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I'M NOT AFRAID ANYMORE: IMPROVING SELF-EFFICACY AND ACHIEVEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH WRITING A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

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Abstract

This research study investigated the observed behaviors and reported experiences of ten fifth grade learning support students, students with learning disabilities, when a narrative writing unit was implemented during daily instruction. In order to help students demonstrate improved levels of self-efficacy; motivation, and attitudes towards, as well as an increased proficiency in writing skills, students were provided with a balanced curriculum of direct instruction, inquiry based learning, and time for independent writing. Participating in writing workshops and interactive writing activities, providing student choice of engaging and motivating writing tasks and prompts, utilizing mentor texts, and using teacher conferencing, students began to increase their writing skills and improve their writing self-efficacy. Data were collected through the use of student learning style and writing skills surveys, student self-efficacy questionnaires, formative assessments of student writing samples with rubric scores, student interviews, student artifacts, and daily observations. Several themes emerged after analyzing the data. It became evident that students were more engaged and motivated to complete authentic writing tasks during the mini lessons of the writing workshop. Over the course of the study, the students' self-efficacy increased during the implementation of the narrative unit. The use of specially designed instruction and student choice in topics allowed for students to increase their proficiency and skills in writing.

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Researcher Stance

My students enter my classroom and take their seats. “Good morning everyone, you have an important job to do today. You will need your writing journal and a pencil because today we are going to do some writing to check our progress.” As soon as they hear the word writing the room completely changes. I hear the groans and anticipate escalation in undesirable behaviors. I read the prompt aloud for the group. “What is your favorite movie? Why is it your favorite? Write an essay giving details to support your response.” Some students put their heads down, some start thinking, and a few start writing. While they work, I walk around the room. After ten minutes, most of the students have stopped writing.

As I stand in the front of my small group of fifth grade students, I am forced to face to a harsh reality. My students come into my classroom already hating writing for a variety of reasons. Their faces tell me all I need to know, exhibiting defeat and anxiety. I am personally familiar with this look because it was once plastered on my face, too, when I was an elementary school student. I look down at the work on their papers to find a few sentences here, a single sentence there, and even blank papers. I hear and understand what they are telling me.

“I can’t write anymore. I’m done!”

“I have no idea what to write.”

“I quit.”

“Why should I try to do this?”

“I can’t do this.”

My students should not be feeling this way in my classroom. My room is a place for them to feel confident, to feel empowered. I know that as long as the status quo continues, I am failing my students in terms of providing meaningful writing instruction.

My continued reflections on my own school writing instruction take me back to tenth grade, where I sit in the front row of a class entitled Creative Writing. As I look around the room, the class is filled with the unfamiliar faces of upperclassmen. I remember feelings of intrigue and excitement as the teacher reviewed the syllabus that outlined the assignments for the year. So what exactly sparked my feelings of intrigue and excitement in the area of writing? As I delve deeper in my memory of my own educational experiences, I try to locate the answer to this question.

For me, elementary school was hard because I struggled academically. I had several health conditions in my first year of life that had lasting effects on my education, including being blind in one eye. I did not have many friends because of it. I was a struggling reader and developed anxiety about reading aloud. My

mom would sit with me for countless hours practicing phonics and other skills. I also struggled with math to the point where my dad needed to sit with me every night to help me with my homework. My key area of strength turned out to be writing, and I loved to write. Writing provided an escape for me. It was a way for me to get out how I felt. I kept a daily journal for many years throughout my childhood.

Middle school and high school were easier for me because my academics caught up with my grade level. I had more friends and was not as anxious. Writing was still my favorite subject, so I was a part of the school paper, the poetry club, and the yearbook club. I kept learning more and more about writing as the years passed. However, I don't really remember actually receiving much formal instruction in writing.

I do not remember being actually taught to write. I can remember learning the parts of speech. I remember learning the elements of a sentence. Writing instruction mainly utilized the skill and drill method with little teacher feedback. There was always a worksheet to be completed independently that included labeling sentences or inserting punctuation. John Dewey (1938) states "The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative" (p. 25). I want to change this specifically for my students. I do not want to teach using the same strategies

because I did not find it engaging or motivating, and, come to think of it, my writing improved through writing—not these skill and drill exercises.

Another important set of memories takes me back to when I realized I wanted to become a teacher. When I was teenager, I made the decision to become a special educator because I wanted to help others just as I had been helped by my parents, and they played a large role in my decision. My mom taught high school English and helped me a lot at home to learn how to read. She also helped me the most with my writing. In fact, she was the first to suggest journal writing, and as I mentioned earlier, my dad helped me to overcome my struggles in math.

I also had two public school teachers who really had a positive impact on my life, and I have chosen them as my teacher role models. Moll (2001) suggests that the teacher understands the child as a whole person and not just a student learning particular content. The first educator beyond my parents who made me want to become a teacher myself was the teacher I was fortunate enough to have for both second and fourth grades. She helped me through some of my hard times with academics and socialization in elementary school. She helped learn how to read and helped me learn to accept myself for who I am. I also had a teacher for three years in high school English and Creative Writing who really connected with me and pushed me to succeed in writing. She was my cheerleader and motivator. Because these two teachers made such an impact on my own education and learning, I knew that I wanted to be an analogous symbol of hope for others. I

wanted to be a light for students who needed it, and I wanted to show them that there is always room to grow and do the best they possibly can in whatever they do.

Unfortunately, I can also remember teachers who weren't the best role models for a future educator. From these experiences, I learned the things I did not want to project onto my future students. Starting at a young age, my views on teaching and learning were being molded. I wanted to be the teacher who provided a motivating and positive perspective for learning. I have always felt strongly about the need for students to feel accepted in the classroom. They shouldn't feel anxious and on edge all of the time like I did. I wanted to give others what I rarely had in my education.

From these personal recollections, I feel that all children can learn regardless of their ability level or disability category. Graham and Perrin (2007) state that students with learning disabilities benefit from an engaging environment full of authentic learning experiences and peer interaction. All students may not learn at the same pace or in the same way. Each student does not have the same motivation or areas of interest. All material needs to be accessible for every student. Learning should allow students to make sense of the world around them. Teachers need to build on the things students already know. What students understand is not the same as what they are able to do. Students need to feel safe and be engaged in order for success. Teachers need to know their students in

order to understand how they learn, their strengths, and weaknesses. Teachers need to differentiate for the students in the classroom in order for the students to learn to the best of their ability.

As a special education teacher, I work with special populations, and my students and I face many challenges in terms of the curriculum, often a battle of curriculum versus annual measurable goals. My students are on average two to three grade levels behind their same age peers. The overall challenge is to find meaningful yet engaging materials that are at the student's instructional level. It can also be difficult to align my instruction to their goals and the curriculum simultaneously because of the large achievement gaps.

When the beginning of new school year approaches, I always reflect on the events of the previous year. These can range from the implementation of instruction to the varying strengths and weaknesses of the students. With each passing year, writing seems to be a prominent area of struggle for many students. In the special education classroom, students are typically given the same defined expectations when it comes to writing. These expectations are aligned with their own Individual Education Program. The students are told what to write, the length the writing should be, and the time frame they have to complete the writing sample. If they do complete the writing assignment, they do so with little confidence in themselves. As a consequence, nearly all of the students have developed a negative attitude towards writing.

Many factors are to blame for this lack of interest and weakness in writing. One reason is due to the lack of curriculum along with a push for reading which in turn has forced teachers to deviate from writing instruction. There is a lack of motivation, or self-efficacy, to write from the students because of a steady decline in their writing skills. Therefore, the students are making little to no progress over the years. These students also live in poverty so they lack experiences. Finally, students are unaware that writing is a form of communication and personal expression that they will use throughout their lives.

After all of this careful reflection, I think about how it can impact my instruction. I think about how I was taught writing. I need to do something different for my students just as my best teachers did for me. What worked for me when I struggled just like my students? How I can use my own childhood fears to help my students? Year to year the needs of my students change. There is no current writing curriculum in place for me to use, so I can teach as I see fit to ensure that my students don't continue to have a negative attitude toward writing. Being able to write is an important skill, and I want to show them that writing isn't something to be scared of or something to make them nervous. I want to show my students that it is a way of expressing themselves.

My students are the reason I am doing this research, and they are at the center of my research because their data will drive my instruction. They are currently telling me that my instruction needs to change. I know that I need to

increase the time I spend on writing. I know that I need to provide them with better quality instruction because it is what they deserve. I know that I need to teach them that writing can be a way to express themselves and communicate with others. Hence, I am beginning by creating a narrative writing unit to show that writing is another way to communicate and express themselves.

By the end of this research project, I hope that I can show overall improvement in student writing. I know not all students will show vast improvement overall, but I hope to show small gains for some students. I also hope to change my student's attitudes towards writing and gain self-efficacy. I want them to feel empowered and confident when they are telling a personal story. I hope they start to view writing as a form of expression. If this unit is a success, I hope to create similar units for informational writing as well as persuasive writing.

My research question has been developed with my students' needs in mind. I want to really focus on improving their feelings and self-efficacy in writing. I want to focus on showing them how to write about themselves. I want them to realize writing is a form of communication with others. My research poses the following question: What are the observed and reported experiences of a learning support teacher and fifth grade learning support students, students with disabilities, when Writer's Workshop, interactive writing, and student choice of

journaling are used during a narrative writing unit to increase self-efficacy, attitudes, and improve writing skills?

Literature Review

Introduction

The research has shown that creating an inquiry based interactive unit focused on writing a personal narrative yields positive results for struggling students with learning disabilities. The unit should consist of student choice, a process writing approach including the implementation of Writer's Workshop, journaling, and a model called Interactive Writing. Writing needs to be more encouraging and accessible for students who have low self-efficacy. The classroom environment needs to stimulate and excite young writers. Teachers need to create this environment for their students. All of these components should improve student self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes as well as writing achievement.

Writing in Elementary Education

Writing in elementary education has transformed over the years. Researchers and teachers have discovered that using traditional writing approaches, or more independent writing, have not greatly advanced student writing. Through this realization, teachers now know there is a connection between skills of reading and writing. A list of best practices was created in order to inform teachers of the key ideas of teaching writing to students. The outcome of all this is the creation of the process/workshop approach, which is extremely different from traditional writing approaches. As defined by Hayes and Flower

(1980), “One of the first and most widely accepted definitions of writing is that the act of composing a text is a goal-directed thinking process which is guided by the writer’s own growing network of goals” (as cited in Drijbooms, Groen, & Verhoeven 2015, pp. 989-990). This definition shows how the process of writing has grown from solely an individual task to one where collaboration is used to help the group as well as the individual.

Traditional Approaches.

Traditional approaches to teaching writing center around the single person and their own writing experience (Zemelman & Daniels, 1988). In this approach, the final writing piece is viewed as something only to be graded. There is only one set way to go about completing a piece of writing. The traditional approach views writing as something that you need to be given instruction in and not something that can be gained through experience. Finally, in order to become a proficient writer, small steps need to be mastered one at a time. This older, more out of date, approach emphasizes teaching writing through more skills based instruction.

Historical Perceptions of Writing in the 20th Century.

During the 20th century, the focus was more on reading. It was said that in school and out, writing required a good deal of labor. “We forget how difficult the labor of writing has been historically—the ‘sheer physical difficulty of inscribing alphabetic characters on some sort of surface’ (Murphy, 2001, p. 5), especially for

children.” Writing has historically been linked to testing. According to Yancey, “In 1845, Horace Mann advocated that teachers should test students not in speech but on paper, in part to serve the interest of fairness” (2009, p. 2). As the 20th century continued, writing instruction was influenced by two trends including science and progressivism. In the 1960s and 1970s and 1980s, a new conception of writing emerged. It came to be called process writing (Yancey, 2009, p.4). Finally, the creation of the computer forever changed the perception of writing.

Historical Perceptions of Writing in the 21st Century.

Writers have started to appear or emerge more frequently in this time than in previous years due to the advancement in technology. In much of this new time, we are writing to share, to encourage dialogue, and to participate (Yancey, 2009, p. 5). Perhaps most importantly, this 21st century writing marks the beginning of a new era in literacy, a period where composers become composers not through direct and formal instruction alone (if at all), but rather through an extracurricular social co-apprenticeship; where inquiry and conferencing are used.

Debates Surrounding Instruction of Students with Disabilities.

Over the years in elementary education, many debates have come to light in terms of how to most appropriately teach students with learning disabilities [SWLD] in the content areas. One central debate focuses around the topic of special education instruction and writing instruction. Secondly, there is a debate with using the rigor among the Common Core standards versus the working

towards their IEP goals. According to Graham and Harris (2003), “Different studies suggest that texts of students with learning disabilities are generally shorter, poorly organized, with more superfluous data and mistakes in their structure than their non LD peers” (as cited in de Caso, Garcia, Diez, Robledo, and Alvarez, 2010, p. 198). A third debate is the effects of student-centered instruction compared to teacher-centered instruction when teaching students with learning disabilities. A final debate deals with finding ways to build motivation in students with learning disabilities. For example, would increasing interest levels and allowing for more student choice build this motivation?

Motivational Factors Influencing Writing

Students with learning disabilities tend to have less motivation and lower self-efficacy in the content area of writing. On the other hand, students who have high writing self-efficacy beliefs are predicted to have more positive writing outcomes. “If students have low self-efficacy, they can also have high writing anxiety” (de Caso, Garcia, Diez, Robledo, & Alvarez, 2010, p. 130). Motivation can affect student academic writing performance. “Motivation research has identified the self-efficacy construct of Bandura’s social cognitive theory as a fundamental component of academic motivation” (Holmes, 2016, p. 1). It is also important to note that little research has been done on how specifically student self-efficacy beliefs are formed. “How students form their self-efficacy beliefs is not yet well understood” (Holmes, 2016, p. 7).

Other than the classic approach to motivation to achieve, Mussen, Conger, Kagan and Houston (1990), have noted four factors of motivation. These four factors include importance, interest or value of the task, standard of demands, attitudes, expectations, self-beliefs, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, and, finally, attributions about successes and failures (as cited in Garcia & de Caso, 2004, p. 142). To motivate an entire classroom of students, it is the responsibility of the teacher to provide students with choice of writing opportunities that are of interest. Maintained by Mayor (2001), “Motivation is not exclusively a stable characteristic of a person, but also depends on situation, domain and context” (as cited in Garcia & de Caso, 2004, p. 141). Students can have different levels of motivation depending on the subject area.

In terms of writing instruction, motivation can play an important role for students. Many students have little motivation when they are asked to write. This is for many different reasons. Teachers need to utilize strategies that can improve both motivation and achievement. Gau, Hermanson, Logar, and Smerek (2003) offer strategies for improving students’ writing abilities and motivation to participate in writing (p. 23). Vue et al. (2016) stated, “Students need to have motivation for writing—self-efficacy and a positive attitude toward writing” (pp. 84-85).

As stated by Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried (2001), “Interventions must also be adjusted to students’ developmental level and adopt methods that

overcome the specific problems associated with developing motivation in students with learning disabilities” (as cited in Garcia & de Caso, 2004, p. 142). There are other interventions that can be used to help motivate students to complete writing tasks. In order to be motivated, the students need to have positive beliefs about their own writing skills. Garcia and de Caso (2014):

“Interventions focus on developing writing ability in students with learning disabilities not only teach strategies for self-regulation and control of the writing process but also focus on the students’ motivation. Arguably, such interventions should aim to foster in students positive beliefs about their ability to manage the writing process and to produce good text. They should also aim to develop a positive emotional environment in the classroom, which would foster intrinsic writing motivation” (p. 142).

Another action research study examined the improvement of writing for five African-American students in urban elementary schools. Interventions included in the study were: choosing words carefully and focusing on the number of words written. The results were optimistic. All participants in the study increased the length of their written work and many were using synonyms more frequently (Geisler, Hessler, Gardner, and Lovelace, 2009).

Intrinsic Motivation.

Mills (1991) defined intrinsic motivation as the desire to contribute (as cited in Oginsky, 2003, p. 4). A classroom that students perceive as safe, supportive of their autonomy, and of their learning increases intrinsic motivation (Oginsky, 2003, p. 2). Students who are intrinsically motivated want to be successful and do their best work. Age level must also be considered while gauging student interest and genres in writing topics. The motivation most teachers are interested in cultivating and building on in students is intrinsic motivation (Oginsky, 2003, p. 4). A student who is intrinsically motivated will have a higher rate of self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy.

The ideas of self-efficacy have been brought to light by two significant researchers, including Bandura and Pajares. Bandura (1994) explained:

Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes.

The level of student self-efficacy affects academic motivation and writing achievement. As noted by Pajeres and Johnson (1994), "Self-efficacy beliefs

affect students' behavior as it determines their ability to achieve their goals and the efforts they exert to achieve these goals" (as cited in Salam & Al Dyiari, 2014, p. 130).

Student self-efficacy is also effected by others around them within the learning environment. Perhaps the most influential person in the classroom for each individual student is the teacher, who plays an equivalent role to the student as a cheerleader and a mentor. "Everyone has the capacity to write. Writing can be taught. Teachers can help students become better writers" (Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing, 2016, p. 5). With this being said, the teacher should write alongside the students while they are writing. Students need teachers who believe in them and who will do everything they can to create experiences for students to learn. A good example of this would be to use teacher generated writing samples as modeled texts.

A writing self-efficacy program was created in a study completed by de Caso, et al., (2010), where the researchers based their measures off of the four sources of self-efficacy Bandura (1997) and McCabe (2003), suggested. The four sources of self-efficacy include a positive psychological and affective state, verbal persuasion and feedback, enactive mastery, and vicarious experiences" (pp. 199-200). These sources need to be taught to students in order to change self-efficacy levels within the content areas. Teachers can integrate these components of self-efficacy into normal instruction. Low-achieving students and/or students with

learning disabilities can learn strategies for producing writing. If students are motivated and teachers make a pleasant and safe learning environment, the students will have increased writing experiences.

There has been research on self-efficacy that is specific to written expression. There are many reasons as to why students have low self-efficacy in writing. Contended by Abdel-Latif (2007):

There were four causes of low English writing self-efficacy. These factors were the lack of linguistic knowledge, low foreign language competence self-esteem, poor history of writing achievement and perceived writing performance improvement, low English writing self-efficacy, instructional practices of English writing, fear of criticism and others' evaluation of the student's writing (as cited in Salam & Al Dyiari, 2014, p. 130).

Self-efficacy is one large factor that determines student motivation. If students have low self-efficacy, it will be hard for them to break out of the slump without help from the teacher. Students who struggle with writing, experience this feeling. Once they have the idea they struggle, it is difficult to overcome. Low self-efficacy also is a predictor of behavior issues and attitudes.

Anxiety and Attitudes.

If students have low self-efficacy, they can also have high writing anxiety. "Self-efficacy has a great connection to the students' thought patterns and emotional responses" (Salam & Al Dyiari, 2014, p. 130). Students who have

writing anxiety, often know they that struggle with writing. They often have struggled for many years. Motivational factors including self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing is usually lower for struggling students. Using the right strategies and approaches can change these motivational factors in students can improve overall writing skills. Teachers need to reduce student writing anxiety, which will increase positive attitudes rather than negative attitudes. Hall and Axelrod (2014) stated, “Attitudes, beliefs, and self-efficacy are influenced by social settings such as the classroom” (p. 35).

Motivational factors including, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and anxiety can impact student writing achievement in a positive or negative way. Students with learning disabilities tend to have less motivation and lower self-efficacy in the content area of writing. On the other hand, students who have high writing self-efficacy beliefs are predicted to have more positive writing outcomes. Motivation can affect student academic writing performance. It is also important to note that little research has been done on how specifically student self-efficacy beliefs are formed.

Best Practices Related to Writing a Personal Narrative

Best practices need to be thought about before developing writing tasks for students. Teacher’s modeling the writing activities provides students with examples and encouragement to students with choice can greatly impact their personal writing achievement and motivation. Writing has a strong connection to

reading, so using texts within lessons will provide examples for students. It is helpful to incorporate a process approach rather than the traditional writing approach.

Charles Whitaker (2005) provides some teaching practices that are well recognized in the profession as being effective in helping students develop as writers. There are many strategies teachers can use to help foster this love of writing including student choice, daily writing, scaffolding, collaboration, modeling, explicit instruction, and providing appropriate feedback. All of these strategies can be used in the classroom to teach writing to struggling writers that will increase motivation and improve writing skills. When teaching writing it is critical to establish a positive atmosphere for writing, reading, and learning. It is important to have an inviting classroom and to have a level of respect within the classroom. The teacher should complete the writing tasks along with the students. This provides students with a model which in turn will motivate them.

There are many interventions and strategies that can be implemented during writing instruction that can benefit all students include students with learning disabilities. To teach writing in the elementary classroom a teacher needs to find strategies to use with struggling writers who are still learning the basics of writing. “Writing poses significant challenges for students with disabilities (ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, 2002, p. 3). It is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that writing experiences are engaging and at the student’s

ability level. With both these notions in place, students will be willing to write more frequently as well as in the future grades. Much research has been done on the topic of strategies to help all students within the context of writing. So many strategies can be implemented to motivate students. These strategies include scaffolding, graphic organizers, student choice, modeling, daily writing using explicit instruction, providing student feedback, use student interests and home experiences, writing centers, Author's Chair, interactive journals, and mentor texts. Teachers need to constantly search for new and innovative ways to instruct students with learning disabilities.

Narrative Writing.

The main idea of the process approach is that writing is viewed as a social and collaborative adventure. According to Zemelman and Daniels (1988), “Many teachers and district writing coordinators view the writing process has changed somewhat to reflect the demands that assessments aligned with the Common Core Standards will make.” This means that a need for a different approach was necessary to adapt to the Common Core expectations. Narrative is a good starting point to teaching writing instruction because it allows the students to build a connection to writing. By allowing the students to write a piece about themselves personally, shows the students that writing is more than just putting words into sentences into paragraphs.

Narrative writing is the best form of writing for students who are struggling to master writing skills. Students will be able to communicate and express themselves. The task of narrative writing can sometimes use higher level self-regulation strategies. Teachers need to get to know each student individually in order to best instruct all students. The process approach is the best way to go about teaching and writing narrative texts. Learning how to write a personal story can give struggling students motivation to complete the task.

Narrative writing is a form of writing that teachers use to bridge the gap between struggling writers and production of text. Narrative writing is a way for students to communicate a personal story about their life experiences. The main purpose is to allow the students to express themselves through words. “Narrative is the primary means of comprehension and expression of our experience over time, which can be found in every setting of human interaction” (Gündüz & Ünal, 2016, p. 45). The main idea is focused around social communication and the emotion of sharing a story with others. Smith (1990) affirms that “Our stories are the vantage points from which we perceive the world and the people in it” (pp. 64-65, as cited in Vitali, 2016, p. 32). Narrative stories can give students a voice when they otherwise do not have a way to share their stories with others.

A process approach, as previously mentioned is a great approach for writing and it is the most appropriate approach for teaching narrative writing. This approach says that students will gradually learn how to produce texts by

mastering cognitive writing strategies. Implementing a process approach is similar to communicative competences. Students need these competences to write particular narrative text. Students also need to be provided with strategies and explicit instruction during the writing process in order to produce quality work. Saddler, Moran, Graham, and Harris (2004) created a two strategy Plan, Organize, and Write [POW]. This strategy helped students create more elaborate stories when they were provided with explicit instruction on how to plan a story and on the specific components that need to be included in a story (as cited in Dunn & Finley, 2010, p. 34).

In order to write a narrative, teachers and students would benefit from using a process approach to develop their stories. According to McCutchen (2006), “Students who struggle with writing often experience difficulty with how to plan a story” (as cited in Dunn & Finley, 3020, p. 33). Using a process approach with these students can change this feeling because it will give the students the tools they need to learn how to plan out, write, and share their story. Narrative writing holds an enormous potential for students. Gair (2015) states, “My motivation for devoting time to narrative writing rests in the transformative potential of telling stories about our lives, as well as the key shifts in the language arts curriculum toward greater learner engagement in informational reading and writing” (Gair, 2015, p. 443).

Struggling students need even more time and instruction to learn the needed skills of writing a story. “For students who struggle with composing text, the writing process can be an arduous challenge which often results in frustration and a final copy which is lower in quality than standards dictate” (Dunn & Finley, 2010, p. 33). They further go on to claim that offering students a step-by-step format and the opportunity to practice managing their own writing process can help struggling writers improve in composing elaborate text (p. 34).

Funds of knowledge.

Moll (2005) plays a central role in the topic of narrative story writing because he was a part of the idea of funds of knowledge, which is similar to narrative writing because his idea says that people have life experiences and knowledge which they want to share (Gonzalez, N., Moll, L., Amanti, C., Taylor & Francis, 2005). Understanding the student as a whole person is a more dynamic relationship rather than only knowing the student based on performance in school (Moll, 2001, p. 134). These Funds of Knowledge initially started as household activities but later were transferred over to the classroom setting. Moll (2001) explained that the Funds of Knowledge concept can challenge teachers to pay more attention to the whole student rather than just assessment information (p. 673). The Funds of Knowledge helped teachers identify students’ prior knowledge. This prior knowledge and learning about the whole student did wonders for both instruction and rapport between the teacher and students. “The

Funds of Knowledge can enhance the schooling experience of ethnic minority children, by scaffolding their acquisition of new knowledge” (Moll, 2001, p. 673).

Authentic Writing.

The advantages of authentic writing are more than just motivational factors. They help students develop real-world writing skills that they will need for their future. Students need to understand the reasons for writing and those reasons need to be meaningful. As noted by Ken Lindblom, “While many students claim to dislike writing, according to a PEW Report, today’s young people actually write a lot more than young people of decades ago. But what they write are texts and on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms” (2017). He goes on to summarize that students will write to their ability level we as teachers need to design writing assignments that is of interest to their audience; the students. We, as teachers, need to allow students to have choice to select topics that they are interested in and that allow them to write to real audiences.

It is important for all students, including students with disabilities, to learn and have the skills to communicate with others. That is why teachers should emphasize authentic writing experiences. According to Graham and Perrin (2007), “Students with learning disabilities benefit from learning in an environment that engages them in peer-interaction and authentic literacy learning activities” (as cited in Jacobs & Fu, 2014, p.101). Students with learning disabilities need to be provided with the same instruction as their same age peers.

They need authentic experiences as well as social interaction with their peers in order to learn and show progress. Writing a personal narrative is a great jumping off point because it teaches the students that writing in the school setting is more than just for a grade. Real writing is meant for self-expression and having possessing the abilities to communicate with others.

Process Based Instruction.

Another best practice for narrative writing is to be organized during the writing process (Whitaker, 2005). The best way to use the process approach is to start at the beginning and teach component at a time. Allow the student's time to master the skill before moving on to the next task. This is especially true for students who struggle. One way to do so is to use a Writer's Workshop and to keep an organized notebook or journal. The process approach is defined by the writer's experiences. This approach allows for the use of different processes of writing to occur depending on the situation. Through this approach writers are guided and learn from practice with others. It is important to write an entire text rather than pieces of text because writers learn best from attempting the whole text and learning as they go through the process of writing. The reading writing connection is also important when teaching a process writing approach. Teachers can become more confident facilitators of the workshop when they understand this connection.

Teachers need to create time for students to use and see that a variety of materials have been written for a variety of reasons (Whitaker, 2005). Teachers need to arrange for students to have constructive responses to their writing and to offer response to other writers, including classmates, teacher, or others. Student's need time to collaborate with others whether it be their peers, or the teacher (Whitaker, 2005). Teachers need to commit to professional writing development (Calkins, 2016, p. 8). Calkins also suggest a technique of a writing classroom where teachers and students work together. One example of this would be writing conferences. Teachers need to take more of a facilitator role while students become more of the center of the instruction. This new balance is shown to improve writing skills.

Similarly, yet another model exists in terms of the writing process for the content areas. Read, Landon-Hays, and Martin-Rivas (2014) noted this content area process called IMSCI, which stands for inquiry, modeling, shared writing, collaborative writing, and independent writing (p. 471). The goal of this model is for the students to be able to independently write in a specific genre after the teacher has provided enough scaffolding. This notion is reflective of both Writer's Workshop and the idea of interactive writing, which will be explained later on.

Writer's Workshop.

Writing a personal narrative is not something the students will be able to do in one on demand sitting or class period. A narrative story is in depth and

needs to be explicitly taught. Following a writer's workshop is the best way to teach the components of a narrative and provide adequate time for the students to apply their newly learned skills by writing their own personal narrative. The workshop will allow the teacher to teach a mini lesson, give the students time for practice, have the student's conference with the teacher, and allow for student collaboration during sharing. All of these stages are aligned with strategies to help students with disabilities make progress as well as decrease anxiety while increasing their self-efficacy.

A workshop model is very different from traditional approaches that focused on a more constricted writing environment. Mini-lessons, independent writing with teacher conferencing, and shared writing are ways in which the teacher can teach the writing process (Gair, 2015, p. 446). According to Monroe and Troia (2006) and Saddler and Asaro (2007), "Multiple writing researchers have found that when students with learning disabilities [SWLD] are taught and supported in the use of strategies for planning, drafting, and revising, the quantity and quality of their writing improved" (as cited in Vue, Hall, Robinson, Ganley, Elizalde & Graham 2016, p. 85).

Writer's Workshop is an effective approach to help scaffold writers through the writing process (Gair, 2015, p. 445). Writer's Workshop follows the process approach of writing as previously mentioned. Certain prerequisites need to be met and put in place before Writer's Workshop can be effective.

Implementing the Writer's Workshop is appropriate after the students have a grasp of phonemic awareness and the basics of sentence structure. Calkins (1986) states that a predictable time should be set aside for writing. Graves (1983) suggests a block of forty-five to fifty minutes four days a week. Calkins (2016) says that it's important to schedule forty-five minutes of daily writing. Calkins also suggests ten minutes of explicit whole group instruction. Thirty minutes should be used for writing. During this time, the teacher will conference with students and teach small group explicit instructions. The last five minutes students will share their writing with a partner. However, students with learning disabilities need more time to master skills. Being able to clearly express thoughts and feelings in writing is one skill that students will use for a lifetime. Student choice is essential to a writing workshop because sparking interests may yield increased motivation as well as improved writing achievement.

A successful writing workshop consists of teachers and students who follow the writing process. Graves (1994) identifies five steps of the writing process including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing/sharing (as cited in Gündüz & Ünal, 2016, p. 48). Students choose writing topics, set goals, and develop writing plans in the planning or prewriting stage. When students are drafting, or actually writing, the time should be uninterrupted time. Meyer (1995) reported that students using graphic organizers during the drafting stage can be an effective strategy in Writer's Workshop instruction (James,

Abbott, & Greenwood, 2001, p. 31). Once students are ready to revise their work, they are able to make needed changes to their writing. The teacher should hold conferences during this stage to provide guidance for the students. Editing is closely related to revising. The publishing stage is the time when a final piece is created usually using a word processor. The final step is to share the work with others.

The workshop model is organized into three sections. These sections include mini lessons, independent writing with conferencing, and “author’s chair” (Gair, 2015, p. 447). Each class begins with whole group instruction with a mini lesson. Gair further explains that when using the narrative genre, mini lessons should focus on writing frequently modeled by mentor texts as instructional support tools (p. 446). Each mini lesson should only focus on one topic at a time and should be topics that students struggle with. After a mini lesson students should have independent writing time, which should be a large portion of class time, to practice newly learned skills.

Conferencing should also be a part of the independent writing time. Students also need to be given feedback throughout the writing process. Use student’s interest and experiences to help motivation. During teacher conferences, teachers should ask the students relevant questions. Students will begin to ask those same questions about their own writing over time. Calkins (1994) states that conferences “are at the heart of teaching writing” (p. 222). Students need allotted

time to work with the teacher and their peers. Graves (1994) advocates using the “author’s chair.” Each day the lesson should end with an opportunity for sharing writing. Graves, Reutzel and Cooter (1996) note that sharing writing with others gives students purpose and provides meaning to their written work (as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 3). Students need to know that their writing matters for more than just a grade and the teacher’s eyes.

Writers Workshop is an effective approach to help scaffold writers through the writing process. Acknowledged by Dean (2010), “Scaffolding is an essential component of strategy instruction that begins with teacher instruction in and modeling of the target strategies; it continues with collaboration between the teacher and students, as students practice the target strategies” (p.11). Scaffolding is an important strategy to help instruct students with disabilities. Students use the teacher’s scaffolds to build up their own knowledge. Teachers need to be careful as to not provide too much assistance when scaffolding material for the students.

Similarly, teachers need to place themselves in a role of guide or facilitator during the workshop time. Writer’s Workshop will allow the students daily writing, mini lessons, sharing and conferencing which will increase writing skills. The frequency of the workshop is important and necessary to increase academic success. Students will also benefit from following the routine of a scheduled, daily workshop. The role of the teacher is different from other instruction because in this approach the teacher needs to be the facilitator or guide

for the students. Students need clear expectations before a writing workshop can start and work appropriately. Students also need to know what the teacher expects from them, so the format for assessment should stay constant. According to Kovbasyuk & Blessinger (2013):

The writing workshop is intended to be learner-centered, an environment in which active learning and inductive instructional methods are fundamental characteristics. In the context of this student-centered approach, I also encourage a meaning centered atmosphere for writing; that is, a classroom environment that encourages students to draw something meaningful from their everyday lives and use it as a springboard or motivation for learning (as cited in Gair, 2015, p. 446).

The classroom environment is key to both the success writer's workshop and the success of the students. The classroom environment is pivotal in creating an atmosphere for writing, sharing, and conferencing. Dean (2010), explains that writing interventions and strategies that can be helpful to the success of all students include cognitive learning strategies, writing strategies, and self-regulatory strategies (p. 3).

Contextualized skill instruction.

Teachers need to provide mini lessons on writing. Choosing areas where students are struggling and then structuring practice lessons around those specific topics is vital to successful writing instruction. Calkins (1994) found that there are

key components to improving writing in schools and a district including having a shared vision of what it means to have good writing instruction and what good writing looks like, establishing a curriculum that builds at each grade level, and implementing shared writing assessments.

Reading-Writing Connection.

Reading needs to be incorporated into writing instruction. Another best practice is to provide opportunities for writing across content areas. The teaching of writing needs to incorporate research that shows a connection between writing and reading. There are many components in reading that overlap with writing, including plot, phonics, and structure. As noted by Bailey, Borczack, Stankiewicz (2001), “Instead of viewing writing as a subject that should be taught separate from other subjects we should take into consideration the research that demonstrates the strong connection between reading and writing” (p. 22). It is important to incorporate other content areas, especially reading, into writing instruction.

If students have strong reading abilities in reading, they also often have a strength in writing. The same is true for struggling readers. Most often if a student’s struggles with reading they struggle with writing as well. By the same token, there are several factors that can put children at risk for becoming poor writers. Students with disabilities usually fall into this category where they struggle with both reading and writing. It is important for teachers to use both

reading and writing instruction to foster growth in both subject areas. The more exposure these students get will lead to growth in both content areas.

Bailey et al. (2001) listed factors that lead to why students struggle in both content areas. They include the lack of experience with language, a Whole Language curriculum, having a learning disability, pressure on the teacher, lack of meaningful time to write, lack of experiences, and lack of multiple intelligence instruction (pp. 22-25). Reading is an essential piece to becoming a good writer. Low reading skills could be another factor in lower self-efficacy toward writing. It is important for teachers to incorporate as much literacy into writing instruction as possible and that is where mentor texts are essential. Mentor texts can help the teacher increase the progression of skills in both areas of reading and writing.

Mentor Texts.

Mentor texts are important for effective writing production. A mentor text is a wonderful tool to use during writing instruction. “Mentor texts are most powerful when students frequently revisit them throughout the writing process—and when teachers help them take lessons from writing exemplars (Gallagher, 2014, p. 29). Gallagher goes on to note that it is important for students to see good writing techniques because it will carry over to their own writing (p. 29). Mentor texts can help the teacher model the correct way to write something. They are powerful visual examples of what good writing looks like. Students can use

the visual to help shape their understanding of what the teacher says. The use of mentor texts can illustrate proper writing skills and form.

A mentor text can be a meaningful tool for teaching narrative writing.

Giving students, especially students with disabilities, a visual representation of what they are expected to accomplish can help motivate the students. A mentor text is also a great tool to use being lessons because a mentor text brings authenticity to their writing task. A mentor text can show students exactly what is expected from their writing. For instance, when the students are asked to write a personal narrative, the mentor text can be an example for them. They can see the components of a narrative and pull ideas into their own writing. This concrete example is a way to decrease anxiety and improve motivation because the students can see the expectations.

Student Choice.

Student choice is very important in terms of writing because if they are interested in the topic, they will be more engaged. In order to get students interested in writing, Calkins (1994) discusses the importance of providing students with meaningful writing opportunities by allowing them to make choices and write about the significant things in their lives. Students will be motivated if they have the opportunity to choose their own topics. The topics they choose will hold meaning for the individual student. Student choice is a large part of providing effective instruction for students with disabilities. Students need

choices because it is a motivation factor. They feel like they are in charge of their learning when they have choices and it lowers the level of anxiety and inappropriate behaviors. As noted by Alonso (1997), Bruning and Horn (2000), Church, Elliot, and Gable (2001), and Reynolds and Symons (2001), “Interventions must take account of: student choice of the goals students pursue motivation-enhancing conditions; the willingness and ability of the teacher to implement the intervention; and the characteristics of activities that are motivational for students” (as cited in Garcia & de Caso, 2004, p.142).

Perhaps the most powerful strategy related to student choice comes from an idea from many years ago that says teachers need to allow children to use their personal strengths.

“Consideration of the individual differences while planning lessons is claimed to have utmost importance for an effective instruction. For that end, Multiple Intelligences Theory (MIT) proposed by Howard Gardner in 1983 proposes that each individual is unique and each individual possess his/her her own learning processes” (as cited in Gündüz & Ünal. 2016, p. 1687).

Gardner’s theory is something that can be used to help students in their battle of learning to be better writers. Using these ideas of multiple intelligences along with student choice will help increase student self-efficacy and then achievement.

Interactive Writing.

Interactive writing is another method that follows the process writing approach. This method is a way to improve independent writing. Interactive writing is an instructional method that allows the students to work together with the teacher to create pieces of writing and review skills they lack within the scope of writing. The strategies of scaffolding and modeling that are used for students with disabilities is essential for this approach. Williams, Sherry, Robinson, and Hungler (2012) say:

Interactive writing is a specific approach to beginning writing instruction. The components of an interactive writing lesson reflect the recursive processes involved in writing (i.e., planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing), and teachers make those processes clear through demonstration and explicit instruction (pp. 331-332).

As previously mentioned, this method can be used alongside Writer's Workshop that follows a process writing approach. Interactive writing became important to the world of writing due to researchers and others including the work of Button, Johnson, and Ferguson (1996) and McCarrier, Pinnell & Fountas (2000).

According to Cox (2012), "Interactive writing makes the writing process visual to the whole class. Reading literature is an excellent way to initiate interactive writing in the class." As noted earlier, the strategy of using mentor texts is important in interactive writing because the texts can show the students

how to do something rather than just saying “do this.” As noted by Bifuh-Ambe (2013), “Modeling and providing effective instruction is critical, especially in elementary grades” (p. 137). Modeling is a key factor in interactive writing because it is how the teacher shows the students how to improve their writing. Interactive writing is perfect for differentiated instruction to meet specific student needs. “Every lesson is multifaceted and scaffolds student knowledge in multiple areas simultaneously” (Roth & Dabrowski, 2014, p. 35). Teachers can help students by supporting them in areas of weakness.

The ultimate goal of interactive writing is to improve students’ independent writing skills and advance them closer to meeting grade level goals. Writing that is completed during these lessons must be authentic in nature. “For students at any grade, the writing completed during an interactive writing lesson must hold an authentic purpose” (Roth & Dabrowski, 2014, p. 38). This method consists of collaboration, teacher scaffolding, and “sharing of the pen” (Roth & Dabrowski, 2014, p. 34). This method is not supposed to be the only writing instruction students receive on a daily basis. Interactive writing reinforces other writing practices including writer’s workshop and journal writing.

An interactive writing lesson is composed of a sequence that similar to the writing process. The flow of the each lesson is important. The lesson elements include experience, prewrite, compose, share the pen, review, and extend (Roth & Dabrowski’s, 2014, pp. 34-35). In the stage of experience, a piece of writing is

created because students share a similar experience. In prewrite, students decide on the type of writing to do and the purpose for writing. They work collaboratively to figure out the audience and the importance of the piece. Compose is when the teacher helps guide the students through the creation of the text. The students can share their ideas while the teacher provides any instruction or assistance needed.

“Share the pen” is a method used during interactive writing where text can be written on paper of choice for all of the students to see. The teacher and students work together to construct the text. Students should be chosen to write at the times when targeted instructional points are being taught. Editing the text can happen in this stage as errors happen or at the end. According to Williams, Sherry, Robinson, and Hungler (2012), “The goal of sharing the pen is to focus students’ attention on specific aspects of the writing process they are still coming to understand” (p. 332). Review happens after the text is completely constructed. The teacher revisits the key points taught in the overall lesson. In the final stage, expand, the completed writing pieces should be kept to refer back to for future use. Students can use these as a model during independent writing.

Interactive writing is perfect for differentiated instruction to meet specific student needs. Cicalese (2003) explains that interactive writing is supported to be an essential first step to teach students how to write independently (p. 1). The approach is only appropriate to use sparingly. This method allows students to

work together with the teacher to review skills they lack. Interactive writing can be conducted with any size group depending on student need. It is mainly used for beginning writers, however the methods can be adapted to fit the needs of older students. Interactive writing can be done using the idea of collaborative writing and inquiry. “Interactive writing is a teaching approach that can simultaneously advance both the individualized needs of writers and any grade-level goals” (Roth & Dabrowski, 2014, p. 43).

There are several key factors for teachers who are interested in using interactive writing (Roth & Dabrowski, 2014, pp. 42-43). In order for the lesson to run smoothly, make sure students understand all routines. Choose a time of day that is appropriate for writing and focusing. Create a classroom environment that is engaging and comfortable. Be sure to use enlarged materials so all students can see. Make appropriate teaching decisions by choosing topics the students are struggling with and need more instruction on. All students need to be engaged and working together. Be patient with yourself and the students!

Using interactive writing can encourage students to work together to gain needed skills for independent writing. Teachers can help students during interactive writing by supporting them in areas of weakness. Writing that is completed during these lessons must be authentic in nature. Interactive writing reinforces other writing practices including writer’s workshop and journal writing.

The ultimate goal of interactive writing is to improve student's independent writing skills and advance them closer to meeting grade level goals.

Summary

There are many strategies to use in the classroom to teach writing to struggling writers that will increase motivation and improve writing skills. Providing students with choices during daily writing is a way to increase motivation, self-efficacy and attitudes. Narrative writing can be a form of writing that allows students to start to communicate with others by expressing their personal stories through writing. Creating an environment conducive to writing is extremely important. Students are likely to pick topics to write about that are interesting to them. Writer's Workshop and interactive writing are two models or approaches that can be used to teach the writing process. Mini-lessons, independent writing with teacher conferencing, and sharing of text are used in Writer's Workshop to teach the writing process. Interactive writing is an instructional method that allows the students to work together with the teacher to create pieces of writing and review skills they lack within the scope of writing. All of these concepts intertwined together will hopefully be used to transform writing instruction within the learning support classroom.

Methodology

Research Goals

Effective writing instruction at the elementary level helps build skills for future academic success for all students at any ability level. In my years of teaching students who struggle with learning, many to all of the students in my classroom struggle with motivation as well as the craft of writing. By the time they enter the upper elementary grades; third, fourth, and fifth, my students have little to no self-efficacy or motivation in any sense towards writing. Many students are multiple years below their given grade level. In my previous years of teaching, I found myself frequently searching for new and improved strategies or instructional programs to allow my students to be an active participant during writing instruction. I would find things I liked, however they did not yield different results among the students. Since the district does not have a solid writing curriculum it is up to me, as the teacher, to find instructional tools that would academically advance the students' writing skills. The goal of my research study was to document the observed behaviors as well as the reported experiences of fifth grade learning support students, students with disabilities, when Writer's Workshop, Interactive Writing, and student choice of journaling are used during a narrative writing unit to increase self-efficacy, attitudes, and improve writing skills.

Setting

The district where I teach is the sixth largest school district in Pennsylvania. I teach at one of twenty-one schools in a district that serves a total of approximately 14,000 students. The district is located in a small city in eastern Pennsylvania. The district offers a full continuum of special education programs and related services that address a broad range of students' individual needs. I teach at one of sixteen K-5 elementary schools in the district. The school is an inner-city elementary school (K-5), which serves approximately 320 students, with a high proportion of children considered at-risk. The school is designated as a Title I school; meaning the school receives federal funds to help disadvantaged children reach state academic standards.

Students at this school are predominantly Hispanic (79%). African American students constitute 13%, Caucasian 6%, students who identify as being of two or more races total 2% and Asian Pacific and American Indian students form less than 1% combined. The gender distribution among the student body is fairly equal, consisting of 54% male and 46% female (Pennsylvania School Performance). Within the school, thirty-eight students, 12% of the population, receive special education services.

Participants

My classroom serves third, fourth, and fifth grade identified special education students who have Individual Education Programs. I currently work

with six third graders, twelve fourth graders and ten fifth graders in the areas of reading, writing, and math. I chose to complete my study with my ten fifth graders during my WIN intervention class. I currently have six boys and four girls participating in my research study. All ten students participated in my study. Of the ten participants, two students are also English Language Learners (ELL).

All students are identified and receive services via an IEP. They receive varied amount of support throughout the day. Most students receive Itinerant support while two students receive Supplemental support. This means they are provided with more time within a small group to focus on their instructional needs. The students' disability categories include Specific Learning Disability, Other Health Impairment, Autism, and Emotional Disturbance. Two of the boys, Ash and Tyreese (pseudonyms) have real writing anxiety and are not pleased to be doing writing every day.

Procedures

In the months leading up to the study, I completed the application, which was reviewed and approval from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (Appendix A). Prior to the start of my study, I explained the purpose and what the students would be doing during the study. I asked and received all of the necessary permission, including the principal consent (Appendix B), the parent/guardian consent (Appendix C), and the student assent (Appendix D) forms.

Before the actual implementation of the study, I wanted to show some baseline data in order to have a better understanding of my students who are participating in my study. Students were given a pre-study writing prompt where they had to write a summary (Appendices K and L). The students were also given a Pre-Study Survey that focused on student perceptions of their writing abilities (Appendix E). There was also a questionnaire given to determine the level of student self-efficacy (Appendix F). The students completed a learning style inventory (Appendix G). Students were then told of the research that their teacher would conduct over the course of the study. Additionally, throughout the study, students were asked interview questions (Appendix H) during student writing conferences. The questions focused on their writing and how they feel about their writing. Throughout the study, the students used mentor texts (Appendix M) as examples of appropriate writing. Students were also given five formative assessments (Appendix N) to monitor progress. Finally, in order to protect the identity of the students, the students were assigned a random pseudonym.

The group met daily for forty-five minute sessions. The study lasted for forty-three days from start to finish. At the conclusion of the study, this process was completed over again. They once again took the student writing survey and the self-efficacy questionnaire. During the eight weeks, mini-lessons were conducted as well as conferences on student work to motivate students to develop

their writing. Over the course of the eight-week study, the activities listed below took place:

- Week One:
 - Pre assessment: Collect initial writing sample of prompt of choice
 - Initial student writing survey
 - Initial self-efficacy questionnaire
 - Learning style inventory VAK survey
 - Initial writing sample
- Week Two:
 - Story Writing Steps Cut and Paste Activity
 - Components of a narrative
 - Heart maps
 - Parts of a personal narrative
 - Narrative graphic organizers
 - Narrative Rubric
 - “Watermelon” story vs. “Seed” story
- Week 3:
 - First formative assessment and conferences
 - Identifying beginning, middle, and end
 - Sequencing flip book
 - Emotional hook
 - Four types of hooks
- Week 4:
 - Second formative assessment with conferences
 - Start to write individual personal narratives
 - Show don’t tell
 - Paint a word picture
 - Adding details
- Week 5:
 - Third formative assessment and conferences
 - Creating a satisfying ending
 - Using transition words
 - Avoid the it/and monsters
 - Continue to write personal narrative
- Week 6:
 - Verbs
 - Nouns
 - Adding dialogue
 - Stretching sentences

- Fourth formative assessment and conferences
- Week 7:
 - How to perform “surgery” to sentences
 - Fifth formative assessment and conferences
 - Revising with a checklist
 - Editing and editing checklist
 - Building a book
- Week 8:
 - Student writing their personal narratives
 - Publishing personal narratives
 - Preparing for author’s celebration
 - Author’s Celebration
 - Final study survey and questionnaire

Data Sources

In this research study, students engaged in a variety of mini-lessons during writer’s workshop that were used to motivate and engage students in the writing process. During instruction students used interactive writing, where writing was modeled, mentor texts, and student collaboration where writing was discussed. At the end of the unit, the students created a personal narrative story that was published into a bound book. My research proposal was submitted to the Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) of Moravian College. After review by the HSIRB, my proposal was approved (Appendix A). A principal Consent Form was completed and approved (Appendix B). Parent Consent Letters were sent home to parents and returned with permission for students to participate in the study (Appendix C), along with student assent forms (Appendix D).

Data were collected through a variety of sources, including a learning style inventory (Appendix G), pre and post study surveys (Appendix E) and

questionnaires (Appendix F), writing interviews completed during conferences (Appendix H), student artifacts, and field log observations and notes. All data were collected during class time. Class time was in the morning from 9:15 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. All of the reflection and analysis of the data took place outside of the classroom setting.

Learning Style Inventory.

The VAK (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) learning style inventory (Appendix G) was given prior to the start of the study in order to gain a better understanding of how my students' learn best. Even though I have worked with these ten students for three years, the results from this inventory allowed me to learn something new about each one of my students. I had my opinions and feelings about how I thought they learned best, however my perceptions proved that I had more to learn, even after two years. I used this new found information to plan the activities for my writing unit. I wanted to make sure I had an equal mix of all three styles to engage and motivate my students.

Student Writing Surveys.

A pre-study student writing survey (Appendix E) was given at the beginning of the study. This survey was created based off of a survey completed from a study by Bassett, DeVine, Perry, and Rueth (2001) and several other published surveys that can be found in the references. The survey has clear concise statements that were read aloud to the students. The students were asked

to choose from one of three choice responses. I used the results to gain an understanding of how each student viewed their writing skills. I had my own idea of how the student's would respond because I have worked with them for so long and I know their areas of strength and need. However, some of the student responses shocked me when I was going the initial study results because the given responses did not align with performance. Some of the items on the survey were geared toward engagement and attitudes towards writing. These results were used to guide my instruction and to target skill areas where the students thought they needed to improve. A post-student writing survey was given at the end of the study to determine if the students' perceptions about their writing abilities changed over the course of the study.

Writing Self-Efficacy Questionnaires.

The self-efficacy questionnaire (Appendix F) is similar in format to the student writing survey. This questionnaire was created based off of a survey completed from a study by Bassett, DeVine, Perry, and Rueth (2001) and several other published questionnaires that can be found in the references. The questionnaire was given at the beginning and ending of the study. The answers to this questionnaire were very eye opening. Similarly to the writing survey, the questionnaire revealed some interesting information that I previously did not know about my students including the self-perceived lack of motivation. The students seemed to be honest, yet some I suspect were not honest. This

questionnaire took longer than I expected because I needed to reread and/or explain many of the statements on the questionnaire. The students also took some time to choose their response. This questionnaire was slightly more complicated than the survey because the students were given four choices to choose from instead of three. I had to explain the difference between the choices and what they meant if it was chosen as an answer. This questionnaire was also given at the conclusion of the study. It was given twice in order to assess if there were changes in the level of student motivation, specifically self-efficacy, and student attitudes and behaviors.

Writing Conference Interviews.

Interviews were conducted throughout the study on an individual basis (Appendix H). I conducted these interviews during weekly student conference times during that time of writer's workshop. Even though these conferences were conducted weekly, only one interview was completed for each student over the course of the study. The purpose of the interview was to determine if discussing student writing using a conference would improve student achievement as well as motivation. I wanted to see if I would get overall positive responses or negative responses from students from talking about their writing using the interview questions. I wanted to see if the students were independently able to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses within their own writing instead of hearing it like

they are accustomed. I planned to use this individual time to give them the push forward and the positive reinforcement they need to start to be successful writers.

Student Artifacts.

During the study, students participated in various writing activities in both the larger and smaller group settings. One example of student artifacts included student work, which the students completed during the mini-lessons. The other example was the culminating project of their personal narrative story they worked on over the course of the unit used for the study. I collected their samples (Appendices K, L, N), took pictures of their work even if it was group completed during interactive writing, and organized all the data for each students into their own person student portfolio that included all of their work completed over the weeks of the study. I wanted to keep track of their work in chronological order so the students could continue to see the progress they were making. I hoped that it would help increase their self-efficacy.

Rubrics.

A rubric was created in the beginning week of the research study (Appendix I). I created the student rubric along with the input from the participants. It was important to have that component of student choice build into the rubric because it was a self-motivator for the students. It was partially created by them so they felt that it was achievable. I took the time to create the rubric during the first week. I felt it was important to teach the students about what a

personal narrative entails to they could effectively contribute to the rubric's creation. After we discussed the criteria we needed to include in the rubric, I found a rubric that was already created to use because it hit all of the areas the students noted to be important. Visuals and student friendly language was used within the body to clearly explain the scoring details and expectations. This rubric was used to grade the weekly writing samples used as formative assessments that I collected throughout the study.

Observation: Field Log.

Throughout the study, a meticulous field log was kept and continuously constructed daily. Every single day of class, an entry was written outlining what was taught, how it was taught, and all observations made. A double entry journal was used to document all observational data gathered from the classroom. I completed both participant and non-participant observations throughout the study that logged student behaviors/attitudes as well as levels of motivation. I also kept an observation log during the conferences and made notes on the interview forms as I asking questions. I took notes on what the students were doing, what they were specifically saying, and overall classroom behaviors. I noted if their behavior was on par with their normal behaviors or if they had a change in behavior. I did the same for their level of motivation to engage in and complete given tasks.

The field log was carefully analyzed after being reread. I assigned codes to these main ideas that emerged over the course of my study. After my log was coded, I sorted the data based off their codes. I used those code in order to develop theme statements to summarize the major findings from the study.

Trustworthiness Statement

As the researcher of this study, I needed to make certain that my study was trustworthy and my results were valid. I followed several ethical guidelines in order to show trustworthiness. After my application was submitted, I received approval in the form of written permission by the Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) at Moravian College (Appendix A). In addition, I obtained approval for my study from my building administrator (Appendix B). I then secured parent consent by using a parental consent form (Appendix C). After I received parental permission, I explained my research study to my fifth grade students and sought their permission to participate (Appendix D). Since my students are elementary special education students, the student permission form consisted of shorter, simple sentences. The entire form was read aloud and explained to the students. All consent forms provided details about my research study, as well as assured complete confidentiality. I explained that student participation was completely voluntary. I also explained that at any time a participant could withdraw from the study for any reason without penalty. All consents further stated that I would use participant data from only the students

who agreed to participate and parental consent was granted. Real student names have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect students' identities. All forms, data collection materials, and documents related to the study were kept in a secure location for the duration of the study. Upon completion of the study, all materials will be destroyed in a secure manner.

When I initially created an outline for this study, I used peer debriefing (Hendricks, 2009) to discuss my research plan with my colleague within the special education department and my fellow teacher researchers. McNiff (2013) described the benefits of peer-validation to include a critical friend as well as a validation group in order to receive advice, criticism, and feedback during the research study (p. 137). I continued to use peer debriefing throughout my study to gather information from an outsider viewpoint. I had a colleague observe my lessons three times over the course of the nine week research study. This helped me see things that maybe I would have missed being an active participant in the research study. I utilized peer debriefing in the form of a support group with my fellow teacher researchers as well.

I used multiple methods to ensure that my findings were valid and trustworthy. McNiff (2013) suggested the idea of self-validation to critique your own work to ensure accuracy of all viewpoints (p. 136). I have included a thick description of the participants, the setting, and the research methods that I have used (Hendricks, 2009). I chose to conduct my study over two months spanning

nine weeks. This provided adequate time for implementation and data collection. A prolonged observation timeline allowed for an increase in the credibility of my study (Hendricks, 2009).

I triangulated data in order to ensure the validity of my research study. Cher Hendricks (2009) describes triangulation of data as cross-referencing data from various sources. I corroborated my conclusions or findings by using multiple sources of data. I collected a large amount of observational data that I gathered daily using anecdotal records. It was important to engage in continuous and ongoing reflective planning (Hendricks, 2009). I paid close attention to determine if my study was moving in the direction I wanted. It was also important to employ techniques in negative case analysis in the cases where the students' data stood out from the others and where the data showed that the study was not working for those students (Hendricks, 2009).

Throughout the study, I made sure that the observational data aligned with my other data. This data consisted of student artifacts and inquiry data gathered from surveys, interviews, and questionnaires. Student artifacts consisted of writing samples and rubric scores. A student survey and a questionnaire were each given twice over the course of the study; once at the beginning of the study and the once at the end. I was able to note any changes regarding their attitudes towards writing. Interviews were conducted during an individual writing conference time. Each student had one interview over the duration of the study in

order to get a deeper understanding of the participants' views and attitudes towards writing.

Another way I accounted for accuracy during the study was to use direct quotations that I took from teacher observations, conferences, interviews, surveys and questionnaires. Direct quotes were used because I wanted to prevent any inaccuracy of the events that took place and the viewpoints of the participants during the study. Member checks (Hendricks, 2009) allowed me to discuss with the students my interpretation of their perspectives in order to verify that my understandings were indeed accurate. Throughout my study I took time each day to reflect and made sure the data was recorded accurately (Hendricks, 2009).

Researcher bias was important for my own personal reflection as I looked over my data (Hendricks, 2009). It was important for the readers of my study to be aware of any biases pertaining to the setting, the participants, second language learning, and/or special education populations. My feelings and opinions have been made clear throughout my study. They were evident in the way I created my study as well as the specific methods I chose to use to implement my study and get the needed data. It was important for my personal gains and beneficial to the reader for my biases to be reflected in the way I presented my data and conclusions.

Finally, I wanted to be honest about my study and researcher biases because I am working with a vulnerable population. Working specifically with the

special education population presented many challenges. Daily reflection on lessons along with adapting and/or modifying my unit will allow me to remain open to any unexpected findings. I needed to go above and beyond in order to consider what all of my students needed when collecting and analyzing my data. I gave a learning styles inventory before I started my study. I used what I already know about my students from the previous two years along with the updated data I gathered from the inventory to gear components of my unit to their specific strengths and needs.

Acknowledgement of Research Biases

I must be aware that the excitement and interest I feel toward my study may not reflect my student's personal feelings toward my study. I must also recognize that my students may not be as willing as I hoped to participate in my study. I teach special education students with learning disabilities as well as ELL students. The students come from a different cultural background than my own. They all have very different home lives from what I grew up having. I believe that all my students already have a fixed negative idea about their personal abilities within the content area of writing. They are aware of their academic status within the fifth grade as a whole. They know that they learn differently and have different expectations from their peers. I must reveal this information in order to ensure that I give an accurate report of my findings in terms of the level of student achievement and the level of student self-efficacy in terms of motivation. I must

not bring my wish for student success to my study as a measure tool and eliminate any of my own personal bias I may have in terms of achievement and self-efficacy.

Our Story

My Students

Before you read any further, please allow me to explain how our story is unique to our classroom and the relationship I have with my students. The results will vary in any other situation due to the uniqueness of our classroom population. No other classroom has my specific students under one small roof. Our classroom is completely made up of only ten fifth graders. This year is my third consecutive year teaching and working with this group of students. I like to think I know them fairly well as both people and students. Every single student in the room has an emotional academic history built upon struggle and a determination to succeed. Every student also acknowledges and understands the fact that they have a range of disabilities including Specific Learning Disabilities, Other Health Impairment, Autism, and Emotional Disturbance. Table 1 below outlines specific student disabilities where I have included pseudonyms in place of their real names.

Table 1. Special Education Classification

Student	Special Needs/ELL
Ash	Autism
Marcus	Specific Learning Disability
Paige	Specific Learning Disability
Frankie	Specific Learning Disability
Fred	Specific Learning Disability
Enrique	Specific Learning Disability, Speech Language Impairment, ELL
Tyrese	Specific Learning Disability, Emotional Disturbance
Harley	Other Health Impairment
Harry	Specific Learning Disability, Other Health Impairment

No other classroom has my Ash, who is upset when a pencil is placed down beside him, yet he loves to read. Ash faced many battles with his home environment during the course of the study. No one classroom also has my Frankie; the bubbly girl who realized that she has great abilities to write and therefore writes everything and anything that pops into her head. Or even Dory, who has the ideas to form great written pieces, however has such limited short term memory, she struggles to write more than one sentence at a time. She sometimes struggles to produce meaningful writing because she has been known to rewrite the same single sentence over and over again.

Since I am not a classroom teacher, I couldn't start taking my groups until the middle of September, which is about the third week of school. From the start of my time with my students, the focus had been writing. As a class, we had a discussion about how in previous years we had focused more on reading and math. Since our class community had made growth in those areas, it was time to for us to make writing more of a priority within our intervention group. I wanted to make sure that the students were aware of this new focus on writing so that we could learn to write better than we were currently writing. We discussed why people write. Through this discussion we landed on writing is used to communicate with other people and it was a way to express ourselves. As the teacher, I took control and decided that we needed to get ourselves interested in writing again because no real progress would be made until we built up some self-

efficacy and motivation. In order to do that, we set out on a journey to write a personal narrative within a writing workshop.

Our story follows the daily lessons used to teach a unit of writing a personal narrative using writer's workshop. Through the workshop, interactive writing was also integrated, which focused on the teacher modeling for the students. Our writing unit needed to be unique and the writer's workshop needed to adapt into what would work best for the students. There was more focus on the mini lesson rather than the independent writing piece due to the fact that our class struggled with writing independently. Conferencing took up more time as well, due to the independent attention our class needed with their writing. Finally, the sharing component was also a focus so my students could hear and see examples of writing from classmates.

When choosing writing, specifically narrative writing, as the focus of my study, I was fully aware of the avalanche of rushing snow I set into motion. I knew I set myself up for an uphill climb. On the other hand, I knew that empowering my students with the skills they needed to communicate with others and express their own feelings were skills within the umbrella of writing that would spark a fire within them to build up their self-efficacy. Having more motivation to write would hopefully improve their achievement in writing at the same time.

Introducing My Study

At some point over the first week with my students after groups have started, we sat in our spots on the blue carpet in our classroom. The blue carpet we sat on was in the front center of the room where we were surrounded by colorful walls filled with all things designed to help with our success as learners. I tell my students that, like them, I also go to school and have homework. I project an image of Moravian College for them to see. Fred said, “My mom works there. She cleans rooms.” The other students chime in and ask me why I go there. Harry asked me about why I need to go to school. He said, “You are smart. You teach us.” I explained that I have teachers who teach me, just like I teach them. Although Moravian is not all that far away, my students live in a world that is far removed from a small college that is located even a few minutes away. Their world consists of poverty, crime, drugs, and violence all within subsidized housing.

I am always trying to be a better teacher, so I can help them be better students and teach them as much as they can learn. I kept explaining that I will be taking notes of what happens in class. I will write about what went well, and what I would want to change. I showed them my field log on my computer. I told them that I would be writing things down during our lessons so I don’t forget what happened each day. They nodded showing they understood. I took the time and explained the student consent forms. I was pleasantly surprised that the students

seemed to have a good understanding of what I was doing. They all granted me permission to include them in my study (Appendix D). Some were more enthusiastic than others. My students want to be helpful. I was relieved and excited to get started.

I explained the study as a writing unit where we would be learning to write a story using new and fun activities. The overall student response was happy and excited. I had two boys make grunting sounds and put their heads down. All of the other students were smiling and cheering. I heard “Yay!” and “Thank you!” from some of the students.

Behind me, on the floor, sat stacks of folders and notebooks. The chatter started to build and I raised the two fingers for quiet and the room fell silent. As the students looked around faces started to frown at me because some students started to realize what was going on. I started with the folders. I gave them their choice of colored folder. As they placed the folder in front of them, I started with the notebooks. After each student had a folder and a notebook in front of them, I started to explain their in class job was to decorate their writer’s notebooks in any way they wanted. They were supposed to be creative and decorate the front cover so that the notebook tells a story about them as a unique person.

Being a special education teacher, teaching learning support, is truly special. This is because I spend multiple years with the same core students. Since I teach the upper grades, third, fourth, and fifth, these students and I have a bond.

Even though I know my students and they know me, I still need to know how they are feeling about writing and where they are academically from the summer break. I wanted to assess them as writer's as well as determine their level of self-efficacy before the narrative unit started.

Baseline Writing Samples

The first baseline writing piece that was used was a summary writing piece that was district mandated. This writing piece took one day (Appendix K). Even though my students are at various levels in terms of their writing scores, they are all still considered to be below grade level. The score of three (3) is proficient and where the students need to be for their writing goals within their IEPs.

The initial excitement of this newly introduced writing unit wore off when I asked them to write something independently without my help. Students had mixed feelings about writing a summary about a story we read together. I heard a few students complaining.

“Can you help me?” Paige asked.

“I need help,” Tyrese said.

“This is hard,” replied Ash.

“I don’t remember!” said Dory.

I replied with, “I’m sorry everyone. I need to see what you can do on your own. Try your best. I believe in you!”

“Look how much I have written! I’m doing it! I have so much done,”
exclaimed Frankie.

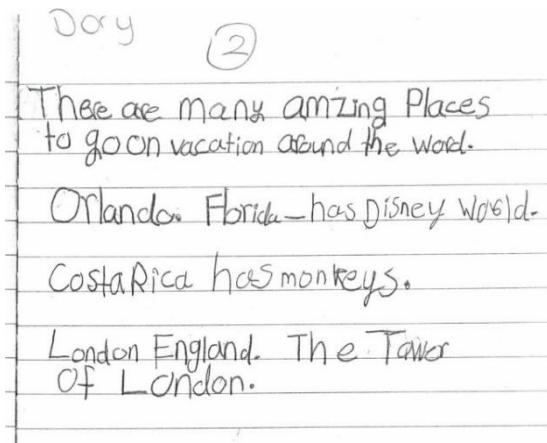


Figure 1. Summary Writing Sample from Dory

A few students put their head down. One student only wrote two sentences. A few students wrote in length. Some students did not write in paragraph form. They just wrote sentences and skipped lines in between. Since I am seeing work avoidance behaviors already, even before the study starts, I fear I will have trouble completing all I plan for the class period. I only have 40 minutes with ten students. The initial writing samples are taking longer than expected. I used the writing rubric (Appendix I) to grade this writing sample. I decided to administer a second writing sample that was more focused on storytelling and connected to narrative writing. I did so because I wanted to note the possible difference in scores between summary writing. The students were given a choice between three prompts (Appendix L). The students all chose between “Big

Money," "Must See," and "If I Could Be Anyone." I used the writing rubric to grade this writing sample. The students only wrote a few sentences.

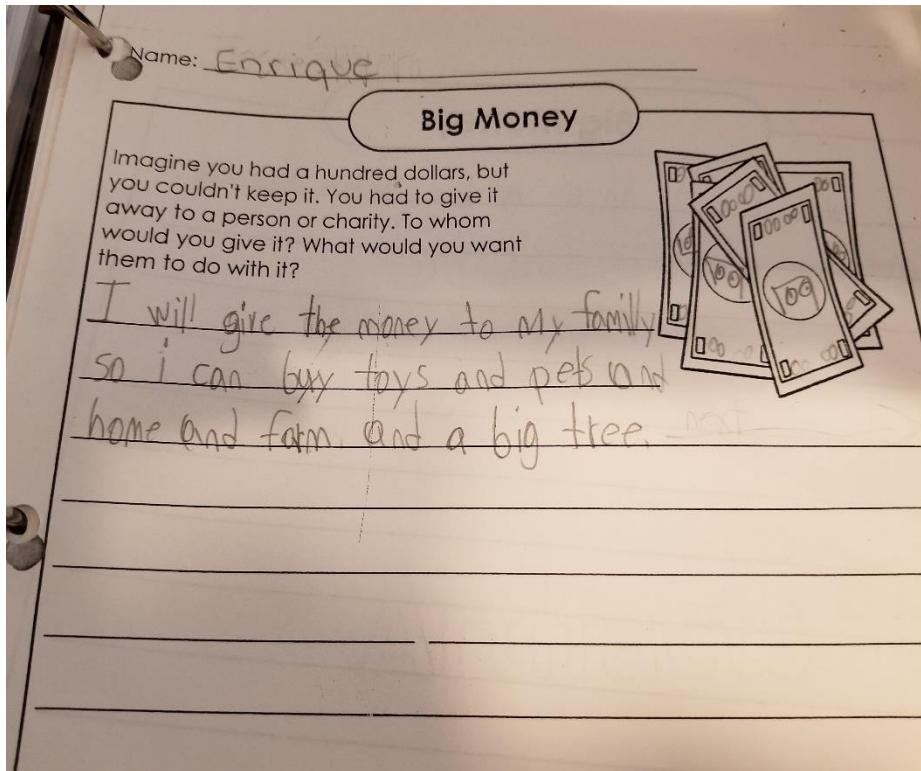


Figure 2. Narrative Writing Sample from Enrique

"I'm done," said Harry.

"I can't write anymore," replied Paige.

"Can I be done now?" asked Fred.

I prompted the students to keep thinking and try to add to their writing, however only three students added something and the rest gave up. Students were slumped in chairs. Behaviors started to come through between Marcus, Harry, and Frankie. They were making noises and disrupting the other students who were trying to work. Initially this data made me think I had a lot of work to do to

improve writing skills for all of the students. The data also revealed areas of individual and overall strengths and needs. Table 2 below shows student scores on both baseline assessments.

Table 2. Summary and Narrative Writing Scores, Pre-study

Student	Score for Summary Sample	Score for Narrative Sample
Ash	1	1
Marcus	1	1
Paige	3	2
Frankie	3	2
Fred	2	1
Enrique	1	1
Tyrese	2	1
Harley	2	2
Harry	1	1
Dory	2	1

Surveys and Questionnaires

Student Writing Survey.

At the start of my study I administered a writing survey (Appendix E) focused on writing skills and achievement. After I explained the directions to the group, I started the survey. I kept my students in mind when creating my survey. I did not want to over complicate the survey. I read each of the statements aloud and some students verbalized their answers. They thought the images were helpful to decide their answers to the statements. Some students thought they needed to answer how I wanted them to and therefore they were not being honest. So we restarted the survey and I told the class to be honest and to answer how they feel

about their writing abilities. When I looked at the results from this second survey, I could see that their desire to please me effected their motivation to complete this task.

The individual and overall results from this survey were extremely interesting. Their opinions of their abilities do not match their skill set. I was surprised to see some of the results because some students have a skewed view of their own abilities. Some students answered completely opposite to how they perform on writing tasks or assessments. Some students are always asking me for help or say they can't do certain things when their answers say they can. One possible cause for this is because my students always want to earn my praise. They were possibly answering how they perceived I wanted them to answer and answered untruthfully.

Writing Self-efficacy Questionnaire.

The next day I administered the writing self-efficacy questionnaire (Appendix F). This paper initially scared the students due to the amount of options for each statement as well as the number of statements on the page. Anything that even looks overwhelming tends to raise the anxiety flags. I tried to relieve the anxiety by giving examples and drawing a visual on the board to help the students understand the relationships between the rating scale numbers from 1 to 4. The students all said it looked hard. I tried to relax them by reassuring them. They were afraid to be wrong. Again, some students thought they needed to

answer how I wanted them to. A possible reason for this is similar to what was mentioned above for the survey. They sometimes act impulsively instead of listening to the expectations. I told them to be honest and to answer how they feel about their writing abilities. It was interesting to note from their verbal responses that their opinions did not match their skill set, which is similar to the survey responses.

After a brief review of the results gained from this questionnaire, I saw some intriguing information and patterns that developed. The rating scale boxes allowed me to easily see this pattern that emerged. The students either had responses that pointed to extremely low self-efficacy or extremely high self-efficacy. There was no real median or in between for my students. Their overall responses seemed black and white. Similarly to the survey, the students viewed their self-efficacy differently from my own opinion, which could be good or bad.

Learning Style Inventory Survey.

To end the first week of the study, we took the learning style inventory survey (Appendix G). The students were very honest about how they like to learn. This was their favorite activity to date. My students are more accustomed to tasks with visuals and less accustomed overwhelming to pages filled with words. This task was something they were used to completing so there was no sign of distress or anxiety. The students easily understood what this survey was used to determine. The students were intrigued by the visuals. The students were happily

talking about the way they like to learn. Each statement listed three choices including one that related to being a visual learner, one that related to being an auditory learner, and one that related to being a kinesthetic learner. All of the students were interested in their end results. They viewed this survey as a game. They all wanted me to figure out their results so they could see which learning style suited them the best. This survey took longer than I anticipated because I gave explanations and examples of each question and answer choices so the students could understand how to best answer each question.

Overall, the results of the learning style inventory were not shocking to me. I have had most of these students for three years and I know how they learn best and what works for them during instruction. However, I was not surprised by the number of students scoring as kinesthetic learners. Most of my students have ADHD and they enjoy being able to learn while moving around. They need that motion in order to facilitate comprehension. One student scored an auditory learner. Most respond well to visuals whenever visuals are provided. I have noticed that when strategies like wait time, or extended response time, along with visuals were given to account for student processing speeds, comprehension increases.

Learning Style Inventory

Directions: Circle the letter before the statement that best describes you.

1. If I have to learn how to do something, I learn best when I:

- (V) Watch someone show me how.
- (A) Hear someone tell me how.
- (K) Try to do it myself.



2. When I read, I often find that I:

- (V) Visualize what I am reading in my mind's eye.
- (A) Read out loud or hear the words inside my head.
- (K) Fidget and try to "feel" the content.

3. When asked to give directions, I:

- (V) See the actual places in my mind as I say them or prefer to draw them.
- (A) Have no difficulty in giving them verbally.
- (K) Have to point or move my body as I give them.

4. If I am unsure how

- (V) Write it in order to determine if it looks right.
- (A) Spell it out loud in order to determine if it sounds right.
- (K) Write it in order to determine if it feels right.



5. When I write I:

- (V) Am concerned with how neat and well spaced my letters and words appear.
- (A) Often say the letters and words to myself.
- (K) Push hard on my paper or pencil and can feel the flow of the words.



6. If I had to remember a list of items, I would remember it best if:

- (V) Wrote them down.
- (A) Said them over and over to myself.
- (K) Move around and used my fingers to name each item.

7. I prefer teachers who:

- (V) Use a board or overhead projector while they lecture.
- (A) Talk with lots of expression.
- (K) Use hands-on activities.



8. When trying to concentrate, I have a difficult time when:

- (V) There is a lot of clutter or movement in the room.
- (A) There is a lot of noise in the room.
- (K) I have to sit still for any length of time.

Figure 3. Learning Style Inventory Survey Sample Page

Over this first week, the students were seeming to have high motivation and were eager to try something new with writing. Some activities were more preferred than others due to the fact that they always did not align with their specific learning styles. By the end of the first week some students started to show low self-efficacy when asked to write: some avoidance behaviors and refusal to work started to emerge. Some students started to shut down. I hope this study will be a fun and interactive way to show the students that writing can be something to get excited about and want to write.

Brainstorming and Prewriting

Before starting this narrative writing unit, I thoroughly reviewed both writing samples I obtained from the students. I needed to have a full understanding of individual as well as overall areas of strength and weakness. I needed time to synthesize my plan for attacking this narrative writing unit and I need a jumping off point for the students. I wanted the initial activity to be engaging, interactive, and yet be a meaningful starting point for the unit.

Story Writing Steps.

As a group we completed the story writing steps cut and paste activity. The objective of this mini lesson was to teach the steps writer's take while writing. The students were tasked to work collaboratively to correctly identify the steps to writing a story (think, picture, draw, and write). Throughout the activity I could see and hear students working together and discussing their ideas. They were also given picture task cards to match with the words, which made them more confident. I modeled the steps to write a story that included: think, picture, draw, and write. The excitement due to their success was measured by their cheers. The students then glued it all into their journals.

“Yes!” yelled Enrique and Harley.

Dory replied, “This is fun!”

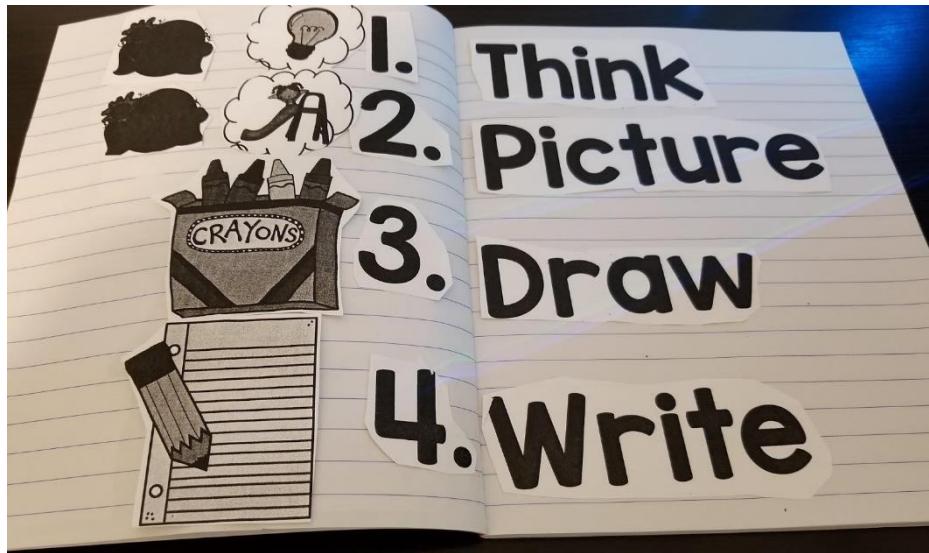


Figure 4. Story Writing Steps Activity

What Can I Write About?

I started off the writer's workshop by reading a mentor text called *Mama Had a Dancing Heart* (see appendix M) to show the students an example of how a real life author writes a personal narrative. I passed out a personal narrative checklist for the students to keep in their folders to use later in the unit. It had visuals for the students that need the picture clue. During their independent writing time, the students designed their own personal narrative heart maps. Students were openly expressing their emotions and excitement. Some students shared their work with me.

“It is like an all about me poster!” said Fred.

“Can we draw pictures?” asked Harry.

“Do we need to write words?” asked Paige.

“I love my mom!” exclaimed Frankie.

As they were working, some were working quietly and some were talking to each other about memories they have. They shared their ideas with each other and asked others for help. We talked about sports, colors, food, vacations, family, and pets. Students were very creative with their ideas. There was a lot of collaboration going on around me. This was something different from previous writing workshop classes. Students helped each other form ideas.

“Write your family. Or the playground, sky zone, or the park,” Harley told Ash.

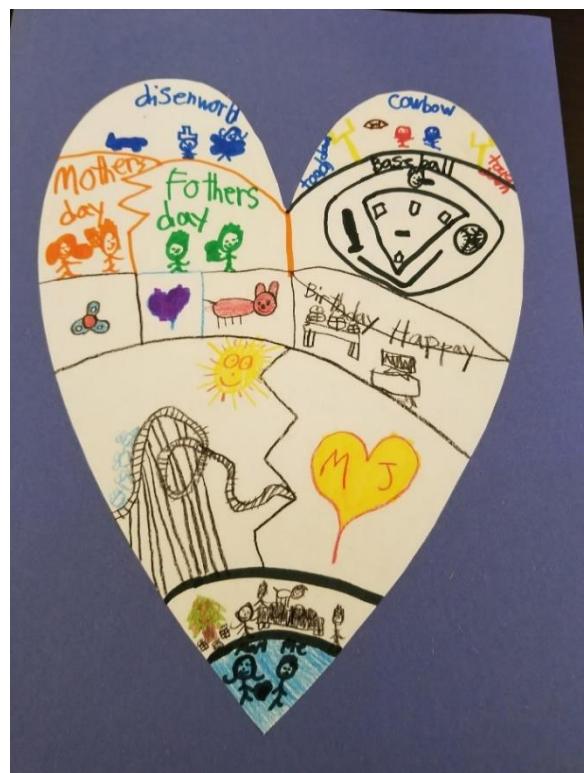


Figure 5. Example Heart Map

One student, Ash, completely shut down because he couldn't think of things to write on his heart map. I prompted him with ideas, however he put his head down on the desk and refused to continue working. At the end of the workshop, students were able to share. The students were each given two minutes to share their heart web with the group. At this point, Ash felt more comfortable to verbalize his ideas than he did not want to print on his map. Ash is more of a visual learner, however he has a high level of writing anxiety depending on the task.

What Is a Personal Narrative?

Using the interactive writing model, I facilitated a mini lesson on the components of a narrative. Each student had a visual to help with comprehension. I asked the group what things make up a story. They used their paper to help them and some were able to share things without looking at their paper.

“Beginning, middle, and end,” said Harry.

Paige replied, “The w questions.”

The students surprised me with the amount of background knowledge they already had. The students were stumped by the fact that stories use feeling words. At this point, I referred back to their heart maps they created to note that some of them wrote words on their maps. Using the paper I just gave them and colored pencils, they were asked to individually highlight the key words. All of the students were following along, even Ash who had previously put his head down.

He started to participate because he liked the activity. After a brief discussion of the key words of things that go into a narrative story, I used a song about how to write a narrative to reach my auditory learners. At this point it was important for me to connect this activity to the overall goal of writing a narrative. It was the words on their paper put to the tune of “Do You Want to Build a Snowman?” All of the students loved this activity. I let Harley sing it for the group because she loves Frozen. After she sung it, we discussed all of the key things about a narrative including people, places, and what happened. I played the instrumental version of the song and all the kids were singing the narrative words to the song. They were all laughing and trying their best because it was something different and fun. Students were all very engaged and trying to sing the words to the tune of the song.

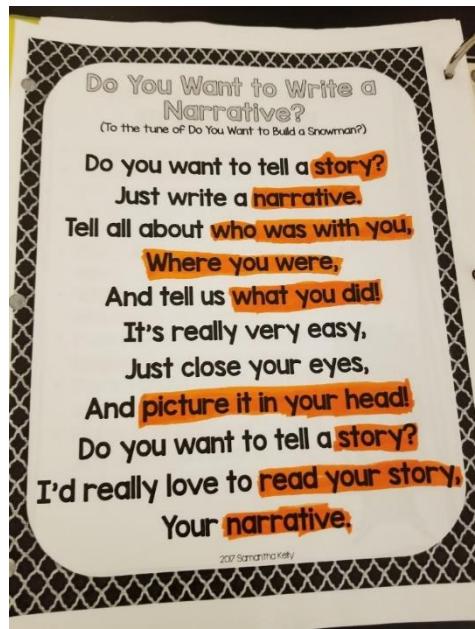


Figure 6. Components of a Personal Narrative

“Are we going to have to write a whole long book? I can’t do that!” cried Ash. At the end of this activity, every student gave an example of something from their life they could write about. The realization of me asking them to write a narrative story hit Ash, my student with Autism, very hard. He started to display some of his anxiousness. There was a sense of worry and frustration. I tried to reassure him by explaining that by the end of this long process each of the students will have a complete story, but it takes time. The students will write only a little bit at a time. Since Ash expressed this high level of concern at such an early part of this process, I felt it was an appropriate time to quickly discuss the options for writing their narrative.

Using a Graphic Organizer.

I introduced the three types of graphic organizers they will be using during the unit (Appendix J). The students will be able to use a web, sentence starters, and/or a story map. During the mini lesson, I read a mentor text *The Outside Dog* and we collaboratively completed the graphic organizer as practice. I used interactive writing where I modeled the expectation before the students came up and participated by filling in the graphic organizer for the text we read. This went quickly because the students are familiar with the graphic organizer, which allowed them to be more motivated and engaged in the activity. Even Ash and Tyrese were engaged and motivated. In terms of Ash, this activity motivated him because in his eyes this was more of a reading and comprehension lesson than a

writing lesson. Since he is more motivated by reading, this activity was more enjoyable for him.

Being that my students are familiar with using a graphic organizer, I allowed for more student collaboration than teacher modeling on this activity. Both modeling and collaboration were great strategies to use for my students in this study because they gave the students ways to feel good about their work and improved their level of understanding, which increased their self-efficacy.

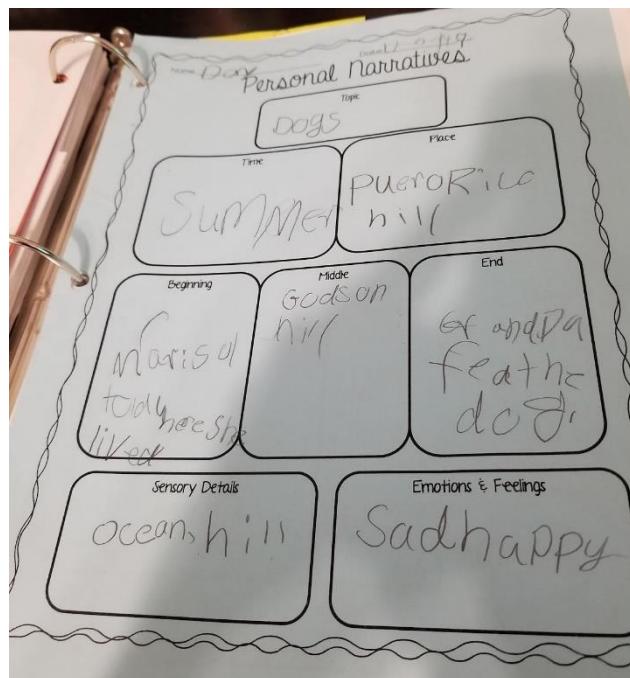


Figure 7. Sample of Completed Graphic Organizer for *The Outside Dog*

Student Centered Rubric Creation.

I then introduced the rubric. I said, “A good writer needs to know what is expected of them before, during, and after they are write.” In order to do so, the students and I created the rubric which was used to grade their pieces of writing.

The hope was that by allowing the students to be a part of choosing the expectations writing, it would increase their motivation. I let them tell me the things they deemed important based off the elements of narrative writing they previously learned. They enjoyed having that choice. The group had a successful discussion about the rubric because for the first time the students had autonomy and a voice. Eventually Ash decided that he wanted to be a part of the conversation after he listened for most of it. He shyly raised his hand and said he thought it was important to have details about what happened in the story. Ultimately, I had the final say because I want the rubric to measure the necessary components need to show student growth and achievement (Appendix I).

A Small Moment in Time

The key to writing a personal narrative is to teach the students not to write a list of events or to write about too large of a topic. I read *Salt Hands* to my class. I wanted the students to notice how the author doesn't share the girl's entire day, but only focused on one special part of her day. After discussing this story and how we could use this mentor text as a model to choose our personal narrative topics, our mini lesson focused on determining whether a chosen topic is a "watermelon story" or a "small seed story." The students were given task cards with example scenarios on them. They were allowed to work collaboratively as two groups to discuss if the scenarios were big story topics or small story topics. The students were very engaged where they were having conversations about why

they thought certain ideas went in certain places. After the groups were done, I reviewed their work. They were the experts teaching me. They explained their thinking of why they put the task cards where they did.

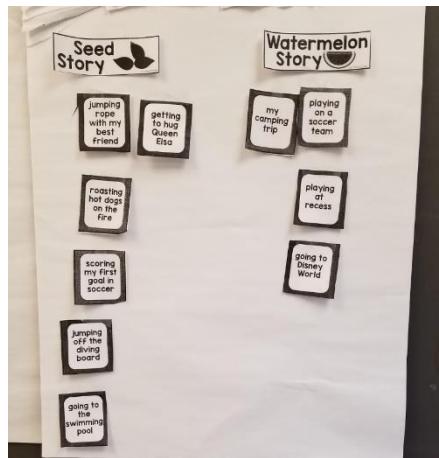


Figure 8. Watermelon Story vs. Seed Story Activity

In order to give the students an example of how to deconstruct a larger topic into a small moment in time, we completed the next mini lesson where the students chose how to complete the task. I facilitated while the students were directing me. They had to take one “watermelon story” idea from the chart in the previous activity and break it apart into smaller story ideas. The students chose “going camping” and the small idea they chose was “making marshmallow s’mores.” We completed a quick beginning, middle, and end on the whiteboard. Finally, they had to complete a graphic organizer independently answering the “w questions” as if they were writing a story about making s’mores.

All of the students, including Ash, were engaged and asked if they were correct, checking with a partner if they did not know a word or what to write, and

asking me for clarification if any still needed it. I used a sequencing activity, which the students were familiar with from reading. I tied in choice of topic, which took away any feeling of doubt or anxiety about writing anything incorrectly. The student had the choice to write a small story about camping and making s'mores. There was no way for them to write the wrong thing. Given this freedom, the students used learned concepts, therefore reinforced a positive response among the class and ultimately increased student self-efficacy.

Topic Selection.

It was time for topic selection! The students had the knowledge they needed to choose their topic for their own personal narrative story. The students were directed back to their heart maps that were displayed on their writer's wall. Since I wrote a personal narrative, just like my students, I decided to model how I chose my topic. I chose the “The Day I Adopted My Dog.” I explained how I thought of this topic. The students sat quietly and listened to me as I explained my thought process. I was surprised by the level of student interest and amazed by the student’s questions. I told my students that they wanted to pick a topic that was a memory filled with a good amount of detail.



Figure 9. Topics for Narratives

Story Sequencing.

During the next writer's workshop class, our class focused on sequencing events within our small moment in time. I led a mini lesson on identifying beginning, middle, and end. We read "My First Bike Ride" as a group. We used a read aloud style to read the story. After we read the story, we discussed the sequence of events. We used highlighters to identify beginning, middle, and end. As a group they used a train organizer to identify each part of the story. They were allowed to come up to the board to complete the chart. They chose a marker and completed the organizer.

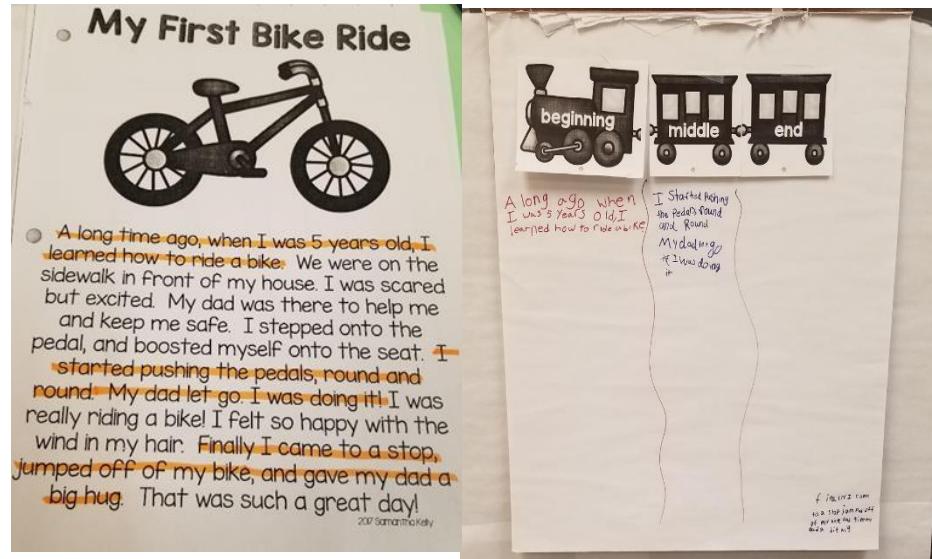


Figure 10. Story Sequencing Activity

During independent writing time, the students were tasked with using their newly learned skills to identify the sequence of a possible story using picture cards using the sequencing flip book. After their visual clues were in the correct order, they glued them in the flip book and were tasked with creating a story to match the pictures. While the students worked on this activity independently, I made sure to check in on everyone to see how they responded to working alone. To my surprise, most students were able to quickly finish this task. I was happy to see Ash writing one word down underneath each picture. I chose this activity as one of the first independent class activities because the students had the support from the provided visuals. During the share portion of the workshop, the students shared their ideas with the group in the author's chair. They enjoyed hearing what

their peers wrote. It was a small victory of both Ash and myself when he decided to share the three words he wrote.

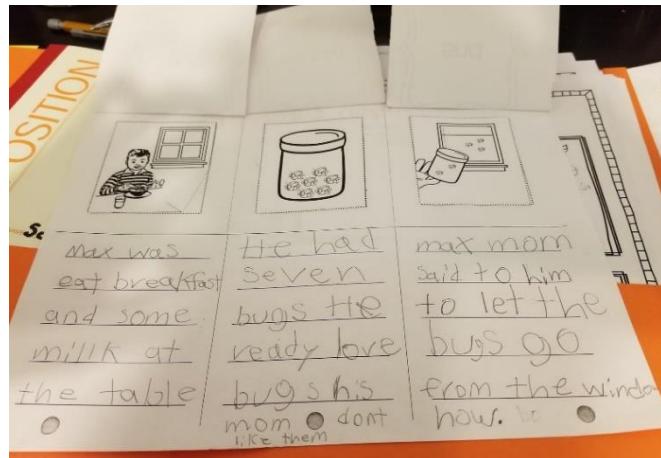


Figure 11. Sample Story with Beginning, Middle, and End

Formative Assessment

A formative assessment was given to check writing progress. The students were allowed to pick their own prompt from eight different prompts. I read them all aloud and they chose the one they wanted. They all had a beginning, middle, and end boxes where the students could draw or write their ideas down before they wrote. They were given the rest of the class time to work on their writing. As they were writing, I met with the students and had their conferences using the rubric we created. I also conducted interviews on two students. I decided to select one student that was performing where expected and one student who was performing below where I expected. I chose Harry and Ash for the first formative assessment. Ash's responses were all negative during the conference and the interview. His self-efficacy and motivation were extremely low. This could be

caused by this activity because it was an independent task, which could have caused him to become anxious and shut down.

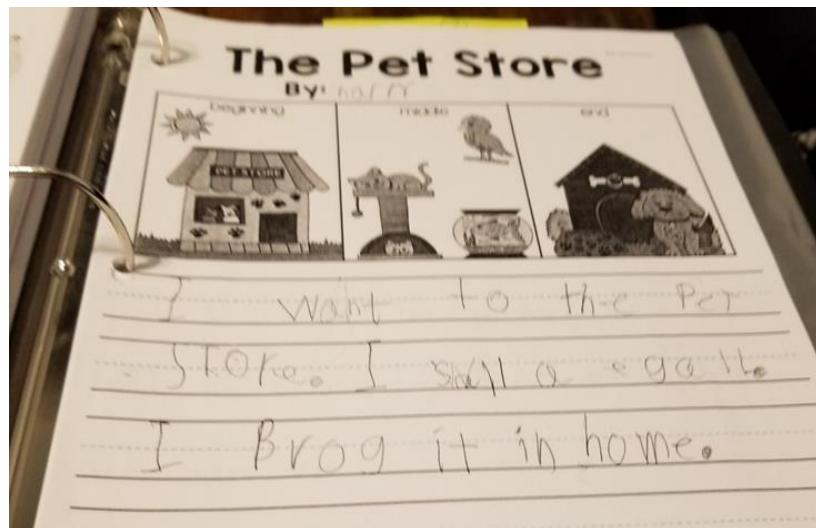


Figure 12. Writing Sample Collected from the First Formative Assessment

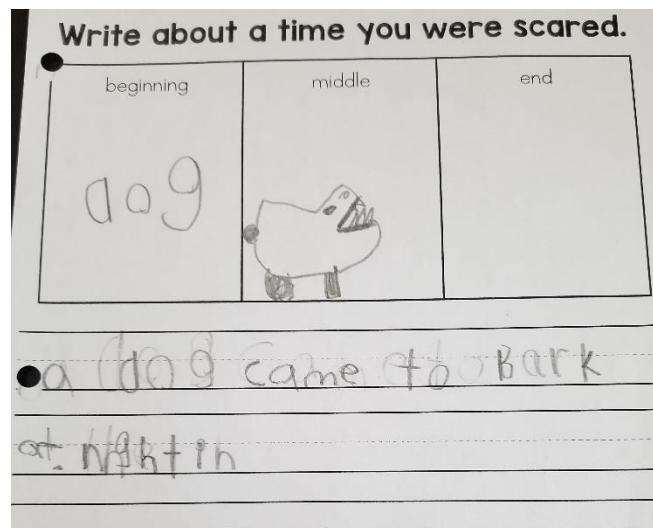


Figure 13. Writing Sample Collected from the First Formative Assessment

Adding an Emotional Hook

In the next writer's workshop block we learned ways authors use emotions to start their stories. It was important for me to start teaching the narrative writing

process at the natural beginning of a story. In my past writing curriculum or my instruction, no emphasis was put on how to write an emotional hook to a story. It is important for my students to understand every story is made up of parts or sections. So this was my natural place to begin.

“When you write your personal narrative, you need to let the reader know why the memory is important. What makes the memory special? A good writer should express their emotions through action, dialogue, and thoughts.” After starting my mini lesson with this lead, the students seemed interested because this information was new to them. From my observations, I noticed many students displaying less notions of panic, less behavior outbursts, and less anxiety. Why the change in behavior? Ash responded with “I can’t be wrong.” He went on to tell me that he thought he was not scared because he was not afraid to be wrong. Whatever he decided to write was true so he could not wrong.

“So, we can’t start out with Hi! My name is Harley?” she asked.

“After we learn these new ways to start a story you might find that a better way,” I responded.

I then used a mentor text to illustrate the difference between Harley’s beginning to her story and a beginning with an emotional hook. We read *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother*. The students could see the difference rather easily. They saw how the author used description to get the reader interested in the story right away rather than just saying their name. I also asked the students

about why the events in this book might have been important to the author. We discussed some of the emotions they felt in the text. Using the mentor texts helped increase their self-efficacy because the students knew what was expected based off the examples provided in the mentor texts. It alleviated their anxiety because they were able to see examples from the pages of the books.

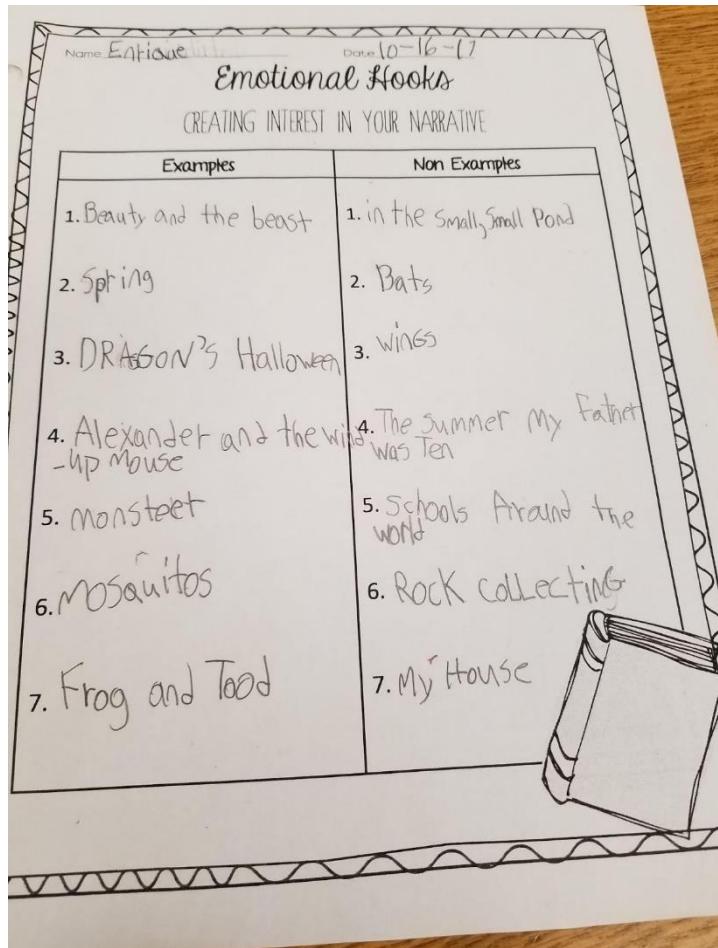


Figure 14. Finding Books With and Without an Emotional Hook

The second part of class was more of the independent writing time for the students to explore books from our classroom library. They were tasked with

locating examples and non-examples of books with a strong emotional hooks.

Before the students were allowed to begin, I modeled what was expected. Since this was an independent activity, I wanted to make certain that all students understood the directions of the task. So, I read the title and the first one to two pages. “This story has a strong emotional hook because the author talks about the boy’s old house and how much he misses it.”

Writing with a Strong Lead.

All narrative stories need to start with a strong lead, or hook, that will get the reader’s attention and make them want to continue reading your story. A good lead will give the reader a little hint as to what the narrative will be about. Throughout this lesson, I read a total of four mentor texts in order to provide an example of each of the four types of story leads. I used a mentor text called *Grandpa’s Face*, and I asked the students to pay attention to how the author starts with an emotion. I read *Shortcut* and explained that the author had my attention on the first page because he started with action. The third text I read was an example of the author using dialogue. *The Bee Tree* used dialogue to express the little girls desire to go play outside. Dialogue helps to immediately hook you into the story, so that the reader will want to know what happens next. The final mentor text I used to describe the setting or scenery. The author of *In November* used a description to express how the month of November looks and sounds.

As the independent writing block, was approaching, I tasked the students with finding their own examples of these four types of strong leads, including an emotion or feeling, an action, dialogue, and description. Each student completed their own page. They had to find a book within the classroom library that had each of the four beginning types of emotion or feeling, action, dialogue, and description. They had to write the name of the text on the worksheet. Some students needed some help with finding books at their level. At the end of class the students shared on book they found. The rest of the group had to guess the type of beginning. At the beginning, for the first two students or so, the class struggled to identify the correct type of lead. I stopped the sharing and reviewed the four types. After the students started sharing again, the students were able to correctly identify the type of lead.

Formative Assessment

A formative assessment was given to check writing progress. The students were allowed to pick their own prompt from eight different prompts. I read them all aloud and they chose the one they wanted. They all had a beginning, middle, and end boxes where the students could draw or write their ideas down before they wrote. They spent the rest of class quietly writing. There has been a slight improvement in terms of writing performance. As they were writing, I met with the students and had their conferences using the rubric we created. I also conducted interviews on two students. I decided to select one student that was

performing where expected and one student who was performing below where I expected. I chose Harley and Enrique for the second formative assessment. Both students had mixed responses to my interview questions. They were able to identify positive and negative aspects of their writing.

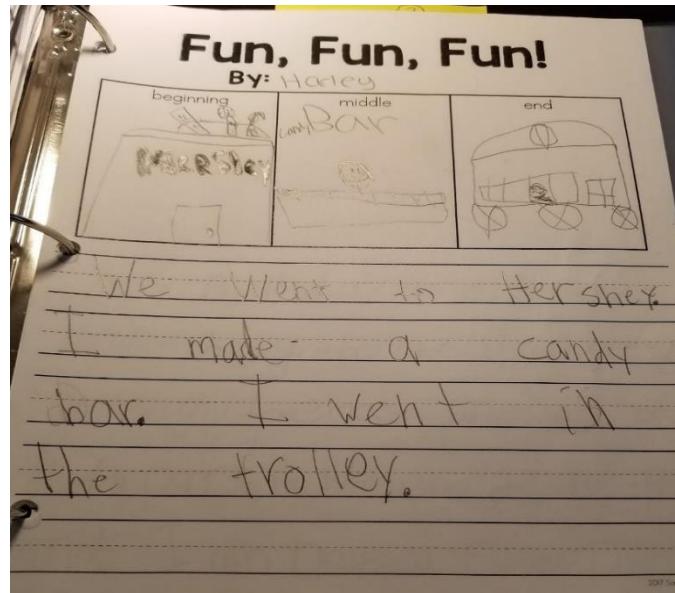


Figure 15. Writing Sample Collected from the Second Formative Assessment

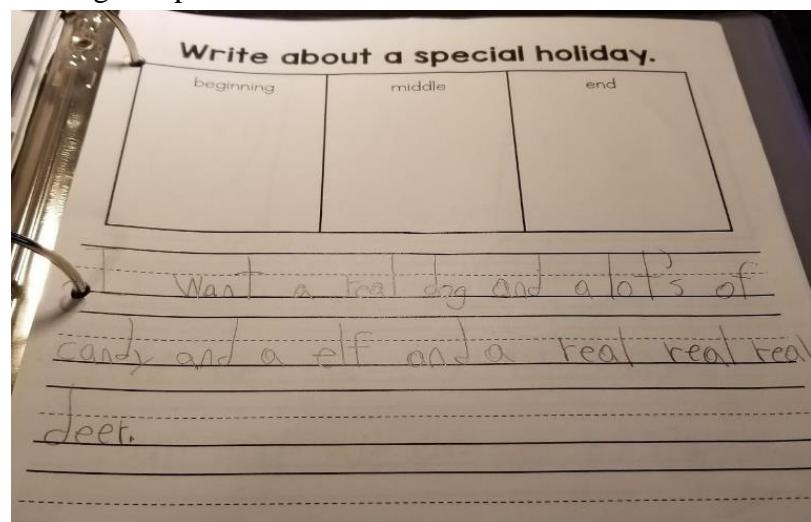


Figure 16. Writing sample collected from the Second Formative Assessment

Attention to Detail

When writing a narrative story, details are the pieces that make the story interesting and leave the reader wanting to read more. Expanding sentences into paragraphs allows for the reader to imagine the plot unfolding. Using detail allows the reader to “see” the story in their mind. Too often the students just want to tell it like it is because they were there. They know what happened, what it sounded like, what it smelled like, what it looked like, and who was there. This is a difficult task for my students to complete. They struggle with their mechanics so they struggle to write multiple sentences about one topic. Writing the body, or plot, of the story is also difficult for my students because their reading skills are below grade level as well, which is why the reading writing connection is so important. In terms of moving forward with my study, I decided to incorporate the use of the computer and Google Docs with the text to speech and speak it extensions to help improve this reading writing connection to help promote engagement as well as improve motivation and self-efficacy.

Show Don’t Tell.

Reading a text is much more interesting when the author shows, rather than tells the reader information. I wrote a sentence on the board: My mom was angry. My mom’s eyes narrowed and she pointed her finger at me and told me to go to my room. My students were able to tell me which one is more descriptive,

however this skill is less taxing than the students fixing their own sentences. They lack the fifth grade level vocabulary to make their sentences be “show” sentences.

This is a lesson is that much more important because I aimed to introduce and give my students practice at identifying sentences that can be more detailed and change those sentences into more descriptive sentences. As I read *The Memory String*, I wanted the students to listen for examples of when the author chose to show how a character felt rather than telling about the feeling. The students needed to either write one down or remember one example of this as I read aloud. After reading the book, I gave the students the opportunity to share what they noticed from the book. There were many good examples provided by the students, which showed me that using these mentor texts has helped improve their skills.

Their job as authors was to give the reader a good descriptive pictures by showing them a picture with words rather than just saying the words. As a group, we completed an activity where they needed to change sentences by adding more detail. I used interactive writing so the students could have practice at this skill before working on their own. There were four sentences that the students needed to improve upon. They had to add as much detail as they could to show a reader rather than just tell them the sentence. The students came up with creative ideas and worked in two groups to complete the activity. To end the lesson, the students shared their ideas with a partner.

The students were able to enhance the sentences by adding more detail. Some students were very creative with the sentences while others only added a few words.

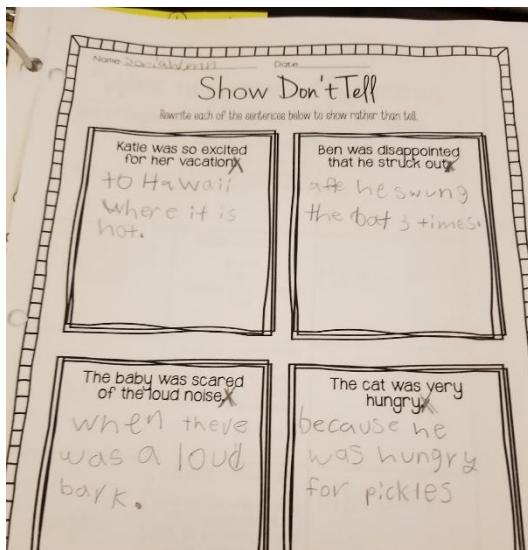


Figure 17. Example of Students Adding More Detail to Sentences

Paint a Word Picture.

Good writers paint word pictures, so their readers can see the story in their minds. I read *Owl Moon*. As I read, the students listened closely to how the author used details. I brought a picture, and I tried to describe it to the students so they could visualize it in their minds. “The cabin stood in the mountains,” I said. I gave the students a few minutes to try to draw a picture. They had questions about what color the cabin was, where the cabin was, how many windows, and so on. I replied, “I didn’t say.” I then tried the activity again. This second time I gave more details. I said, “There is a small log cabin on the mountainside. The cabin had one window on the front. There is a small front porch on the front of the cabin. The cabin is surrounded by tall green trees. The cabin sits on a riverbed

with large rocks blocking the water from the green grassy land. The sun is bright above the cabin in the sky.” I gave the students a couple minutes to try to draw a picture of what I described when I finished my description. There was an extreme change from the first attempt with the cabin the woods to the second, more detailed attempt. When the students shared their first pictures with each other, they were all surprised by how different they all looked. I explained this was because it did not give enough detail so it was hard to see. When I asked the class to share their second drawing, the students’ pictures had more similarities than differences. This was because I gave them more detail.



Figure 18. Picture Used to Paint a Detailed Image

We continued learning how to add details to a story using the five senses. During independent writing, the students completed their five senses activity using their sheet of paper with the five shapes on them. Each shape had one of the five senses written inside. The students had to complete the activity by using detail words that related to their specific narrative story. They described what they

saw, heard, smelled, tasted, and felt from their memory. Some students worked and just needed my help with spelling. Other students struggled to think of description words, so I prompted the students to help formulate ideas by referring back to the mentor text from the beginning of the lesson.

Formative Assessment

A third formative assessment was given to check writing progress. The students were allowed to pick their own prompt from eight different prompts. I read them all aloud and they chose the one they wanted. They were not allowed to choose the same writing prompts as the previous weeks. They all had a beginning, middle, and end boxes where the students could draw or write their ideas down before they wrote. They were given the rest of the class time to work on their writing. This was the first formative assessment where I saw that the students were able to produce more lengthy writing. I was happy to see that Ash had more than one sentence written by the time I had his conference. Even though his overall score has not improved from a 1, that is alright because he has made progress. I could see a slight improvement in both his self-efficacy and motivation. My hope is that once he saw this in himself, it would increase his rubric score. As they were writing, I met with students to have their conferences using the rubric we created. I also conducted two more interviews with Dory and Tyrese.

MY BIRTHDAY is on october
and it has got to be fun and
it is go to more and we are
go to fun and we are go to the
and I am have a Sleep Over.

Figure 19. Writing Sample Collected from the Third Formative Assessment

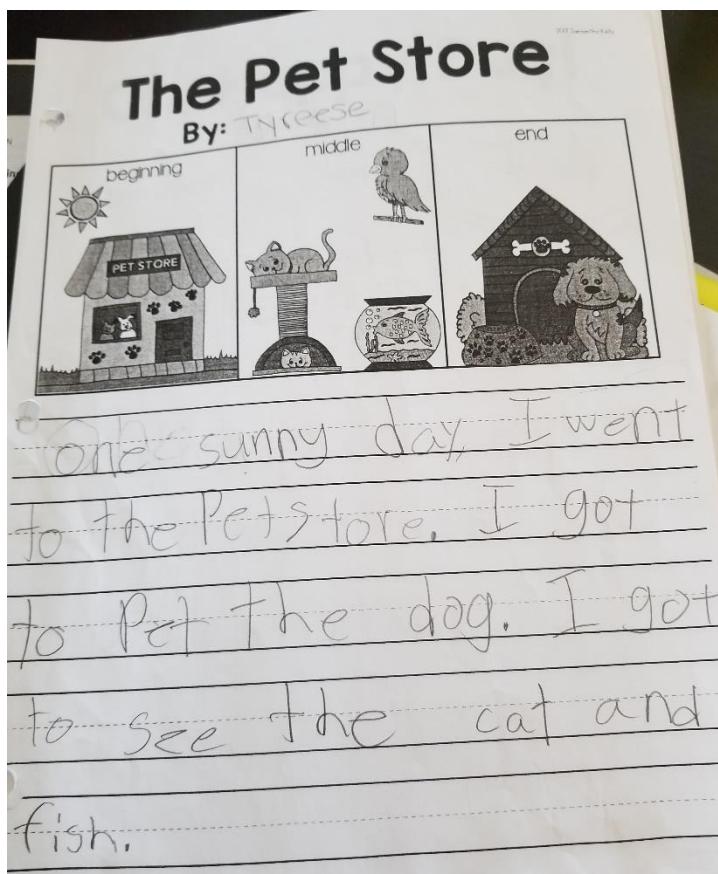


Figure 20. Writing Sample Collected from the Third Formative Assessment

A Satisfying Ending

I told the students an important writing secret. Writing “The End” at the end of the story doesn’t mean that the story is finished. To complete a narrative all authors need to write a satisfying ending that leaves the reader with closure. The story should not leave any unanswered questions. We learned how to end a story over the next lesson.

One effective way author’s ended stories was through a reflective ending. This was when the end of the book reflected the beginning of the book. As I read *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*, I wanted the students to think about how the author ended the story in a similar way to beginning the story. After we finished the book, we discussed the ending. I let the students share using turn and talk. There were multiple mini conversations that took place amongst the students. The second book I read aloud was *Strong to the Hoop*, which was an example of an ending that explained hopes or wishes. The third book I read aloud was *Oma’s Quilt*, which was an example of a book that had a moral or a lesson the reader was supposed to learn. The final book I read was called *Saturdays and Teacakes*. This mentor text was an example of an ending that made a decision.

After the students had some idea of the types of endings they could use close their narratives, the class was in charge of finding books that were examples of these four ending types. After some time, the students had one example text for each ending type.

Ways to End a Narrative		
Type of Ending	Mentor Text	My Example
Reflective or Circular	Willow Gordon McDonald Cartridge by Mem Fox	CHRISTMAS CAROL
Hopes or Wishes	Strong to the Hoop by Leslie Jean-Bart	Goldilocks and the Three Bears
Moral or Lesson Learned	Oma's Quilt by Paulette Bourgeois	IS YOUR MAMA a LION?
Decision	Saturdays and Teacakes by Lester Laminack	The Gingerbread Man.

Figure 21. Ways to End the Narrative Activity

Independent Writing

The students started to write their narrative stories at this midpoint of the unit. They learned the basic components to a narrative strong including the larger sequencing of beginning, middle, and end. When they started to write, the students were using paper because we were actively using their writing during the daily workshops. Their final copy of their stories were typed in a Google Doc and then made into a mini book that was bound. I made the decision to allow the

students to type their stories using a word processor due to student ability levels and specially designed instruction as outlined in all of my students IEPs. I wanted the students to have ownership of their work.

Most of my students use the voice to text option within the computer. For the students that did not use this tool on a daily basis, I taught them how to type their stories or use the voice typing tool. For example, if a sentence called for a period, the word period needed to be spoken during the talking of their sentences within their stories or it would be one long sentence. Some students would flip back and forth between typing and speaking. Most students chose to type their story used the voice typing tool for words they did not know how to spell. In the end, it turned out to be a good decision because it allowed my students to get their creative juices flowing and increase their motivation to write their story. The students knew that they still were expected to follow all of their writing rules including conventions. Whenever the students were completing independent writing, the rubric was displayed on the board via the projector.

After a few days of writing, I met with students individually to have a conference to check on their progress and to help with anything they needed in terms of their stories with me, the students were asked to go back and look at their stories they wrote so far. I assisted with revising and editing their work. The beneficial thing about Google Docs was the sharing ability. I could actively see their progress and see what they were doing. We could change things together at

the same time on two different screens. The students were eager to use the comments within Google Docs. They have used them before, so they were familiar with how they worked. This process allowed to a more productive work environment because the students could work at their own pace. The overall level of anxiety decreased because their work was private, which meant only myself and that specific student could see their work. This method worked especially well for Ash, which in turn increased his self-efficacy. During this independent writing process, the overall attitude projected from the students changed. I could tell from their body language and level of on task behaviors that there was an increase in self-efficacy that led to an increase in motivation.

Revising and Editing

At this stage of the unit, my students have learned about the basic structure of a personal narrative and they have written a rough draft of their own narrative. The remainder of this unit was devoted to taking their initial writing piece and making improvements. The students showed more interest in this part of the unit because we completed more interactive activities where they could work collaboratively and complete more hands on activities. These activities allowed me to see the improved levels of motivation for almost all of the students, which in turn reduced student anxiety. In the past, my students were told to fix their work, but they were not explicitly taught how. There was minimal time spent on improving writing after a draft was written. I made this portion of the unit to teach

my students ways they could go about fixing their writing to make it the best it could be. Allotting time to revise and edit writing was imperative to promoting self-efficacy and the change was easily seen during this stage of the unit.

Adding Transition Words.

This interactive writing lesson was used to start teaching students about how to make their stories flow without being choppy. It was important for me to explain that good writers use transition words to give their readers clues that time has passed or that a new thought is being introduced. Transitional words and phrases help to join these new thoughts together. The students participated in an activity where I read a few sentences aloud that were choppy and did not make much sense together. I modeled a way to write that paragraph where transition words were used. Immediately after I was finished, a few students asked me how I knew what words to use as transition words. I expected this, so I handed out a transition word chart that included four types of transition words to use while writing. Students worked in pairs to complete an activity where they needed to combine two sentences together using a transitional word or phrase. During the share portion of the lesson, the pairs each were able to share one sentence with the rest of the class. Directly following this lesson, the students were given time to

make any needed corrections with using transition words in their own narrative stories.

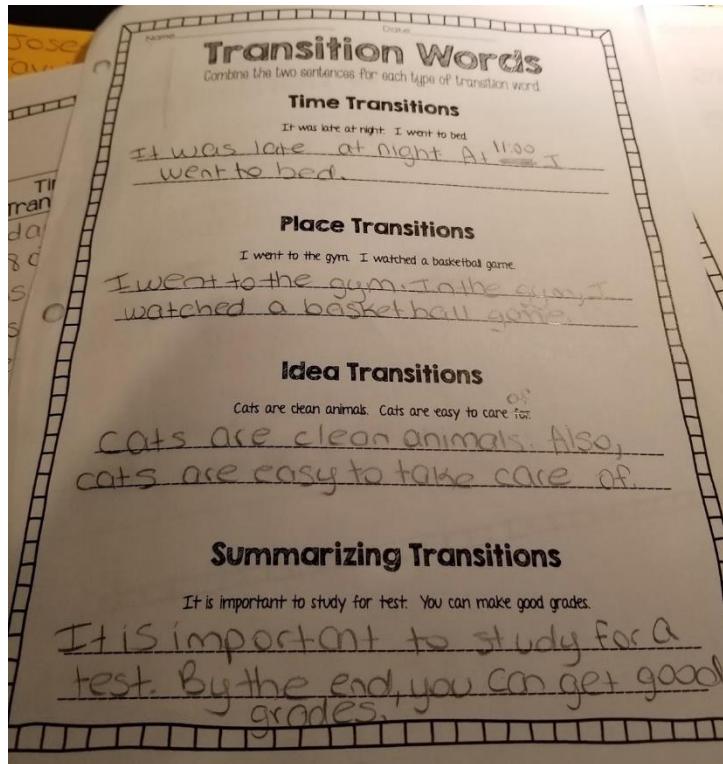


Figure 22. Independent Practice with Using Transition Words

Avoid the “It/And Monsters.”

My students had a hard time with overusing the words “it” and “and” in their writing. They frequently started their sentences with “and.” I prepared a mini lesson to address these areas of struggle. I used a model paragraph where I specifically used “it” as well as “and” too much, as I thought, my students struggled with this task. I had to guide the students into noticing that the word “it” was overused in the paragraph. They did not make that realization on their own. I had to explain the paragraph could confuse readers because the reader

doesn't know what the paragraph was about. The students needed to think carefully about their word choice and tell what they mean by "it."

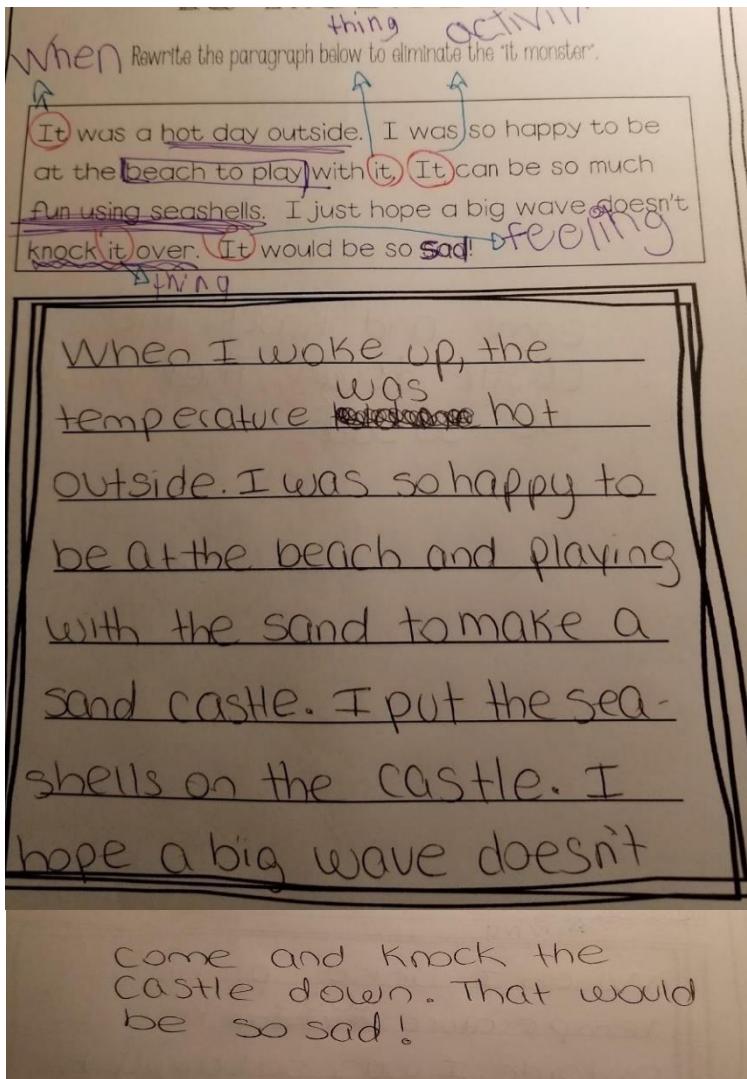


Figure 23. Activity Replacing It/And in Text

The students then completed an independent activity where they needed to look back in their first draft and correct these specific errors of these two words. They used their independent writing time. I made sure I sat with each student to

review their work and offer some help when needed. The students improved on locating their words within their stories, however they had a harder time figuring out how to correct their sentences.

Using Strong Verbs.

Another component of revising student writing was using specific verbs. The students were using the same few verbs throughout their story. I made sure to express the importance of using verbs to add extra interest. The verbs needed to explain the exact action and allow the reader to visualize the action in their heads. I used a mentor text to teach this concept. “As I read *Come on, Rain* to you, I’d like for you to listen for examples of strong verbs.” After I read the text I gave the students the opportunity to share some of the verbs that stood out to them. We discussed how they added to the meaning of the narrative. The students were tasked with taking an ordinary verb and finding other stronger verbs, or other ways to say that word.



Figure 24. Frankie’s Wordle of Synonyms for Happy

During students' independent writing time, the students reviewed their stories and looked for weak verbs that they replaced with strong verbs. As students were writing, I again sat with each student to quickly assess how they were doing and to provide assistance if necessary. While I was meeting with the students, I found a couple of students who have included strong verbs in their writing and allowed those students to share. This activity allowed for both the person who shared and the students in the audience to gain some self-efficacy.

I asked, "Are there any other words we could add to their list?"

"I think ecstatic would be good for happy" replied Ash.

Using Specific Nouns.

We also looked at the nouns students chose in their narrative stories. I explained that nouns should tell the reader exactly who, what, and where the text is referring to. "She went to the store. Do you know who I was talking about or what store she went to?" The students responded all at once and very talking over each other, which showed me they indeed did understand what I was saying. I went on to say, "Instead I could say Kate went to Build-A-Bear." I then read the mentor text *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. The students shared some of the specific nouns they noticed.

The students completed the specific nouns exercise with a partner. I told the students they could make up the names and places they used in the sentences. Their goal was to replace the general noun with a specific noun. I read each

sentence aloud. For each sentence, I gave the partners two minutes to discuss and write their new sentence. During this activity, I paid close attention to Ash because he has been working hard and participating more. He has also used the information he gained from my prompting and scaffolding. I saw him choose to write two sentences without any prompting from either myself or his partner. His level of motivation was slowly improving. At the end of the exercise some students volunteered to share their ideas when they finished their work. Even Ash volunteered to share his sentence. The figure below shows the work Ash completed during this activity.

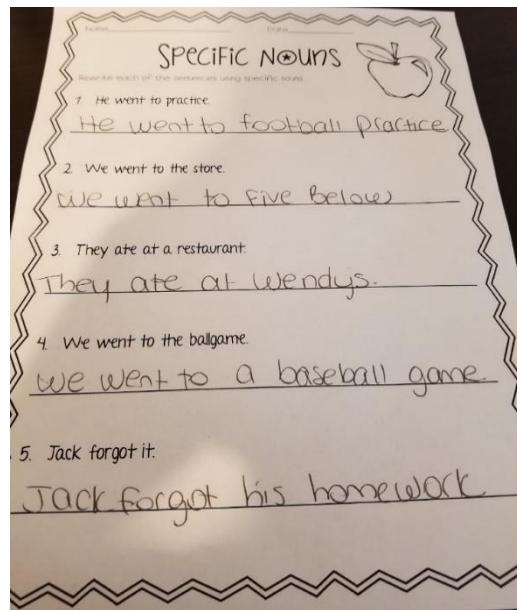


Figure 25. Student Expanding Sentences Using Detailed Nouns

Including Dialogue.

The concept of dialogue was very tricky for the students. On the first draft of their narratives, I did not have any students use dialogue. I felt that it was

important to introduce this idea to my students. I started the lesson by reading *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. I projected the book on the screen so the students could see the way dialogue was written in text. After some initial prompting, the students were able to tell me that dialogue was when a person talks. Fred said, “They use those weird marks when they talk in that book.” I was so excited by this! I said, “Yes! You should place quotation marks around what is said and write who spoke.” We found some examples in the story. After that, I put up a list containing examples and non-examples of dialogue and the students had to sort them. During independent writing, the students went back in their writing and added some dialogue to their stories. During sharing, I selected a few students who have done a great job of adding dialogue to their narratives to share. Providing students with praise gave these students a chance to shine and feel good about their hard work. During these times of sharing, I can see an immediate difference in their self-perception. However, I am still struggling to see a prolonged sense of changed self-perception. It can be difficult for my students to carry over a success to the next day.

Stretching Sentences.

It is also important to have a variety of sentences in text to keep the reader interested. I read a few sentences aloud. “The clouds darkened. I heard thunder. I saw lightning. It began to rain. I was scared!” I guided the students to realize that my sentences were short and choppy. Sometimes sentences need to be stretched

and made into longer sentences. I used an anchor chart to guide students into strengthening weak sentences. In independent writing and sharing, the students looked through their writing to find short and choppy sentences that could be strengthened and stretched. I asked the students highlight these stretched sentences. I chose a few students to share some of the sentences they stretched. During the independent portion of the class, the students went back into their narratives and worked to stretch their sentences.

Performing Surgery.

It was very difficult for my students to maintain a clear focus throughout their writing. Many times during the conferences, I saw other stories starting to develop within their original story. I did not want to play down the amount of effort and work they completed. “It’s very easy for authors to get off track when they are writing, and to write about more than one topic in a particular piece of writing. So one revision trick is to perform surgery on your writing,” I told the students. Rather than having my students rewrite or cross out the majority of their story, which would lower their self-efficacy, I taught them to perform “surgery” on their story. I taught them the strategy where they cut out the extra information using Google Docs.

I explained we were going to practice finding and taking out extra things that do not belong. I modeled how to cut out extra information from a sample writing piece. I read the paragraph out loud to students and identified which parts

of the story didn't belong. I cut out that those sections. I finally read the story once again to the students. They were able to see the difference. The students explained why the paragraph sounded better. Several students volunteered to share with the group what they thought. The students worked in pairs on a second example. I split them in pairs so I could easily assess the level of understanding because sometimes my more quiet students, including Ash, tend to not tell me when they do not understand. Since this is a higher level task, I wanted to make sure they were able to identify the extra information that was not important for the overall story.

Revising and Editing with Rubric.

The students were given a copy of the rubric we created as a group (Appendix I). After I reviewed the rubric with them to refresh their memory, they were asked to use the rubric to revise and edit their work. They were given an entire class period to work independently to find their own errors and mistakes. During that time I made sure to meet with everyone to conference. The nice thing about using the computer and Google Docs was that the students had most of their revisions completed already. Throughout the course of their writing, I wrote comments with possible ideas and areas to edit. I followed the same procedure that was used during the initial draft during the independent writing time (pp. 98-100). The students enjoyed this process. If they had a question they wrote a note and I was able to quickly see what they were working on and resolve their

problem. The students were also given a class period to sit with another student and peer edit. Most of the students enjoyed sharing their work with a peer. However, Ash was still reluctant to share his writing, so I gave him the option of working with me or continue working on his own. He chose to continue on his own, so I had one group of three students working together.

Formative Assessment

A fourth formative assessment was given to check writing progress over this revising and editing stage. The students were allowed to pick their own prompt from eight different prompts. I read them all aloud and they chose the one they wanted. They were not allowed to choose the same writing prompts as the previous weeks. They all had a beginning, middle, and end boxes where the students could draw or write their ideas down before they wrote. They were given the rest of the class time to work on their writing. As they were writing, I met with the students to have their conferences using the rubric we created. I also conducted two interviews with Fred and Paige. Overall, I saw noticeable improvements with the length of their writing samples. I saw more creativity within their text. I saw some students using newly learned strategies including the use of transitions. Finally, I started to see some students take risks and be unafraid to have a mistake within their writing. I even saw a change in Ash. However, even with this change in Ash, he still earned a score of 1 when I applied the rubric to his writing. Even though his writing still scored a 1, the change in his writing is

night and day. He was not discouraged when we discussed his score because he when we compared his previous samples with this sample, most current at this time, he was proud of his progress. I should take a minute to explain that even with this level of progress, sometimes a number score from a rubric is not all that matters to measure progress.

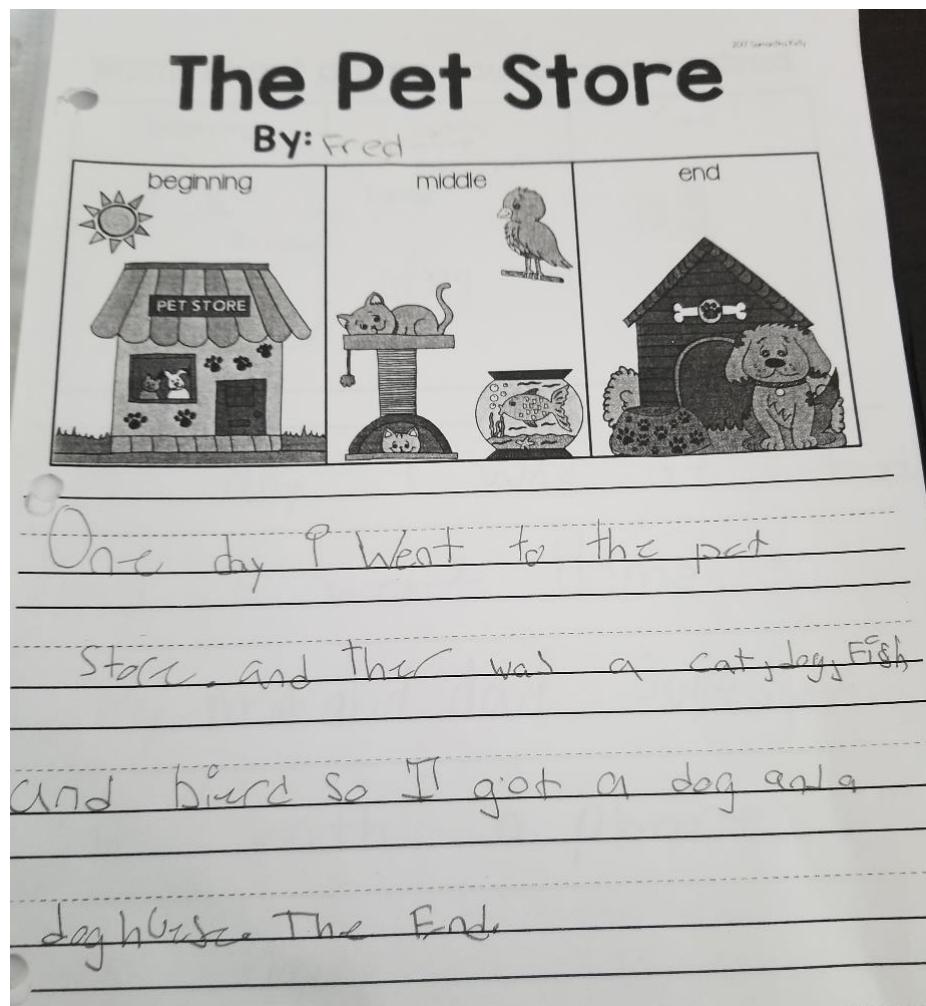


Figure 26. Writing Sample Collected from the Fourth Formative Assessment

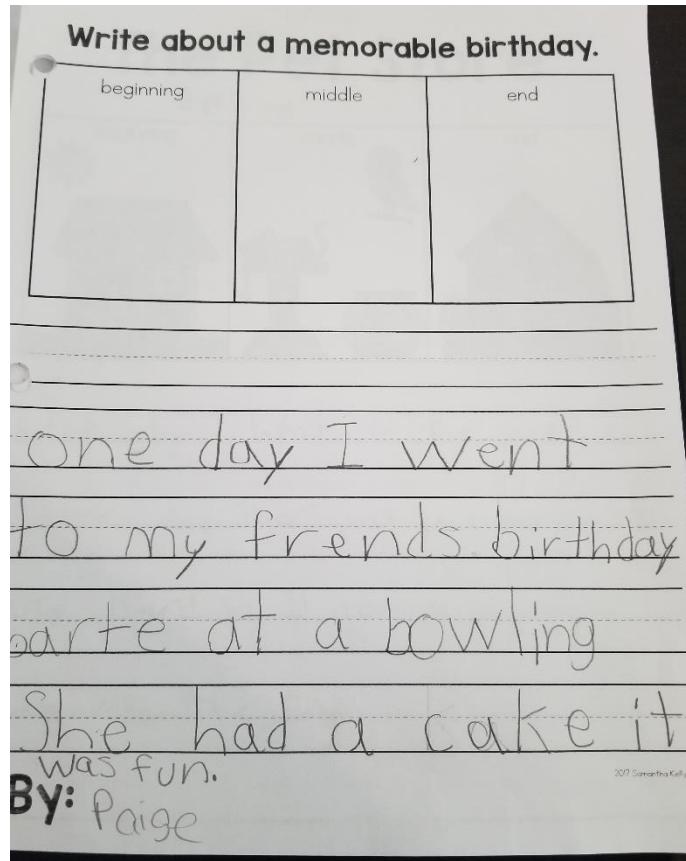


Figure 27. Writing Sample Collected from the Fourth Formative Assessment

Publishing

The students were finally at the end! They worked so hard to create their personal narratives. They also worked hard during the instructional lessons. They were almost at the finish line. They started the final leg of the race. The students were tasked with starting the publishing process of writing their personal narratives. At this point, I taught the students about how writers go from having words on pages to creating books like they were used to seeing. I explained how a published book consists of creating a title, a book title/cover page, and multiple

pages with page numbers, and adding illustrations to each page. At this point, I shared my own story with the students. I had my story completely published as to use my personal narrative as an example. I shared each component of the publishing phase and explained how I created a title, a book title/cover page, and multiple pages with page numbers, and adding illustrations to each page.

Final Rewrite of the Narrative.

The students had their stories typed in paragraph format up until this point. In this final rewrite stage, the students had to decide how to break up their story as to organize it over multiple pages. They had to decide how to organize their writing in order to keep similar ideas together on one page. This was difficult for them to do at first. Using my own story, about my dog, I modeled how I would organize my story. The students asked questions about organizing their story. They quickly wanted my input on formatting their own text. While they were working, some students asked for my opinion of what to do. Even Ash completed this task without complaining or arguing. He had the computer speak his text back to him and he organized his pages the way he wanted. He even asked me to check his work. This was a major break for him with writing because in the past he would refuse to write even one sentence without my assistance. One possible explanation for this change in Ash was due to his growing self-efficacy and his belief in himself both inside and outside of the school setting. There have been

several changes outside of the classroom and school environment that may have impacted this change within Ash.

Choosing a Title.

After the students had their story organized over multiple pages, it was time to choose their titles for their narratives and create the cover of their story. “All of your great stories need great titles.” I said. I gave the students time to think of a creative way to title their narratives. The most important thing I told my students was to make sure the title they chose had to do with their narrative.

Figure 28, below, is one example of a student generated title. Other examples included *My First Baby Sister* and *The Old Red House*.

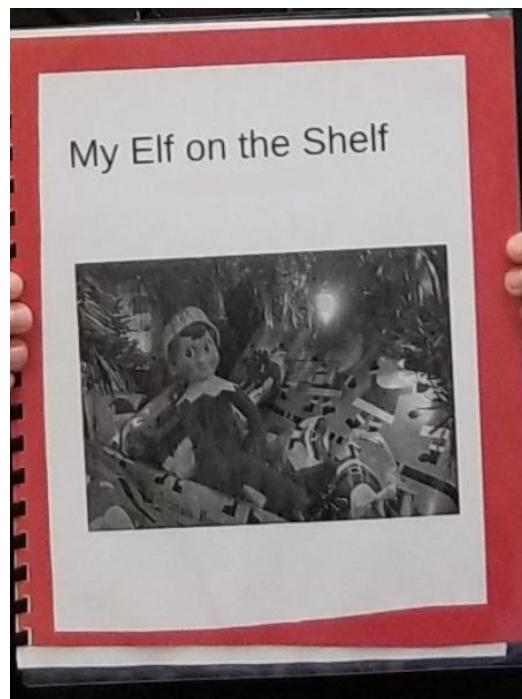


Figure 28. Example of a Completed Cover Page with Title

Illustrating the Narrative.

The next step, was to show the students on my narrative how to illustrate their narratives to make them look like story books. “Illustrations help add interest and meaning to your narrative as well.” I explained. The students were excited to see my own illustrations because some were hand drawn and some were photographs. I compared my own text with a mentor text. I used a mentor text to provide an example of excellent illustrations. I read *A Chair for My Mother*. After we looked at the visuals and how important they were to the story, the students used the rest of the class to add pictures and visuals to their stories. By this time, I had all of their personal narratives printed out and in order. Their job was to draw or find pictures from magazines I brought in to illustrate their stories. Many of my students were extremely artistic and enjoyed the creative freedom to express themselves through their visuals as well through their text. When Ash heard he was allowed to draw, he got out of his seat and did his famous “Ash dance.” Whenever he got very excited for something he would do a small dance, which meant it was a preferred task.

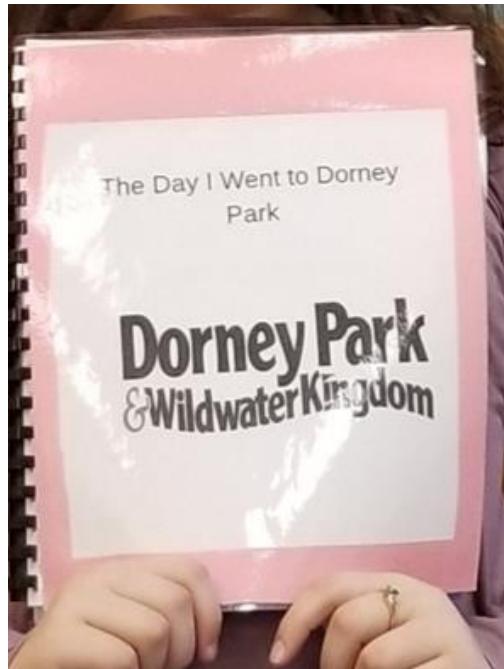


Figure 29. Example of a Completed Cover Page with Illustration

Formative Assessment

A fifth and final formative assessment was given to check writing progress over this last part of the unit. The students were allowed to pick their own prompt from eight different prompts. I read them all aloud and they chose the one they wanted. They were not allowed to choose the same writing prompts as the previous weeks. They all had a beginning, middle, and end boxes where the students could draw or write their ideas down before they wrote. They were given the rest of the class time to work on their writing. As they were writing, I met with the students to have their conferences using the rubric we created. I also conducted interviews with Frankie and Marcus. Overall I noticed a change in every student. Each student made improvements in their own writing journey. At

this conference, I wanted to show each student their progress. I showed them all of their five samples I collected from the formative assessments. The students were surprised to see how much their writing grew over these eight or so weeks. It was beneficial for them to see their abilities change even if there was not much change in the actual numerical rubric score. It was extremely important for my students, myself, and the study to have these formative assessments because the growth is more evident within these samples than from their personal narrative. I wanted to have both in order to show the students they can be successful with writing in both an on-demand situation as well as an over-time situation. Through gathering this data, the students saw their achievement, which allowed them to see their growth in terms of self-efficacy.

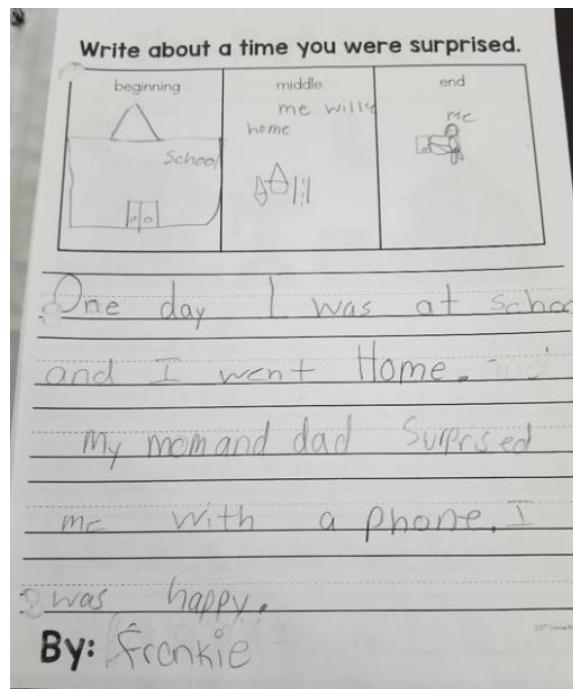


Figure 30. Writing Sample Collected from the Fifth Formative Assessment

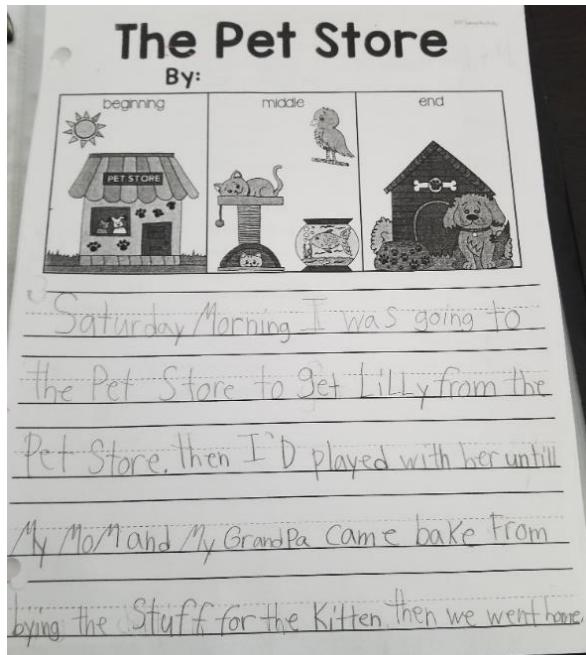


Figure 31. Writing Sample Collected from the Fifth Formative Assessment

Author's Celebration

The students worked hard to prepare for their author celebration. It was important for the students to make sure they spoke clearly, spoke loudly, didn't rush through their narrative, showed their illustrations, and stayed quiet while others were reading. This activity was taught prior to the actual author's celebration, so the students could practice presenting their narratives. I went first and I modeled the correct way to share their narratives. I read slowly and paused to show my illustrations. Each student was given a turn to practice in front of the group. Only Ash showed some resistance and reluctance in the fact that he was afraid to read his story aloud. The students shared their stories with their

homerooms and after a lot of encouragement from myself and his peers, even Ash decided to read his narrative. They read their stories to their classmates.

“That was amazing!” cheered Frankie.

“I am so happy everyone heard my story” Fred said happily.

After school they shared their narratives and presented to their parents.

Every student had at least one family member come to listen to their stories, which boosted their confidence. But, it made Ash feverous again. After a second round of playing his cheerleader, Ash read his story for a second time that day. Before he left my classroom to go home, he came up to me, hugged me, and said, “Thank you for getting me to read my story. I’m not afraid of it anymore. Writing is not that scary.”

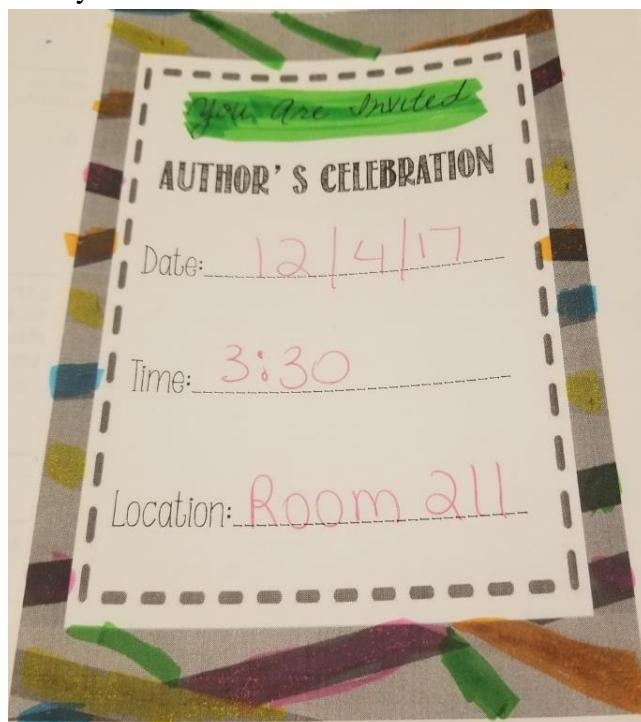


Figure 32. Student Created Invitation to the Author’s Celebration

Data Analysis

While conducting my action research study, I collected multiple forms of data. During my study, I was both a participant and non-participant observer. I collected multiple data sources where I could be engaged in prolonged observation in order to gather sufficient data to enhance the analysis of my research (Hendricks, 2009). Throughout the study, students took a learning style inventory (Appendix G), a writing survey (Appendix E), and a self-efficacy questionnaire (Appendix F). The students participated in interviews (Appendix H), completed various activities that provided student artifacts, and completed many writing samples which were assessed by a rubric (Appendix I), and were used as formative assessments. A journal, or field log, was used to record what took place within the classroom. It was also a place where recorded my reflective thinking on student actions, behaviors, and performance. I continually analyzed all data points throughout my study.

Baseline Writing Samples

My study began with the collection of two different writing samples; one was a summary writing required by the district and the other to assess background knowledge of narrative writing. It was important for me to collect two samples because I have worked with these students for three years. I did not want my assumptions about their writing ability from the past to sway my present impressions of their skills. The summary writing sample is a writing task the

students were used to completing because they have completed this task multiple times. On the other hand, the narrative writing sample was truly enlightening for me because this data is more of a true snapshot of their abilities from September.

In terms of the summary writing sample, the results (Table 3) seem overall positive since this was the first writing sample the students completed since being back in school from summer break. I was surprised to see two of my students, 20%, score a 3, proficient. Four students, 40%, scored a 2. Of this 40% of the students who scored a 2, two students really stood out to me. They seemed to have been practicing over the summer. Four students, 40%, scored a 1. These students who scored a 1 are my students who have really struggled with writing over the years I have worked with them. Overall these students have shown little progress in writing in the previous school year.

Table 3 also shows the initial narrative writing prompt that was used to evaluate the students' performance and prior knowledge about writing a narrative story. The students chose between two prompts. The scores were extremely surprising because the scores were completely different from the previous summary writing sample. On this narrative writing sample, the scores were drastically lower. Of the ten students in my class, 60% of the students scored a 2 and 40% scored a 1. These results were interesting to my study because 80% of my students either scored the same score as the score they received on the

summary or their score decreased. Only 20% of the students improved their score from the first writing sample to the second sample.

Table 3. *Individual Student Score Comparisons*

Student	S.L.O. Summary Score	Narrative Prompt Score	Level of Change
Ash	1	1	None
Marcus	1	2	Increase
Paige	3	1	Decrease
Frankie	3	2	Decrease
Fred	2	2	None
Enrique	1	1	None
Tyrese	2	1	Decrease
Harley	2	2	None
Harry	1	2	Increase
Dory	2	2	None

Surveys

Initial Survey.

The second piece of data I collected was a simple student writing survey where I included simple language and visuals (Appendix E). The survey was read aloud. It was important for me to learn how my students viewed themselves as writers. I also wanted to gain an understanding of my students' attitudes towards writing. I was interested to see how they personally felt about their skills in the classroom. The survey consisted of statements with three choices including yes (thumbs up), maybe (sideways thumb), and no (thumbs down). Each question was read allowed for the class and the students had wait time, which is a practice

where you give your students time to think about your questions before asking for an answer, before asking them to choose their response.

The results of the initial survey were telling. Some of the students thought they needed to answer in a way that would make me happy instead of being truthful. After the assessment, I made sure to explain that it was important for them to answer honestly. The individual and overall data were extremely interesting to note. Their opinions of their own abilities did not match their abilities, which was surprising. For example, some students always asked me for help, and they chose responses that did not reflect their actions. . One possible cause for this is because my students always want to earn my praise. They were possibly answering how they perceived I wanted them to answer and answered untruthfully (p. 68).

I was surprised to see 70% of my students enjoy writing. I was also very surprised to see that 40% of my students said they do not like to choose their own topics to write about, 30% of the students said they sometimes like to choose, and only 30% of my students said they enjoying the opportunity to pick their own topics. I was happy to note that 70% of my students view themselves as becoming a better writer. I was shocked to learn that 60% of students said they are able to edit and revise their own work because very few of my students have previously taken the time to go back and review their daily written work. Only 60% of my students said they knew the steps to writing a good story at this beginning point of

the study. It was telling for me to see that 40% of the students thought they would feel good about sharing their writing and 50% said they would not feel good about sharing their writing. Finally, it was interesting for me to note that 90% of the students shared that they would benefit from working with others to improve their writing. The raw scores for this survey are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Initial Student Writing Survey Results

Statement	# of Yes	# of Maybe	# of No
I enjoy writing most of the time.	7	1	2
I consider myself a writer.	5	2	3
I type on the computer, tablet, journal or diary at home.	7	0	3
I share my writing with friends and family.	5	2	3
I write text messages.	3	5	2
I like to choose my own topics to write about.	4	3	3
I am becoming a better writer.	7	2	1
I like to publish my writing.	3	4	3
I use words I know when I write.	7	3	0
I like to edit and revise my writing.	6	1	3
My teacher gives me enough time to write.	8	2	0
I know the steps to write a good story.	6	1	3
I like to read my work in the author's chair.	6	2	2
I like when others help to make my writing better.	9	0	1
I want the teacher to give me ideas to write about.	10	0	0
When Mrs. Schnalzer asks me to write, I feel....	7	1	2
When I am writing, I feel...	6	2	2
If I could share my writing with the class I would feel...	4	1	5
If I could share my writing with the class I would feel...	8	2	0
This is how I feel about my writing:	9	0	1

Post-study Survey.

After my writing unit was complete and my students finished their personal narratives, I decided to collect data on how the students viewed their writing after all of the instruction. I used the same simple student writing survey where I included simple language and visuals. I reminded the students that I wanted to see how they truly felt about their writing. The survey was again read aloud. It was important for me to reflect upon these results in comparison to the survey given at the beginning of the unit. I was interested to determine if and how my students' thoughts changed. I also wanted to gain an understanding of how student attitudes towards writing changed. I was interested to see how they personally felt a difference after they received instruction and practice with the newly learned skills within the classroom. The survey consisted of statements with three choices including yes (thumbs up), maybe (sideways thumb), and no (thumbs down). Each question was read aloud for the class and the students had wait time, which is a practice where you give your students time to think about your questions before asking for an answer, before asking them to choose their response.

The results of the post-study survey (Table 5) were even more intriguing than the initial survey results. I noticed an almost immediate change in student responses. It was hard to determine, however, if the change was from the quality of instruction and the amount of time spent of writing or if this time around they

were more honest about with themselves. The individual and overall data were extremely interesting to note for these reasons. Students' opinions of their abilities were more in agreement with my own personal opinions. I was surprised to see these results based off of the amount of progress and changed that occurred throughout the study.

I was surprised to see the same amount, seventy percent of my students enjoy writing. I was also very surprised to see that there was a decrease in the number of students who said they did not enjoy writing, which was ten percent, or one student. There was an increase from 30% to 70% of the students who noted they now want to choose their own topics to write about. There was a decrease from forty percent to twenty percent of my students who said they do not like to choose their own topics to write about. One possible conclusion I deduced based off this piece of information is that the students had a harder time choosing a prompt rom the bank of choices as the weeks progressed.

I was happy to note that there was an increase from seventy percent to ninety percent of my students who viewed themselves as becoming a better writer. I was shocked to learn that 70% of students said they are able to edit and revise their own work. It gave me validation to see that one hundred percent of my students said they knew the steps to writing a good story at the end of the study. It was exciting for me to see that 100% of the students felt good about sharing their writing with others. Finally, it was interesting for me to note an

increase from ninety percent to one hundred percent thought they benefited from working with others to improve their writing. The raw scores for this survey are given in Table 5. Allowing the students with many opportunities to work collaboratively gave the students an understanding of how working with others was more beneficial than working alone.

Table 5. Post-study Student Writing Survey Results

Statement	# of Yes	# of Maybe	# of No
I enjoy writing most of the time.	7	2	1
I consider myself a writer.	5	3	2
I type on the computer, tablet, journal or diary at home.	8	0	2
I share my writing with friends and family.	6	2	2
I write text messages.	6	2	2
I like to choose my own topics to write about.	7	1	2
I am becoming a better writer.	9	2	1
I like to publish my writing.	6	2	2
I use words I know when I write.	10	0	0
I like to edit and revise my writing.	7	1	2
My teacher gives me enough time to write.	9	1	0
I know the steps to write a good story.	10	0	0
I like to read my work in the author's chair.	8	1	1
I like when others help to make my writing better.	10	0	0
I want the teacher to give me ideas to write about.	6	2	2
When Mrs. Schnalzer asks me to write, I feel....	9	0	1
When I am writing, I feel...	7	2	1
If I could share my writing with the class I would feel...	8	1	1
If I could share my writing with the class I would feel...	10	0	0
This is how I feel about my writing:	9	0	1

Questionnaires

Initial Questionnaire.

The third piece of data I collected was the writing self-efficacy questionnaire, which looked at students abilities related to motivational factors and attitudes. This questionnaire was different from the student writing survey because the survey was designed to assess student abilities within the context of writing while the questionnaire was designed to focus more on their writing self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing. I read the statements aloud and some students were verbalizing their answers, which I allowed because it showed me that the students were engaged in the task. It was interesting to note from their verbal responses that their opinions did not match their skill set, which is similar to the survey responses. I told the students to answer how they feel about attitudes towards writing. This questionnaire took longer than I expected because I needed to reread and/or explain many of the statements on the questionnaire. The students also took some time to choose their response. The answers to this self-efficacy questionnaire were very eye opening. It was important for me to administer this questionnaire because it revealed some interesting information that I did not know about my students.

According to Table 6, sixty percent of my students identified themselves as always being able to write in complete sentences. On the other hand, twenty percent of the students said there was little chance of being able to write in

complete sentences and twenty percent of the students said they were unable to write in complete sentences. I was shocked to learn that 50% of my students thought they were able to always use correct punctuation at the end of sentences. The other forty percent thought they either never used correct punctuation or rarely used punctuation. This was where I thought more students would have scored themselves. In terms of being able to use writing strategies, twenty percent said they always do, ten percent said there is a good chance they do, forty percent said there is little chance they do, and thirty percent of the students said they never use writing strategies.

I then looked at the results that focused more on the motivation and self-efficacy towards writing. Almost immediately, one statement caught my eye because I did not agree with what my students thought. Seventy percent of my students said that they were always able to think of ideas to write about while none of the students said they have trouble thinking of ideas for writing. Fifty percent of my students said they have no trouble putting their ideas into their writing. Only one student noted they really struggle putting their ideas into writing. I was very interested as well as hopeful to see that half of my students thought that they had what it takes to be a good writer, while one student noted that they thought there was no chance they could ever be a good writer. This is what I hoped to change with this study.

These next set of results emphasized levels of student ability to focus and determination to continue writing. When asked about how fast the students are able to start writing, only 20% said they have no trouble with starting a written task immediately. In terms of being able to focus on writing for twenty minutes, I was not shocked to see that sixty percent of the students said there was no chance they could complete that task. The students were then asked about their ability to stay focused during the entire time allotted to complete writing assignments. The results were mixed. Thirty percent of the students said they really struggled with this task while forty percent said they have no trouble with continuing to write for the desired amount of time.

There were two statements that dealt with writing frustrations. These results were interesting because the data showed opposite results to what I thought. When I asked the students about their ability to control their frustration during writing and writing activity, sixty percent of the class said they had no trouble with keeping their frustration in check while twenty percent said there was no chance they could control their frustration. I immediately thought of Ash because he does struggle with writing tasks. When I asked the students about continuing to work on a writing task even if it was difficult for them, I got a wide range of responses. Forty percent of the class said there was no chance they could work on writing if the activity was difficult. Twenty percent said there was little chance they could to write if the task was deemed too hard. Ten percent said there

was a good chance they could continue to write if the task was difficult. Thirty percent said they could always continue working on challenging tasks. The raw scores for this questionnaire are given in Table 6.

Table 6. *Initial Self-efficacy Questionnaire Results*

Statement	No Chance 1	Little Chance 2	Good Chance 3	100% Chance 4
I can spell my words correctly.	1	6	2	1
I can write in complete sentences.	2	2	0	6
I can end my sentences correctly (. ? !)	2	2	1	5
I can indent my paragraphs.	2	2	0	6
I can quickly think of the perfect word.	3	2	2	3
I can think of many ideas for my writing.	0	1	2	7
I can put my ideas into writing.	1	3	1	5
I can think of many words to describe my ideas.	1	1	0	8
I can think of a lot of my own ideas.	0	4	2	4
I can focus and write for 20 minutes.	6	1	1	2
I can stay focused while I write.	3	2	1	4
I can start writing quickly.	3	4	1	2
I can control my frustration when I write.	2	2	0	6
I can see where I need to fix my writing.	2	2	1	5
I know how to use writing strategies.	3	4	1	2
I can keep writing even when it's hard.	4	2	1	3
I can write a good story.	1	1	1	7
I can write a good report.	3	2	4	1
I have what it takes to be a good writer.	1	3	1	5

Post-study Questionnaire.

At the end of this study, I administered the same questionnaire to complete as the one from the beginning of the study. I wanted to determine the difference in the students personal perceptions related to motivational factors and attitudes. I administered the questionnaire the exact way I did at the beginning of the study. I read the statements aloud for the students. I could tell from listening to their verbal responses that their opinions were truthful. The students were able to complete the questionnaire in less time compared to initial time because they had some idea of the questions. The results of this self-efficacy questionnaire were very different compared to the initial results. It was important to administer this questionnaire at the end of the study because it revealed a drastic change in their opinions and feelings towards writing.

According to Table 7, seventy percent of my students identified themselves as always being able to write in complete sentences; a ten percent increase. Only one student said there was little to no chance they could write in complete sentences. There was a twenty prevent increase in the area of always using correct punctuation. One student said they never used correct punctuation. The most shocking improvement can be noted in Table 7 when I asked about writing strategies. There was a fifty percent increase in the use of writing strategies. Twenty percent of the class noted they still struggle with using their strategies during writing. Even though the students saw they could use their

strategies during the study, when the students were actively engaged in the writing tasks, two students had the perception of not being able to remember and transfer the skills into everyday writing.

I was intrigued when I compared the results for being able to think of ideas to write about. According to Table 7, this data yielded the same result as the initial survey. The students were still struggling with this specific task. There was an increase from sixty to ninety percent of the students that noted they had no trouble putting their ideas into their writing. Only one student noted they really struggled to put their ideas into writing. I was very interested as well as hopeful to see that the number of students who thought that they had what it takes to be a good writer increased to eighty percent, or eight students while two students noted that they still do not consider themselves to be good writers. This was what I hoped would change with the implementation of this study.

The next results stuck out me because they all showed growth related to self-efficacy. The number of students who shared they were able to keep writing even if it was hard showed a positive change by the end of the study. Table 7 showed seventy percent of the students said there was a good chance that they could continue with writing even if it was hard as compared to forty percent at the start of the study. When I asked the students about their ability to control their frustration during writing and writing activities, ninety percent of the class said they had little to no trouble with keeping their frustration in check while one

student said they still struggled with their ability to control their frustration. A possible answer to this statement is that this student struggles with dealing with frustration in all content areas rather than just writing.

These last set of results emphasized levels of student ability to focus and determination to continue writing. The statement about writing for a longer period of time had opposite results from the initial survey. Seventy percent of the class said there was a good chance they could do this task while thirty percent said they would struggle with writing for that long. Eighty percent of the class noted that they were able to stay focused during writing tasks. The raw scores for this questionnaire are given in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Post-study Self-efficacy Questionnaire Results

Statement	No Chance 1	Little Chance 2	Good Chance 3	100% Chance 4
I can spell my words correctly.	1	2	2	5
I can write in complete sentences.	0	1	2	7
I can end my sentences correctly (. ? !)	1	0	2	7
I can indent my paragraphs.	1	1	2	6
I can quickly think of the perfect word.	1	1	3	5
I can think of many ideas for my writing.	0	1	2	7
I can put my ideas into writing.	0	1	2	7
I can think of many words to describe my ideas.	0	1	1	8
I can think of a lot of my own ideas.	0	0	2	7
I can focus and write for 20 minutes.	2	1	1	6
I can stay focused while I write.	1	1	2	6
I can start writing quickly.	1	1	2	6
I can control my frustration when I write.	0	1	3	6
I can see where I need to fix my writing.	1	1	3	5
I know how to use writing strategies.	1	1	1	7
I can keep writing even when it's hard.	2	1	1	6
I can write a good story.	0	1	1	8
I can write a good report.	3	0	2	5
I have what it takes to be a good writer.	1	1	1	7

Learning Style Inventory

This was the fourth source of data I collected before I started my writing unit. The students were very honest about how they like to learn. Several students

said this was the favorite task to this point. “I like the visuals because they help me” said Tyrese. During this survey, the students were asking for explanations and examples for certain statements that were confusing. The students were happily chatting about their responses about how they like to learn. The students were extremely interested in their learning styles, so I quickly determined their results. Overall raw class scores for the learning style inventory are given in Table 8 below.

Table 8. *Learning Style Inventory Results*

Student	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
Ash	X		
Marcus	X		
Paige	X		
Frankie			X
Fred			X
Enrique	X		
Tyrese			X
Harley		X	
Harry			X
Dory	X		

These results were not shocking to me since I have had time to really learn about my students after working with them for the third consecutive year. I have learned what teaching and learning styles work the best for each specific student. However, I was surprised at the fact that only one student was classified as an auditory learner. Fifty percent of my students scored as a visual learner, which I

was expecting because most of my students need use visual cues during instruction. I designed my lessons with this in mind. I used as many visuals as possible. Forty percent of my students learn best through kinesthetic activities. This was interesting to me because most of my students have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) where they enjoy their ability to learn while having opportunities to learn. The number of students for each learning style are given in Table 9.

Table 9. *Number of Students per Learning Style*

Learning Style	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
Number of Students	5	1	4

Observations: Field Log

Throughout the study I kept a detailed field log which held my observations of students, notes about specific lessons, and my reflections. By keeping these detailed notes I was able to identify the important themes in my research.

Motivation, especially student self-efficacy, is an essential component when trying to spark student interest and inspire students to write. In the past I tried to pinpoint reasons why students had low motivation and high frustration towards writing. I wondered why only writing was such an area of need. Why were students displaying those avoidance behaviors during writing instruction? It

was this study that really allowed me to discover that by changing the way I delivered my instruction accompanied by authentic writing tasks, really impacted the students in a positive way.

Providing the students with authentic writing experiences was the key to engaging my class in completing writing tasks. Allowing the students to incorporate a life experience into writing made it real for them. After all, my students are students with learning disabilities. They all have goals within their IEPs that say they need to be able to write at least a paragraph with correct conventions. My students need to develop real world communication skills that reach past the spoken word into the written word. Providing the students with an opportunity to tell a story about their life made the transition to writing a personal narrative story engaging for all my students no matter their disability.

Student Artifacts

Throughout the study, students completed numerous activities during writer's workshop. Student artifacts include writing samples and in class activities. The activities were completed independently, in pairs, in small groups, or as an entire class. All of this student work was collected and used to determine levels of students understanding. Student artifacts were also used to measure levels of self-efficacy and motivation to write and complete writing tasks. Student artifacts were collected in order to track progress over the course of the study. In reviewing all of the student artifact data, there was a significant difference in the

amount of writing and quality of writing in the activities from the start to the end of the study. The effort level improved over the course of the study. In class activities as well as writing samples showed me that the students were more motivated by these workshop mini lessons. The mini lessons were designed for student success. The activities were designed to promote motivation because the strategies of modeling and scaffolding were used.

Writing Samples and Analysis Using Rubrics

Student writing samples progressively improved overall over the course of the study. The students were required to complete five narrative samples through the unit of study. The students were given multiple writing prompts to choose from and complete. For each sample, the students needed to choose a different prompt as to avoid any repetition on the student's part. Scores were determined by the use of the personal narrative rubric that was created at the start of the study.

According to the personal narrative rubric (Appendix I), the students were evaluated based on seven categories: story sequence, focused topic, detailed descriptions, spelling, punctuation (capitals and ending marks), and handwriting. The scoring scale ranged from 0 to 4, and comprised of the following labels: The Ice Cream Fell off the Cone, Ice Cream is a Little Melty, Single Scoop of Vanilla, Triple Scooper, and With Whipped Cream, Sprinkles, and a Cherry on Top. Visuals were also included for those students who needed the visual cues. From the first sample, 80% of the students scored a 1; the ice cream is a little melty.

From the first sample, 20% of the students scored a 2; single scoop of vanilla. By the end of the study, as noted in Table 10 as sample five, one student still earned a score of 1. I should take a minute to explain that even with this level of progress, sometimes a number score from a rubric is not all that matters to measure progress. Four students earned a score of two and 50% of the students scored a 3; triple scooper. The raw scores for these writing samples are given in Table 10.

Table 10. *Formative Assessment Results*

Student	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4	Sample 5
Ash	1	1	1	1	1
Marcus	1	2	2	2	3
Paige	1	1	2	2	3
Frankie	2	2	2	3	3
Fred	1	2	2	2	3
Enrique	1	1	1	2	2
Tyrese	1	1	1	1	2
Harley	2	2	2	3	3
Harry	1	2	2	3	2
Dory	1	1	2	2	2

Interviews during Conferences

Interviews were conducted during writing conferences that took place during the formative assessments. The interview questions as outlined in Tables 11-20, were designed to evaluate levels of self-efficacy, or motivation to complete the writing sample and student attitudes or thoughts about their own writing. Exact quotations were recorded in the field log. Each student was interviewed during one conference during the study. Student responses were then turned into

a positive response or negative response to the question being asked. This allowed me to gauge the overall level of self-efficacy of the class. From the interview data, self-efficacy was shown to either be present or absent based off the students' responses. Each student either had self-efficacy or lacked self-efficacy based off their responses. I took note of all of Ash's responses because most of them were negative. Even if he was doing well, he still thought it was bad.

Table 11. *First Interview Question*

1. What are you working on as a writer today?
Paige: "Spelling and my sentences"
Tyrese: "Writing more"
Enrique: "Making sentences with words"
Fred: "Adding details"
Harley: "Using larger words instead of small words"
Ash: "Writing"
Dory: "Using periods"
Frankie: "Writing three sentences"
Marcus: "Writing about the pictures and the title"
Harry: "Writing something down on the paper"

Table 11 shows that the class had something to share with me. Some of the responses were descriptive while other responses were a generic answer. Most of the responses were aspects of writing that the students were working to improve upon.

Table 12. *Second Interview Question*

What was your plan for writing today?
Paige: "I just write my story"
Tyrese: "Look at the pictures and write about them"
Enrique: "To write about Christmas"
Fred: "Using the pictures"
Harley: "Write as much as I could"
Ash: "To try to write a word"
Dory: "To write a good story"
Frankie: "To write the best I could"
Marcus: "Having a beginning, middle, an end"
Harry: "Don't write 'and'"

Table 12 above shows 70% of the students had an actual plan for writing.

Table 13 below shows that 60% of my students were able to verbally explain their writing and what they did during the time they were writing.

Table 13. *Third Interview Question*

Can you take me on a tour of your writing?
Paige: "Yes, I wrote what came in my head"
Tyrese: "No, I don't like my story"
Enrique: "I wrote the things I wanted but can't ever get"
Fred: "I wrote three sentences about the pictures, one sentence about each picture"
Harley: "I wrote a lot"
Ash: "I did not do a good job. I wrote three words."
Dory: "I wrote what I could"
Frankie: "I thought about the story in my head and then wrote this down"
Marcus: "I wrote a good story I think and used capitals and periods"
Harry: "I like my story because it is funny. I tried hard to make it funny"

Table 14. *Fourth Interview Question*

Is there anything you want me to know about as a writer?
Paige: "No"
Tyrese: "I am not good at it and I don't like it and it is hard for me"
Enrique: "I need more help with it and it is hard to write what I think"
Fred: "I think a write good details and I like telling stories"
Harley: "I love writing"
Ash: "I hate writing"
Dory: "I like writing about me"
Frankie: "I like writing when there are pictures to write about"
Marcus: "I like telling stories"
Harry: "I write 'and' a lot"

Table 14 above shows 60% of the class was able to verbalize something positive and 30% of the class told me something negative about their writing.

Table 15 below shows that 20% of my students focused on spelling, 30% of the class focused on punctuation, and 30% of the class focused on the content.

Table 15. *Fifth Interview Question*

What is best about you as a writer?
Paige: "Using capitals"
Tyrese: "Good ideas"
Enrique: "Spelling my words"
Fred: "A good imagination"
Harley: "I can write so much"
Ash: "Nothing"
Dory: "I can use capital letters"
Frankie: "I use periods"
Marcus: "I can use big words in my stories"
Harry: "Spelling the words. I know how to spell a lot of words."

Table 16. Sixth Interview Question

What could you use more help with as a writer?
Paige: "Writing more"
Tyrese: "Spelling, writing more"
Enrique: "Writing a good story"
Fred: "Making sentences with periods"
Harley: "Using bigger words and not all the same all the time"
Ash: "Everything"
Dory: "Getting all of my ideas to make sense together"
Frankie: "Spelling and choosing words"
Marcus: "Writing more sentences"
Harry: "Thinking of more ideas to write about so I have a longer story"

Table 16 above shows 90% of the students were able to identify at least one area where they struggle. Table 17 below shows that 70% of the class was motivated enough to reread their story to identify what they wrote about.

Table 17. Seventh Interview Question

What is the most important thing you are trying to say?
Paige: "Why my birthday was fun"
Tyrese: "There are lots of animals at the pet store"
Enrique: "The things I want this year"
Fred: "When I went to the pet store"
Harley: "The fun I had on a school trip"
Ash: "I don't know"
Dory: "It is all important because I wrote it down."
Frankie: "About my day"
Marcus: "It is all important"
Harry: "I do not know."

Table 18. *Eighth Interview Question*

What is your favorite part of your writing today?
Paige: "Picking the topic"
Tyrese: "Saying that I got to pet a dog"
Enrique: "I wrote I wanted a real deer"
Fred: "I got a dog"
Harley: "Picking the topic"
Ash: "I used a capital in my sentence."
Dory: "I like my sentences"
Frankie: "Picking the topic"
Marcus: "I wrote a lot"
Harry: "My story"

Table 18 above shows that 70% of the class was able to identify their favorite part of their writing. Table 19 below shows that 80% of the students had enough motivation or self-efficacy to identify something specific they could improve upon. Table 20 below shows 60% of the students reflected positively on their work.

Table 19. *Ninth Interview Question*

What could we try to make better in this writing?
Paige: "Writing smaller"
Tyrese: "Write neater or use bigger words"
Enrique: "Adding more stuff to it"
Fred: "Making sentences"
Harley: "Use vocabulary words"
Ash: "Writing some more sentences"
Dory: "Spelling and sentences"
Frankie: "Reading my story to myself when I am done"
Marcus: "Writing more details"
Harry: "Having a beginning, middle, end"

Table 20. *Tenth Interview Question*

How successful do you feel with your writing today?
Paige: "I did a good job"
Tyrese: "I did better today than I do all other times"
Enrique: "I could do better"
Fred: "I did okay"
Harley: "I can do better"
Ash: "I tried harder and had reminders to work"
Dory: "I did bad"
Frankie: "I think I did great"
Marcus: "It wasn't that good"
Harry: "I did okay but I might do better"

Final Personal Narrative

The final personal narrative was the culminating project of the unit and marked the end of the research study. All activities completed during the unit prepared the students to write their personal narrative. This narrative was developed over a long period of time and was not written all at once. The students were given time during independent writing times to produce each section. After a given lesson, the students worked on that specific piece of the narrative story. For example, after we learned about writing a strong lead, the student wrote an opening sentence to their story. It was important for me to teach this unit with the same accommodations and modifications in place for the students. Chunking this larger task into sections is what the students are used to experiencing in the classroom normally.

Table 21. *Final Personal Narrative Scores*

Student	Personal Narrative Score
Ash	2
Marcus	3
Paige	3
Frankie	4
Fred	3
Enrique	2
Tyrese	2
Harley	4
Harry	2
Dory	2

Students were evaluated based off of the same rubric used to grade writing samples; the personal narrative writing rubric. The students were all aware of the criteria and everything they needed to include. Table 21 above shows that 20% of the students scored a 4, 30% of the students scored a 3, and 50% of the class scored a 2. This shows an overall improvement from their baseline scores. Based off these results shown in Table 2, all students made some level of progress since the initial samples. I should take a minute to remind readers that even with this level of progress, sometimes a number score from a rubric is not all that matters to measure progress. One insight into the improvement in Ash's score would be that Ash was able to improve his score in this over-time assignment. He used the skills he learned during the mini lessons from the unit to correct his writing over the eight weeks of the study. His score improvement suggests that he struggles with on-demand writing, similar to the formative assessments, and was successful with over-time writing. This is also an explanation for other student success. The raw

scores for the final personal narrative writing project are given in Table 21 shown above.

Analysis of Codes and Bins

Once the study was completed, it was important for me to code the data in order to synthesize all of the information I gathered over those eight weeks. This process allowed me to think critically and make discoveries that led me back to my research question. Through the coding process, I found 5 categories that include Benefits, Engagement, Mini Lessons, Modifications, and Self-Efficacy. (Figure 33). Within these five categories, there are sub-categories that are in some way related to the category. This visual representation is a quick guide that shows me how what the student did, what I observed, and how my reflections contributed to the changes I saw were all connected yet separate from one another.

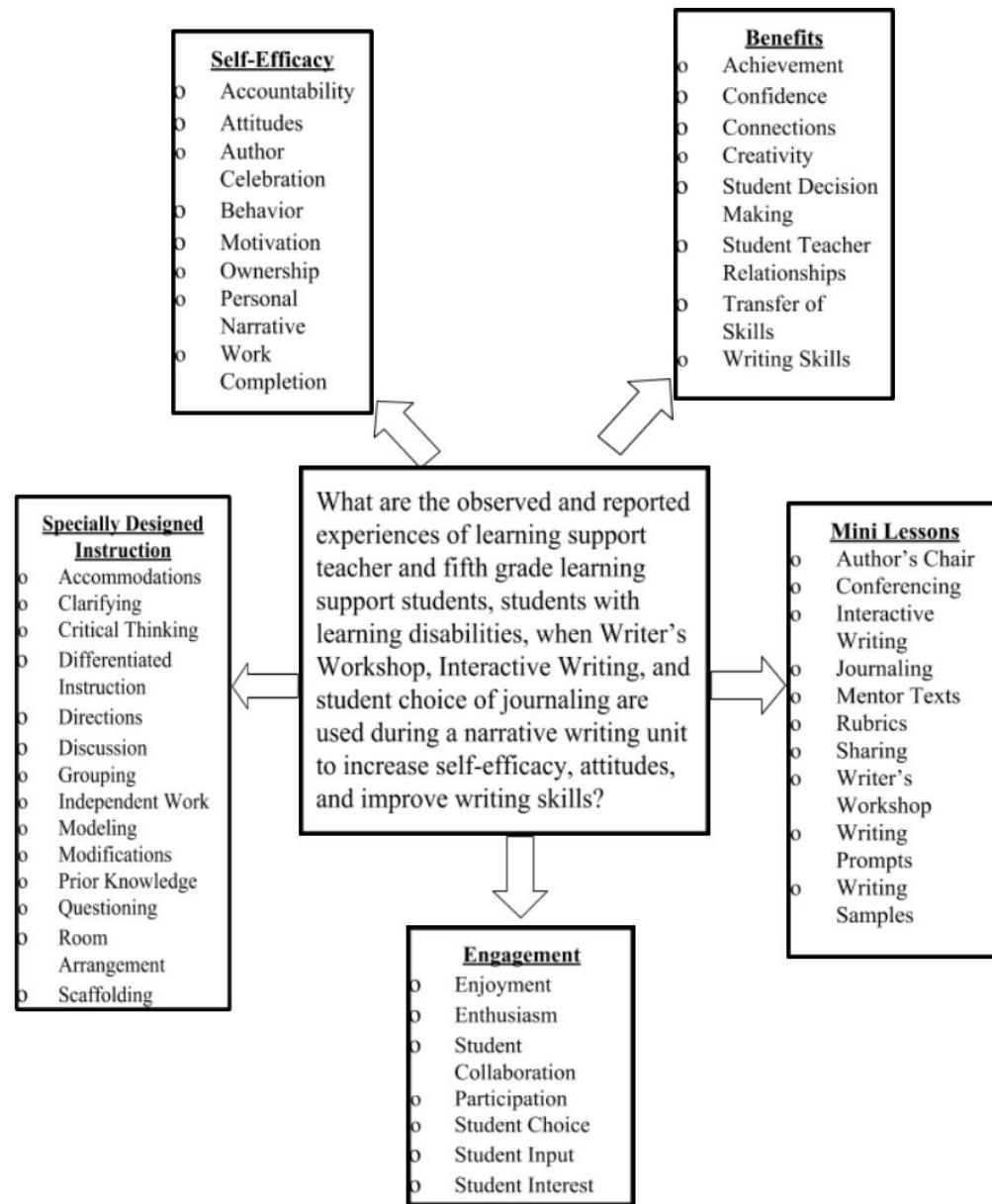


Figure 33. Codes and Bins

Theme Statements

Throughout the course of completing my action research study within my classroom, several themes emerged that were confirmed through my literature review, writing samples, student responses to surveys and questionnaire data, field log data and student interview responses. These theme statements allowed me to reflect upon an influential learning experience for both my students and for myself as a lifelong learner.

- When students have the chance to make new connections and transfer learned skills to their writing, they will increase their work completion and improve writing skills, which leads to improved writing achievement. Other benefits include confidence, creativity, decision-making skills, and student teacher relationships.
- Writing a personal narrative encourages the development of student ownership and accountability, which increases student self-efficacy and motivation by providing numerous opportunities for writing within a collaborative and student centered environment fostering more positive attitudes and behavior.
- When students are provided with meaningful choices, they have a chance to become active learners by having opportunities to participate, provide input, share interests, and collaborate with other students, which increases enjoyment and enthusiasm towards writing.

- Specially designed instruction allows the delivery of instruction and the given curriculum to be modified and/or adapted, which is necessary for achievement because differentiation, including scaffolding and modeling, can support the students' diverse learning needs.
- Using the structure of a mini lesson including conferencing, journaling, sharing during the writing workshop alongside Interactive Writing, where mentor texts are used to model writing skills allows students to improve their writing. Through the use of rubrics, the students were able to show personal improvement.

Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to answer the question: *What are the observed and reported experiences of learning support teacher and fifth grade learning support students, students with learning disabilities, when Writer's Workshop, Interactive Writing, and student choice of journaling are used during a narrative writing unit to increase self-efficacy, attitudes, and improve writing skills?* My goal was to determine the effects of student writing when writing instruction was delivered through the writing workshop. I wanted to discover if personal narrative writing would motivate the students to improve their self-efficacy and in turn, improve their overall writing skills. To help organize my findings, I identified five theme statements to show my findings from my study.

The Benefits of the Personal Narrative Unit

When students have the chance to make new connections and transfer learned skills to their writing, they will increase their work completion and improve writing skills, which leads to improved writing achievement. Other benefits include confidence, creativity, decision-making skills, and student teacher relationships.

When designing my study, I noted that with each passing year, an alarming trend has made its mark on me as a teacher. This alarming notion is the fact that student writing, in terms of achievement, has not improved. Student rates of progress have been meeting the bare minimum, which caused students to

become aware of their deficit. In previous years, my writing instruction was on the defense, where I would target specific skills the students lacked that were in their IEP. I felt the need to try to improve upon those skills, which only widened the achievement gap. I needed to find a solution to this growing problem so I decided to create this study to hopefully see a change.

I decided to create my own unit so I could finally do what I have failed to do for years. I wanted to provide instruction to my students through a process based approach where they could transfer learned skills from the lessons into their actual writing. This result is consistent with research from Whitaker (2005) where he noted the best thing to do is to start at the beginning and teach one component at a time and to allow the me to master the skill before moving on to the next task. As can be seen from Table 22 below, the students' perception of their own writing achievement seems to have drastically increased.

Table 22. *Students' Perception of their Writing Achievement*

Statement	Percent Responding to 100% Chance or Good Chance, Pre-Study	Percent Responding to 100% Chance or Good Chance, Post-Study
I can spell my words correctly.	30%	70%
I can write in complete sentences.	60%	90%
I can end my sentences correctly (., ? !)	60%	90%
I can indent my paragraphs.	60%	80%

After changing my approach to teaching writing with my narrative unit, the level of student growth and achievement based off of student writing samples

seems to have increased over the course of my study, as can be seen from Table 23 below. These scores reflected an overall increase in a number score, which reflected progression in the amount of text written as well as using learned skills. At the start of this study, twenty percent of my class was able to score a 3, proficient, on a summary writing task. Similarly, when I had the students complete a summary writing, 100% of the class scored below proficient with sixty percent scoring 2. During the weeks of the study, when five formative assessment samples were collected, the students made slow growth.

At the time when the first sample was collected eighty percent of the class scored a 1 and twenty percent scored a 2. On the second writing sample, the students started to show growth overall with the number of students scoring a 1 decreased by thirty percent. Half of the class scored a 1 and half scored a 2. By the time I collected the third writing sample from the students, I could see more improvements in students' scores. There was a twenty percent decrease in students scoring a 1 and an improvement to seventy percent of students scoring a 2. The fourth formative assessment showed the most progress of the study. Twenty percent of the students scored a 1, fifty percent scored a 2, and thirty percent of the students scored a 3, proficient. Towards the end of the study, fifty percent of the class received a score of 3. On the final copy of the personal narrative story writing, the students had made significant progress compared the

before the study started. Fifty percent of the class scored a 2, thirty percent scored 3, proficient, and twenty percent of the class scored a 4.

Table 23. *Class Percentages of Writing Progression*

Type of Writing	Percent Scoring 1	Percent Scoring 2	Percent Scoring 3	Percent Scoring 4
Summary	40	40	20	0
Narrative	40	60	0	0
Sample 1	80	20	0	0
Sample 2	50	50	0	0
Sample 3	30	70	0	0
Sample 4	20	20	30	0
Sample 5	10	40	50	0
Final Personal Narrative	0	50	30	20

From my data, it seems that I have found a way to connect writing to the students' lives and a personal narrative was that bridge because the students could work on improving their communication and storytelling skills using authentic writing. This is evident from the author's celebration as seen on page 118. I also used interactive writing and student collaboration throughout the unit to help promote communication. These results are consistent with research conducted by Gündüz & Ünal (2016) as reported in my literature review. They noted that a narrative is a way to express our lives over time and can be formed from any interaction we have (see page 22). These results also are consistent to a study conducted by Smith (1990) from my literature review where it is noted that our stories are the way we view the world around us.

As noted by Lindblom (2017), “While many students claim to dislike writing, according to a PEW Report, today’s young people actually write a lot more than young people of decades ago. But what they write are texts and on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms.” This quote is consistent with my data because my students were participating in authentic writing outside of my classroom until I brought it into my classroom. That was when I saw a change in writing scores. These data are also supported by my individual student’s topic selection (see pages 78-79) in which students chose their story to tell. Student choice became authentic because they chose a topic that was specific to their life. Their specific topic and specific story was authentic to their past.

Other benefits include confidence, creativity, decision-making skills, and student teacher relationships. All of these benefits were noted throughout my unit through my observations. As the mini lessons and workshops progressed, students felt more comfortable, which allowed for them to let their guard down. This resulted in the students actively participating, which led to an increase in confidence. They were given a choice of topic to write about, which increased their decision making skills. Allowing the students to have a more active role in their learning enhanced the student teacher relationship. This increase in student teacher relationships could be noted throughout the study, when reading about Ash. Through the activities in this unit and research study, I was able to improve

my relationship with him and was able to learn even more about him and his previously hidden writing talents.

In terms of confidence, I could tell that there was an increase in the student confidence during the author's celebration (pp. 109-110). The students had confidence in their work and enough confidence to share their work with their peers and families. Throughout the study, there was a recurring theme of student desire to share their work with their peers and me, as the teacher. This suggests a sense of empowerment in both their voice and their story. Even Ash developed a sense of power over his writing (see pages 118-119). By allowing him build his confidence, he was able to realize his newly molded abilities.

When looking at an increase in creativity, the lesson on story sequencing (p. 80) is a good example because the students were tasked with creating a story using the three pictures. All ten students wrote very different stories with no students writing the same story. Also, on the lesson were the students learned about creating a word picture, the students were able to draw a picture of the story I told as well as write their own story based on a picture. When the students learned about using a variety of descriptive verbs, the students showed their creativity when they created their word webs. Students showed an increase in their decision making skills from the beginning of the study and the end of the study. One of the first activities of the unit, the students made a heart map (p. 72) where they designed a visual that represented their personal life stories. Student

decision making was also represented when it came time to pick their topics for their narratives (pp. 78-79). All of the students were able to pick a topic. In the past, this was a difficult task for my students because they had no connections to the writing we completed. My students would want me to choose their topics for them.

The Effects of the Personal Narrative on Self-Efficacy and Attitudes

Writing a personal narrative encourages the development of student ownership and accountability, which increases student self-efficacy and motivation by providing numerous opportunities for writing within a collaborative and student centered environment fostering more positive attitudes and behavior.

Bandura (1994) explained the idea of self-efficacy as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce certain levels of performance. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. This notion is related to my study because before and at the start of my study, my students had extremely low levels of self-efficacy. My study aimed at improving self-efficacy in the content area of writing. My study also looked at how self-efficacy affected behavior in the classroom during writing tasks.

As can be seen from Table 24 below, student self-efficacy and motivation has increased from the start of the study to the end of the study. Every statement related to self-efficacy and motivation towards writing has increased. This suggests providing time to collaborate, share, and write independently as well as

providing choice allowed the students the ability to have such success in terms of self-efficacy and motivation.

I only had ten students in my class so even though some results have only shown a slight increase over the course of the study, it is still significant to my study findings. As previously noted in the methodology section, both the survey and questionnaire statements were created after reviewing surveys and questionnaires from a study completed by Bassett, DeVine, Perry, and Rueth (2001).

Table 24. Students' Perception of their Self-efficacy

Statement	Percent Responding 100% Chance or Good Chance, Pre- Study	Percent Responding 100% Chance or Good Chance, Post-Study
I can quickly think of the perfect word.	50%	80%
I can think of many ideas for my writing.	90%	90%
I can put my ideas into writing.	60%	90%
I can think of many words to describe my ideas.	80%	90%
I can think of a lot of my own ideas.	60%	90%
I can stay focused while I write.	50%	80%
I can start writing quickly.	30%	80%
I can control my frustration when I write	60%	90%
I know how to use writing strategies.	30%	80%
I can keep writing even when it's hard.	40%	70%
I can write a good story.	80%	90%
I have what it takes to be a good writer.	60%	80%

These data are also consistent within my literature review and the research I found from Abdel-Latif (2007) where a few causes of low English writing self-efficacy were reported based off that study. Some of the factors related to my

findings included a lack of linguistic knowledge, poor history of writing achievement and perceived writing performance improvement, low English writing self-efficacy, instructional practices of English writing, fear of criticism and others' evaluation of the writing. These factors are similar to the reasons my students started off the study with lower self-efficacy than by the end of the study.

These data are supported by individual interviews (see pages 131-135), in which the students expressed their own feelings or attitudes towards their writing abilities. The change in students' motivation and attitudes towards writing was expressed through their dialogue within the classroom. For example, at the beginning of study I heard things like "Can you help me?", "I need help.", "This is hard.", or "I don't remember!" (page 63). By the end of the study, I had 90% of the class, excluding one student, excited to share the narrative they wrote during the Author's Celebration (pages 109-110). As seen below in table 25, student perceptions of their attitudes towards writing have increased throughout my study.

Table 25. Students' Perception of their Attitudes towards Writing

Statement	Percent Responding with a Thumbs Up or A Maybe Thumb, Pre-Study	Percent Responding with a Thumbs Up or A Maybe Thumb, Pre-Study
When Mrs. Schnalzer asks me to write, I feel....	80%	90%
When I am writing, I feel...	80%	90%
If I could share my writing with the class I would feel...	50%	90%
If I could share my writing with the class I would feel...	100%	100%
This is how I feel about my writing:	90%	90%

These results are also consistent with research conducted by Hall and Axelrod (2014) because they stated, “Attitudes, beliefs, and self-efficacy are influenced by social settings such as the classroom” (p. 35). Students who have writing anxiety, often know they struggle with writing, which is consistent with my study. My study suggests that by utilizing a collaborative environment along with modeling and scaffolding can decrease anxiety among students. To support this research finding from Hall and Axelrod even further, I used Interactive Writing during instruction because it fosters a student centered environment, where students have opportunities to write collaboratively.

The Effects of Student Engagement

When the students are provided with meaningful choices, they have a chance to become active learners by having opportunities to participate, provide input, share interests, and collaborate with other students, which increases enjoyment and enthusiasm towards writing.

Providing student choice was a large component of my study. More specifically, I wanted to determine if providing students with choices played a role in their learning achievement. Student choice was implemented in the daily workshop lessons, student writing samples, and the final personal narrative story. Calkins (1994) discusses the importance of providing students with meaningful writing opportunities by allowing them to make choices and write about the significant things in their lives.

As noted by Table 26 below, student engagement seems to have increased slightly throughout my study. For example, under each question from my questionnaire showed a 10% increase. Even though, in terms of my study, that is only one student, it still was a slight increase. These results are consistent with the research completed by Gair (2015) which states, “My motivation for devoting time to narrative writing rests in the transformative potential of telling stories about our lives, as well as the key shifts in the language arts curriculum toward greater learner engagement in informational reading and writing.” Students most likely will be engaged when writing a story about their lives.

Table 26. Students' Perceptions of Motivation impacting Engagement

Statement	Percent Responding Yes or A Little, Pre-Study	Percent Responding Yes or A Little, Post-Study
I enjoy writing most of the time.	80%	90%
I consider myself a writer.	70%	80%
I share my writing with friends and family.	70%	80%
I like to choose my own topics to write about.	70%	80%
I like to read my work in the author's chair.	80%	90%
I like when others help to make my writing better.	90%	100%

Student engagement is also evident from my day to day mini lesson activities during the workshop time (Table 27). By using the interactive writing I can model a task or skill for the students while actively involving the students in the lesson providing opportunities for the students to participate and collaborate with their peers. Towards the beginning of the study, the students completed a heart map (page 72) which supports these data because the students provided

input, shared their interests with one another, and collaborated with other students, which increases enjoyment and enthusiasm towards writing.

Table 27. *Quotations Showing Student Engagement during Mini Lessons*

“It is like an all about me poster!”
“Can we draw pictures?”
“Do we need to write words?”
“I love my mom!”

Two controversial debates are also linked to the idea of student engagement for students with learning disabilities. As noted by de Caso, Garcia, Diez, Robledo, and Alvarez, (2010), such debates consist of the effects of student-centered instruction compared to teacher-centered instruction when teaching students with learning disabilities and finding ways to build motivation in students with learning disabilities. For example, would increasing interest levels and allowing for more student choice build this motivation?

The Effects of Specially Designed Instruction

Specially designed instruction allows the delivery of instruction and the given curriculum to be modified and/or adapted, which is necessary for achievement because differentiation, including scaffolding and modeling, can support the students' diverse learning needs.

Almost every aspect of my study was created with my students in mind because my class consisted of ten students with different disabilities as well as different ability levels. It was important for me to provide every student with the

tools to be individually successful. “Writing poses significant challenges for students with disabilities (ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, 2002, p. 3). This idea is tied to one debate about how to most effectively teach students with learning disabilities. The debate was with using the rigor among the Common Core standards versus the working towards their IEP goals. My research study aimed to link the two conflicting ideas together.

My decision to choose the topic of narrative writing was made because of the academic level of my students. My students are not performing at grade level, so the unit needed to be developed to a more appropriate level. Similarly, as noted in my literature review, Graham and Harris (2003), “Different studies suggest that texts of students with learning disabilities are generally shorter, poorly organized, with more superfluous data and mistakes in their structure than their non LD peers.” This data is supported by my final narrative stories. Yes, my students did improve over time on their overall scores, however the length of the stories were shorter than grade level expectations, which say a student in fifth grade should be able to write an equivalent of 5 paragraphs or between 25-35 sentences.

Students with disabilities usually fall into this category where they struggle with both reading and writing. It is important for teachers to use both reading and writing instruction to foster growth in both subject areas. The more exposure these students get will lead to growth in both content areas. Bailey et al. (2001) share that the lack of experience with language, a Whole Language

curriculum, having a learning disability, pressure on the teacher, lack of meaningful time to write, lack of experiences, and lack of multiple intelligence instruction all leads to low reading and writing skills. These are reasons why I chose lessons that target both reading and writing skills. If you refer back to the writing scores outlined in Table 23, you can see that using specially designed instruction during the writing workshop lessons seems to increase student achievement as well as increased levels of self-efficacy, which is reflected in their scores. This type of workshop approach utilizes strategies that are beneficial to students with disabilities, including collaboration, modeling, scaffolding instruction, repetition, applying skills, monitoring progress, and student teacher conferencing.

I chose to investigate how my students learn best at the start of the study so I could use that information during my study in order to provide more choice for my students. As can be seen from Table 9 (page 128), most students, 50%, learn best from having visual supports while almost just as many kinesthetic learners. I incorporated as much of these two learning styles throughout my unit, which could have possibly contributed to my rate of progress. A classroom that students perceive as safe, supportive of their autonomy, and of their learning increases intrinsic motivation (Oginsky, 2003, p. 2). Students who are intrinsically motivated want to be successful and do their best work. Age level must also be considered while gauging student interest and genres in writing topics.

The Effects of Mini Lessons within the Writing Workshop

Using the structure of a mini lesson including conferencing, journaling, sharing during the writing workshop alongside Interactive Writing, where mentor texts are used to model writing skills allows students to improve their writing. Through the use of rubrics, the students were able to show personal improvement.

Teachers need to provide mini lessons on writing. Choosing areas where students are struggling and then structuring practice lessons around those specific topics is vital to successful writing instruction. A mentor text is a meaningful tool for teaching narrative writing. By the same token, the specific process used during writer's workshop and interactive writing could lead to improved writing achievement.

As seen in Table 28 below, student writing achievement has improved from 40% of the students scoring a 1 at the beginning of the study to 0% of the students scoring a 1 by the end of the study. Similarly, no student was able to score a 3 or 4 at the beginning of the study while by the end of the study 50% of the class scored a 3 or a 4 on their story.

Table 28. *Progress Made by the Class over the Duration of the Study*

Writing Sample	Percent Scoring 1	Percent Scoring 2	Percent Scoring 3	Percent Scoring 4
Initial Narrative Piece	40%	60%	0%	0%
Final Narrative Piece	0%	50%	30%	20%

Mentor texts could be a contributing factor to this level of improvement.

In a study by Gallagher (2014) says, “Mentor texts are most powerful when students frequently revisit them throughout the writing process—and when teachers help them take lessons from writing exemplars.” Mentor texts can help the teacher model the correct way to write something. During the mini lessons, I used the mentor text to illustrate powerful visual examples of what good writing looks like. The students used them as models to help understand what the specific skill I was teaching.

A mentor text is also seemed to be a great tool to use during lessons because a mentor text can bring authenticity to a writing task. A mentor text can show students exactly what is expected from their writing. For instance, when the students were asked to write a personal narrative, the mentor text were used almost daily as examples for the students (Appendix M). The students could see the components of a narrative to help with their own writing. Mentor texts can decrease anxiety and improve motivation because the students can see the expectations. Another example of a mentor text used in the study was my own pre-written personal narrative, which was about the day I adopted my dog. The students had authentic texts written by true authors as well their teacher’s example of a personal narrative to refer to throughout the study. At the time, it decreased student anxieties because they saw that I completed one, so it must not be too terrible.

As seen in Table 23, student writing achievement has improved both from beginning to end as well as over the course of the formative assessment samples. The workshop model was my basis intervention for the entire unit. In the past I had never taught writing using this approach. I was interested to see what change, if any, this approach would have on students and their writing. According to Monroe and Troia (2006) and Saddler and Asaro (2007), “Multiple writing researchers have found that when students with learning disabilities are taught and supported in the use of strategies for planning, drafting, and revising, the quantity and of their writing improved.”

Interactive writing was a large part of my study that really allowed me to use scaffolding and modeling in a different way than I have in the past. This provided the students with a sense of security and familiarity, which could have led to an increase in self-efficacy. This process helped the students know what to expect, which decreased anxiety and ultimately allowed them to feel more confident. According to Williams, Sherry, Robinson, and Hungler (2012), interactive writing is an approach to beginning writing instruction. The components of an interactive writing lesson reflect the recursive processes involved in writing, and teachers make those processes clear through demonstration and explicit instruction. Most of my lessons incorporated this idea. For example, my lesson on a small moment in time where we discussed the differences between a watermelon and small seed stories and then the students

collectively write a story about going camping. If you refer back to the writing scores outlined in Table 23, you can see that interactive writing seems to increase student achievement as well as increased levels of self-efficacy, which is reflected in their scores.

Next Steps

This action research study has made an impression on both my students and me, as the teacher researcher. It allowed me to gain an understanding of my students and their writing in ways no other class had in the past. This research study allowed me to become familiar with their fears, their anxieties, their excitement, their motivation, and their stories. Most importantly, my students learned how to tell their stories by communicating through their writing. They came to see the value in learning the writing process and developing their skills so they could express themselves in a meaningful way that could be understood.

My action research also allowed me to learn the best practices that related to teaching writing to students with disabilities. I learned the importance of using writing workshops and the strategy of interactive writing. I quickly learned the relation between engagement and self-efficacy to predicting the level of student achievement. I learned the value in providing students with choice over their work. Finally, I learned the benefits of creating a narrative writing unit filled with these newly learned best practices along with my prior knowledge of specially designed instruction.

My study allowed me to understand just how much I still need to learn about appropriately providing writing instruction to my students. For example, I want to continue to research writing workshops for students with learning disabilities. I also would like to research ways where I could incorporate more

time for student conferencing. My study has shown me that my students really benefited from this activity because it allowed to really give each student that level of individual attention and support they need to increase their skills and motivation. For some of my students, working independently is a difficult task, so this idea is especially important for them to be successful. I also want to continue to teach writing using interactive writing were teacher modeling is essential. I also want to continue to use mentor texts when teaching the different types of writing throughout the year.

For next year, I want to research similar ways to expand this intervention into the other types of writing that are taught throughout the year, including descriptive, persuasive, and expository writing. I want to build on my students newly found self-efficacy towards writing as well as achievement. I would like to find ways to use what this study has taught me and develop units for the other types of writing. I want to show my students that they have what it takes to complete these writing assignments, just like their peers.

Furthermore, I want to continue using this narrative writing unit since the benefits are clear. When I teach this unit again next year, I would like to make some changes. The students would benefit from having more than eight weeks to learn about narrative writing. I would like to implement this unit at the beginning of fourth grade instead of fifth. This way I could spend more time teaching and more time allowing the students to write. I could expand the time table to a third

to a half of the school year per unit. This way over the course of fourth and fifth grade the students will have experience with all five types of writing.

While my specific research question was indeed answered as a result of my action research study, additional questions arose. The first question I would like to investigate is how journaling could be used to help my students diagnosed with an emotional disturbance. The second question is how to develop a way for the students to track their own writing progress. Could it be similar to the way they already track their IEP goal progress? The final question is how to use more technology in writing for my students who struggle with communicating their ideas and expressing their thoughts into writing.

The most rewarding memory of the entire study was being able to watch the changes slowly happen in my students each day. By the ending two weeks of my study, I could see that the students began to look forward to writing in the workshops, completing the activities, and working on their personal narratives. Having a chance to publish their writing and sharing it with their peers and families changed from a frightening activity to one of pride and excitement. It was heartwarming to witness this transformation in my students all of whom started out this study with low self-efficacy and low writing achievement to pride in communicating with their peers through writing.

Even though my research study has come to an end, I have a new found understanding that I need to objectively look at my teaching and change it when it

is necessary because my students are worth it all. I now look at writing instruction with zeal and animation because I know my instruction will be forever changed and it will help my students. I look forward to the challenge of creating new units for the four remaining types of writing. I have been able to share many of my writing resources with the colleagues in my school, especially with the other learning support teacher. I hope that my colleagues will use this narrative writing unit will be able to see the positive changes it has in store for all students. It has been a delightful challenge to complete this action-research process, and I am honored to present my experiences to the professional teaching community.

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Appendices

A. HSIRB

 Account, HSIRB <hsirb@moravian.edu>5/10/17 ★ ↻ ⏹
to me, Tristan ▾

Dear Kirsten,

The HSIRB has completed its final review of your proposal and is granting approval of this proposal.

Please note that if you intend on venturing into topics other than the ones indicated in your proposal, you must inform the HSIRB about what those topics will be. Should any other aspect of your research change or extend past one year of the date of this email notification, you will need to file those changes or extensions with the HSIRB and receive approval of the changes before implementation. If you need a hard copy letter indicating your approval status for record keeping purposes, please let me know.

One last step. We need to collect your **electronic signature(s)**. If (each of) you could respond to this email with your own name and the project title in the subject line, that will serve as your electronic signatures. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Great job on your proposal and consent forms!! Most impressive!

Good luck with your research!

Take care,

██████████

B. Principal Consent Form

<p>Principal Consent Form April 28, 2017</p> <p>Dear [REDACTED]</p> <p>In addition to being a Special Education Teacher, I am also currently a graduate student working towards my Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. The Master's program requires me to study my own practices in order to reflect upon how I can provide more meaningful and engaging experiences to my students and how I can continue to grow and develop in my professional practice. In response to this journey of lifelong learning and reflection on my teaching, I will be conducting a systematic action research study on increasing student self-efficacy, motivation, and engagement as well as improving writing skills by using student choice, teacher conferencing, and teacher modeling through interactive writing. I will be using these different techniques while implementing a narrative writing unit using a writer's workshop approach to give students practice with writing. I hope to use this research and data to help my students make the appropriate gains in writing. I want my students to understand the value in writing and that writing is a form of communication and expression. I want my students to reach their maximum potential by helping them become more descriptive and confident writers. The purpose of my study is to develop a new narrative writing unit that will help my students improve their writing skills and increase their self-efficacy and motivation towards writing.</p> <p>I will be using multiple methods of data collection including various observations, interviews, surveys, questionnaires, a rubric, writing samples, and a final personal narrative writing. Each week the students will learn a new part of the narrative writing process. (an emotional hook, a strong lead, painting a word picture, show, don't tell, creating a satisfying ending, transitions, dialogue, revising, editing, publishing, and completing their final personal narrative story) I anticipate that all of my students will benefit from this inquiry. As a learning support teacher, I try to find way to help my students become more enthusiastic towards learning. I want to show them that everyone is able to learn writing skills and can making progress in writing.</p> <p>Parents and guardians may choose to withdraw a child from the study at any time with no penalty to the student. Since writing is a part of the curriculum, all students will complete the same work, whether or not they serve as participants in the study. Only the data collected from participants, though, will be included in my research study. This study will take place during the months of October and November 2017. The results of this research study will be shared with my colleagues and my Master's Thesis will be published on the Moravian College website. However, all material and data that relates to the students' identity will be kept in the strictest confidence. Students will be given a pseudonym, and all paperwork will be kept in a secured locked location outside of my classroom and will be destroyed after the completion of the study.</p> <p>If you have any questions or concerns regarding my research study, please do not hesitate to contact me. You may also contact my Moravian College professors, Dr. Joseph Shosh at 610-861-1482 or shoshj@moravian.edu or Dr. Tristan Gleason at 610-861-1452 or gleasont@moravian.edu. I greatly appreciate your support and cooperation in allowing me to model being a lifelong learner for my students.</p> <p>Please check the appropriate box below and sign the form:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I give permission for my school to participate in the project. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form. I have read this form and understand it.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I do not give permission for my school to participate in this project.</p> <p>Please sign: _____ Date: _____</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sincerely, Kirsten Schnalzer Special Education Teacher</p>
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C. Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

April 28, 2017

Dear Parents,

In addition to being your child's learning support teacher, I am currently a graduate student working towards my Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. I will be conducting a study in our classroom to determine new ways to connect your child to writing that is engaging, motivating, and exciting. I hope to use this research and data to help your child make the appropriate gains in the area of written expression. I want each child to reach their maximum potential by helping to increase their self-efficacy, motivation to write, and improve their overall writing skills. I am writing to ask permission to use the data I collect from your child during this process. Participation in this study involves only regular classroom activities. You may contact me at any time regarding your child's participation. My phone number is 610-865-0012 or by email at kschnalzer@basdschools.org. Please ask for Mrs. Schnalzer or dial extension 16208. The principal of the school has approved this study.

The purpose of this study is to increase student motivation and self-efficacy towards writing and improve writing skills by writing a personal narrative, a personal story about their life. I will be using student choice, interactive writing through a writer's workshop approach, and teacher conferencing. At the end of the study your child will create their own personal narrative about a time in their life. The study will take place at Marvine Elementary School in the learning support classroom and will last for the months of October and November. Each week your child will learn a new part of the narrative writing process. (an emotional hook, a strong lead, painting a word picture, show, don't tell, creating a satisfying ending, transitions, dialogue, revising, editing, publishing, and completing their final personal narrative story) During my study, I will collect various forms of data to determine whether this narrative writing unit was successful. Possible types of data I will collect include observations, interviews, surveys/questionnaires, and writing samples of journal entries or other work.

Benefits of participating in this study include receiving writing instruction that is more engaging and student friendly that will improve writing skills. Only my colleagues at Moravian College will have access to the data collected in this study. This study will also be published on the Moravian College website. Your child's participation in this study is strictly confidential. Only I will have access to your child's identity. Students will be given a pseudonym, or false name, in order to protect their identity. All paperwork will be kept in a secured and locked location outside of my classroom, and will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

Use of the data from your child is voluntary. You may contact me at any time if you do not wish to have your child's data included in the study.

Please check the appropriate box below and sign the form:

Please check the appropriate box below and sign the form:

I give permission for my school to participate in the project. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form. I have read this form and understand it.

I do not give permission for my school to participate in this project.

Please sign: _____ Date: _____

Sincerely,
Kirsten Schnalzer
Special Education Teacher

D. Student Assent

Student Assent Form

April 28, 2017

Dear Student,

Besides being your teacher, I am also a student, like you, working towards my Master's degree at Moravian College. I will be completing a study in our classroom to find new ways to connect you to writing that keeps you focused on your work, motivated, and excited to write. I hope to use this information to help you make the appropriate progress in writing. I want you to improve your writing skills by helping you to be a more self-confident and motivated writer. I am asking permission to use the information I collect from you during this unit of writing activities. Being a part of this study means that you will do all of the classroom activities as we learn how to write a personal narrative story about ourselves. You may ask me any questions at any time about this study. Dr. Gomez has agreed to this study.

The purpose of this study is to increase your motivation and self-efficacy (what you believe you can do) to write. This study also is to see if you can improve your writing skills by using choice, teacher modeling (interactive writing) using writer's workshop, and teacher conferencing. The study will take place here at Marvine Elementary School in our classroom and will be completed during October and November 2017. Each week you will learn a new part of the narrative writing process. At the end of the unit you will create your own personal narrative about a time in your life. During my study I will be looking at different kinds of information to see if the narrative writing unit was successful and helpful. I will be using looking at your written work, grading your writing, looking at your behavior and focus during the lessons, as well as asking you questions using paper and pencil or by just talking to you.

If you participate in this study you will be getting writing instruction in safe environment that is more exciting and at your level that will improve your writing skills. I will not use your name in any part of this study. You can ask me not to use your information in the study or tell me later if you no longer want your information included.

If you agree to let me use your data in the study, please print and sign your name below.

Student's Printed Name

Student's Signature

Date

Sincerely,
Mrs. Schnalzer

E. Student Writing Survey

Student Writing Survey

X

Put an x in the box of the best answer.

	Yes 	A Little 	No 
I enjoy writing most of the time.			
I consider myself a writer.			
I type on the computer, tablet, journal or diary at home.			
I share my writing with friends and family.			
I write text messages.			
I like to choose my own topics to write about.			
I am becoming a better writer.			
I like to publish my writing.			
I use words I know when I write.			
I like to edit and revise my writing.			
My teacher gives me enough time to write.			
I know the steps to write a good story.			
I like to read my work in the author's chair.			
I like when others help to make my writing better.			
I want the teacher to give me ideas to write about.			
When Mrs. Schnalzer asks me to write, I feel....			
When I am writing, I feel...			
If I could share my writing with the class I would feel...			
If I could talk to my teacher about my writing I would feel...			
This is how I feel about my writing:			

F. Writing Self-efficacy Questionnaire

Writing Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

Confidence about writing

Put an x in the box of the best answer.

	No Chance 1	Little Chance 2	Good Chance 3	100% Chance 4
I can spell my words correctly.				
I can write complete sentences.				
I can end my sentences correctly. (. ? !)				
I can indent my paragraphs.				
I can quickly think of the perfect word.				
I can think of many ideas for my writing.				
I can put my ideas into writing.				
I can think of many words to describe my ideas.				
I can think of a lot of my own ideas.				
I can focus and writing for 20 minutes.				
I can stay focused while I write.				
I can start writing quickly.				
I can control my frustration when I write.				
I can see where I need to fix my writing.				
I know how to use writing strategies.				
I can keep writing even when it's hard.				
I can write a good story.				
I can write a good report.				
I have what it takes to be a good writer.				

G. Learning Style Inventory Survey

Learning Style Inventory

Directions: Circle the letter before the statement that best describes you.

1. If I have to learn how to do something, I learn best when I:

- (V) Watch someone show me how.
- (A) Hear someone tell me how.
- (K) Try to do it myself.



2. When I read, I often find that I:

- (V) Visualize what I am reading in my mind's eye.
- (A) Read out loud or hear the words inside my head.
- (K) Fidget and try to "feel" the content.

3. When asked to give directions, I:

- (V) See the actual places in my mind as I say them or prefer to draw them.
- (A) Have no difficulty in giving them verbally.
- (K) Have to point or move my body as I give them.

4. If I am unsure how to

- (V) Write it in order to determine if it looks right.
- (A) Spell it out loud in order to determine if it sounds right.
- (K) Write it in order to determine if it feels right.



5. When I write I:

- (V) Am concerned with how neat and well spaced my letters and words appear.
- (A) Often say the letters and words to myself.
- (K) Push hard on my paper or pencil and can feel the flow of the words.

6. If I had to remember a list of items, I would remember it best if:

- (V) Wrote them down.
- (A) Said them over and over to myself.
- (K) Move around and used my fingers to name each item.



7. I prefer teachers who:

- (V) Use a board or overhead projector while they lecture.
- (A) Talk with lots of expression.
- (K) Use hands-on activities.



8. When trying to concentrate, I have a difficult time when:

- (V) There is a lot of clutter or movement in the room.
- (A) There is a lot of noise in the room.
- (K) I have to sit still for any length of time.

9. When solving a problem I:

- (V) Write or draw diagrams to see it.
- (A) Talk myself through it.
- (K) Use my entire body or move objects to help me think.



10. When given written instructions on how to build something, I:

- (V) Read them silently and try to visualize how the parts will fit together.
- (A) Read them out loud and talk to myself as I put the part together.
- (K) Try to put the parts together first and read later.

11. To keep occupied while waiting, I:

- (V) Look around, stare, or read.
- (A) Talk or listen to others.
- (K) Walk around, manipulate things with my hands, or move/shake my feet as I sit.

12. If I had to verbally describe something to another person, I would:

- (V) Be brief because I do not like to talk at length.
- (A) Go into great detail because I like to talk.
- (K) Gesture and move around while talking.



13. If someone were verbally describing something to another person, I would:

- (V) Try to visualize what he/she was saying.
- (A) Enjoy listening but want to interrupt and talk myself.
- (K) Become bored if her/his description got too long and detailed.

14. When trying to recall names, I remember:

- (V) Faces but forget names.
- (A) Names, but forget faces.
- (K) The situation where I met the person rather than the person's name or face.

Scoring instructions: Add the number of responses for each letter and enter the total below. The area with the highest number of responses is your primary mode of learning.

Visual

V = _____

Auditory

A = _____

Kinesthetic

K = _____

Adapted from, Learning to Study Through Critical Thinking, J.A. Beatrice

H. Interview Questions

Interview Questions during Writing Conferences

1. What are you working on as a writer today?

2. What was your plan for writing today?

3. Can you take me on a tour of your writing?

4. Is there anything you want me to know about you as a writer?

5. What is best about you as a writer?

6. What could you use more help with as a writer?

7. What is the most important thing you are trying to say?

8. What is your favorite part of your writing today?

9. What could we try to make better in this writing?

10. How successful do you feel with your writing today?

I. Rubric

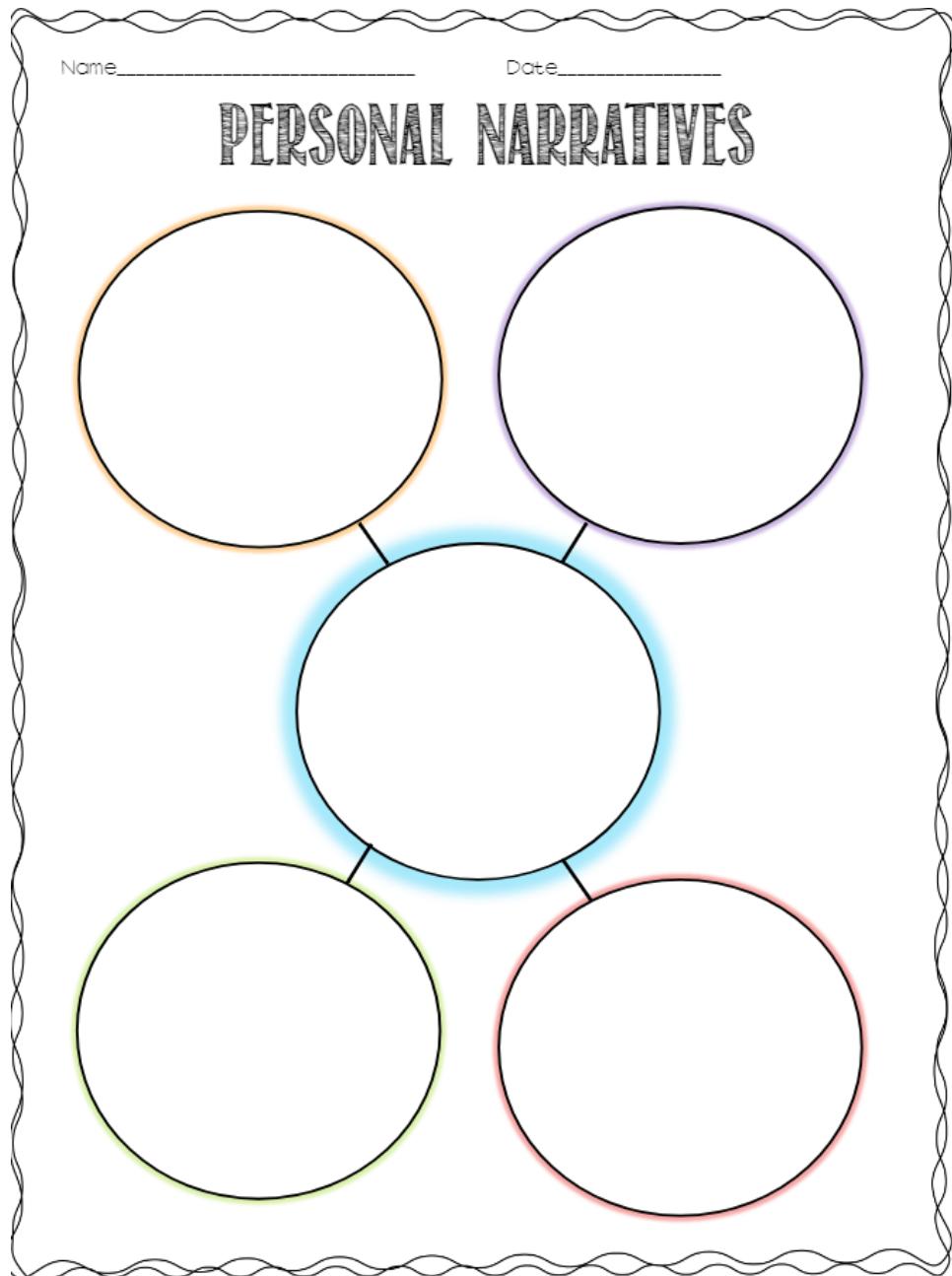
Narrative Writing Rubric

	With Whipped Cream, Sprinkles, and a Cherry on Top!	Triple Scooper (3)	Single Scoop of Vanilla (2)	Ice Cream is a Little Melty (1)	The Ice Cream Fell off the Cone (0)
Did I have a complete story with a beginning, middle, and end?	Yay! You had a very clear beginning, middle, and end.	You had a beginning, middle, and end, but parts were not clear.	You left out the beginning, middle or end.	You only told about one event, so there was no beginning or ending.	You have no parts of a story.
Did I stay on topic and make the story easy to follow?	You chose one event and stayed on topic the whole time. Great job!	You mostly wrote about one event, but got off-topic once or twice.	You got off-topic a few times or the information you gave was not important to your main event at some points.	You had a main event, but you did not stay on topic in your story.	You wrote about too many events instead of one main event, and I could not follow the story.
Did I use good details so that the reader can make a picture in their mind?	You used details that made the story more interesting, and I could picture everything that was going on in your story.	You used some good interesting details, but could have used more descriptive details to help me picture what was going on in your story	You used a few good details, but you need details so I can picture what was going on in your story	You only used one or two descriptive words, and I was confused about many parts of the story	You left me with a lot of questions about the story when I finished reading because there were no details.
Did I spell everything like it sounds	You spelled everything I	You made one or two spelling mistakes in your	You made a few spelling mistakes (3-5), but it did not make	You made many spelling mistakes,	You made many

or did I use my word walls?	expected you to spell correctly, and gave your best shot at the harder words.	story that I expect you to be able to spell.	your story hard to read.	but I could still understand your story.	spelling mistakes which made it hard to read your story.
Did I use capital letters correctly?	You used capital letters at the beginning of each sentence, for the word "I," and for every proper noun.	You forgot to capitalize one or two words.	You forgot to capitalize three to five words.	You made many capitalization errors, but you did use some capital letters where they were needed.	You did not use capital letters in your writing.
Did I put periods (.), question marks (?), or exclamation marks (!) at the end of each sentence?	You punctuated every sentence correctly.	You made one or two mistakes with punctuation.	You made three to five errors with punctuation.	You made many punctuation errors, and had many run-on sentences.	You had no punctuation in your story, and it seemed like one long sentence.
Did I use neat handwriting and turn in a neat, clean story?	You used your best handwriting, erased all your mistakes clearly, left plenty of space between words and turned in a clean copy of your story.	You used good handwriting, but got sloppy at one or two parts, tried to squeeze too many words on one line, or had a few spots that weren't erased all the way.	You wrote so that I could read the story, but it wasn't your best handwriting, or you had quite a few spots that were messy.	You did not use your best handwriting and had quite a few spots that were messy.	You turned in a rough draft quality story that was very difficult to read and/or was very messy.
TOTALS					

Your Grade for Your Narrative is a _____

J. Graphic Organizers



Name _____ Date _____

Personal Narrative Graphic Organizer

This is a story about _____

First, _____

Next, _____

Then, _____

Finally, _____

Name _____ Date _____

Personal Narratives

Topic

Time

Place

Beginning

Middle

End

Sensory Details

Emotions & Feelings

K. Baseline Writing Prompts: S.L.O. Summary

Name _____ Date _____

Tourist Attractions

There are many amazing places to go on vacation around the world. The Great Barrier Reef in Australia is famous for its colorful coral reef which looks as if a box of 120 crayons exploded! You can even go snorkeling, explore the rain forest or visit a wildlife park. Another great vacation spot is Orlando, Florida - the home of Disney World! Here you can visit the many amusement parks or watch dolphins perform at SeaWorld. You can also visit Universal Orlando and take in the Shrek 4-D film experience! For a change of pace and scenery, you can visit London, England. The Tower of London is the most popular spot for tourists. It has been a fortress, a palace, and a prison. Now, it provides entertainment. You can even ice-skate on it! If you think erupting volcanos and spewing hot lava sounds interesting, then you should visit Costa Rica. Howler monkeys leap and yell from the treetops, and toucans can be found perched nearby. There is so many amazing place to go on vacation around the world. Where will you go next?

() RED () Use a red crayon to underline the **MAIN IDEA**.

() BLUE () Use a blue crayon to underline the **SUPPORTING DETAILS**.

Complete the web below by adding the main idea and at least 3 supporting details.

Topic/Main Idea

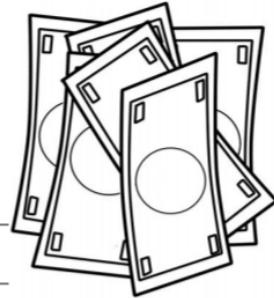
Supporting Detail #1 Supporting Detail #2 Supporting Detail #3

L. Baseline Writing Prompts

Name: _____

Big Money

Imagine you had a hundred dollars, but you couldn't keep it. You had to give it away to a person or charity. To whom would you give it? What would you want them to do with it?





NARRATIVE

If I Could Be Anyone...

There are times when we all wish we could be someone else for the day. Who would you choose to be? What would you do? Imagine you were that person for a whole day. Write a paragraph telling about one thing you did that day.

Brainstorm

Don't Forget to Include:

- ✓ 5 to 8 sentences
 - ✓ A hook to grab your reader's attention
 - ✓ Details and Description
 - ✓ Conclusion Sentence

© One Stop Teacher Shop

If I Could Be Anyone...

NARRATIVE

Written By: _____

© One Stop Teacher Shop



Must See!

Think about the best movie you have ever seen! What did you like about it? You are going to write a review for this movie. Write one paragraph telling your friends why they MUST see this movie!

Brainstorm

Don't Forget to Include:

- ✓ 5 to 8 sentences
- ✓ A topic sentence to start your paragraph
- ✓ Supporting details
- ✓ A conclusion sentence at the end

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Must See!

Written By: _____

M. Mentor Texts

Mentor Texts

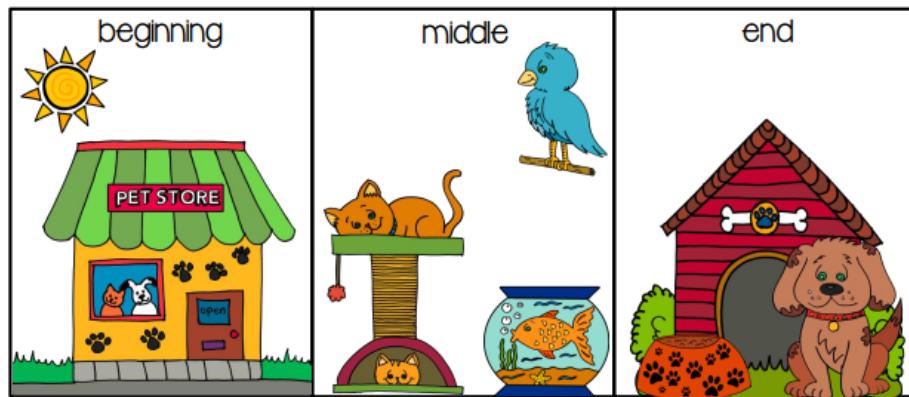
- Mam Had a Dancing Heart by Libba Gray
- The Outisde Dog by Charlotte Pomerantz
- Salt Hands by Jane Aragon
- My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother by Patricia Polacco
- Beauty and the Beast by Teddy Slater
- And Then It's Spring by Julie Fogliano
- Dragon's Halloween by Dav Pilkey
- Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse by Leo Lionni
- How to Catch a Monster by Adam Wallace
- Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears by Verna Aardema
- Frog and Toad Are Friends by Arnold Lobel
- In the Small, Small Pond, by Denise Fleming
- Bats by Gail Gibbons
- Wings: A Tale of Two Chickens by James Marshall
- The Summer My Father Was Ten by Pat Brisson
- School Days Around the World by Margriet Ruurs
- Let's Go Rock Collecting by Roma Gans
- My House by Rebecca Emberly
- Grandpa's Face by Eloise Greenfield
- Shortcut by Donald Crews
- The Bee Tree by Patricia Polacco
- In November by Cynthia Rylant
- Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox
- Strong to the Hoop by John Coy

N. Formative Assessment Writing Prompts

The Pet Store

By:

2017 Samantha Kelly



My OUCH Story

By:

beginning	middle	end
-----------	--------	-----

Oh, Happy Day!

By:

beginning	middle	end

Fun, Fun, Fun!

By:

beginning	middle	end
-----------	--------	-----

Write about a time you got in trouble.

beginning	middle	end

Write about a memorable birthday.

beginning	middle	end

Write about a time you were surprised.

beginning	middle	end

Write about a special holiday.

beginning	middle	end
