pictures the children had completed thus far, and some students began helping their classmates sound out words to write about their shared experience. They were also reproducing words from each-others' papers which they wanted to spell correctly for their own sentences.

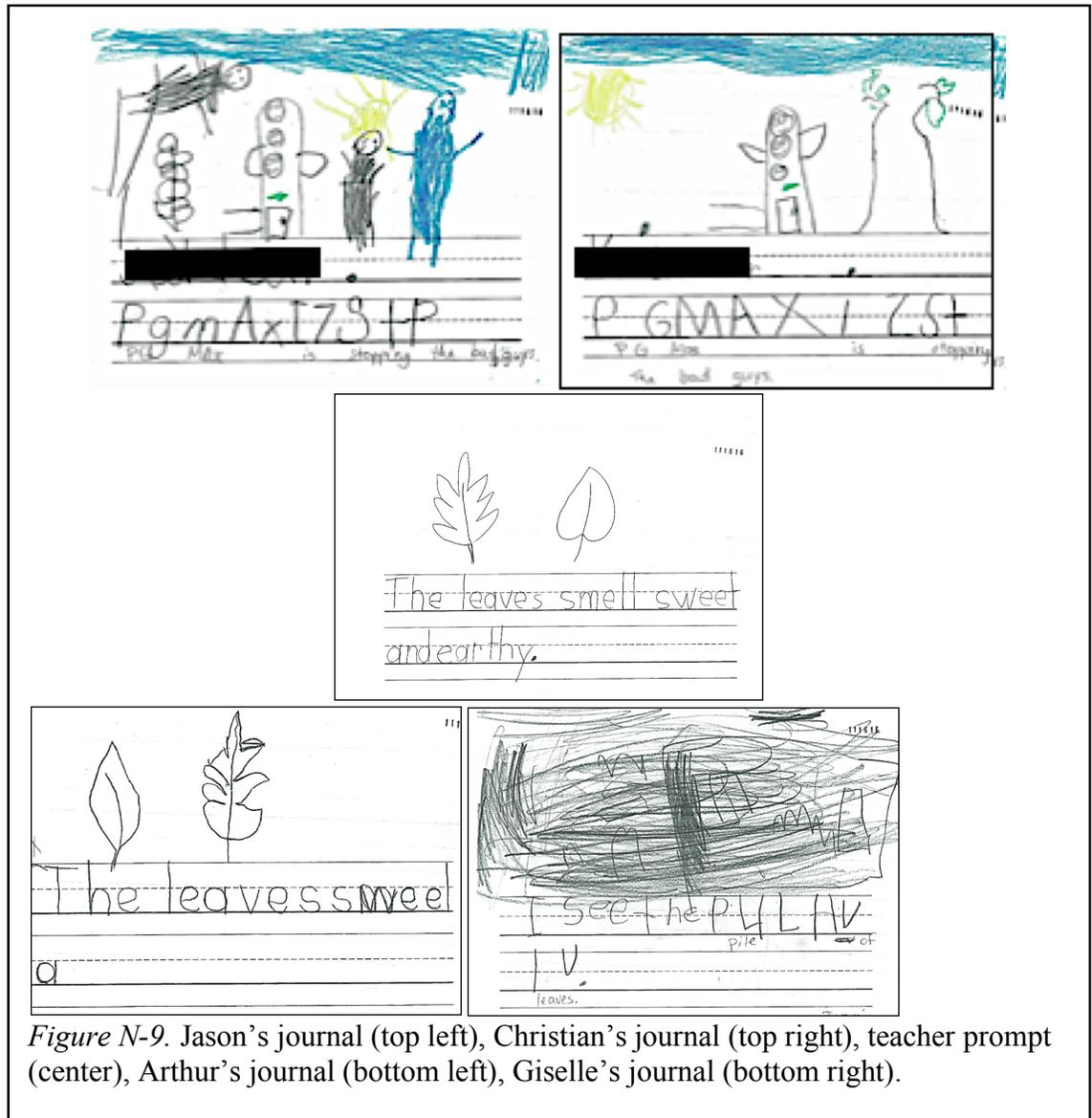


Figure N-9. Jason's journal (top left), Christian's journal (top right), teacher prompt (center), Arthur's journal (bottom left), Giselle's journal (bottom right).

Jason and Christian collaborated on their pictures. They copied off of each other and created a shared story. Giselle provided the letter-sound associations

that allowed the boys to spell their sentence. While Giselle was able to help them by verbally sharing her letter knowledge, she did not share in their story and instead copied the teacher example, along with Arthur, who also assisted Jason and Christian by providing spellings. In this grouping, Jason and Arthur are older, while Christian and Giselle turned five after September 1st.

Week 7: October 17th – 21st

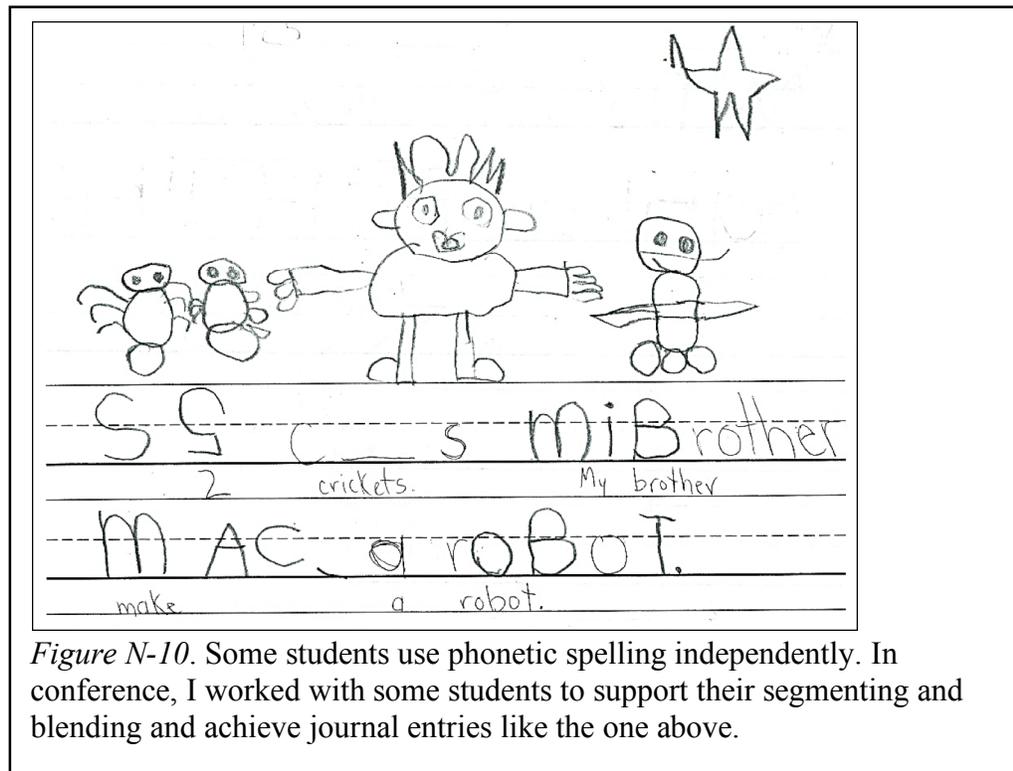


Figure N-10. Some students use phonetic spelling independently. In conference, I worked with some students to support their segmenting and blending and achieve journal entries like the one above.

This week's lessons consisted of providing opportunities for letter-sound matching practice. The students had demonstrated a benefit from shared writing, so we began to increase the frequency of shared writing activities. The head teacher and aid provided Kid writing lessons on Tuesday while I visited another Kid Writing classroom. They completed a read aloud about working together and then answered the prompt "How do you work with others?" I returned to the

classroom and facilitated completion of student interest inventories for the remainder of the week.

Arthur struggled with segmentation to sound out words. Many younger students and some older students copied what was written by the teacher during conferences, a few students expanded upon conference dictation with minimal phonetic writing.

Shadowing a Kid Writing instructor.

On October 18th, I received training in the Kid Writing method from a local practicing kindergarten teacher in her classroom. Ms. Rupp uses Kid Writing in conjunction with Foundations in her kindergarten classroom. It was beneficial to see how another teacher was implementing the type of writing experiences I wanted to provide in our classroom. I used the examples she provided to inform my practice. These examples included ensuring all students attended to the example entry done by the class, the journal writing pages and sight word charts she used, and discussing the writing development progression she observed. Some of her students at that point had begun to phonetically spell. Students who could not yet phonetically spell target words copied strings of sight words from the sight word board or a series of words from the class example journal. I was also experiencing this trend in our classroom, with some students beginning before these steps and scribbling across the entire page. Many of my students were in the initial two stages of writing development (Emerging and Pictorial stages) and treated writing as an aspect of their pictures, while Ms. Rupp's students displayed the ability to differentiate between pictures and alphabetic characters in their

journal entries. The application of both letter-like forms and pictures in journaling is typical of the third and fourth stage of writing development, the Precommunicative and Semiphonetic stages.

Returning to the classroom.

October 19th and 20th were spent completing student interest inventories. I called the kids to a work/job table in small groups of four. I explained the rules: they could pick as many answers as they wanted, there were no right answers, it was to let me know what they think.

Based on student survey data, as shown in Table 3, 91% of the class has maintained a positive opinion of school and school activities. I found that the students enjoyed writing and reading, which meant that the literacy experience provided through journaling was most likely positive. Only two children in the class expressed a preference for math over literacy. Thirty percent of the students in the class prefer to work independently and avoid collaboration. This may be due to minimal contact and collaboration experience prior to entering school. For subsequent lessons, I decided that an aspect of journaling needed to include learning the language and actions specific to collaborative journal writing. Forty-three percent of students preferred reading while fifty-seven percent preferred writing. Five students expressed interest in both. Therefore, most of the class seems to have maintained a positive opinion of school, which could mean that the learning environment and the experiences provided were useful in boosting confidence in school. These results are discussed in more detail on pages 88 and 90.

Enjoyed school	91%	Preferred home	9%
Preferred reading and writing	93%	Preferred math	2
Preferred independent work	30%	Preferred to collaborate	70%

When working with the teams in large group in the classroom, I realized each time I collected a student work sample or helped the student solve a problem or sound out a word, I would say “check” like I was checking the students off of a list, which is pretty hard not to do with a class of thirty-one students. I realized this when Luke started drawing boxes with squiggly lines next to them and putting checkmarks in the boxes as I went around the room. His neighbor, Delia copied him. I praised them for using their writing to make an important list and help me remember who had received assistance that day. I learned that some of the kids knew basic uses for writing and picked up on my verbal cues. Lists are associated with constant action and they are short. They were good motivators for writing for Luke. Jenny and Jamie were at the flannel board with Velcro shapes after completing their journals – they independently ordered all of the shapes in rows by color and shape, moving left to right. This showed me that these students demonstrated the skills of pattern recognition and directionality necessary for writing during their independent activity.

On October 21st, the students could reproduce sight words and complete, simple sentences from the board or sight word cards. Most students copied in the correct direction, and approximately half of the class missed some medial and final letters. The class wrote the correct letter to match the beginning sound when

shadow writing, and occasionally when journaling. They touched and read self-copied sentences left to right with direction. Buddy activities continued to yield good journal entries. By instructing the student buddies in basic read-aloud skills and providing guiding questions, they became aware of skills that would benefit their independent reading comprehension.

Week 8: October 24th – 28th

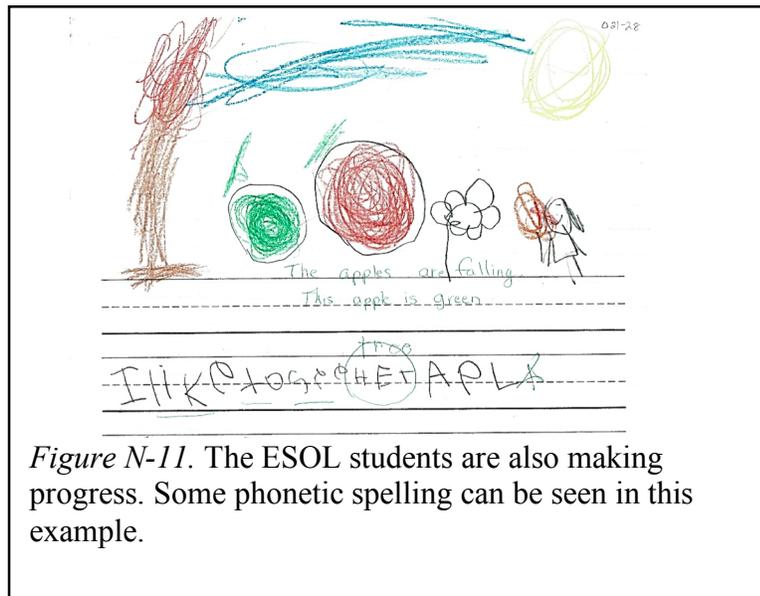


Figure N-11. The ESOL students are also making progress. Some phonetic spelling can be seen in this example.

Thus far in the study, The teachers provided consistent, frequent exposure to stimuli such as books, lists, agendas, and class-created sentences. I realized on the 27th of October that many of the younger students who did not receive one to one conferencing yet that week demonstrated separation of picture and text independently. For example, the students put text and images in separate locations on the page and kept their text within the lines, while the pictures were isolated to the blank space at the top of the page. This showed that the students considered

images and text to be different with different meanings and purposes, which is a major milestone for beginning readers and writers.

Tabitha was progressing, but seemed to be behind the rest of the class. She added few details to her pictures and discussed one key detail in conference. Her conference stories were somewhat static, lacking action verbs. She had begun to separate pictures and text, and had begun reproducing three or more words or word approximations into each journal entry.

Peer mentoring seemed to be effective with Kid Writing. For example, Jason mentored Tabitha by helping her find environmental text so that she could write about the picture she drew. When she was unsure how to physically form a letter, he helped her by replicating what I did with them. He drew the lines first and she traced them. I found the four year olds responded well to seeing the example of the older kids. They benefited most from shared writing and independent drawing. Both age groups did a lot of shadow writing and reproduction of environmental text. They need common words with pictures to refer to when writing. Both groups required scaffolding.

The students began breaking down two-syllable words by using the following protocol: clap once for each syllable or “part” and mime “hitting a baseball” to blend the syllables back together and say the complete word. Ideas moving forward included a picture game where they express themselves using simple sentences. I make cards with pictures and words on them and they can mix and match them. It would be best if they were rubbing stencils. This game never came to fruition in time to use it with the students.

By the end of October, most students differentiated between writing space for Kid Writing and picture drawing space. Nina usually had letters in the proper sequence, and infrequently missed letters. Javier wrote large letters which spilled into the picture space. There were a few students who could write upper and lowercase letters. Most students used some form of letters, mostly including capital letters. Some students put initial sounds on their paper independently. The teachers and I kept them writing almost daily. The beading, pattern board activities, and parquetry may have also helped build dexterity and pattern-recognition skills. We concluded at that point that continuing review games for letter-sound association would benefit the students. We also continued to emphasize the connection between pictures and words used to write about them.

If we journaled following a read-aloud, we would first engage in discussion involving text-to-self connections. We would then create a class journal entry, followed by an opportunity for the students to journal independently. For example, we read *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss aloud. We stopped periodically and the students and I engaged in discussion about vocabulary, character actions, and other occurrences within the story. We first talked about the cat's actions, then about the importance of his hat. To support our lesson on color words, we ended the discussion with the question, "What are the colors of the cat's hat?" Our class journal entry was, "The cat's hat is red and white." The children had a copy of the book at each of the tables so that they could share and have the book available to look at and reproduce words and pictures from. Whole text sets were frequently on display on the chalkboard and select books were brought to

“meeting time” when the kids sat on the floor together with the teacher and had discussions, making text-to-text connections.

We used shadow writing and environmental text as a bridge to increase text recognition and writing confidence. If the students were not comfortable writing their own sentence, they could reproduce the example sentence. If they didn’t know how to spell a word, as they progressed they could find that word in the example sentence. They were also taught to locate words in their environment and use those sources the same way other grades use picture dictionaries to increase spelling accuracy when writing independent thoughts. An example of use of environmental text is:

Peter: *[Raises his hand. Ms. Boyer walks to Peter.]* Ms. Boyer, how do you spell the word ‘home’?

Ms. Boyer: Well, Peter, what is the first thing we do?

Peter: Sound out the word. But I sounded out the word.

Ms. Boyer: I see you wrote “I play at h_m.” Like our example, “I play with my sister.” Now, find the word ‘home’ to complete your thought.

Peter: *[walks up to schedule board with his journal and copies the word ‘home.’]*

Ms. Boyer: Good job finding the word, Peter!

Collaboration became increasingly natural. Students towards the end would ask their friends and neighbors to help them spell a word or find it in the classroom. One time, Christian and Joshua were responding to a math

session where we counted with blocks and made a tower. We made a story about it, measured it with a ruler, and counted how many blocks high and wide it was. They thought of a new super hero story based on a video game they both shared and they worked together to draw and write the same sentence about it. Arthur helped them sound out all of their words while he meticulously copied the example sentence and picture from the board. After that experience, Arthur was encouraged to write his own thought, but the three boys did a great job learning together and helping each other.

November - Week 9: October 31st – November 4th

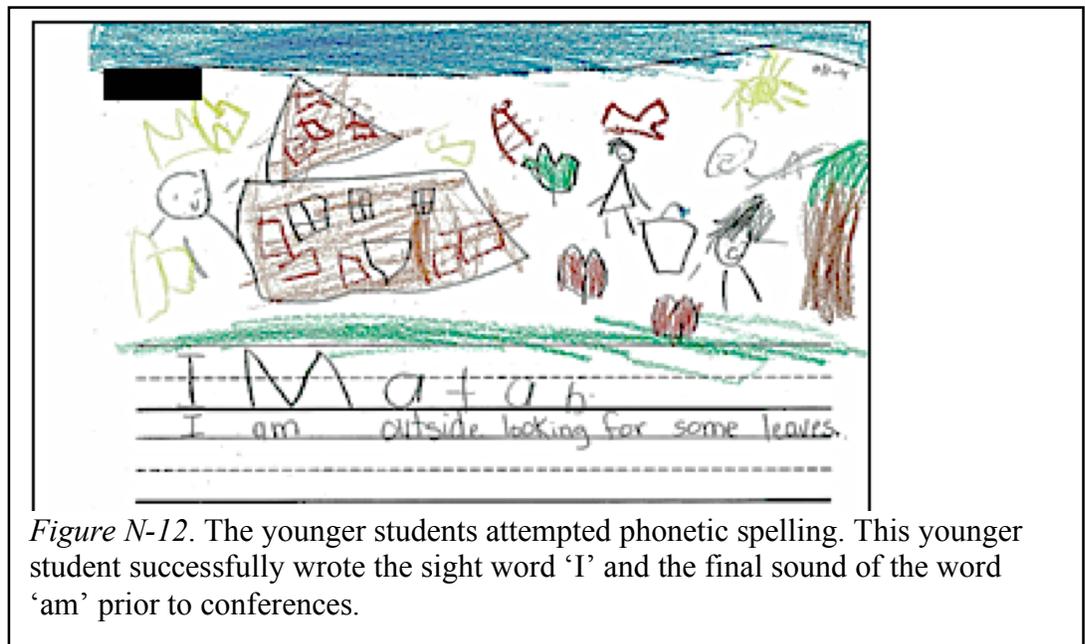


Figure N-12. The younger students attempted phonetic spelling. This younger student successfully wrote the sight word 'I' and the final sound of the word 'am' prior to conferences.

Kid Writing sessions were completed at the latter end of the week following Halloween celebrations. The kindergarten teacher completed journal activities based on these activities earlier in the week. The students worked in the

classroom and most of the lesson was conducted in whole group with the kindergarten aid and the head teacher.

Four teams rotated through the resource room with me after listening to a read-aloud from their big book unit, “Building with Dad”. During discussion, most of the older students and some students with preschool experience participated by identifying beginning sounds of key words, replacing initial sounds to make new words, and asking what rhymed. The remaining students primarily observed and volunteered to add pictures to the example journal entry. When asked what they would like to build, the class added lots of different types of buildings, which all received labels before the students began writing their journal entries.

Aiden copied the first half of the prompt “I want to build...” He and I began to sound out the word “scary” for his scary school.

Aiden: Does scary end with an ‘e’?

Ms. Boyer: “That’s the right sound, but at the end of a word, the letter ‘y’ sometimes makes that sound.”

[Ms. Boyer writes the word “scary” underneath Aiden’s label]

Aiden: “Can I write a y at the end [of his Kid Writing]?”

Ms. Boyer: “Yes. Please do.”

Aiden tried to write “a scary school”, but ended up using my example writing of the word “scary” under his independently created label and wrote “scary a school.”

Many students began writing the words they found on sticky note picture labels on the board that the group and I completed together before the current group began their Kid Writing. The younger kids needed a large amount of prompting to make sure they reproduced the target sentence prompt from the board: “I like to build _____.”

Luke attempted to draw and write about building a skate park. He worked on his journal entry for a maximum of ten minutes. I had Luke choose a word to phonetically spell, put his nametag with the alphabet right above the paper, and we sounded out some parts of the term “skate park”. When we finished working together, he moved to the next activity immediately, while some of his peers continued to work on their journals for an extra ten minutes past their conference time. His recent trip to the pediatrician informed the family and the school that his diabetes must be consistently monitored and he must receive insulin multiple times per day. We continued to observe whether his blood sugar has any effect on his attention and behavior.

Multiple students made progress that week. Carson conferenced with me and wrote quite a bit. He added a detail about a dog and wrote the word independently, spelled correctly, during conference. He included the alphabet on most of his papers throughout the week. Anna read her dictation with me. I asked her questions about her picture and transcribed sentences with details. After that discussion, I asked her to go back and read her first sentence with the target words. She read most of the words independently. She did not know the word ‘build’.

Many younger students received support adding labels to their pictures and writing independent thoughts after adding letter approximations or environmental text independently. Tabitha and Giselle only copied when told to and I watched them complete the task. They spoke with detail but did not volunteer to write.

The students started to help each other and form their own focus groups to sound out words for each other and get the words down that they wanted. They also worked together on the pictures. Christian and Jason collaborated and each made their own picture of the same thing and decided on a sentence that their focus group helped them sound out. Arthur and Giselle were instrumental in this task. Giselle used it as a reason not to complete her own journal immediately, while Arthur was busy writing the example with precision only matched by a visual artist. He copied everything exactly, right down to the pictures. Through helping his neighbors, he demonstrated that he could use segmentation and blending to spell out a thought.

Week 10: Finishing the Alphabet - November 5th – 9th



Figure N-13. Both older and younger students are capable of copying enough words to make a sentence. Many of the students in both age groups were using initial or final sounds to represent whole words that were not readily available in their environment, such as 'r' for 'earrings' (left). The older student (right) used magic lines to remind him to ask how to spell two new words during conference.

By November 9th, students were beginning to isolate initial sounds and identify rhymes.

Nina: “Time rhymes with /t/.”

Ms. Boyer: “yes. Time BEGINS with /t/. A rhyme sounds like /time – slime/. Which part is the same? Beginning or end?”

Javier: “The end. Sun-fun sun fun, sounds the same they rhyme.

Ms. Boyer: Very good, Javier. Nina, do see and key rhyme?”

As we wrote, Holly turned and looked from me to her picture and back to me. She pointed to her drawing as she announced, “‘C’ is for car.” Jason reviewed his drawing and added, “Bottle starts with ‘B’.”

Tabitha needed lots of support emotionally, and assistance in writing words for her stories. We used the alphabet on her name card to find ‘J’ for jacket. She then went on to produce the spelling for the word as ‘jklmnop’. Lots of cueing was needed to stop her spelling at the letter ‘K’ and shadow write ‘T’ for the final sound.

Three younger students and one older student who received speech therapy were in a group. We reviewed the story, *Three Little Kittens Who Lost Their Mittens* from their reading series. We discussed how kittens and mittens rhymed. All kids said in chorus: “kittens-mittens, kittens-mittens, sound the same they rhyme.” Nina, Delia and Joshua were very verbally expressive in conferences. They and some of their peers still seemed to find difficulty associating sounds and graphemes, with the exception of letters I, T, J, and M.

The students worked as a group to help each other. They demonstrated the most success when they could rely on each other for help to spell key nouns for their stories. Nina was very active answering questions regarding letter-sound matching, and did not demonstrate signs of discomfort 40% accuracy letter-sound matching. Aiden heard and spelled beginning and end sounds independently. Emmanuel R. refused to participate for first 10 minutes, but eventually became active. I introduced “magic lines” to the older of our four groups. Aiden applied the concept in his journal writing when he wanted assistance spelling the words mitten and rocket. The goal of magic line use is to eventually only use the lines for specific phonemes within a word instead of whole words.

Due to schedule conflicts, Emmanuel F. had a one-to-one lesson. He was focused at the table by himself. He copied well, and was still working on letter-sound association. To increase his association between /w/ and “w”, we used our hands to make “W” for water and recited “water, /w/.” We each drew the letter ‘W’ in a bucket of water on the board, highlighted the letter with a different color chalk, and then linked it visually to alphabet line on his nametag. We ended by using it in the context of the word “win” in his journal entry. Luke and Emmanuel F. benefited from using an increased variety of textures such as sand and play dough as mediums to write letters. The sand was difficult to contain and needed constant supervision, but the playdough letters worked well as an independent center following an introductory lesson.

All students progressed at a different rate and struggled with different skills. All children required support in the learning of different oral language skills prior to their application in writing. The students expressed themselves orally and collaboratively sounded out the words they desired to use to express their thoughts. By expressing themselves through pictures first and dictating some of the story during conferences, they transitioned to expressing themselves more fully in their writing.

All students passed through a period where they benefitted from reproducing the alphabet, and would do so independently and frequently. They started with the capital letters and transitioned to the lowercase letters regardless of the frequency with which they were exposed to capital and lowercase letters. Their stories initially included mostly or strictly concrete concepts from their daily experience. Students began mixing daily life such as common places and people with make-believe elements such as dragons, zombies, and superheroes. The students had begun to use fictional narration in their journaling and in their conferences.

Week 11: November 12th – 16th

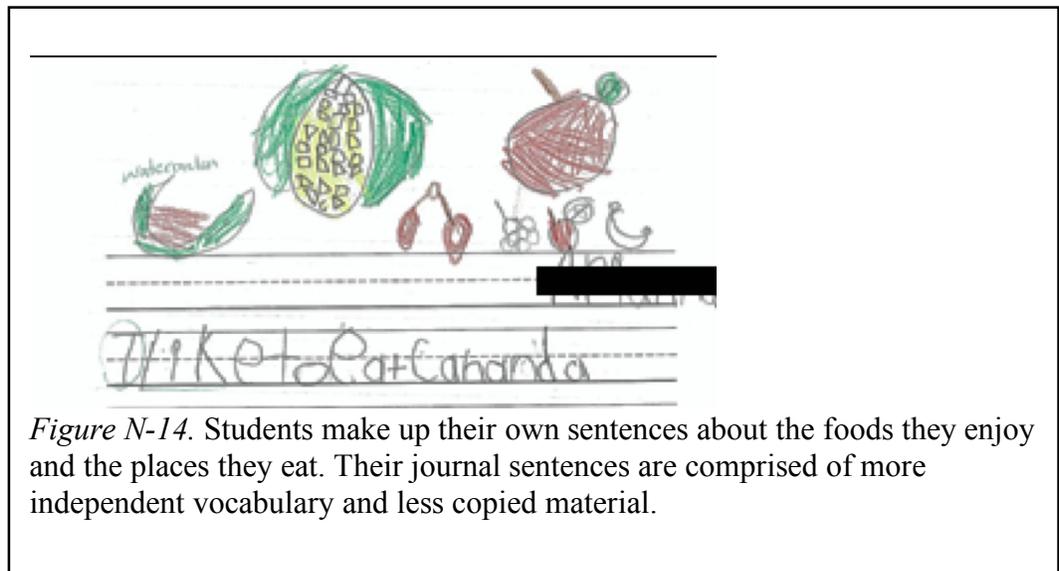


Figure N-14. Students make up their own sentences about the foods they enjoy and the places they eat. Their journal sentences are comprised of more independent vocabulary and less copied material.

Multiple children in the group of oldest students were able to identify initial and final phonemes in words, including Luke. The quality of Luke's journal entries improved. He spent an average of five to ten minutes on each entry, and quietly moved to the next task on most occasions. I checked with the school nurse, and his blood sugar stability had increased. He was a candidate for an insulin pump, which was expected to be added after the conclusion of the study.

On November 16th, Delia found success in guided reproduction of environmental text. She was able to find the words needed for her sentence on the word wall and her nametag with guidance from myself and her peers. She maintained her sentence in her head independently. She did not attempt to sound out the word with prompting. Even with lots of prompting, narrowing of choices, she remained silent for a long time.

Some children began sounding out words, while others demonstrated a preference for shadow writing and reproducing examples. Christian, Jason, Arthur and Christine worked together to sound out a joint sentence that Christian and Jason wanted to do about a video game character. Christine and Arthur copied a sentence from our class example, while he and Christine correctly segmented the words and listed appropriate letters for the other boys who were creating their own sentence from scratch. Giselle sounded out words with little assistance and did not attend to print or write anything she said for others. She struggled to sound out the words to her own sentence with my assistance and used the word wall to write most of her thought.

Luke was very energetic and wrote a few wavy letters to answer the prompt. He demonstrated frustration when sounding out words with me. Javier and Marilyn gave detailed stories in conference but were hesitant to write them. Aiden was anxious to write and used sight words and phonological awareness skills well. In conference, we reviewed his journal entry and corrected phonetic spelling. Alison, when asked to identify what letter makes the /s/ sound in the word 'snake', identified L, R, T, and B as representations of /s/. She copied the teacher example on the lines correctly. Peter sounded out the word 'leaves' with great difficulty and little aid. He used the word wall with prompting.

On November 19th, Tabitha brought me a paper she colored leaves on. She wrote a bunch of letter-like forms that did not correspond to her thought dictated to me in conference, "My mom has toys and food for me at home." She was very engaged and proud of her achievement.

The school celebrated Thanksgiving on November 20th and was on Thanksgiving November 21st through November 28th. Nov. 19 and 20 were that last days before vacation. There were lots of special activities and not a lot of teaching. They were allowed to write and draw on Monday, but no formal journal was completed during those 2 days.

Week 12 and Post-Testing: November 29th - December 9th

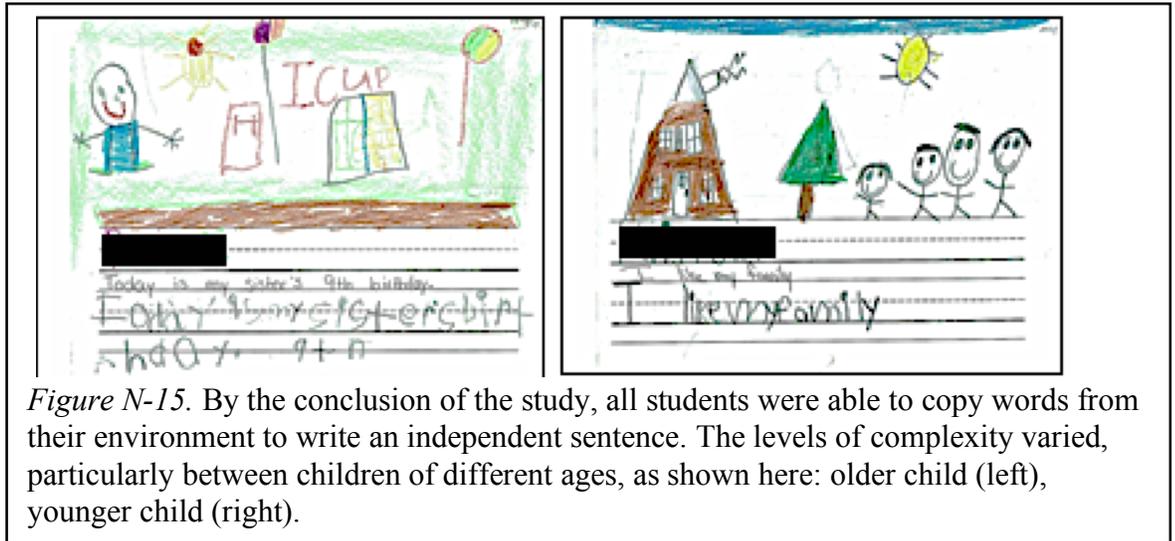


Figure N-15. By the conclusion of the study, all students were able to copy words from their environment to write an independent sentence. The levels of complexity varied, particularly between children of different ages, as shown here: older child (left), younger child (right).

During the two weeks following Thanksgiving break, the students completed Istation testing, Letter Knowledge testing, and we collected two writing samples. By the middle of December, many students were already on vacation with their families to visit family in other countries for Christmas. Some of the children who left right before Christmas break did not arrive back to school until after Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Reproducing the ABC's is a point they reached and a developmental milestone all of the students went through or are going through. After that stage, all of the students started playing with sounds in words and sounding out words that they were writing. The students remained engaged in all of the fine motor development centers we established.

DATA ANALYSIS

Surveys

preference for writing.

At the beginning of the study, the students were asked about their preference for reading and writing, collaboration, and other subjects and school activities. The surveys were given in small group. Students were allowed to select all responses that expressed their opinions on the activities survey; on the emotional response survey, they were instructed to select one response that best expressed their feelings about reading, writing, and working with their peers. The children were asked the same questions at the end of the study. The questions are given in Appendices G and H, and Figures 1 and 2 are pie charts of the results.

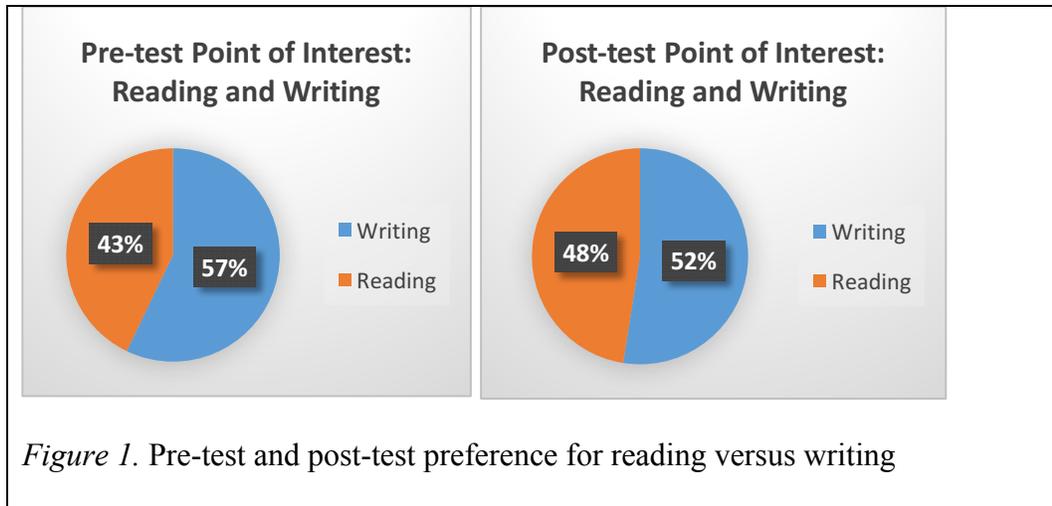


Figure 1 shows student responses which indicated whether they preferred reading or writing. Students were provided the opportunity to ask for clarification and to interpret the questions according to their experiences with reading and writing. In the pretest, students indicated that they preferred writing

(57%) over reading (43%). In the post-test, students indicated that they still preferred writing (52%) over reading (48%). There was no significant change in their preference for reading or writing from beginning to end of the study. Nearly half of the class enjoyed writing more than reading. In both cases, many students who indicated enjoyment for reading also wrote that they enjoyed writing.

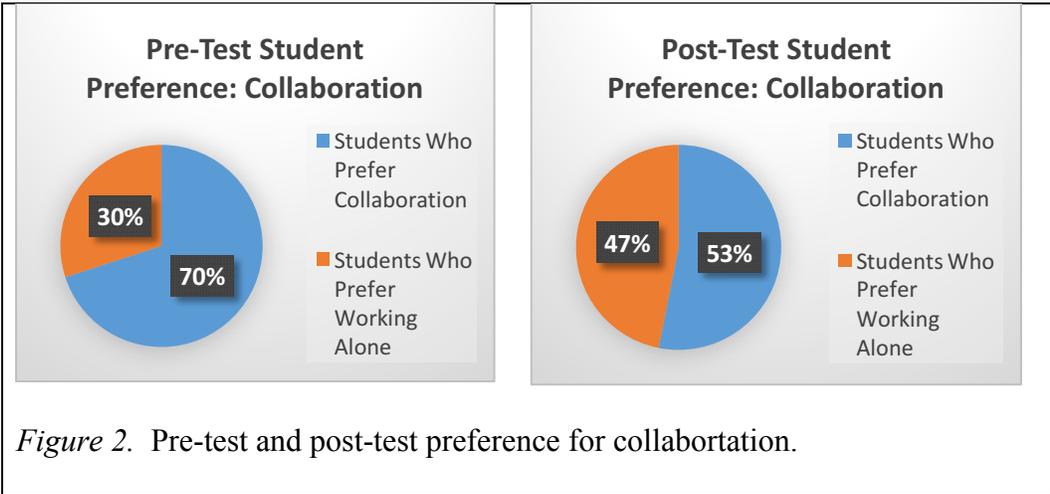
Students journaled for an average of 40 minutes per school day. This information demonstrates that an increase in the amount of writing required during the study did not deter students, nor increase their desire to write. I believe this is because students found the activities engaging, as noted throughout my study, and through the active participation of all of the students in discussion, journaling, and conferences. These results are important to the effectiveness of Kid Writing because student engagement is essential for effective learning to take place. Students were able to retain information longer when they learned it in a meaningful context, such as journaling (Saad & Ahmed, 2015). These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Paley (1992), Feldgus & Cardonick (2000), Gray (2013), Vygotsky (1978), and Saad & Ahmed (2015), as discussed on pages 6, 10, 11, and 34.

collaboration.

Before the study began, the students were asked via the emotional response survey in appendices G and H whether they preferred to collaborate or work independently. Figure 2 shows that at the beginning of the study, 70% of children preferred to collaborate over 30% who preferred to work independently.

At the conclusion of the study, the percentage of students who preferred collaboration had decreased to 53%.

Student preference for collaboration decreased by 17% from the beginning of the study to the end of the study. This may be due to the increase in the number of collaborative activities, which required children who do not normally work together to rely on each other for completion of classroom activities. This reliance may have been viewed as a hindrance for some students who had previously enjoyed collaborative play.



These results are important because students spent a large percentage of their journaling time collaborating with classmates and instructors to increase their writing skills. They were taught to use their environment and those around them as resources to support written communication, exemplified in the “walk to the text” strategy described in Appendix P. (also see Kid Writing Procedure, Table 2, p. 34). The decrease in preference for collaboration may be due to an increased understanding of what collaboration entails. Students who were not

comfortable asking their peers and teachers questions were less likely to progress due to limited use of available support systems that proved beneficial to Kid Writing, and therefore were less likely to state that they enjoyed collaboration. It was noted on several occasions that students helped each other complete tasks. There were also students during these times who purposely separated themselves from others to complete writing tasks.

These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Feldgus & Cardonick (2000) and others (Carpenter, 2000; Gray, 2013; Lillard 1996, 2005; Leigh, 2015; Saad & Ahmed, 2015; Vygotsky, 1965). These findings are also consistent with observations discussed in my story. Students collaborated frequently and most often saw improvement in their written communication during periods of collaboration such as those discussed on pages 73, 81, 85, and 88. Collaboration between kindergarten students, and kindergarteners and the 8th grade helpers also increased productivity in some student groups as noted on pages 45, 58, 70-71, 73, 77, 79, 81, 82, 85, and 87.

Artifacts

Artifacts included student work samples consisting of journal entries and copying assessments. Assessments were taken weekly and graded using rubrics found in Appendices I, J, and K. Rubrics included the Kindergarten Copying Assessment (CA) which gave a measurement of fine motor development, Kindergarten Writing Rubric (KWR), which measured journal entries, and the Conventions of Writing Development Scale (CWDS) (Feldgus and Cardonick, pp. 169-170), which measured students' writing progress on a Level system of 1:

Emerging to 8: Advanced. Results from the first, sixth, and final weeks of the study were more extensively analyzed in the following tables.

Students completed the Teacher-Administered Letter Knowledge Test (TALKT) during the first week of October and at the end of the study. During the test, students were shown alphabet flashcards and asked to provide the letter name and sound for each upper and lowercase letter of the alphabet. The TALKT scoring rubric can be found in Appendix L.

Kid Writing and Copying Assessments.

Conventions of writing development scale.

Student writing samples were taken weekly and assessed using the Conventions of Writing Development Scale (CWDS) found in appendix K. This scale measures students' progress based on the pictorial and orthographic content of their journal entries through eight stages of writing development. Students achieved between a level 1 and a level 4 throughout the course of the study. Level 1 requires students to use a crayon or pencil and scribble within a page and attribute meaning to it. For example, a series of red scribbles would accompany the dictation, "This is my puppy." Level 4 requires students to correctly use some letters to match sounds, use one beginning letter to represent a whole word, and most frequently write left to right, inverting some letters. These writings would typically be accompanied by a detailed picture that incorporates various colors and pertains to their dictated story. In this case, a picture of a stick figure dog on the grass outside of a house would accompany a string of letters, such as "MYp kz BALL the to home," with the dictation, "My puppy catches the ball outside my

house.” In this example, the student would have used their environment to find and reproduce the spellings for most of the whole words in the sentence, and attempted to phonetically spell the words *catch* and *puppy*. Overall, the class demonstrated consistent improvement in their written expression over the course of the study.

The CWDS measures average level changes in the kindergarten class as identified by their writing samples taken at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the study. The numerical values are the students’ writing level as defined by the CWDS (see Appendix K). Each movement of 0.1 or greater indicates a shift of a significant number of students from one developmental stage to the next. Our school district expects students to be capable of completing level 5 work by the end of kindergarten and completing level 8 work by the middle of second grade.

CWDS: Older vs. Younger Student Performance.

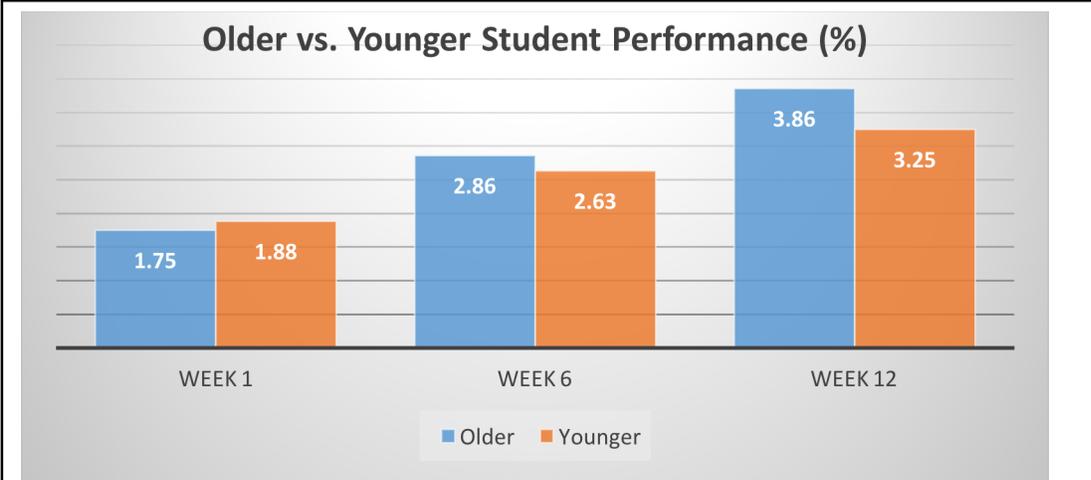


Figure 3. Comparison of Average Conventions of Writing Development Scale (CWDS) achievement level for Older vs. Younger students (out of 8 total possible levels)

Students categorized as “older” turned five years old on or before August 31st, 2016. “Younger” students turned five years old after August 31st. Some students struggled to transition from Precommunicative (Level 3) to Semiphonetic (Level 4) due to difficulties incorporating phonetics in their writing. Many students who struggled to transition from reproduction of environmental text to phonetic spelling during the course of the study celebrated their fifth birthday after September 1st. This indicates a different stage of phonological awareness acquisition from their peers. Phonological awareness is necessary for successful completion of Kid Writing activities. This finding is consistent with research by Paul & Norbury (2012) and Alderson-Day & Fernyhough (2015) (p. 16, 20). In addition, many participants were identified as ESOL or simultaneous bilingual. Hart & Risley (1995, 2013), Ramos-Sanchez & Cuadrado-Gordillo (2004), Gunning (2014), and others agree that low SES and acquiring English as an ESOL student or simultaneous bilingual student with a majority language that is not English can result in a slower rate of English language acquisition.

Also, the achievement gap between the older students and the younger students grew significantly between week six and week twelve. Week twelve testing closely followed Thanksgiving break. This may indicate that the younger students required increased repetition to maintain letter-sound association skills as other phonological awareness skills began to emerge, while the older students whose phonological awareness skills had begun to emerge earlier in the study were able to focus on applying letter-sound relations in context. Repeated application of letter-sound associations in the meaningful context of segmenting

and blending for journal writing may have increased the older student's retention of letter-sound associations. Segmenting and blending are Phonological awareness skills the younger students were still developing at the time this study was conducted.

Three students did not fit this schema. Carson and Jenny were younger and progressed to Semiphonetic (Level 4), while Hope and Luke were older and progressed from Emerging (Level 1) to Precommunicative (Level 3). Hope got a prescription for corrective lenses after the study concluded. Her eyesight may have hindered her writing development. Luke was diagnosed with diabetes before beginning the study. The majority of his school work was completed during the hour following snack or following lunch, when he demonstrated the most focus and calm (p. 59).

I observed that two older students scored similarly to their age group in their ability to orally dictate a story and to use phonological awareness skills such as rhyming. Both of these students received ESOL intervention throughout the study. These students scored at Level 1 at the beginning of the study and progressed to Level 4 by the conclusion of the study, showing a more rapid rate of growth than the younger group. All samples taken from the two older students lacked sharp detail in their pictures. It was also noted that these same two students had limited pencil grip and struggled to complete journal entries throughout the study. This suggests that the development of fine motor skills and literacy may be connected, as discussed on pages 19 and 28. The expression of literacy in the form of writing may emerge some time following the acquisition of phonological

awareness skills and is equally dependent on phonological awareness and fine motor coordination, as discussed on page 21.

CWDS: English Support vs. English Proficient Student Performance.

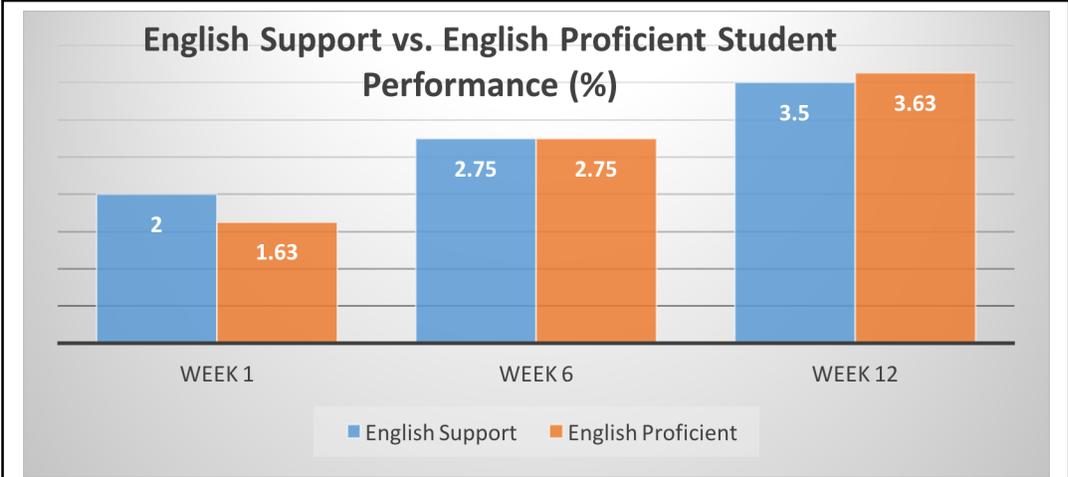


Figure 4. Comparison of Average Conventions of Writing Development Scale (CWDS) achievement level for English Support vs. English Proficient students (out of 8 total possible levels)

English support students included simultaneous bilingual students whose majority language, the primary language of their home environment, was another language aside from English, and ESOL students who were born in another country and were tested for ESOL services at the beginning of the school year. English proficient were identified as simultaneous bilingual students who spoke both English and Spanish from birth at home, and English speaking monolingual students. We observed that 20 English Support students scored higher than 10 English Fluent students at the start of the study, but overall progressed at a slightly slower rate than their English Proficient peers. By the conclusion of the study, the English Proficient students achieved a higher level score than the English Support students.

One ESOL English support student who did not fit this schema was Jamie. She consistently scored higher than many of her English Proficient classmates. She was also the most verbal, able to dictate and then shadow write multiple-sentence original stories. In fact, all of the highest achieving students demonstrated proficiency in oral story-telling. This is in keeping with the findings of Vygotsky and Gillon discussed on pages 20-21, that oral language is necessary for young children to complete certain tasks, and development of personal narration precedes expression of the same narration through writing. Carson and Colleagues (2013) found that explicit teaching of Kid Writing skills such as sounding out words and formulating thoughts before beginning to write are especially beneficial to students who are second language learners, students with special needs, and students who have limited early literacy experiences.

CWDS: Home Literature Support vs. Limited Home Literature Support Student Performance.

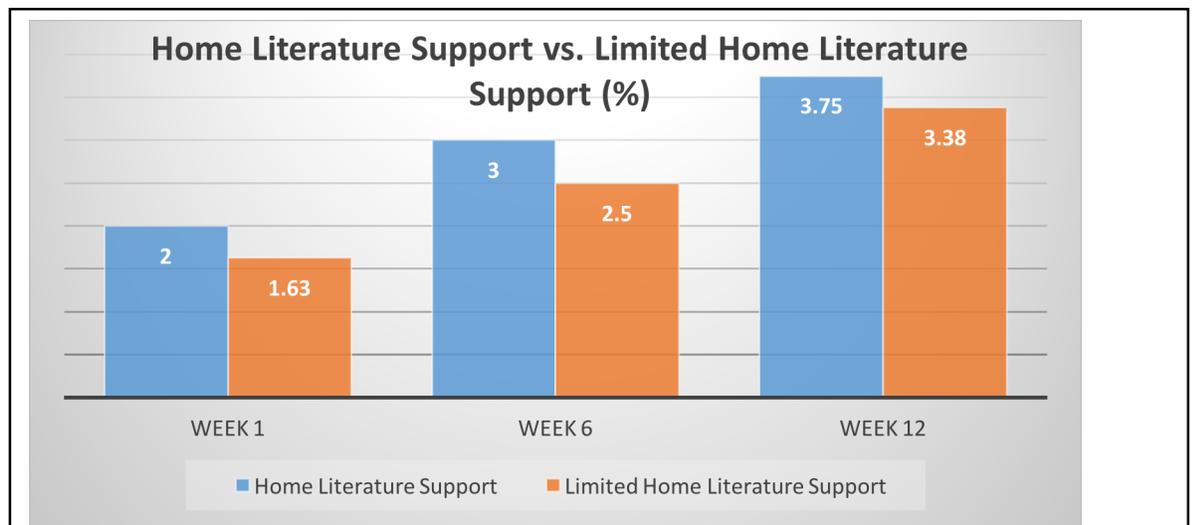


Figure 5. Comparison of Average Conventions of Writing Development Scale (CWDS) achievement level for Home Literature Support vs. Limited Home Literature Support for learning English at Home (out of 8 total possible levels)

Students with literature support were identified as students whose parents indicated on a questionnaire during conferences, that they participated in literature activities with their children at home. Students who had support outside of the classroom consistently out-performed students who did not have parents that were available to work with them at home, regardless of previous schooling experience. Most students in the support group did have preschool experience, while a higher percentage of the ‘less support’ group did not attend preschool.

This is significant because those students who have parental support at home are most likely to receive praise and support for their journal writing, are most likely to have the resources to practice reading, writing, and oral communication at home in a meaningful context, and are the most likely to have exposure to print and higher level vocabulary, as supported by the research of Hart & Risley (1995, 2013), Gray (2013), Freire (1970), Montessori (1965), Saad & Ahmed (2015), and others and discussed on pages 11, 18, 21-22, and 24. As noted by Gunning (2014), ESOL students and students with learning difficulties are more likely to find learning to write discouraging. Home reinforcement empowers the students to take risks and practice writing in and out of school, which has been shown to increase proficiency over time.

Students in this study whose parents indicated less home literacy support were also simultaneous bilingual and ESOL children who received ESOL support in the classroom. These students would most likely benefit from direct instruction, as noted by Gillon (2013). The development of written expression is typically

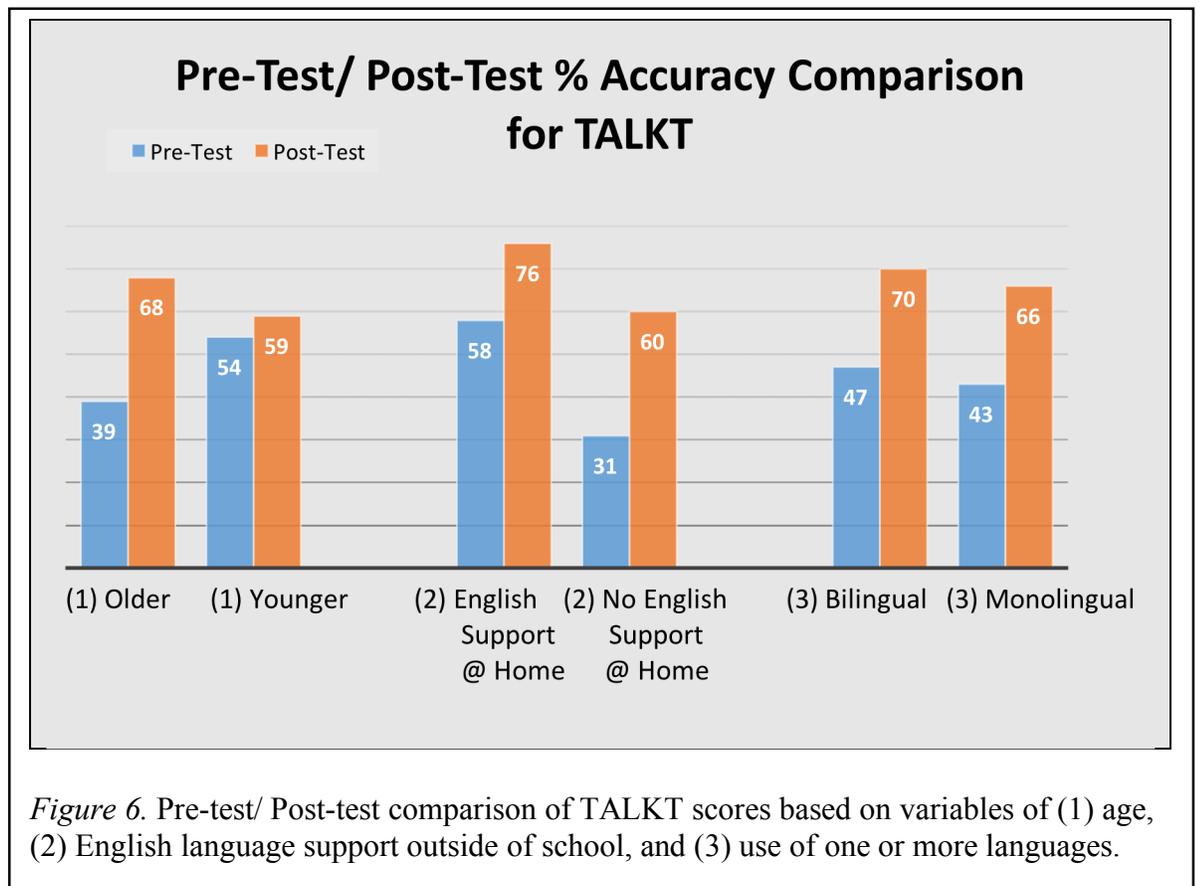
supported by the development of oral expression as discussed on pages 18 and 20-21 (Brabeck, Jeffrey & Fry, 2017; Dickinson, 2006; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009).

Intertwining of oral and written development was addressed by the Kid Writing method through use of dictation during conferences and discussions that primed the students to write their journal entries. Student use of shadow writing - the act of tracing over teacher-written student dictation or shadow writing the dictation directly on top of or underneath the teacher text – provided ESOL students, simultaneous bilingual students with a majority language of Spanish, and special needs students the opportunity to achieve success in writing in English. This addition to kid writing seems to have increased their confidence in writing in English, as evidenced by their enthusiasm for beginning journaling projects, and their requests to participate in discussion regarding their entries. Shadow writing also provided a scaffold to allow these groups of students to connect meaning to the written word, as expressed on page 63.

Teacher Administered Letter Knowledge Test (TALKT).

The Teacher Administered Letter-Knowledge Test (TALKT) is an assessment created by the instructor in which each student's letter knowledge is tested individually using flashcards of uppercase and lowercase English alphabet letters. In brief, the TALKT is a measure in which each student is required to produce the name and one associated sound for each letter of the alphabet independently, both uppercase and lowercase. The name and sound of each letter are scored separately, resulting in a total of 104 points. The score sheet can be

found in appendix L. The students were given one opportunity to name the letter and give at least one associated sound before being marked incorrect for the letter name or sound. If the student did not answer, they were prompted, but given no hints. If the students still did not answer, they were given no points, but given a hint and allowed to answer so as to maintain some perception of success and encourage participation in the remainder of the test. The TALKT was completed at the beginning of the second month and at the end of the study.



The TALKT was administered October 5th-7th, and at the conclusion of the study, December 12th-16th using a grading chart (Appendix L) and capital and lowercase letter flash cards. The pre-test had the children identify the name and sound of capital letters A-M only (26 items) independently, as those were the

letters they had reviewed in class during the month of September. The post-test required the students to identify all capital and lowercase letters of the English alphabet and their sounds (104 items) independently. Three students were still not able to identify lowercase letters, and so they were only tested on all uppercase letters (52 items).

When grouped by age, as seen in grouping “1”, the older students began the year with less letter knowledge than the younger students. Many younger students participated in preschool programs while many older students came without that experience. The older students increased their accuracy percentage by 29% from the pre-test to the post-test, while the younger students only improved by 5%. This may be attributed to a need for repetition of basic phonological awareness skills such as letter-sound association and rhyming in the younger student population as evidenced on pages 51, 63, 65, and 70-71, and discussed on pages 7, 11, 18, 29. The students were tested following Thanksgiving break and before Christmas.

In grouping “2”, students with support at home to practice reading, letter sounds, and review work sent home achieved higher scores overall than did students without that support system. The students with home support also increased their TALKT score by 11% less than their peers who lacked support structures at home. This suggests that one or more students began receiving help with their letters at home, or that students without support at home have the aptitude to learn rapidly and begin to match the success of their classmates by participating in the curriculum.

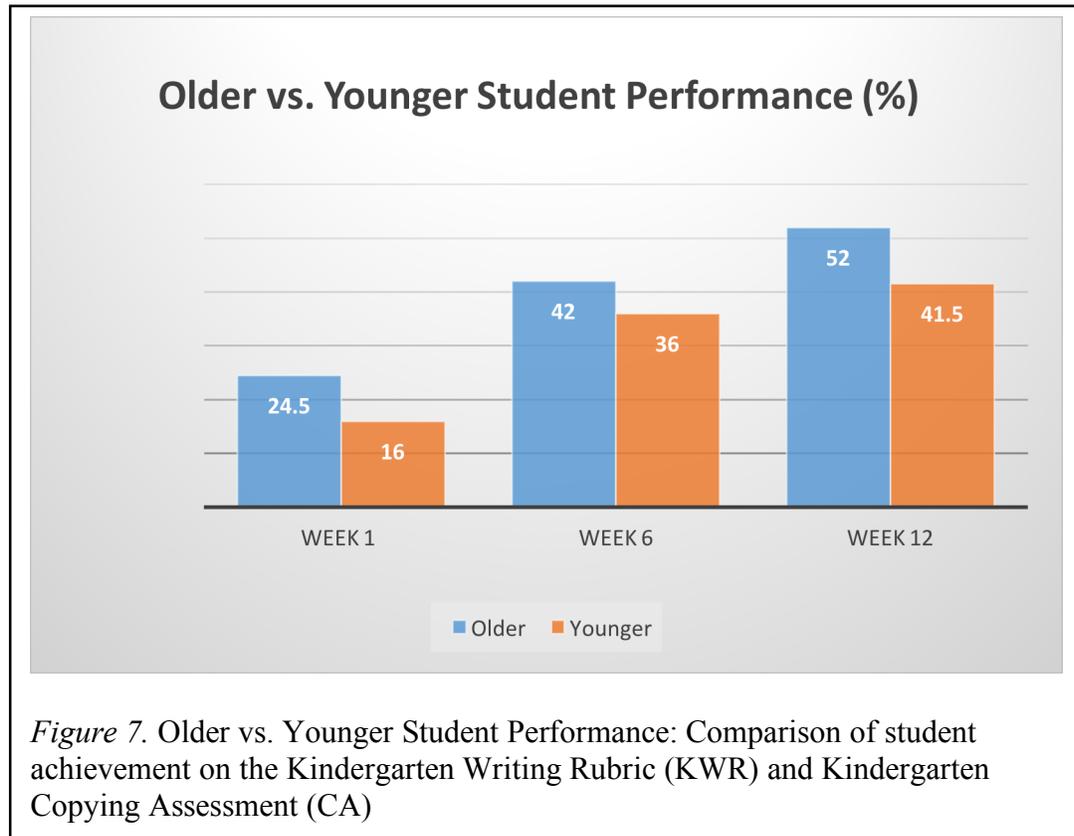
In grouping “3”, both English Proficient and English Support students achieved similar results, with English Support students achieving slightly higher scores than English Proficient students. This slight difference may be attributable to the students who came into kindergarten conversationally fluent in both English and Spanish, as identified in Table 1 on page 31.

Kindergarten Writing Rubric (KWR) and Kindergarten Copying Assessment (CA).

The Kindergarten Writing Rubric can be found in Appendix J. It measures progress in the areas of ideas, word choice, conventions, organization, phonetic spelling, sight word spelling, and presentation. To achieve a perfect score, students must express at least one written idea with a subject, and have a matching picture in their journal entry. They must also incorporate basic vocabulary and reproduce sight words correctly to receive. Students must write in complete sentences with a beginning, middle, and end, and use correct capitalization and punctuation. Their name must be on the paper and the paper must be properly titled or formatted, where applicable.

The Kindergarten Copying Assessment (CA) measures pencil grip and control, spacing, word structure, sentence structure, and the types of strokes the children can incorporate in their writing. To score full points, students must master the pincer grasp and produce legible strokes with ease within the writing space. They must also use proper spacing, capitalization, punctuation, and be able to write all of their letters and numbers 1-20.

KWR and CA: Older vs. Younger Student Performance.



Students categorized as “older” turned five years old on or before August 31st, 2016. “Younger” students turned five years old after August 31st. During the first week, there was a seven and one half point gap in combined Kindergarten Writing Rubric (KWR) and Copying Assessment (CA) scores for the older students versus the younger students. That gap narrowed to six points by week six, indicating that the younger students were keeping up with their peers, but not catching up to their older peers’ ability level. The score gap between the groups widened to 11.5 points during post-testing following Thanksgiving break, indicating that younger students may struggle to retain the same information with longer breaks between skill practice, while older students may be less affected by extended breaks between skill rehearsal. Younger students may need more time

and repetition to acquire new skills than older peers. The effects of time and repetition on skill growth are discussed on page 18 and noted in the story on pages 49, 50, 52-53, and 56.

Older students and students with previous literature exposure achieved higher scores in writing and were able to use writing to communicate simplified forms of their oral communication, as noted on pages 57 and 65-67. This is supported by the studies of Paley and Feldgus and Cardonick on pages 11 and 14. Oral language and writing parallel each other, with oral language slightly preceding writing development, resulting in writing proficiency at a later age. Gillon (2004), Storch & Whitehurst (2002), Torgesen (2005), and Williams (2010) note that phonological awareness skills developed during the late preschool period (ages 4-5 years) are essential for writing and are typically developed by the time students enter kindergarten (p. 11, 14).

The copying assessment demonstrated that age significantly impacts fine motor development. The copying assessment also demonstrated the trend that older students out-performed their younger peers by a minimum of 5% at the midpoint and a maximum of 11% at the beginning and end of the study. Once again, the increase in % success difference between the two groups, coupled with the decline in the younger students' score trend, may be contributed to difficulties for the younger students to retain skills and information without regular practice. Students must be adept at maneuvering a pencil before they can express themselves through writing. Throughout the study, younger students demonstrated shorter attention spans on a high concentration task such as

journaling, as noted on pages 49, 77, and 106. Older students more frequently initiated scholastic endeavors such as applying writing in a meaningful context, including when they were not yet able to phonetically spell. An example of parallel play involving writing occurred on page 77 of the story when Luke, an older student, applied writing to list making. Delia, a younger student, then mimicked his meaningful application of writing by writing her own list. The performance gap between younger and older students increased by the end of the study.

KWR and CA: Home Literature Support vs. Limited Home Literature Support Student Performance.

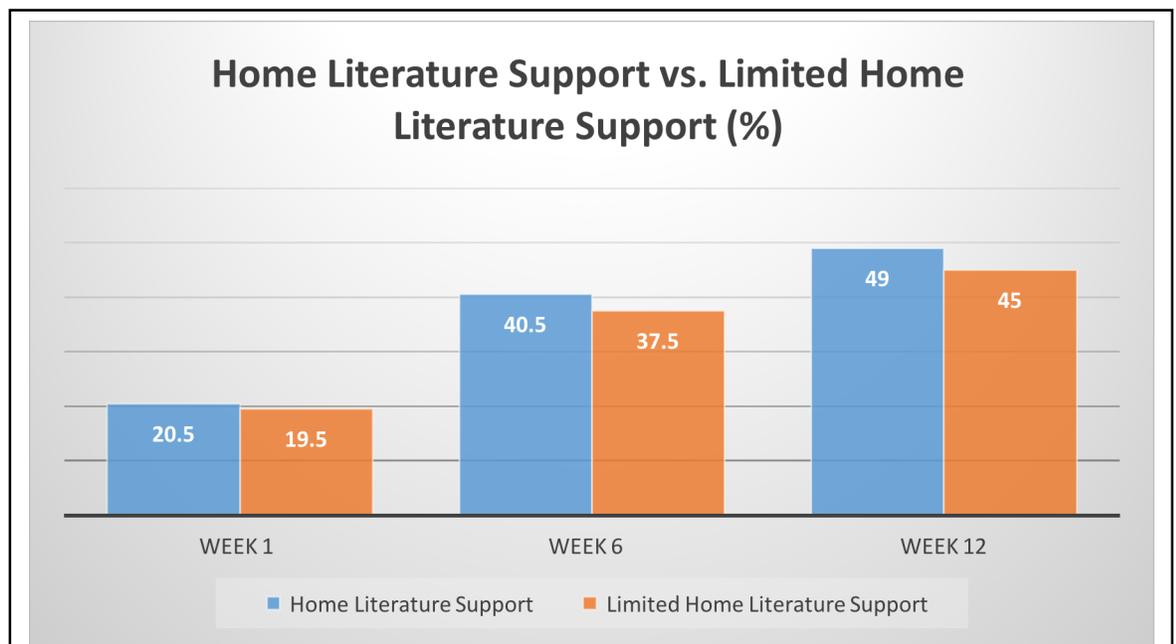


Figure 8. Home Literature Support vs. Limited Home Literature Support Student Performance: Averaged comparison of student achievement on the Kindergarten Writing Rubric (KWR) and Copying Assessment (CA).

Students with literature support were identified as students whose parents indicated participating in literature activities with them at home during conferences held throughout the course of the study. The questions were given orally and clarified, rephrased, and interpreted when needed to ensure understanding. The question template can be found in Appendixes N (English) and O (Spanish). The English Support group included monolingual children and simultaneous bilingual children whose parents reported speaking English at home, sending their children to an early learning program, or supporting their language development at home through story time, writing, or other literature activities. The Less Support group included students who were simultaneous bilingual, ESOL, and Monolingual. Their parents identified that they did not speak English at home, reported no participation in an early learning program, reported that their child did not participate in early learning experiences at home before their children began kindergarten, or some combination thereof.

Children require the opportunity to develop the ability to communicate orally. Oral expression is the basis of written expression and should receive as much time and attention as writing development, as noted by Paley (1992), Gillon (2004), Vygotsky (1978), and Feldgus and Cardonick (2000) on pages 8, 10, 11, 20, 22, and 26-27. Children who have time and assistance building verbal skills at home have an advantage over their peers who have less practice time. Journal entries scored using the KWR demonstrated gradual improvement throughout the study across both groups, with slightly higher achievement for students with English language support at home.

CA scores gradually increased throughout the study, with slightly higher achievement in students with English support at home. The achievement scores of children born in August were more highly correlated to their literature exposure than their age, with the student who came to school from a literature-rich home environment continuously out-performing her two peers who were the same age, but who lacked home support.

KWR and CA: English Support vs. English Proficient Student Performance.

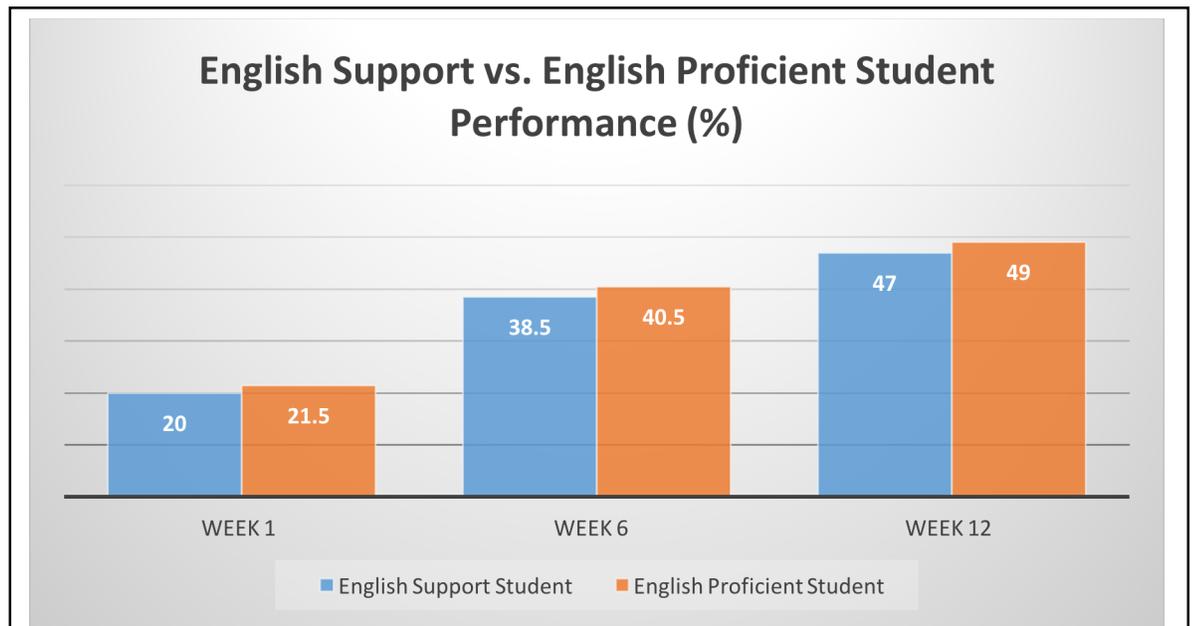


Figure 9. English Support vs. English Proficient Student Performance: Averaged comparison of student achievement on the Kindergarten Writing Rubric (KWR) and Copying Assessment (CA).

Most of the class (n=25) were identified as simultaneous bilingual; students who had exposure to English and Spanish or English and Arabic from birth and who had become proficient at speaking at least the majority language

(Spanish, English, or Arabic), or both languages (English and Spanish or Arabic). (MacLeod et. al., 2013; Midgette & Philippakos, 2016). English proficient included monolingual English speakers (n=5), Spanish/ English simultaneous bilingual speakers (n=4) and one English/Arabic simultaneous bilingual speaker (n=1). English support consisted of ESOL Students (n=6) and Spanish/English simultaneous bilingual students (n=14). Both groups performed comparably to one another, with the English proficient group gradually exceeding the gains of the English support group, leaving a slight achievement gap at the end of the study. English proficient students performed slightly higher on average than their English support peers.

The combined KWR and CA test results demonstrated that the students' expression through writing, fine motor development, and phonological awareness improved to similar degrees through the use of kid writing regardless of their level of English proficiency. KWR and CA results slightly favored English proficient students. These results are in agreement with the studies of Hart & Risley (1995, 2013), Gunning (2014), Oullette, Seneschal & Haley (2013), Oullette & Seneschal (2008), Craig (2006), and Feldgus & Cardonick (2000) who found that students who received services for ESOL or Speech therapy, or who were of a low socio-economic status were more likely to require increased time and explicit instruction using multiple modalities to achieve similar results to their English Proficient peers (p. 11, 21-22, 24).

It was observed that English support students struggled slightly more than their peers, yet demonstrated growth. ESOL students and students with learning

differences may take longer to apply writing skills as demonstrated on page 71 of the story. As discussed on pages 49-50, 52, and 100, ESOL students and simultaneous bilingual students whose majority language was Spanish began writing very little, shadow writing, and primarily communicating pictorially and orally. By the end of the study, the older students in this group had progressed and nearly caught up to their peers in their ability to communicate via writing. These students needed pictorial and oral support and benefitted most from shadow writing and incorporation of environmental text instead of phonetically spelling their journal entries for the first two-thirds of the study. Attempts at guided phonetic spelling during conferences began to emerge towards the end of the study (p.78, 82, 84, 90). Hart & Risley (1995, 2013), Gunning (2014), and others support that ESOL, low SES, and some simultaneous bilingual students need more explicit instruction to achieve higher success in writing (p. 14, 24). Older English Support students achieved scores comparable to, yet slightly lower than, their English Proficient peers by the end of the study.

Whole Class Achievement Across Measures

All assessments were given during the first week, the 6th week, and the 12th week of the study, with the exception of the TALKT, which was given during the 4th week and at the conclusion of the study. All class test scores demonstrate improvement in writing, phonological awareness, and fine motor ability over the course of the study. This data supports use of journaling in the classroom, as done by Paley (1992) and Feldgus & Cardonick(2000) (p. 6, 11-13, 26-27). Research by Oullette and Seneschal, Gray, and Vygotsky support the collaborative aspects

of journaling as well as incorporation of structured activities that contain an element of choice (p. 4, 10, 20).

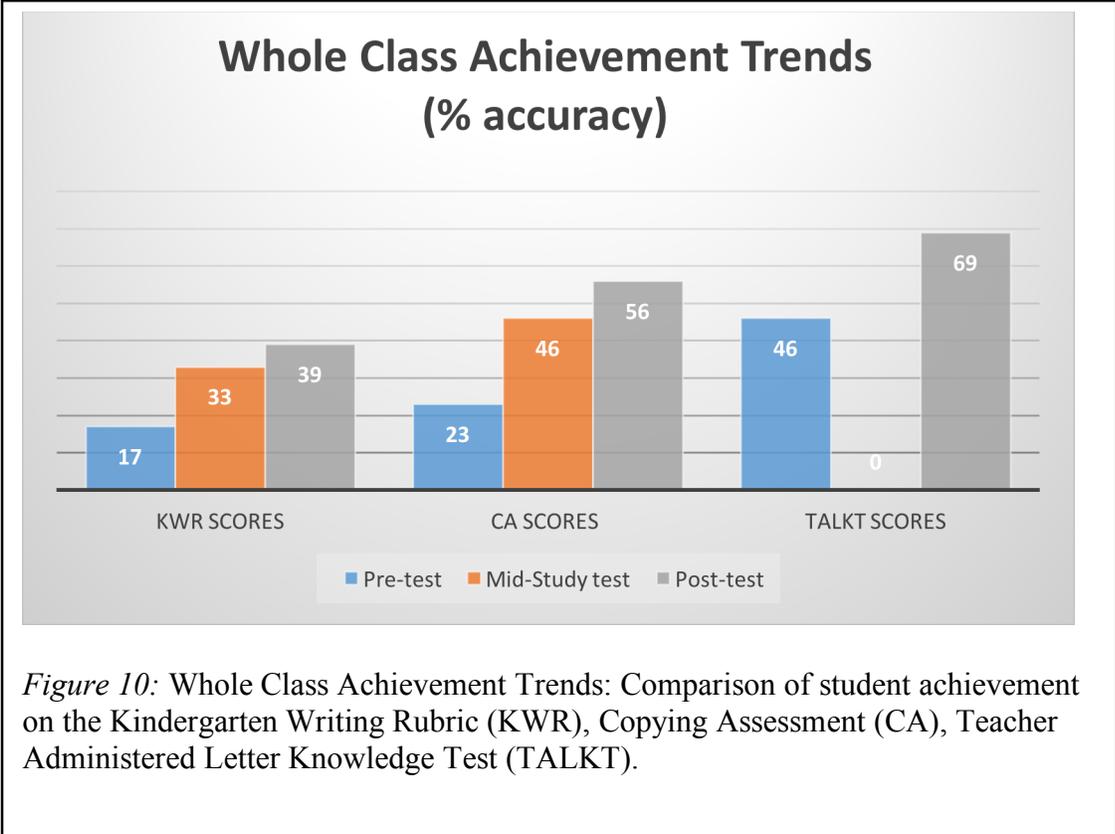


Figure 10: Whole Class Achievement Trends: Comparison of student achievement on the Kindergarten Writing Rubric (KWR), Copying Assessment (CA), Teacher Administered Letter Knowledge Test (TALKT).

Shadow writing and incorporation of environmental text improved over the course of the study, indicating an increase in fine motor skills. Shadow writing and incorporation of environmental text were included as an option during kid writing time as a bridge for those students who were still beginning to grasp phonological awareness skills necessary to phonetically spell their thoughts and piece sentences together using environmental text. The strategy of reproducing random text was also used by kindergarteners in the classroom I observed on October 17th, as discussed on page 75.

All of the students demonstrated growth in their writing abilities over the course of the twelve-week study. The students demonstrated use of environmental text to support spelling. Everyone showed growth in their written expression as demonstrated by their Kid Writing scores. Students were required to demonstrate use of phonetic spelling and independent authorship to achieve a Kid Writing score of 32% or higher. Students on average achieved a score of 39% in Kid Writing by the end of the study, demonstrating limited use of phonetic spelling and instances of independent authorship, while their scores averaged 17% at the beginning of the study.

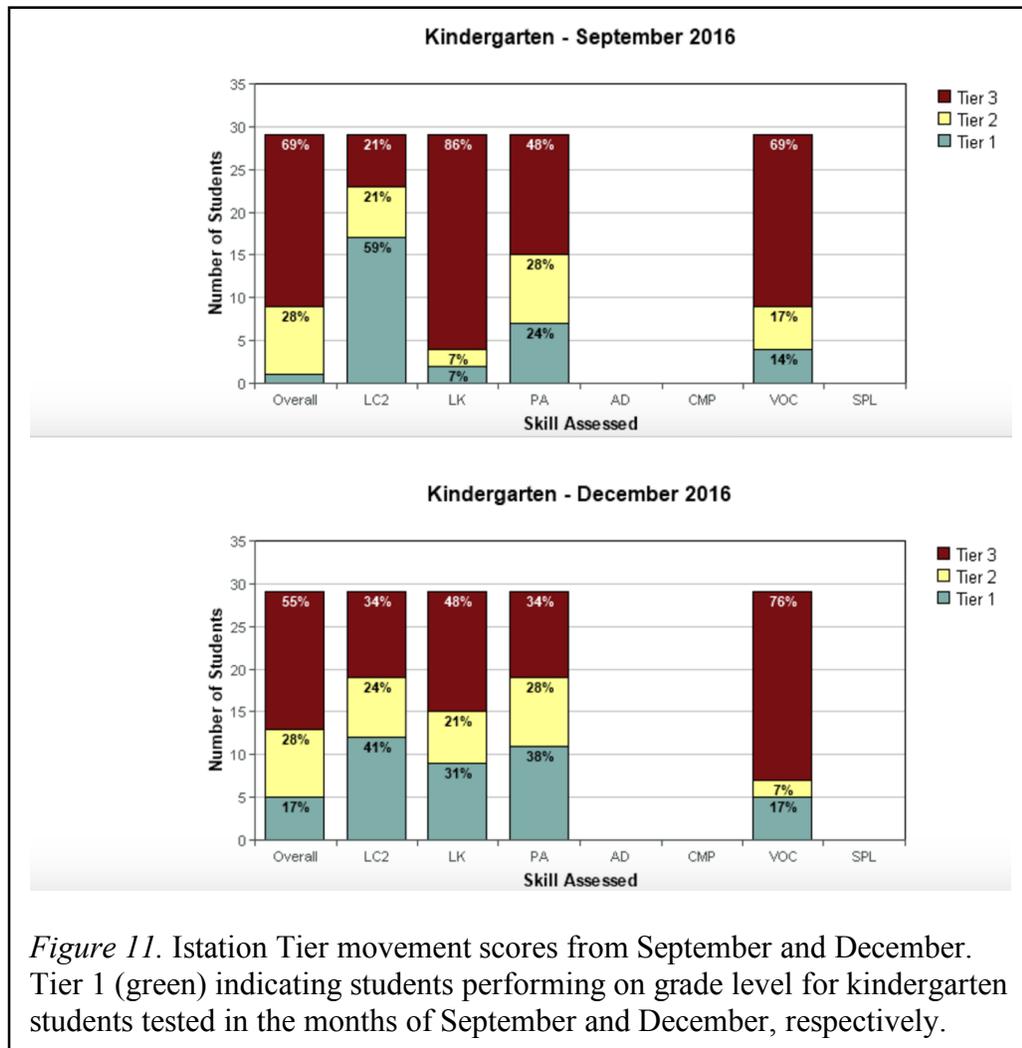
Repeated practice is necessary to attain skill mastery (Brabeck, Jeffrey & Fry, 2017; Johnson, 2009; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009). The extended Thanksgiving break may have contributed to the observed slowed achievement growth from the middle of the study to the end of the study due to the need for young students to repeatedly practice skills (Johnson, 2009) in order to retain and perfect them.

The students who demonstrated growth in Kid Writing into the 40% accuracy range generally were the students who demonstrated observed progress each week and who could express themselves accurately through writing, discussion, and drawing. Their ability to conceptualize and express a complete sentence verbally with a complimentary picture indicates the emergence of literacy skills such as visualization. The ability to express themselves through print suggests the establishment of phonological awareness skills such as segmenting, blending, and letter knowledge.

Overall, TALKT scores from the entire class indicate an increase in accuracy of 23% from the beginning to the end of the study. This may be attributed to the inclusion of Kid Writing, or a combination of Kid Writing and shadow writing as a meaningful form of expression in which students used skills explicitly taught during other periods of the school day.

Standardized test measures

Standardized test measures included Istation. Istation is a standardized, computer-administered test measure in which students are tested on listening comprehension, letter knowledge, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary by listening to oral prompts, then clicking pictures or graphemes to select answers. In the following data, students were most frequently referred to as performing within Tier 1 or below Tier 1. Tier 1 is defined as students who are performing on grade level or higher as indicated by their raw scores within the Istation program. Raw Istation scores that fell within the Tier 1 range each month also equated to a score within the 50th percentile or greater, as compared to a baseline test group.



There has been an overall increase of 14% in Tier 1 achievement. Listening comprehension (LC2) decreased, Letter knowledge (LK) increased. There was an increase of 14% in Tier 1 achievement in phonological awareness (PA). Vocabulary knowledge (VOC) increased in Tier 1 but showed an overall decline due to the increase in Tier 3 scores (in red).

Their Tier 1 phonological awareness scores (PA) in Istation increased by 14%, indicating an increase in the base skills for phonetic spelling. The

phonological awareness skills tested include segmentation, blending, isolation of initial, medial, and final sounds, and rhyming.

The decrease in listening comprehension (LC2) may be due to decreased attention, as they take the same test monthly. The students who have demonstrated attention difficulties in the classroom comprise the majority of the students whose test scores dropped in this area.

Letter knowledge (LK) scores increased by 24%, indicating a significant increase in ability to rapidly recall sounds and names of alphabetic letters; an essential skill for phonetic spelling.

Vocabulary (VOC) increased by 3%, which may be insignificant due to the 7% increase in the percentage of the class who achieved Tier 3 scores in vocabulary. As I demonstrated in the story, reading aloud to students provides a mentor text for beginning readers by introducing new vocabulary in a meaningful context and modeling proper grammar and syntax. Discussions of these stories provide support for deriving meaning and individualized story development prior to writing. Student vocabulary scores in Istation increased with use of read-alouds and other Kid Writing components, as noted in Figure 11.

<u>Letter Knowledge</u>	Istation	TALKT
<i>Pre-test</i>	7%	23%
<i>Post-Test</i>	31%	52%
<i>% change (Pre to Post)</i>	24% increase	29% increase

Table 4 compares the percentage of students who achieved scores equivalent to Tier 1 in September and December on Istation and the TALKT. Istation was administered using a computer, no questions were repeated, and all questions were timed. The TALKT was administered orally using flashcards and a paper score sheet, questions were repeated once, and the test was untimed. Anyone taking the Letter Knowledge test who achieved 65% accuracy or higher was deemed equivalent to Tier 1 as defined by Istation and included in the TALKT score for September. The equivalent percent accuracy for December was 72% to account for increased difficulty each month and equate to test scores as calculated by the Istation program. This demonstrates that there is a difference between the results of the timed, computer-given, proctored Istation exam, and the teacher given, untimed exam.

There is a comparable difference between pre-test and post-test scores for Istation and the TALKT (24% and 29%, respectively). This implies that both tests were accurate measures of the children's letter knowledge ability. Istation is computer-administered and timed, while the TALKT is not. These factors may account for the overall difference in scores between tests.

RESEARCH DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to engage students in the act of writing and provide them with ample opportunity to rehearse phonological awareness skills and build dexterity necessary to communicate via writing. This was done through the implementation of the Kid Writing Method.

Throughout this study, I found that Kid Writing in conjunction with fine motor development activities was effective in increasing the students' ability to communicate through writing in a low SES kindergarten classroom.

Effects of Age on Writing

Figures 3 and 7 show that older students performed better on journal writing and copying tasks than their younger peers. Students were missing key phonemic awareness skills such as segmenting, blending, and isolation of initial, medial and final sounds (p.49). Vygotsky, Alderson-Day & Fernyhough, and Paul & Norbury, and others assert that it is developmentally appropriate for students ages four years eight months to six years to begin to develop the phonological awareness and narrative skills needed for journaling (p. 20, 23), which is in-keeping with the findings of the study. A majority of the class participated in the journal writing study between the ages of four years eight months and five years 10 months. Throughout the research narrative, the children exhibited journaling and copying skills appropriate for their age.

Effects of Conferencing on Writing

Conferencing as defined by Feldgus and Cardonick (2000) was time spent helping students to use explicitly taught skills to write their story more

effectively. Conferencing within the context of this study began as time spent taking dictation and helping the students to make the connection that written words are a representation of their thoughts, which are otherwise conveyed orally. As the students matured, they began to write more independently, as seen in the dialogue on page 75. As student skill increased, conferencing evolved to more closely mirror the Feldgus and Cardonick approach.

In Figures 3, 6, and 7, in the CA, TALKT, CWDS, and KWR, the older students achieved higher scores at the beginning. The score gap between ages narrowed slightly at mid-study testing, with both groups making gains and older students maintaining a slightly higher score. The gap between older and younger student scores widened significantly following Thanksgiving break, with the younger students making less progress than their older peers. This indicates that children between ages 5 and 6 may make major gains in the ability to retain phonological awareness skills and in development of fine motor skills.

Effects of ESOL on Writing

ESOL students and young students achieved similar scores, but their process and their work were notably different. Both ESOL students and younger students achieved scores that were lower than their older, English Proficient peers. They struggled to apply phonological awareness skills in writing.

The ESOL students closer to six years old were able to narrate complete stories and draw detailed pictures during most of the study, giving a description of setting, characters, and actions that matched the picture they drew. On multiple occasions, they would give the proper word to describe an item in their picture or

in their verbal narrative, and then use their environment, synonyms, or what they drew to guide me to tell them the English word they wanted to use but had not yet memorized. The younger students frequently gave incomplete narrations which lacked action or a description of location. Also, the younger students did not begin to demonstrate use of repair strategies until the end of the study.

ESOL seemed to have minimal impact on phonological awareness and its application in English. All ESOL students progressed, showing an improvement in Kid Writing (Figures 4 and 9), Copying (Figure 9), Phonological Awareness (Figure 11), and Letter Knowledge (Figures 6 and 11). English Proficient students scored slightly higher than English Support students across all measures.

Figures 4, 6, and 9 show decreased rate of growth following Thanksgiving vacation. After students returned from winter break, even the students who were most successful during Mid-study testing struggled with application of phonological awareness skills in writing and completion of copying assessments. Growth slowed following vacation in both the English Support and English Proficient group.

Effects of Home Support on Writing

I found that students who were young but had literature exposure and previous schooling/ literature experience were prepared to apply that knowledge once their phonological awareness skills developed. This allowed them to progress faster with more confidence than their peers with less literature experience. Figures 5, 6, and 8 demonstrate that the presence of home support

increased student achievement overall. Students who did not have home support made gains similar to those with home support, but the overall scores were higher for those students with home support. Hart & Risley (1995, 2013) and Gunning (2014) indicate that literacy practice at home may have increased student knowledge of English vocabulary and letter-sound associations, which would provide an advantage for students when learning to apply a new skill (p. 14, 17-22).

When students with literacy background had an “aha! moment,” and began to understand a new concept, they were able to apply it immediately. This learning moment was demonstrated by Christine and Javier, a young student and an ESOL student, respectively, as they began to recognize initial sounds and rhyming pairs on page 80. As students’ phonological awareness skills developed, they could immediately incorporate those skills with pre-learned letter knowledge and journaling technique to write more effectively.

It was also noted that vision impairment and health concerns such as diabetes could impede growth in writing, as noted on page 39. In the cases of Hope and Luke, their physical difficulties outweighed the benefits of home support and resulted in minimal growth overall for those individuals.

Effects of Play on Writing

Play is practice. Dramatic play allows the students to rehearse oral narratives before journaling. Beading, painting, coloring, and dramatic play were some of the activities that provided motor practice associated with good

penmanship. These activities also rehearsed concentration, memory, and thought organization associated with good writing.

Multisensory play provided motivation and structure for rehearsal of oral language and vocabulary introduced through read-alouds and other learning experiences, while cooperative learning supports differentiated instruction for students across the wide age group and various language backgrounds. Journal writing skills such as letter-sound association, segmentation, blending, and fine motor abilities were effectively developed through multisensory play.

Effects of Journaling on Writing

The journey from concrete narration to imaginative storytelling was captured and supported by student journaling. The activity of journaling provided opportunity for students to practice basic fine motor skills such as holding the pencil, in conjunction with formulating relevant thoughts regarding experiences they had in class or at home (writing for a purpose). They also practiced letter-sound association, sight words, sentence structure, collaboration, and drawing pictures to organize their thoughts before writing. Some students used journaling to practice writing and transcribing their dictation noted during journal time, while other students increased the amount of phonological awareness practice by collaborating with other writers. On pages 73-74, Giselle provided Jason and Christian with the letters needed to complete their stories, and then drew images with limited text for her own story. During conferences, she was required to complete one simple sentence to accompany her journal image, and was guided

by the instructor to apply the letter knowledge she demonstrated with the boys in her own writing.

Effects of Collaboration on Writing

On page 78, I note that students need to have a reason to write. Providing students with the opportunity to collaborate in a meaningful context fostered their desire to help each other and express themselves, which was very helpful for their growth as writers. Paley (1992), Gray (2013), Vygotsky (1976), Hart & Risley (1995, 2013), Storch & Whitehurst (2002), Dickinson (2006), Montessori (1965), and others agreed that play is essential to fostering English language development, as discussed on pages 6, 8-9, and 11. This language development, in turn, increased supported writing development. Paul & Norbury (2012) and Montessori (1965) note a shift in play and narration from egocentric and less complex to more complex around age six.

In cooperative activities, such as play and journal writing, all of the students facilitate the growth and achievements of their peers. Student discoveries were fostered and expanded upon in the context of discussion prior to beginning our journal writing. The Kid Writing structure provided the students with time to choose and personalize their activities to address their needs, while ensuring they worked on achieving target skills, as noted on pg. 33. The students who are familiar with letter-sound associations naturally helped those who struggled. Those who are still learning the associations and basic phonological awareness skills of writing benefit from writing their thoughts with the help of their peers.

Despite multiple occurrences of collaborative writing, overall desire to collaborate decreased from the beginning to the end of the study, as noted on page 95. This may be due to an increased understanding of what collaboration entails. It may also be due to an overreliance of some children on more knowledgeable peers.

Kid writing provides the structure to practice application of phonological awareness skills developing between the ages of five and seven years, in addition to building fine motor skills needed for writing. This method also includes opportunity to practice comprehension skills such as narration and visualization.

NEXT STEPS

I am grateful that my co-teachers and I got to meet at the beginning of the year to put a cohesive behavior plan and set of rules and procedures in place from day one. I re-organized and tweaked my method of presentation multiple times throughout the project due to the newness of Kid Writing. We also came up with new rules or restructured old ones as the need arose to address the needs of the students. After Kid Writing this year, next year should run much smoother, as we will know what to expect and how to diversify effectively from the beginning for the younger students and ESOL students.

As mentioned in the story, we incorporated journaling as the culminating activity of a variety of interactive lessons. We went on field trips to the pumpkin patch and “Pip the Mouse”, brought in various plants, leaves, and nuts, and incorporated documentary clips, and many different arts and crafts. The majority of the journal periods were centered around songs and read alouds. I would like to continue to incorporate a variety of activities, adding letter writing, list making, and reader’s theater, to increase the number of examples of uses of text. I would also have mini-centers for one or two children to use to explore these types of print. For example, the letter writing could be part of the dramatic play center and list making could be a to-do list, or a grocery list in a housekeeping area.

We have numerous activities used to build their fine motor skills, such as parquetry and bead work. Given time, money, and materials, I would increase our repertoire of manipulatives for the upcoming year, adding more Montessori

materials such as a letter set, stacking blocks, and a life skills set that includes shoelaces to tie, buttons, and zippers.

We were able to help the children track their progress by keeping a folder of journal entries for each, pulling out different weeks and comparing them during conferences when possible. The process of tracking student progress, keeping organized, and allowing the students to have word lists and alphabet charts at their seat regularly could be improved by getting journals printed for each of the students at the beginning of the year. The clutter would be minimized inside the book, and the books would provide the students with reference material within their area of focus. Many of the students struggled to focus on the sight word board or environmental text because it was too far away. It would also make it easier to keep track of student work and progress to have all pages contained within one book, or several books, date stamped in chronological order, just as we did with the loose papers this year.

On days where writing sessions were completed without my assistance, a large percentage of the class did not have the opportunity to conference with an instructor. This occurred because of limited personnel for such a large group with some students needing additional assistance due to learning a second language or having a disability. As a result, multiple journal entries consisted of a picture with little writing on it two or three days per week. Rotating groups between stations was also attempted to alleviate this problem, with some success. All groups were supervised, but there were increased distractions and little space which disrupted the students' concentration when writing. The Kid Writing method was most

successful when completed with a tutor-child ratio of approximately 1:5. To achieve this ratio, we completed Kid Writing time with the eighth grade helpers. The three teachers supervised multiple eighth grade students and kindergarten students for the duration of the writing activity.

Overall, Kid Writing extended the literature program of the kindergarten classroom. I would use this program again next year, expanding upon it and incorporating more choices and activity variety. By increasing variety and continuing to reinforce the class rules and procedures honed throughout the year, I hope to enjoy an even more successful program next year.

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APPENDIXES:

Appendix A: HSIRB Form

2014-2015 HUMAN SUBJECTS INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD (HSIRB) PROPOSAL FORM

This form must be completed for any research activity involving human participants. All researchers should review the Moravian College Human Subjects Research Policy found at `p:\hsirb\MoravianCollegeHSIRBPolicy.doc` before designing and submitting their proposals.

When you have provided all of the information required in the proposal form below, please follow the submission instructions below. ***Please be aware that incomplete proposals will be returned to the proposer until they are complete.*** Failure to submit all documentation will delay the Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) review of your research proposal.

Proposal Review Timetable: Please note that during the standard academic year when the committee meets regularly, it typically takes a minimum of two weeks (14 days) for the committee to review and respond to completed proposals. Most proposals require some modifications before we grant full approval and the revision process typically adds an additional week to the review process.

Submit all of the following:

1. This completed Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) Proposal Form. Please make sure all required information is complete. We encourage completion of this proposal form as a Word document.
2. A copy of your Informed Consent form and/or other evidence of Informed Consent to voluntary participation [See HSIRB proposed Policy #MC.116 & MC.117. The policy statement can be viewed at `Public/hsirb/.`] You can also find helpful informed consent guidelines at `public/hsirb.`
3. A copy of all of your instruments (surveys, tests, etc.). If you are showing pictures or videos, a copy of these need to be submitted as well. You may provide links if the material will be accessible online.

Submit **electronic copies** of complete proposals to:

hsirb@moravian.edu

You have the option of either combining the various documents in one file or submitting separate files as email attachments, but **please make sure that the**

file name clearly indicates the section of the overall proposal package and the author. So, for example, please call your document something along the lines of “johnson.proposal.docx” and “johnson.informedconsent.docx.” The preferred format for all materials is Word (doc/docx) or PDF. We understand that some materials may only be available in other formats, but please make every effort to send files in one of those two formats. At the end of the approval process, we will collect **electronic signatures** from proposers and their faculty sponsors (if applicable).

Questions: contact

Dr. Sarah Johnson, Chair HSIRB
 Department of Psychology
 skjohanson@moravian.edu
 (610) 625-7013

Part I: RESEARCHER

<p>1. Proposer: Dinamichele Boyer</p>	<p>2. Department: Education</p>
<p>3. Mailing address: [REDACTED]</p>	<p>4. Phone: [REDACTED]</p>
<p>5. E-mail address: [REDACTED]</p>	
<p>6. This is a (please check):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> New Proposal</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resubmission of a rejected Proposal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Renewal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Request for modification</p>	<p>7. Research Start/End Dates: Make sure you clearly define the start and end dates. Format as month, day, year.</p> <p>Start: 8-20-2016</p> <p>End: 12-2016</p>

7. Title of Proposal:
How young can you write? The effects of journaling and phonetic spelling instruction on emergent writers.

8. Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Joe Shosh

Part II: PROPOSAL TYPE

1. This research involves ONLY the use of **educational tests** (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude or achievement).

Yes
 No

2. This research collects interviews or surveys ONLY of **elected or appointed public officials** or candidates for such.

Yes
 No

3. This research involves ONLY observations of **public behavior**.

Yes
 No

4. This research involves ONLY **existing data, documents, records or specimens**.

Yes
 No

5. List the **research funding sources**, if any.
none

6. The results of this research will be published.

Yes
 No
 Uncertain

If you marked “yes” or “uncertain”, please provide a brief description of the possible forum of publication (for example, peer-reviewed journal, conference

presentation, etc.)

Description of publication forum:

Research will be published on the Moravian educational action research website.

In this next section, you will provide extensive details about the research project. Please make sure that your explanations/descriptions are clearly written and grammatically correct so that the committee can accurately follow and assess your proposal.

Part III. DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

1. In this section, you have the option of either addressing each of the following subheadings individually or together (since there may be some overlap) in your proposal narrative. If providing a narrative, please make sure that each of the following topics is clearly identified in the narrative.

a. Objectives:

- Students will be able to apply explicitly taught phonetic writing skills in daily journal writing activities.
- Students will be able to express thoughts, opinions and observations regarding classroom activities both orally and through journal entries containing student artwork and written words.

a. Design:

- Data will be gathered using the following methods:
 - i. rubrics to assess student artifacts
 - **Spelling-Sound Correspondences Checklist** (Feldgus & Cardonick, pp. 164-169) will allow me to track the progress of each students' spelling by charting their association of various anchor words with spelling patterns explicitly taught in class. I will note accurate use of these anchor words in their journal writing weekly.
 - **Conventions of Writing Development Scale** (Feldgus & Cardonick, pp. 176-177) will provide a rubric for tracking the progress of the students through the stages of phonemic writing development. This chart will be completed weekly or bi-weekly based on their last assignment of the instructional period.
 - **Emergent Writing Stage Assessment** by Stephanie McAndrews provides a detailed guide for the instructors to assess the students current strengths and weaknesses in written expression and to tailor instruction to meet each student's needs. Completed for baseline, mid-study

- evaluation, and final evaluation. (S.L. McAndrews, 2008, pp.309-312)
 - **Kindergarten Writing Rubric (Pictorial)** By Susan See at www.teacherspayteachers.com (attached) provides feedback to students regarding their writing process and gives an objective, pictorial framework by which they can understand areas in need of improvement and seek to focus their attention on those areas.
 - **Oral or Written Story Retelling Analysis** by Stephanie McAndrews allows the instructor to identify the students ability level regarding fundamental comprehension and verbal expression of basic events in a story told to them, or their organize and present their own creation. This skill of organizing and expressing their thoughts is the precursor to successful journal writing. (S.L. McAndrews, 2008, pp.308)
 - **Handwriting Rubric Assessment** by Stephanie McAndrews allows the instructor to assess fine motor development. (S.L. McAndrews, 2008, pp.313)
 - **Kindergarten Writing Rubric** by Luvtoteachk@teacherspayteachers (attached) provides a more explicit, written framework which the teacher can use to critically assess student writing and offer constructive feedback at the phonetic, transitional, conventional, and advanced stages of writing development.
- i. student surveys
1. **Student Interest Survey** (*attached*) is a pictorial answer only survey that will be easy for students without concept of print to complete. This scale will provide feedback regarding activities that capture their interest in addition to informal reading experience assessment.
 2. **Leichert scale 1 (LS1)** (*attached*) provides knowledge of student awareness of environmental print and student opinion on use of colors, computers, and multisensory experiences during lessons. This will be given following the first lesson of each new skill.
 3. **Reading Survey** (*attached*) will provide feedback at the beginning and conclusion of the study regarding student reading attitudes. Questions will be read aloud and students will answer by circling one of 3 faces; smiling, questioning, or sad.
 4. **Interest Inventory** (*attached*) provides feedback regarding reading attitudes and interpersonal

skills. It would be given pre-study and post-study in place of the Reading Survey and/ or the Student interest survey. Questions would be read aloud. Children can pick one of three faces to indicate their feelings; smiling, questioning, or sad.

- ii. **Double-entry journal** (Gee, p.177) provides a framework by which I can note actions and reactions of the students in regard to writing and phonics activities and then log interpretations of those events for future analysis and construction of a timeline of learning events.
- iii. behavioral and writing checklists
1. **Oral language development checklist: kindergarten** (Scholastic, Canada, Ltd., 2006) provides an open rubric by which I can make notes weekly or bi-weekly regarding the oral expression of the students. Oral expression is the first manner in which phonological skills are presented. Oral language forms the basis of reading and writing.
2. **Teacher Rating of Oral Language and Literacy (TROLL)** (Reutzel & Cooter, pp. 75-78) provides a closed rubric which gives an explicit outline to assess the progression of the oral expression of my students weekly or bi-weekly.
3. **Oral Language Checklist (OLC)** (Reutzel & Cooter, p. 83) provides an open form in which to note specific examples of oral language development, as gathered in my double-entry journal, on a bi-weekly basis.

a. **Procedures (makes sure you clearly describe what is required of subjects):**

Procedural process:

- Students will engage in daily mini-lessons associating speech sounds with orthographic symbols (ABC's) and practicing the strokes needed to complete the letters.
- Students will participate in activities including read-alouds and other physical motion and song activities that facilitate learning of academic, social, and motor skills appropriate for their age.
- Instructors will engage students in discussion regarding their recent learning experience in small group or whole group.
- Instructors will model how to sound out and spell out journal entries.
- Students will participate in small group discussion, illustrate their responses, and then use english orthography and model sentences to write about their responses.
- Students will have access to games during center time which allow them to practice fine motor skills, patterning, sequencing, and sound-symbol

association.

Assessment:

- Writing samples will be assessed informally during small group and written under using adult writing every day.
- Writing samples will be collected and scored using a rubric weekly (Thursdays).
- Experiences will be logged in my double-entry journal daily.
- Handwriting Rubric Assessment will be completed in the middle and at the end of the study, after the students have begun to develop the knowledge base and motor skills for handwriting.
- Emergent Writing Stage Assessment will be completed for baseline, mid-study evaluation, and final evaluation.
- The Oral or Written Story Retelling Analysis will be completed as a baseline measure, mid-study assessment, and final assessment. All student responses will be oral at baseline. Some students may be assessed using their oral and written responses at the conclusion of the study.

a. Outline procedures/steps to reduce risks to subjects:

Subjects' names will not appear in written research reports. Pseudonyms will be used. The pseudonym key and all other written data will be stored electronically on password restricted computer to which only I have access. All hard copies of written data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my classroom. The pseudonym key, field notes, and other research materials will be deleted or destroyed upon conclusion of the study. Participants will be permitted to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and will be made aware of this within and through discussion of the consent letter.

1. This research involves the following GROUP(S) vulnerable to risk. Check all that apply.

- Subjects under the age of 18
- Prisoners
- Pregnant women
- People with mental, cognitive, intellectual, or physical disabilities
- Volunteer sample so vulnerable group membership may be unknown

Research Design Note: *If you are asking for volunteer participants, you will not necessarily know whether or not your participants are under 18, pregnant and/or disabled. In fact, your volunteers may themselves not know whether they fall into one of these categories. Therefore, if you are asking for volunteer participants, you need to think carefully about whether or not your research project could adversely affect someone in any of these categories, and if so, how you might try to either screen out these individuals and/or design the project so that the risk to*

these individuals is minimized.

2a. If you checked any or all of the groups identified above, explain why you need to use the group and the methods you will use to minimize risk. If your research design proposes no special risks to these vulnerable individuals even if they happen to be included in your sample, please state why:

Subjects consist of Kindergarten students, ages 4-6.

To minimize risks, subjects' names will not appear in written research reports. Pseudonyms will be used. The pseudonym key and all other written data will be stored electronically on password restricted computer to which only I have access. All hard copies of written data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my classroom.

The pseudonym key, field notes, and other research materials will be deleted or destroyed upon conclusion of the study.

Participants will be permitted to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and will be made aware of this within and through discussion of the consent letter.

4. This research might affect people with special vulnerabilities (for example, pregnant women, people with allergies, people taking some medications, people with cognitive impairments such as ADHD, etc.)

Research Design Note: Think carefully here again about whether or not your research design could negatively affect people with special vulnerabilities. For example, does your research design require so much concentration and/or computation that it might result in considerable stress for someone with a cognitive impairment? Are people completing your instrument in solitude or in a group setting? Might comparative performance result in excessive stress?

Yes
 No

If you checked "Yes", explain the methods you will use to minimize risk to these people.

Subjects may include student participants who have IEPs, 504 plans, or allergies. To minimize risk to these subjects, I will make sure to follow all accommodations specified in their IEPs, 504 plans, or allergy plans.

Subjects' names will not appear in written research reports. Pseudonyms will be used. The pseudonym key and all other written data will be stored electronically on password restricted computer to which only I have access. All hard copies of written data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my classroom.

The pseudonym key, field notes, and other research materials will be deleted or destroyed upon conclusion of the study.

Participants will be permitted to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and will be made aware of this within and through discussion of the consent letter.

4. Describe your subject pool including:
 - a. the intended number of subjects
 - b. subject characteristics/demographics

Subjects may include 10-35 students, age 4-6 years, depending on the number of students enrolled in Kindergarten at my school during the 2016-2017 academic year, and how frequently students are absent. Subjects include a mix of male and female student enrolled in an inner city private school. These students may be racially, ethnically, socially, and economically diverse.

5. Describe in detail the methods you will use to recruit your subjects. Subjects will consist of students assigned to me by my building principal for general instruction during the 2016-2017 school year.

6. This research involves **deception** of subjects.

Yes
 No

If you checked “Yes”, describe the nature of the deception and your debriefing procedure. You will need to provide the debriefing statement with the full proposal submission. Even if the debriefing will be done orally, you need to submit the text of the verbal statement that will be read to participants.

7. Explain by whom and how the subjects will be informed of the purposes of this research project. *(Remember to provide a copy of the informed consent form with this proposal form.)*

As a language arts co-teacher in the kindergarten classroom, I will explain the informed assent form to all subjects. All subjects will also receive an assent form drafted in comprehensible language for a kindergarten student. The assent form will outline the purpose of the project, the procedures used to minimize risk, and the option to participate or withdraw from the study. Since the subjects are minors, parents will also receive a consent form by which they may choose to grant or decline permission for their child to participate in the study. Information will be provided to all of the parents in both English and Spanish because we have a bilingual community.

Lastly, my building principal will also receive a consent letter. I will secure the signed consent of my principal and all participants prior to beginning the study. Consent forms will be provided in English. Translation services will be available upon request through the school office.

8. This research collects information, which (check all that apply)

deals with **sensitive aspects** from the participant's point of view.
 identifies the subject by **name** or **number codes**.
 might place the subject at **risk of liability** if made public.

_____ might place the subject's **financial standing or employability** at risk if made public.

Research Design Note: Think carefully about whether or not your research deals with topics that may be sensitive from the participant's point of view. Sometimes it is not obvious to the researcher that the subject of their research may be a sensitive topic for others.

If you checked any or all of the categories above, explain the methods you will use to

- a. safeguard the data you collect (you need to describe this safeguarding procedure in detail, including but not limited to a description of how the data will be protected (for example, in a locked cabinet), whom will have access to the data, and how and when the data will be destroyed)
- b. inform subjects of available support services (If your participants are drawn from the Moravian College community, please provide contact information for the Counseling Center, Campus Safety and the Health Center—contact information available on the HSIRB website. For participants drawn from other communities, please provide the comparable support service information.)
- c. minimize the risk of identification of subjects.

Subjects may include student participants who have IEPs, 504 plans, or allergies. To minimize risk to these subjects, I will make sure to follow all accommodations specified in their IEPs, 504 plans, or allergy plans. Some students' academic performance may be far below grade level of peers who are not identified ESOL and do not have IEPs. I will inform students of their performance level privately and encourage them to make progress based on their individual goals.

All data will be considered confidential and, with the exception of my Sacred Heart School teaching team and my Moravian thesis advisor, will not be shared with anyone.

Subjects' names will not appear in written research reports. Pseudonyms will be used. The pseudonym key and all other written data will be stored electronically on password restricted computer to which only I have access. All hard copies of written data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my classroom.

The pseudonym key, field notes, and other research materials will be deleted or destroyed upon conclusion of the study.

Participants will be permitted to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and will be made aware of this within and through discussion of the consent letter.

Should subjects or their parents have any concerns, contact information for myself and my Moravian College faculty advisor will be provided within the consent letters and highlighted during consent letter discussion.

Appendix B: Child Informed Assent Form

Name _____

Date _____

We will hear stories.

We will draw pictures.

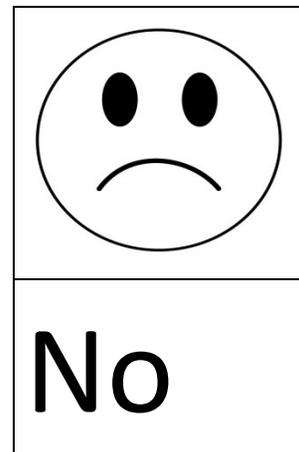
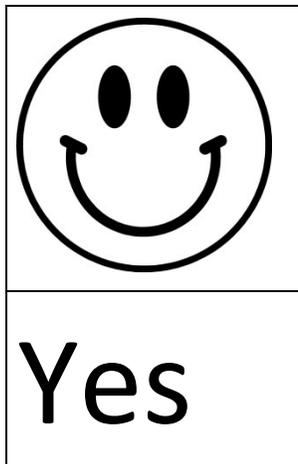
We will learn to write letters and words.

Ms. Boyer will take notes

and talk with other teachers

about what we do.

**Would you like to help Ms. Boyer
with her project?**



Appendix C: Parent Informed Consent Form

Moravian College Action Research

Parent/Guardian Permission Form for Informed Consent to Participate in Study

Study Title: How Young Can You Write? The Benefits of Journal Writing Across the Curriculum

Primary Researcher: Dinamichele Boyer

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Joe Shosh, M.Ed.

Your child is invited to participate in a research study to develop their writing skills using a journaling and a phonetic spelling program called Kid Writing. Your child was selected because they are beginning kindergarten. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision whether or not to allow your child to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask Ms. D. Boyer.

The purpose of this study is to find out if daily journal writing and phonetic writing instruction will increase student understanding of the writing process and help them write more easily. Your child will 1) be taught a new writing skill each week 2) complete writing activities, and 3) listen to stories read aloud. Teachers will engage students in discussion regarding their recent learning experience in small group or whole group. Teachers will model how to sound out and spell out their example journal entries. Students will participate in small group discussion, illustrate their responses, and then use the alphabet and teacher model sentences to write about the images they drew. Students will have access to games during center time which allow them to practice fine motor skills, patterning, sequencing, and sound-symbol association.

Forms of data collection may include standardized test measures, interviews, and other written records. Interest surveys will be given at the beginning and end of the first trimester. Handwriting Rubric Assessment will be completed in the middle and at the end of the first trimester, after the students have begun to develop the knowledge base and motor skills for handwriting. The Oral or Written Story Retelling Analysis and the Emergent Writing Stage Assessment will be completed at the beginning, middle, and end of the first trimester. All skills addressed as part of the research study are part of the standard curriculum and will be taught to all students. All activities pertaining to the study will take place during the school day and are part of whole-class instructional time. The classroom teachers and the researcher, Ms. D. Boyer, will take written notes and collect student work for the student's writing portfolio during all parts of the study. Writing samples will be assessed weekly. All IEP and 504 plans will be followed throughout the study. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

The findings from the study will be written up for publication by the researcher, but your child's name will never appear in the reports. The Moravian College advisor, the kindergarten teacher, and the researcher will have access to the data collected. The information gathered for this study will not be shared with anyone except the researchers and teachers, and only for the purpose of this study. All of the students will participate in the curriculum, but each child's data will only be used in the study if a parent/guardian chooses to provide their consent. Research materials will be locked in a secure location in Ms. D. Boyer's classroom and will be destroyed after the completion of the study. Students may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, but will still be required to complete all classroom work.

Please know that you can choose to not have your child participate in this study. Also, if you or your child should decide that you/they do not desire to continue at any time during the study they can stop without penalty or obligation.

If you have any questions about this study, you may send a note to your student's teacher, Mrs. L. Boyer.

Sincerely,

Ms. D. Boyer

PERMISSION:

I understand that my child has been selected to participate in a research study. My child will participate in journal writing and other activities such as read-alouds and class discussions. Samples of my child's written work will be saved throughout the course of the study, and all information will be kept confidential. All of the student work completed during the study is part of the standard curriculum and will be required whether or not my child participates in the study. I also understand that I am allowing my child to participate voluntarily and I/my child may refuse to participate and/or may withdraw at any time during the study. I agree to allow the researcher, Ms. D. Boyer, to invite my child to participate in the study.

I have read and understand this Letter of Informed Consent and I may request a copy of this letter to keep.

_____ *Agree* _____ *Do Not Agree*

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D: Parent Informed Consent Form (Spanish)

Investigación Acción Colegio de Moravia Padre / Guardián Formulario de Permiso de consentimiento informado para participar en el estudio

Título del estudio: ¿Qué tan joven puedes escribir? Los efectos de escritura de diario a través del currículo.

Investigador Principal: Dinamichele Boyer

Supervisor Facultad: Dr. Joe Shosh, M. Ed.

Se invita a su hijo a participar en un estudio de investigación para desarrollar sus habilidades de escritura utilizando un programa llamado Kid ortografía fonética y de escritura en diario. Su hijo fue seleccionado porque están empezando jardín de infancia. La siguiente información se proporciona para ayudarle a tomar una decisión informada si debe o no permitir que su hijo participe. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta, por favor no dude en preguntar a la Sra D. Boyer.

El propósito de este estudio es averiguar si la escritura de un diario todos los días y la enseñanza de la escritura fonética aumentarán la comprensión del estudiante del proceso de escritura y ayudarles a escribir con mayor facilidad. Su hijo será 1) enseñar una nueva habilidad de la escritura cada semana 2) actividades de escritura completas, y 3) escuchar historias leídas en voz alta. Los maestros involucrar a los estudiantes en la discusión con respecto a su reciente experiencia de aprendizaje en grupos pequeños o con todo el grupo. Los maestros modelar cómo suena y explican sus entradas ejemplo de diario. Los estudiantes participarán en pequeños grupos de discusión, ilustrar sus respuestas, y luego usar las frases del alfabeto y del modelo maestro para escribir sobre las imágenes que dibujaron. Los estudiantes tendrán acceso a juegos durante el tiempo de centros que les permite practicar las habilidades motoras finas, patrones, secuencias y asociación sonido-símbolo.

Formularios de recogida de datos pueden incluir medidas estandarizadas de pruebas, entrevistas y otros documentos escritos. encuestas de interés serán dadas al principio y al final del primer trimestre. Evaluación de escritura a mano Rúbrica se completará en el medio y al final del primer trimestre, después de que los estudiantes han comenzado a desarrollar la base de conocimientos y habilidades motoras para escribir a mano. El análisis Volver a contar la historia oral o escrita y la Evaluación de la etapa Escritura emergente se efectuará directamente en el principio, en medio y al final del primer trimestre. Todas las habilidades abordadas como parte del estudio de investigación son parte del plan de estudios estándar y se les enseñará a todos los estudiantes. Todas las actividades relacionadas con el estudio tendrán lugar durante el día escolar y son parte de toda la clase el tiempo de instrucción. Los maestros y el investigador,

Sra. D. Boyer, tomarán notas escritas y recoger el trabajo del estudiante para el portafolio de escritura del estudiante durante todo el estudio. Muestras de escritura serán evaluados semanalmente. Todo IEP y los planes 504 serán seguidos durante todo el estudio. Toda la información se mantendrá estrictamente confidencial.

Los resultados del estudio serán escritos para su publicación por el investigador, pero el nombre de su hijo que nunca aparecerán en los informes. El asesor Colegio de Moravia, la maestra jardinera, y el investigador tendrá acceso a los datos recogidos. La información recopilada para este estudio no será compartida con nadie, excepto los investigadores y profesores, y sólo para el propósito de este estudio. Todos los estudiantes participarán en el plan de estudios, pero los datos de cada niño sólo se utilizará en el estudio si un padre / tutor elige para proporcionar su consentimiento. Los materiales de investigación serán bloqueados en un lugar seguro en el aula de la Sra D. Boyer y serán destruidas después de la finalización del estudio. Los estudiantes pueden retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento sin penalización, pero todavía serán necesarios para completar todo el trabajo en el aula.

Por favor, sepa que usted puede optar por no tener a su hijo participar en este estudio. Además, si usted o su hijo debe decidir que usted / que no desea continuar en cualquier momento durante el estudio que pueden dejar sin penalización ni obligación.

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre este estudio, puede enviar una nota al maestro de su hijo, la señora L. Boyer.

Sincerely,

Ms. D. Boyer

PERMISO:

Yo entiendo que mi hijo ha sido seleccionado para participar en un estudio de investigación. Mi hijo participará en la escritura de diarios y otras actividades como la lectura en voz alta y discusiones en clase. Las muestras de trabajos escritos de mi hijo se guardarán durante todo el curso del estudio, y toda la información será confidencial. Todo el trabajo que se complete durante el estudio es parte del plan de estudios estándar y se requerirá o no mi hijo participa en el estudio. También entiendo que estoy permitiendo que mi hijo participe voluntariamente y yo / mi niño puede negarse a participar y / o puede retirarse en cualquier momento durante el estudio. Estoy de acuerdo en permitir que el investigador, Sra. D. Boyer, para invitar a mi hijo a participar en el estudio.

He leído y entendido esta carta de consentimiento informado y puedo solicitar

una copia de esta carta a mantener.

_____ Agree _____ Do No está de acuerdo

Nombre impreso: _____

Firma: _____

Fecha: _____

Appendix E: Principal Informed Consent Form

Principal Informed Consent Form

September 20, 2016

Dear [REDACTED],

I'm currently a graduate student at Moravian College. This semester I am completing my master's thesis, and would appreciate the opportunity to conduct a study in the kindergarten classroom with Mrs. L. Boyer.

The purpose of this study is to find out if daily journal writing and phonetic writing instruction will increase student understanding of the writing process and help them write more easily. Your child will 1) be taught a new writing skill each week 2) complete writing activities, and 3) listen to stories read aloud. Teachers will engage students in discussion regarding their recent learning experience in small group or whole group. Teachers will model how to sound out and spell out their example journal entries. Students will participate in small group discussion, illustrate their responses, and then use the alphabet and teacher model sentences to write about the images they drew. Students will have access to games during center time which allow them to practice fine motor skills, patterning, sequencing, and sound-symbol association. The timeframe of this study will be from August 25, 2016 through December 20, 2016.

Forms of data collection may include standardized test measures, interviews, and other written records. Interest surveys will be given at the beginning and end of the first trimester. Handwriting Rubric Assessment will be completed in the middle and at the end of the first trimester, after the students have begun to develop the knowledge base and motor skills for handwriting. The Oral or Written Story Retelling Analysis and the Emergent Writing Stage Assessment will be completed at the beginning, middle, and end of the first trimester. All skills addressed as part of the research study are part of the standard curriculum and will be taught to all students. All activities pertaining to the study will take place during the school day and are part of whole-class instructional time. The classroom teachers and the researcher, Ms. D. Boyer, will take written notes and collect student work for the student's writing portfolio during all parts of the study. Writing samples will be assessed weekly. All IEP and 504 plans will be followed throughout the study. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

The findings from the study will be written up for publication by the researcher, but your child's name will never appear in the reports. The Moravian College advisor, the kindergarten teacher, and the researcher will have access to the

data collected. The information gathered for this study will not be shared with anyone except the researchers and teachers, and only for the purpose of this study. All of the students will participate in the curriculum, but each child's data will only be used in the study if a parent/guardian chooses to provide their consent. Research materials will be locked in a secure location in Ms. D. Boyer's classroom and will be destroyed after the completion of the study. Students may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, but will still be required to complete all classroom work.

All research participants will be provided with a pseudonym for purpose of discussion so that they remain anonymous. My Moravian College advisor, the kindergarten teacher, and I will have access to the data collected. Information concerning the study will be discussed with a research support group at Moravian college and presented at a research conference using the pseudonyms. All of the students will participate in the curriculum, but each child's data will only be used should the parent/guardians choose to provide their consent. Research materials will be kept in a secure, locked location in my classroom and will be destroyed after the completion of the study. Students may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, but will still be required to complete all classroom work.

If any questions or concerns arise, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]. The questions may also be directed to my Moravian College advisor, Dr. Joseph Shosh, at shoshj@moravian.edu, or (610) 861-1482.

Sincerely,

Ms. D. Boyer

Permissions:

- I, _____, **provide** consent to allow Ms. Dinamichele Boyer to conduct her action research in Mrs. Boyer's Kindergarten class in Sacred Heart School.
- Signature _____
Date _____

Appendix F: Co-Teacher Informed Consent Form

Teacher Informed Consent Form

September 20, 2016

Dear Mrs. Laurann Boyer,

I'm currently a graduate student at Moravian College. This semester I am completing my master's thesis, and would appreciate the opportunity to conduct a study in your kindergarten classroom.

The purpose of this study is to find out if daily journal writing and phonetic writing instruction will increase student understanding of the writing process and help them write more easily. Your child will 1) be taught a new writing skill each week 2) complete writing activities, and 3) listen to stories read aloud. Teachers will engage students in discussion regarding their recent learning experience in small group or whole group. Teachers will model how to sound out and spell out their example journal entries. Students will participate in small group discussion, illustrate their responses, and then use the alphabet and teacher model sentences to write about the images they drew. Students will have access to games during center time which allow them to practice fine motor skills, patterning, sequencing, and sound-symbol association. The timeframe of this study will be from August 25, 2016 through December 20, 2016.

Forms of data collection may include standardized test measures, interviews, and other written records. Interest surveys will be given at the beginning and end of the first trimester. Handwriting Rubric Assessment will be completed in the middle and at the end of the first trimester, after the students have begun to develop the knowledge base and motor skills for handwriting. The Oral or Written Story Retelling Analysis and the Emergent Writing Stage Assessment will be completed at the beginning, middle, and end of the first trimester. All skills addressed as part of the research study are part of the standard curriculum and will be taught to all students. All activities pertaining to the study will take place during the school day and are part of whole-class instructional time. The classroom teachers and the researcher, Ms. D. Boyer, will take written notes and collect student work for the student's writing portfolio during all parts of the study. Writing samples will be assessed weekly. All IEP and 504 plans will be followed throughout the study. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

The findings from the study will be written up for publication by the researcher, but your child's name will never appear in the reports. The Moravian College

advisor, the kindergarten teacher, and the researcher will have access to the data collected. The information gathered for this study will not be shared with anyone except the researchers and teachers, and only for the purpose of this study. All of the students will participate in the curriculum, but each child's data will only be used in the study if a parent/guardian chooses to provide their consent. Research materials will be locked in a secure location in Ms. D. Boyer's classroom and will be destroyed after the completion of the study. Students may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, but will still be required to complete all classroom work.

All research participants will be provided with a pseudonym for purpose of discussion so that they remain anonymous. My Moravian College advisor, the kindergarten teacher, and I will have access to the data collected. Information concerning the study will be discussed with a research support group at Moravian college and presented at a research conference using the pseudonyms. All of the students will participate in the curriculum, but each child's data will only be used should the parent/guardians choose to provide their consent. Research materials will be kept in a secure, locked location in my classroom and will be destroyed after the completion of the study. Students may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, but will still be required to complete all classroom work.

If any questions or concerns arise, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]. The questions may also be directed to my Moravian College advisor, Dr. Joseph Shosh, at shoshj@moravian.edu, or (610) 861-1482.

Sincerely,

Ms. D. Boyer

Permissions:

- I. I, _____, **provide** consent to allow Ms. Dinamichele Boyer to conduct her action research in my Kindergarten class in Sacred Heart School.
- Signature _____
Date _____

APPENDIX G: Interest Inventory

Name _____



Interest Inventory!

How do you like to learn? Tell me about it!



Do you like to read?

Do you like math?

Do you like working with others?

Do you like working by yourself?

APPENDIX H: Student Interest Survey

Name _____

Student Interest Survey

What do you like to do at recess?

Playground



Soccer

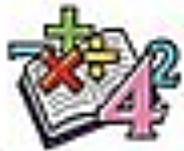


Frisbee



What is your favorite part about school?

Math



Reading



Writing



What do you like to do at home?

Watch T.V.



Play outside



Draw



APPENDIX I: Kindergarten Copying Assessment
Kindergarten Copying Assessment

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

	1: struggling	2: need improvement	3: progressing	4: proficient	Total:
Pencil control	No pincer grasp, work incomplete, struggle evident	Limited pincer grasp, work incomplete, some struggle evident	Pincer grasp present, moderate speed and ease	Pincer grasp present, rapid speed, ease evident	
spacing	Uses only uppercase letter-like forms or random lines, is not within writing space	Uses only uppercase letters or random lines, is within writing space	Uses a mix of upper and lowercase letters, is mostly within writing space	Use uppercase and lowercase letters entirely within writing space	
Word structure	No capital letters, copying, or phonetic spelling	CAN copy No lowercase letters or phonetic spelling	Some capital letters, initial sounds in phonetic spelling	Provide capital letters to proper nouns, phonetic spelling	
Sentence structure	NO spaces between words and no punctuation.	Spaces between words, words contained within writing space.	Spaces between words, words, words contained within writing space, and some punctuation (?-.)	Spaces between words, words contained within writing space, some punctuation (?-.) and some capital letters.	
strokes	Write using random lines, some letter-like forms, and some number-like forms using basic strokes: Horizontal, vertical, slant right, slant left, backward circle, forward circle	Able to write some numbers and uppercase letters with the 6 basic strokes within the writing space.	Able to write some numbers, some uppercase, and some lowercase letters with the 6 basic strokes within the writing space.	Able to write numbers 1-20 and upper and lowercase letters with the 6 basic strokes within the writing space.	
				Score Totals:	

APPENDIX J: Kindergarten Writing Rubric by Susan See

Kindergarten Writing Rubric (aligned to Common Core)					
Points	1	2	3	4	
Ideas Content CSE 1.d 	✓ Needed help with topic. ✓ Unable to verbalize their own sentence. ✓ Sentence answers WHO? (Subject)	✓ May have needed help with topic. ✓ Can verbalize sentence, or pretends to read own sentence. ✓ Answers WHO?, DID WHAT?, WHERE? ✓ Writing has some interesting nouns, verbs AND describing words.	✓ Created a topic elaborated with little guidance, ideas are somewhat clear. ✓ Can read own sentence. ✓ Answers WHO?, DID WHAT?, WHERE? ✓ Writing has some interesting nouns, verbs AND describing words.	✓ Created a topic independently and ideas are clear with lots of detail. ✓ Can read own sentence. ✓ Answers previous + WHEN? or HOW? or WHY? ✓ Choice of words paints a picture for the reader. Has nouns, verbs, describing words and shows feelings.	
Word Choice CSE 1.b PDW 5 	✓ Writing has regular words, no colorful or describing words used.	✓ Spacing seems random. Letters move left to right. ✓ Has one: Capital OR Period	✓ Visible spaces in between words, no spaces in the middle of words. ✓ Has a Capital and Punctuation.	✓ All spaces are spaced correctly & evenly (not too big not, too small). ✓ Has a Capital and proper Punctuation.	
Conventions Punctuation, Spacing & Capitalization PC Lc CSE 2.a, 2.b 	✓ Letters are scattered on paper, no evident spacing. ✓ No punctuation. ✓ No capitalization.	✓ One complete sentence. ✓ Beginning, middle or end or not very clear.	✓ One compound sentence or two complete sentences. ✓ Beginning, middle and ending are somewhat clear.	✓ Two + complete sentences that begin <i>differently</i> . ✓ Beginning, middle and end are clear and easy to follow.	
Organization Sentence Structure TTP 3 	✓ Incomplete sentences. ✓ No beginning, middle or end.	✓ Partially phonetic, at least beginning and end sounds are included for most words with some wrong letters sounds.	✓ Phonetic spelling most sounds for most words. Has beginning middle and end (CVC)	✓ Includes most sounds, endings, digraphs or consonant blends.	
Phonetic Spelling PHA 2.d CSE 2.c, 2.d 	✓ Random letters, do not seem to match words in sentence OR one letter sound for one word.	✓ Can spell simple sight words (I, a, my, to)	✓ Can spell some sight words correctly (like, the, come, this)	✓ All sight words are spelled correctly.	
Sight Word Spelling PHWR 3.c 	✓ Spelled sight words phonetically	✓ Name on paper ✓ Some letters appropriately formed, may overstep the guiding lines, has reversals.	✓ Letters formed appropriately, may overstep lines, corrects reversals when prompted.	✓ Name, date on paper ✓ All letters are appropriately formed and aligned to the lines. No letter reversals.	
Presentation CSE 1.a 	✓ Name on paper. ✓ Few letters are appropriately formed and do not follow lines, has letter reversals. ✓ Drawing has one or two subjects, not much detail. ✓ No coloring, or one color used.	✓ Name on paper ✓ Some letters appropriately formed, may overstep the guiding lines, has reversals.	✓ Letters formed appropriately, may overstep lines, corrects reversals when prompted.	✓ Name, date on paper ✓ All letters are appropriately formed and aligned to the lines. No letter reversals.	
	A = 26-28 points	B = 23-25 points	S = 20-22 points	N = 17-19 points	U = 0-17 points
	Student Name: _____				Total Points= _____ / 28

APPENDIX K: Conventions of Writing Development Scale by Feldgus and Cardonick

Conventions of Writing Developmental Scale

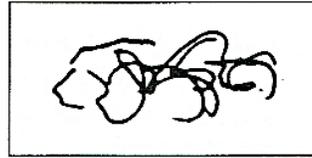
Name: _____ Date: _____
Level: _____

RECORD THE HIGHEST LEVEL AT WHICH MORE THAN HALF OF THE DESCRIPTORS APPLY TO A WRITING SAMPLE OR COLLECTION OF A CHILD'S WRITING. REFER TO THE ANCHOR PAPERS FOR EXAMPLES OF WRITING AT EACH LEVEL.

Anchor Papers

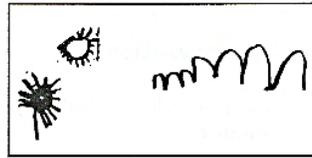
Level 1—Emerging

_____ Makes uncontrolled or unidentifiable scribbling



Level 2—Pictorial

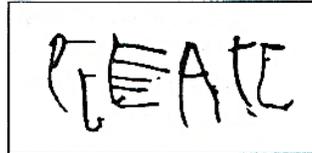
- _____ Imitates writing
- _____ Draws somewhat recognizable picture
- _____ Tells about picture



The flower is growing.

Level 3—Precommunicative

- _____ Writes to convey a message; attempts to read it back
- _____ Uses letter-like forms and/or random letter strings
- _____ Prints own name or occasional known word



There are webs in Spidertown.

Level 4—Semiphonetic

- _____ Correctly uses some letters to match sounds
- _____ May use one beginning letter to write a word
- _____ Usually writes left to right (may reverse some letters)



I have a goldfish called Arielle.

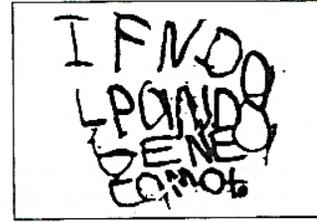
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Conventions of Writing Developmental Scale (continued)

Level 5—Phonetic

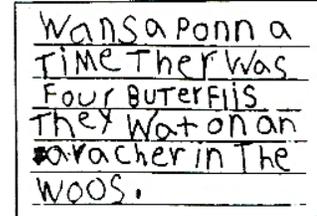
- _____ Represents beginning and ending consonant sounds
- _____ Spells some high-frequency words correctly in sentences
- _____ Includes some vowels (often not correct ones)
- _____ Writes one or more sentences



I found a lamp and a genie came out.

Level 6—Transitional

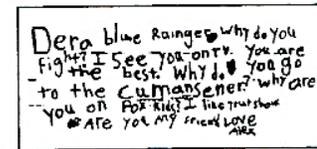
- _____ Correctly spells many high-frequency words in sentences
- _____ Uses vowels in most syllables (may not be correct ones)
- _____ Begins to use simple punctuation (periods, question marks—may not be correct)
- _____ Writes more than one sentence



Once upon a time, there was (were) four butterflies. They went on an adventure in the woods.

Level 7—Conventional

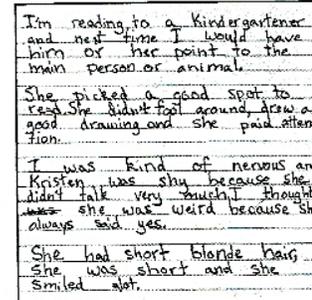
- _____ Correctly spells most high-frequency words (more than one sentence)
- _____ Uses larger correctly spelled vocabulary; may use phonetic spelling for advanced words
- _____ Uses more complex and varied sentence structure; capitalizes beginning word in sentence; uses lowercase appropriately
- _____ Usually uses periods and question marks correctly
- _____ Spaces words correctly



Dear Blue Ranger,
Why do you fight? I see you on TV. You are the best. Why do you go to the command center? Why are you on Fox Kids? I like your show. Are you my friend? Love, Alex

Level 8—Advanced

- _____ Has accumulated a rich body of written vocabulary
- _____ Uses advanced print conventions accurately (quotation marks, commas, apostrophes)
- _____ Organizes writing into appropriate paragraphs



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**APPENDIX L: Teacher-Administered Letter Knowledge Test
(TALKT) Score Sheet**

Name: _____		TALKT Score Sheet		Date: _____	
	Letter name	Letter sound		Letter name	Letter sound
A			N		
B			O		
C			P		
D			Q		
E			R		
F			S		
G			T		
H			U		
I			V		
J			W		
K			X		
L			Y		
M			Z		

Total Correct	/104
----------------------	-------------

	Letter name	Letter sound		Letter name	Letter sound
a			n		
b			o		
c			p		
d			q		
e			r		
f			s		
g			t		
h			u		
i			v		
j			w		
k			x		
l			y		
m			z		

+	Correct independently
-	Correct with cue
x	Incorrect

Appendix M: Double-entry Journal Format

Description of observaitons	Discussion of observations

Appendix N: Parent Questionnaire (English)

Child's Name _____

Kindergarten Survey:

Circle your answer.

Do you read at least one book each week with your child? Yes No

Do you help your child learn new words? Yes No

Do you or the daycare provide writing activities for your child? Yes No

Do you or the daycare provide books for your child to read? Yes No

Did your child speak English since birth? Yes No

Did your child learn English as they grew up? Yes No

Did your child speak Spanish from birth? Yes No

Did your child learn Spanish as they grew up? Yes No

Does your child speak a language other than English or Spanish? Yes No

If yes, what is that language? _____

Did your child attend preschool, daycare, or another early literacy program before beginning at attending their current school? Yes No

Appendix O: Parent Questionnaire (Spanish)

El nombre del niño _____

Encuesta de Kindergarten:

Encierra en un círculo tu respuesta.

¿Lee al menos un libro cada semana con su hijo? Si No

¿Ayudas a tu niño a aprender nuevas palabras? Si No

¿Usted o la guardería proveen actividades de escritura para su hijo? Si No

¿Usted o la guardería proporcionan libros para que su hijo / a lea? Si No

¿Su hijo hablaba inglés desde el nacimiento? Si No

¿Su hijo aprendió inglés mientras crecía? Si No

¿Su hijo hablaba español desde el nacimiento? Si No

¿Tu niño aprendió español cuando creció? Si No

¿Habla su hijo otro idioma que no sea el inglés o el español? Si No

En caso afirmativo, ¿cuál es ese lenguaje? _____

¿Su hijo asistió a preescolar, guardería u otro programa de alfabetización temprana antes de comenzar a asistir a su escuela actual? Si No

Appendix P: Description of writing strategies

“walk to the word” – Student identifies the word they would like to spell. Then, student finds that word in the room, walks to it, and writes it down in their journal entry. These words are most typically identified by associated pictures and placement within the room, such as the words *stop* and *go* on the bathroom door sign. (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000)

“turtle talk” – Students draw out the sounds within a word that they would like to spell as they speak it slowly. This is done to increase attention to each sound as part of the whole word and assist in sound isolation for more accurate phonetic spelling. (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000)

“magic lines” – the students are instructed to insert an underscore, referred to as a “magic line,” when they are able to isolate a sound in a word, but are not able to identify the letter or letters that represent the sound when phonetically spelling. This line acts as a placeholder until conferences when a teacher can help them spell the word correctly. (Feldgus & Cardonick, 2000)

“shadow writing” – The student dictates to the teacher the word, phrase, or sentence that they wish to convey through writing. The teacher then writes the student’s words on paper using a highlighter or light colored pen. After reading the sentence together, the student traces over their words, reading them aloud. This technique is recommended for use with groups of emergent writers, such as low SES, ESOL and simultaneous bilingual students, that may have low confidence when writing and spelling in English. (Johnson, 2014)