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Walden University
2011

Abstract

The Effects of Writer's Workshop on Writing Achievement

in the Kindergarten Classroom

by

Mary Mester

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2011

Abstract

Only one quarter of American students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 were considered at or above the proficient level in writing in 2002 and 2007. The purpose of this quantitative study was to identify the effect of the instructional strategy known as writer's workshop on students' writing achievement. Writer's workshop is an instructional strategy involving daily writing and systematic lessons. The research question guiding this study examined the writing achievement of students taught through writer's workshop versus students taught through the county's writing curriculum which utilizes journal writing on a regular basis but does not involve systematic lessons or daily writing. Writer's workshop was implemented in 3 Kindergarten classrooms, totaling 45 students, and scores from these students were compared to the scores of the students in the control group, totaling 45 students, none of whom had been exposed to writer's workshop. The participants were 90 Kindergarten students enrolled in a suburban elementary school in the southeastern United States. The students were randomly placed in experimental and control conditions. A pre- and posttest derived from a 10 stage developmental writing rubric was used to measure writing achievement. An independent-measures t test on posttest scores determined a significant difference in writing achievement when the writer's workshop strategies were integrated into the curriculum. Results from this study may contribute to positive social change by maximizing young learners' academic success, confidence, and self-image as their written communication abilities and skills improve.

The Effects of Writer’s Workshop on Writing Achievement

in the Kindergarten Classroom

by

Mary Mester

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Teacher Leadership

Walden University

August 2011

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I DID IT!!

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Background of the Problem

Early childhood educators are attempting to find a balance between developmentally appropriate practices and the required achievement benchmarks identified by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education [USDoE], 2001). I conducted a quasi-experimental quantitative study to compare the implementation of writer's workshop, an instructional writing strategy, with writing instruction that does not incorporate the writer's workshop strategies of daily writing and direct writing instruction. I investigated both strategies and their effect on students' writing achievement in six Kindergarten classrooms in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia.

The stricter educational requirements and standards established by the NCLB (USDoE, 2001) concerns the entire educational community. To meet the mandates of NCLB early childhood educators need to identify and adopt more effective and developmentally appropriate instructional approaches (Bredekamp, 1987). However, the pressure for students to achieve academically continues to impact effective and developmentally appropriate curriculum choices for the young child. This problem impacts all students, particularly Kindergarten students, who may not be developmentally ready to address the rigors of the NCLB.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge needed to address the extreme diversification of background literacy experiences and abilities among children by examining developmental aspects of writer's workshop, an instructional strategy emphasizing the process of writing. Writer's workshop incorporates specific steps to

emphasize the writing process: a minilesson, independent writing and conferencing, and sharing time. The minilesson is a short, 10-minute minilesson that brings the students together for a specific instructional focus. The minilesson focuses on strengthening students' area of need by modeling effective writing techniques. Students observe what is necessary to be effective writers. The minilesson is followed by the largest block of time, which is reserved for an independent writing period and conferencing. This time block allows the students to talk with their peers or their teacher about their writing, mechanics, and content. Writer's workshop ends with sharing time. The purpose of this study was to determine whether writer's workshop is an effective method for enhancing the writing process and writing development of Kindergarten students. The insight gained from this research will help teachers to identify and adopt instructional approaches that are developmentally appropriate as well as effective strategies that enhance the students' motivation to learn, write well, and value writing as a potent avenue for self-expression and influence.

Statement of the Problem

There is a problem with writing in America's schools. That problem is that only one quarter of America's students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 were considered at or above the "proficient" level in writing in 2002, according to the USDoE (2002). Tachibana (2008) found that even though writing scores have increased over the years, this improvement has been slight. Only one third of students in Grade 8 and less than one quarter of high school seniors tested at or above the proficient level in 2007. Many possible factors may be contributing to this problem, including developmentally inappropriate teaching

practices (Bredekamp, 1987) and educational standards that may be too rigorous (USDoE, 2001).

The intent of this quasi-experimental quantitative study was to compare the implementation of writer's workshop, an instructional writing strategy, with writing instruction that does not use the strategies of daily writing and direct instruction. The data analysis tool was the independent-measures *t* hypothesis test, which served to establish whether there was a significant difference in writer's workshop strategies on Kindergarten students' writing achievement.

Teaching students how to write is the goal of all writing instruction. To develop young writers who can progress through their writing stages and achieve proficiency in their writing is the objective. According to Dorn and Soffos (2001), writer's workshop is a place where "children learn the processes of how to write" (p. 32). Fu and Shelton (2007) clarified students' writing goals by affirming that "when our focus was on the student and not on books, materials, testing, a set of skills or standards then our teaching was effective" (p. 336). This study addresses the need to identify effective writing strategies that will improve the percentage of students achieving proficient and beyond (USDoE, 2001).

Nature of the Study

I used a quasi-experimental, nonequivalent control group design to investigate the differences between the independent variables of instructional strategies, including writer's workshop, on the dependent variable of Kindergarten students' writing achievement. The methodology included collecting pre- and posttest data from a writing

assessment and scoring the assessment against a rubric used in the county's public schools (C. Hall, Caudill, Grindo, Jones, & Ramos, 1999; see Appendix A) to determine whether a significant difference existed between the experimental group and the control group regarding writing achievement and different instructional strategies.

Data were collected from 90 students in six Kindergarten classrooms at the elementary school where the researcher was employed at the time of the study. The participants were assigned to their respective Kindergarten classrooms based upon enrollment data. Three classrooms represented the experimental group, and three classrooms represented the control group. All participants were divided evenly in terms of age, gender, and entrance data. All participants attended a public elementary school in a suburb of Atlanta.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The study was guided by one research question and its hypothesis: Is there a difference between the writing achievement of students taught through writer's workshop and students taught through the county's writing curriculum?

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer's workshop and students taught through the county's writing curriculum.

H_{a1}: There is a significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer's workshop and students taught through the county's writing curriculum.

The hypothesis was designed to assess the growth of Kindergarten students' writing achievement on the rubric used in the county's public schools (C. Hall et al., 1999). A more detailed discussion of the writing assessments used in this study to measure achievement, data collection, and data analysis is provided in section 3. The independent variable was the instructional writing strategies defined as writer's workshop. The dependent variable, writing achievement, was defined as a numerical rubric score for each of the developmental stages, that is, Stage 1 to Stage 10. The independent-measures *t* hypothesis test served as the data analysis tool.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, quasi-experimental, nonequivalent control-group design was to identify the effect of writer's workshop on student achievement. The intent of the study was to test the hypothesis comparing instructional strategies to Kindergarten students' writing achievement. The independent variable of instructional writing strategies is defined as writer's workshop. The dependent variable was defined as students' writing achievement, as determined by a numerical rubric score for the 10 developmental stages of writing (C. Hall et al., 1999). The independent-measures *t* hypothesis test served as the data analysis tool for the hypothesis. The results were used to evaluate the impact of writer's workshop on the writing process and skill acquisition of emergent Kindergarten writers.

Writer's workshop incorporates the developmentally appropriate practices of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to create an environment conducive for students to achieve (as cited in Bredekamp, 1987). This

environment is based upon three important tenets that create the foundation for developmentally appropriate practices: knowledge about child development and learning, knowledge of individual students in order to differentiate instruction, and knowledge of students' cultural and social contexts to ensure appropriate instruction (NAEYC, as cited in Bredekamp, 1987). Writer's workshop does not involve lecture and drill. Writer's workshop is nontraditional in its approach to writing. Writing skills are developed through a variety of interactive experiences, starting with a minilesson that is followed by independent writing, conferring, and group sharing (Calkins & Mermelstein, 2005).

Writer's workshop has been shown to be effective in improving the literacy of early writers (Smith, 2000). Behymer (2003) concurred that when incorporating writer's workshop in students' daily schedule, teachers also are working on students' reading skills. Reading and writing, both of which derive meaning from print, are closely related. The more that children read, the better they become at writing. The reverse of that statement also is true: The more often that children write, the better they become at reading.

Graves (1975) found that writing to young children can mean drawings or scribbles on paper. These drawings and scribbles, which are a precursor to writing, is a fundamental first step in the writer's workshop process. Perotta (1994) suggested that these markings are children's attempt to convey meaning. Students must be coached through the process of writing. These early attempts at writing recede to allow more elaborate and complex examples of student writing. This student writing presents in developmental stages. The developmental writing stages presented by Gentry (1982) are

the springboard for the county's handbook (C. Hall et al., 1999) as well as the Kindergarten Literacy Standards Anchor Papers that were used as an assessment rubric for this study.

The stages begin with scribbling and progress through letter-like symbols and strings of letters into the phonetic stages of initial, middle, and final sounds, ending with transitional phrases and standard spelling. Clay (1975) agreed with Gentry (1982) that students pass a through series of developmental stages during the writing process from the (a) beginning stage of drawing pictures into (b) tracing words and (c) copied words, transitioning into (d) remembered words written independently and then into (e) invented word forms.

More research is necessary to validate the effectiveness of writing strategies because it is difficult to assess writing achievement. Dunsmuir and Blatchford (2004) noted that although much has been written about assisting teachers with writing instruction, this literature has not been research based. Eitelgeorge and Barrett (2004) concurred with the need for valuable writing assessment measures. Research has shown that "a review of the literature in writing development offers few methods to monitor progress or tools for assessing overall writing development" (Eitelgeorge & Barrett, 2004, p. 17). This is problematic. Unfortunately, the most reliable way to assess student achievement is based upon multiple-choice measures. Therefore, developing a standard for writing assessments is a difficult task (National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2007). Sulzby (1992) further suggested that research is needed in this area to help better understand and contrast effective and ineffective strategies.

Theoretical Basis

Writing is an integral part of daily life. It is a form of expression that allows ideas, thoughts, feelings, and sense making of the world to be communicated. Learning to write is a multifaceted and complex process. According to the NAEYC (2000), "The ability to read and write does not develop naturally, without careful planning and instruction" (p. 6). The ability to capture one's voice and intended message in logical written statements involves establishing a purpose and the subsequent implementation of a set of comprehensive understandings (Graves, 1983).

The research conducted by Calkins (1986) and Graves (1983) has greatly impacted writing instruction. The strategies introduced by these pioneers shifted writing instruction from a product approach to a process approach. Similar to that found in writer's workshop, their influence created an emphasis on the stages of writing (Knudsen, 1990). These stages are described in section 2.

Writer's workshop emphasizes the teaching-learning relationship of social interaction rather than teaching materials. The basic premise of the writer's workshop strategy is the interface between teacher and student. Dorn and Soffos (2001) suggested, "Children learn how to become writers though meaningful interactions with knowledgeable adults" (p. 2). According to Bomer and Laman (2004), the interactions between and among students are equally important because they allow students to exchange ideas that may impact their learning and achievement. The theoretical underpinnings of this approach are provided by three related theories of learning, namely,

the social development theory of Vygotsky (1978), the constructivist theory of Bruner (1981), and the social learning theory of Bandura (1986).

Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a central feature of writer's workshop. The zone posited by Vygotsky is the difference between what children can do alone and what they can do with assistance. In this approach, the focus is on acquiring more knowledge and the ability to achieve higher levels of knowledge, which depends on the children's interactions with others. This social interaction is the foundation for cognitive development and growth.

Within the school environment are many opportunities for students to have interactions with knowledgeable people: teachers, volunteers, and peers. The accountable dialogue that transpires within these interactions assists students in acquiring higher levels of knowledge. According to Keaton, Palmer, Nicholas, and Lake (2007), "Successful teaching is contingent on lesson designs that meet each child in his/her "zone of proximal development" (p. 259). Vygotsky's (1978) theory is related to Bandura's (1986) social learning theory. The constructivist principles are supported in Bandura's (1986) beliefs of observing, modeling, and imitating to engage authentic learning. According to Bandura, learning occurs when individuals observe the desired behavior being modeled by others and then adopt the behavior themselves to achieve a learning goal.

Writer's workshop also draws from Bruner's (1981) concept of scaffolding. The process of scaffolding, an extension of Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, gives students the opportunity to build upon prior knowledge and skills. As the learners' abilities increase,

the scaffolding provided is removed in a systematic manner. Thus, the learners are able to achieve the task independently. According to Thomas (2000), to produce successful writers, “all writing instruction must be grounded in constructivist theory” (p. 39), an avenue that allows students to build their own knowledge base.

Writer’s workshop provides opportunities for students to assume a variety of roles that reinforce the critical-thinking and language skills necessary for writing. As writers, they learn to share their work with a group, ask good questions, and provide positive feedback (Meyers & Pough, 2002). All skills are supported by the theories of Bandura (1986), Bruner (1981), and Vygotsky (1978).

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, I used the following essential terms and definitions:

Balanced literacy: An approach to literacy incorporating reading and writing instruction.

Appropriate practices: Age appropriateness and individual appropriateness (Bredekamp, 1987).

Emergent: Literacy skills that are developing and evolving.

Proficient: Solid academic performance (USDoE, 2002).

Scaffolding: Support given by adults and peers to complete a task (Bruner, 1981).

Writing process: The course that writers follow as they move from idea creation to final written product. The writing process includes prewriting or rehearsing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Graves, 1983, 1985).

Writer's workshop: An instructional context in which the teacher guides the children through the writing process. In daily writing workshops, children engage in the creation of a variety of written products with instructional assistance from the teacher. Minilessons, writing times, conferencing, and share times are the components central to writing workshops (Calkins, 2003).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Assumptions

I assumed that the classrooms were representative of the total Kindergarten enrollment. I assumed that the three teachers in the experimental group were knowledgeable about writer's workshop and its components. I assumed that a minilesson, independent writing, conferencing, and sharing took place daily in the three experimental group Kindergarten classrooms for 1 hour. Another assumption was that the three teachers in the control group engaged in writing instruction without a minilesson and conferencing.

I also assumed that all the participants worked to the best of their ability while engaged in writer's workshop and traditional writing instruction. I assumed that while they were conferring, the students would share in an open and honest fashion. As conferencing occurred in the classroom, the majority of students shared from their heart what they were working on as writers. Some students had difficulty expressing orally what they wanted to say because they were non-English proficient (NEP) or limited English proficient (LEP). However, these students' efforts, instead of orally, were focused on their writing, as evidenced by their drawing and their accompanying story.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the involvement of only six teachers. Their different instructional styles, quality, training, and experience were weaknesses. The limitation of involving only six teachers of different quality and expertise raised the question of whether the findings were a direct result of the treatment or the individual teachers. Future research may need to address the issue of whether teacher versus method impacted the findings.

Another limitation was that the sample was limited to Kindergarten students. Nonprobability sampling, that is, the use of enrollment data and class selection data maintained by the admissions office of the research school, determined the population of these classes. Variables other than instructional strategies, such as socioeconomic status or home environment of the participants, may have impacted the results.

Daily scheduling conflicts may have effected instructional time in all participating classrooms. As a result, the length of time students engaged in writing activities in all six classrooms was not guaranteed. An additional limitation was that the research was restricted to the results gained from the quasi-experimental research design. The study was specific to my county of employment.

Scope

The scope of this study involved Kindergarten students at a public school in a northeastern suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. The elementary school enrolls almost 1,100 students in Kindergarten to Grade 5. The ethnicity of the school, based upon the 2007 School Administration Student Information System (SASI) was 34% White, 29% Black,

23% Hispanic, 8% Asian, 5% Multiracial, and 1% Indian. At the school, 25% of the student population participates in the Free Meals program, and 8% of the student population participates in the Reduced Meals program.

The school has 10 Kindergarten classes, each with 15 to18 students. All of the Kindergarten teachers are certified in early childhood education, and all hold master's degrees in related fields. A questionnaire was distributed to the Kindergarten teachers who were interested in participating in the study (see Appendix B). The school's literacy coach and I reviewed the results from the questionnaire and determined that of the 10 classroom teachers, six would participate in the study. Six respondents submitted questionnaires that indicated an interest, willingness, and proficiency level that would aid in implementing the study accurately. Three of these six were selected for the treatment group because of their expertise in writer's workshop. Three were chosen for the control group because they were not familiar with writer's workshop. Of the four respondents who were not chosen to participate, two were focusing on a new math initiative at the time of the study and would not have been able to dedicate sufficient focus to the rigors of what was expected with this study, one felt unable to fulfill the program because of substantial behavioral issues in the classroom, and one would not have been available during the course of the study because of pregnancy.

Delimitations

This study focused on the effectiveness of writer's workshop and Kindergarten students' writing skills. This quantitative study included a convenient sampling of six Kindergarten classrooms. The study took place in one suburban Atlanta public school of

1,100 children. The number of participants was 90 students ranging in age from 5 to 7 years. The population of the classes was a random selection for both diversity and gender.

Significance of the Study

The focus of this study on the Kindergarten classroom and student is significant in several respects. First, this study provides concrete evidence of the impact of writer's workshop on emergent writing achievement. Second, this study adds to the body of knowledge on writing strategies by addressing the learning needs of 5–year-old children. Third, this study supports the research-based best practices requirement of the NCLB (Gonzalez, Hamilton, & Stecher, 2003). The NCLB requires that schools, districts, and states be held accountable for the academic achievement of all students. I proposed that writer's workshop, as a component of a research-based balanced literacy program, models best instructional practices designated by the NCLB (Gonzalez et al., 2003).

As a 30-year educator in early childhood education, my role as a facilitator is significant to this process. As a Kindergarten teacher, I am present at the beginning of students' exploration of literacy. As a researcher, I understand that this study is the culmination of an inquiry beginning with my own curiosity about what was the best possible vehicle to help emergent writers to acquire the skills necessary to succeed. My most important role is that of a caring adult to create an environment conducive to learning. These three roles together define my role in this study. In terms of professional application, the county's public schools emphasize the importance of children being able to communicate orally as well as through the written medium. The optimal use of my

professional efforts includes exploring and discovering the best instructional methods to empower students to achieve to their potential and beyond.

As world competition increases, it is becoming increasingly important for children to learn to communicate well. A primary focus of the county's public school system is clearly stated in its vision to pursue excellence in academic knowledge, skills, and behavior for each student, with the result being measured improvement against local, national, and world-class standards (Georgia County Public Schools [GCPS, a pseudonym], 2007). This study addresses social change by determining and supporting research aimed at preparing children to compete globally by becoming effective readers and writers.

Transition Statement

This purpose of this study was to compare the impact of two types of instructional strategies, namely, writer's workshop and traditional approaches, on the writing achievement of Kindergarten students. I conducted this quasi-experimental quantitative study to examine the implementation of writer's workshop in three public school Kindergarten classrooms in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. The other three Kindergarten classrooms did not implement writer's workshop. The participants were 45 students in each of the experimental and control groups. Data were gathered from pre- and posttest writing assessments. This assessment was scored using the county public schools' rubric (C. Hall et al., 1999). The data analysis tool was the independent-measures *t* hypothesis test.

Writing is becoming important in the global world society. Exploring effective ways to teach children the necessary skills to communicate is important locally, nationally, and internationally. This study addresses the need to determine and implement effective writing strategies for emergent writers in developmentally appropriate ways.

Section 2 includes a comprehensive review of related literature pertaining to writing practices, including writer's workshop, appropriate for Kindergarten students. Section 3 identifies the research design and methodology of the study. In section 4, the findings of the study and the analysis of the data are discussed. The summary, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in section 5.

Section 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

From the first scribbles that children make while imitating adults, to their final signature on a last will and testament, the ability to express thoughts in writing is an essential part of being educated (Allen, 2003). Toddlers love to "scribble" on pads, books, and even walls to express themselves in this written format. Parents dote on their children's every scribble, determining that each wavy line is their children's creative attempt to express their thoughts in written verse. Each scribble, letter, word, or phrase is a step in the development of the writing stages. As parents attempt to guide and nurture their children's love for written language, so ought the educators who have accepted their call to teach.

Children's introduction to writing begins in the preschool years, when their instructors encourage the writing of names in the preschool classroom. Vygotsky (1962) observed that the awareness of object names at age 2 signifies the point at which thought and language began to work together to form intellect. Whiteman (1980) suggested that children know more about written language before coming to school than has generally been assumed" (p. 152). As children move into Kindergarten, there are many nudges into letter formation and the writing of words, along with all the other struggles of pencil-and-paper tasks along the way. Graves (1983) stated that children come to school wanting to write from the very first day. The true love of writing comes simply from the mere activity of just writing. This process evolves by putting on paper what the writers feel or have experienced.

The love of writing is not always love at first. Fletcher (1993) illustrated the attitudes of many children toward the act of writing:

> It happened in a classroom one frigid November morning when the clouds were hanging low and steely in the sky. At precisely 11:03, the third grade teacher glimpsed something, a fraying hint of whiteness outside the classroom window. “It’s starting to snow!” She said to her class. The kids looked up. Blinked. “Come here. Over to the window. We’ll open the blinds up and take a good look at it.” The children hurried over, eager to eyeball the year’s first snowfall. Innumerable fat flakes parachuting down. One boy held back and stayed at his desk. “Come on, Brent,” the teacher urged, “Join us,” but Brent was adamant. “Don’t do it!” he cried to the other kids. “Don’t look! She’ll make us write! (p. 29)

A familiar cry of many students is when the reality of writing greets them. What is it that causes children to squirm, groan, and ask countless times, “How long does it have to be?” Calkins (1994) found that in both the primary grades and Kindergarten, many children have developed the symptoms of writing phobia, the fear of writing.

In this section, emergent writing is discussed first. Then, the factors influencing writing development and the process approach to writing are outlined. After the discussion on the process approach, the writing stages of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing are discussed. Then, a discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of writer’s workshop follows. A sample lesson is offered as an example of the writer’s workshop process.

Emergent Writing

Early writing appears to go through many stages before it becomes conventional. Emergent writing was defined by Sulzby (1990) as "the reading and writing behaviors of young children before they develop into conventional literacy" (p. 85). Emergent writing for young children can be drawings or scribbles on paper. Graves (1975) suggested that these drawings and scribbles are a precursor to writing, but this categorization does not mean that the markings are random. They may be intended to convey meaning (Perotta, 1994). According to Williams (2003), writing their own names or the names of their friends might be "a child's first true act of writing" (p. 99). Dunsmuir and Blatchford (2004) suggested that name writing becomes the first line of letters that children learn, has meaning, and is repetitive. Early writing experiences are significant in terms of the NCLB (USDoE, 2001) assessments that are required for emergent writers in preschool and Kindergarten.

Many students may come to school with various levels of exposure and prior knowledge about print. Many students often are well on their way to learning the basics of print before entering formalized schooling. Perotta (1994) noted that research has shown that a large percentage of children have a basic knowledge about print prior to entering school. As early as preschool, students may learn that writing holds meaning and has a function. As a result, Cunningham (2008) asserted that many school districts are revamping their preschool curricula to provide ample opportunities to better prepare children for a successful entry into Kindergarten. For example, students immersed in a literacy-saturated environment discover that notes and other written creations, during

play, carry distinct messages that elicit responses from adults and peers. This process of attaching meaning to symbols may provide the foundation to what later may become organized, formal writing. According to Bearne (2002), making meaning is central to writing. Graves, Tuyay, and Green (2004) agreed but stressed that writing also is “a medium for learning to think” (p. 91). For Sparks (2006), “writing is thinking - perhaps in its most powerful and intense form” (p. 38). The voices of young children are made evident through emergent writing.

Average children may start their school experience being able to write part or all of their names. Other children may be able to do random scribbles and forms from which letters emerge. According to Clay (1975), the English alphabet with both upper- and lowercase letters totals 52 different geometric forms, of which 11 letters are identified as easier to recognize by children. The remaining 39 letters have to be distinguished, identified, and learned, a very challenging undertaking for a 5-year–old child. After observing children, Clay found that developing writers use several principles to engage in writing: (a) the recurring principle - repetitive marks to convey meaning; (b) the directional principle - organized pattern of placing writing on the page; (c) the generating principle – lengthy statements made with a small number of forms or letters; (d) the inventory principle – lists of letters/words known; and (e) the contrastive principle – contrasting lines, shapes, and letters in one’s writing.

As with writing their names, children enter school with diverse abilities. Some children recognize all 52 letters of the alphabet; others do not recognize any. As a result, these varied abilities often generate writing that spans many different levels. These levels

constitute the emergent stages of writing and are exemplified in Gentry's (1982) developmental writing stages. These developmental stages begin with scribbles and work through to conventional spelling. Gentry's stages are found in part in the county's instructional handbook (C. Hall et al., 1999). These stages are not meant to be static or sequential. Students will exhibit writing behaviors that may be found in multiple stages. The writing process is complex and is best described as a continuum. A description of Gentry's developmental stages follows:

1. Scribbling – Scribbling looks like random assortment of marks on a child's paper.
2. Letter-like symbols – Letter-like forms emerge, sometimes randomly placed, and are interspersed with numbers.
3. Strings of letters – In the strings of letters phase, students write some legible letters that tell us they know more about writing.
4. Beginning sounds emerge – At this stage, students begin to see the difference between a letter and a word, but they may not use spacing between words.
5. Consonants represent words – Students begin to leave spaces between their words and may often mix upper- and lowercase letters in their writing.
6. Initial, middle, and final sounds – Students in this phase may spell correctly some sight words, siblings' names, and environmental print, but other words are spelled the way they sound.
7. Transitional phases –This writing is readable and approaches conventional spelling.

8. Standard spelling – Students in this phase can spell most words correctly and are developing an understanding of root words, compound words, and contractions.

Writing has been defined as putting thoughts and ideas on paper, but defining writing has not been that simple. Developing literacy is a complex and multisensory process (Bearne, 2002). According to Fitzpatrick (1999), effective writing involves four elements: (a) the desire to say something, (b) the vocabulary to say it, (c) the structure with which to write it, and (d) the ability to make words. Writing is an intricate process with power, that is, the power to persuade, inform, even to entertain. Graves et al. (2004) suggested that the job of the writer is to instruct, pass along information, and excite the reader enough to continue reading to find out what has been written. Calkins (1994) believed that "we write to communicate, plan, petition, remember, announce, list, imagine … but above all we write to hold our lives in our hands and to make something of them" (p. 8). In addition to the writing purpose, writing helps children to become perceptive thinkers, which results in better writing (Klein, 1981).

Teaching children to discover the power of writing by working through the process is difficult. Graves (1983) attributed this difficulty to the complexity of skills involved. Students must be coached through the process of writing. Dorn and Soffos (2001) found, "Children learn how to become writers though meaningful interactions with knowledgeable adults" (p. 2). Then, they must practice writing on a consistent basis in order to learn how to write well. Although becoming an experienced writer takes many years to develop, it is a valuable skill that can be used throughout life.

Factors Influencing Writing Development

Children began their literacy journey long before they enter school. From the first words heard, to the first words spoken, the foundation for emergent literacy is being laid. Early interactions with friends and family during play influences children's writing development. Family and friends play an important part in children's writing through role-playing, songs, and stories. These early experiences with words, whether oral or written, are the cornerstone for future literacy development. Bearne (2002) concurred that this prehistory is "represented in the writing, drawing, modeling, and making which children participate in before they come to school" (p. 8).

Dunsmuir and Blatchford (2004) conducted a longitudinal study on the factors influencing writing development between 4- and 7-year-old children. The results of that study identified variables in the home, the school, and characteristics of children as influencing writing development. The following discussion deals with each variable.

Home Factors

Dunsmuir and Blatchford's (2004) findings determined that the mothers' educational background is a significant factor in children's writing development. A possible reason appears to be that the mothers were the primary caregivers of their children during the length of this study. IN addition, the size of the family upon the children's entrance into school was identified as an influential variable. For obvious reasons, the children who did not have any siblings scored higher on writing development than those children with two or more siblings. Parents who understood their children's

writing ability were another significant variable in determining writing success (Dunsmuir & Blatchford, 2004).

Keaton, Palmer, Nicholas, and Lake (2007) agreed that the amount of time children spend engaged in reading and writing activities prior to formal instruction influences their emergent literacy development. In addition, Cunningham (2008) found that "economically at-risk students (students who qualified for free or reduced-price meals) had more negative attitudes toward writing" (p. 19). These variables impact the acquisition of skills needed to be successful writers:

School Factors

Dunsmuir and Blatchford (2004) stated that children's ability to master letter recognition and concepts about print is a precursor of successful writing ability. They found that the "development of handwriting fluency appears to be significantly related to the development of compositional skills and fluency for children in the early stages of learning to write" (p. 479). The fine-motor skills required for handwriting are substantial. Graham and Harris (2005) investigated the importance of transcription, that is, thoughts turned into print, on writing development. Their study determined that mastering handwriting skills influences students' writing ability. The importance of handwriting on writing achievement also was determined by Kellogg (as cited in Dunsmuir & Blatchford, 2000), who noted that "when automaticity with handwriting is achieved, mental capacity can be freed up for dealing with other aspects of the writing process, such as compositional demands" (p. 462).

Teachers are instrumental in the development of emergent writers. Borba (2008) attested to the value of skilled teachers in children's acquisition of early literacy. Borba commented, "Teachers are the most critical factor in student achievement, far more powerful than class size, race, socioeconomic level, and classroom homogeneity" (p. 441). It is important for children to see their teachers as writers. If students see teachers engaged in writing, they develop an understanding that writing is valued by their teachers. Haager and Klingner (2005) suggested that teachers model the writing process by engaging in writing with the students as often as possible during the week.

The importance of reading aloud to children to develop successful readers is well known; so it is with writing. Teachers who model the writing process for their students can use this opportunity to introduce various strategies to assist the students with their writing. The teachers and the writing process are then validated for the students. Teachers who write in front of the class also can have a positive effect on student writing (Calkins, 1994).

Child Characteristics

Dunsmuir and Blatchford (2004) identified children with summer birthdays as children who were less mature and the youngest in the class. These factors impacted their lower scores in writing achievement. Many variables influence writing development. Bearne (2002) suggested that "spoken language, gesture, construction of all kinds, clothes, food, furniture, culture – all influence the way children develop literacy" (p. 7).

Process Approach to Writing

The foundation for good writing is established in the elementary grades. A strong elementary school writing curriculum that is implemented by teachers involved in the process of writing is essential if students are to be taught to communicate through the written word (Atwell, 1982). Over the last 3 decades, there has been a change in writing instruction across the nation. New research and new strategies were introduced by Graves (1983) and Calkins (1986), both of whom are known as the “gurus” of writing instruction. The trend shifted from writing instruction that focused on generating a product to a process approach that emphasized the stages of writing (Knudsen, 1990). Much of the writing instruction prior to 1970 consisted of workbook exercises and drill work in spelling, vocabulary, handwriting, and grammar (Henck, Marinak, Moore, & Mallette, 2003). This traditional form of writing was concerned with the finished product.

Bearne (2002) found that product-driven writing often was used as an assessment of children’s skills on a specific topic and completed in a certain amount of time. Writing was defined as a “noun.” According to Haager and Klingner (2005), children with special needs experienced failure when instructed using the product approach. With all the emphasis on the mechanics of writing, very little time was spent on composing. According to Feinberg (2007), “Children were relegated to the status of ‘receivers’, never ‘senders’ of information” (p. 26).

The instructional method of writer’s workshop is different from that of traditional methods. Writing that is traditionally taught follows a lecture format and is characterized by the teacher’s red marks on papers. It tends to be more teacher-controlled and less

student-centered, which takes ownership away from students. The focus of teacher-centered instruction is on the writing product, not on composing a written piece (Knudsen, 1990). Students are not given the freedom to choose topics. This leads to lower student motivation. In response to the traditional approach, students tend to produce artificial pieces of writing. Furthermore, writing is used as an assessment tool rather than a learning experience. The focus is on the product, not the process of writing (Pollington, 2001).

The process approach to writing is child centered. Bearne (2002) discovered that the process approach defines writing as a verb and is "much more as a series of activities than a single piece of evidence" (p. 5). The focus is on teaching students the writing process, using the phases of drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The product now becomes part of the process. According to Calkins (1986), all children should be encouraged to let their voices be heard in their own personal writing. The process approach to writing creates a different atmosphere in the classroom.

Atwell (1982) stated:

> We stop focusing on presenting a lesson and evaluating it results and start observing our students in the process of learning, listening, to what they can tell us, and responding as they need us. As a result, a different relationship between teacher and student emerges. The teacher-centered classroom becomes a community of writers and learners in which teachers and students are partners in inquiry. (p. 85)

According to Keaton et al. (2007), a classroom environment that affords children the opportunity to construct their own knowledge while actively engaged in learning increases their motivation to read and write. Oswald (2002) concurred that the constructivist approach to writing results in more motivated, engaged, and empowered writers. As children construct their own knowledge and increase their reading and writing, learning takes place (Haager & Klingner, 2005). During the writing process, children navigate through the five writing stages.

Writing Stages

The five stages of the writing process are prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Tompkins, 1998). During writer's workshop, these stages may overlap rather than take place in a linear fashion. The following stages are adapted from Wonder Writer's (2000) and Haager and Klingner (2005).

Prewriting

This is the first step when students are planning, deciding on a topic, and getting ready to write. Myers and Pough (2002) stated, "It is the author's right to decide what this was, to decide what he or she wants to say" (p. 48). Self-selection of topics is an important component of writer's workshop. Haager and Klingner (2005) claimed that "it is through topic selection that students realize that their own thoughts and experiences have value and learn to think of themselves and to cultivate creativity" (p. 243). At this time, students have the opportunity to talk to classmates and teachers about their ideas and topics. Emergent writers may need assistance in selecting a topic. The following are some suggestions to springboard ideas: Writers write about people; what they do; where

they go; and their special times, favorite things, or feelings. Minilessons may be introduced at this time.

Drafting

The second step, drafting, gives students the opportunity to write what they are thinking. The students write about what they see, hear, smell, taste, and feel about their topic. Students do not worry about the mechanics of spelling, punctuation, and handwriting. During drafting, conferencing with students will allow teachers to observe and identify specific learning needs and offer encouragement.

Revising

The next step is revising, or the fix-up stage. Hansen (2007) attested that "even young children, when they read their drafts, can sense when a piece of needed information is absent" (p. 28). Students can revise their writing, adding details and more ideas. The authors pay special attention to their intended audiences. Teacher-student and student-student conversations about their writing may take place at this time.

Editing

During the editing phase, students have the opportunity to focus on the mechanics of the language: spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Hansen (2007) attested that children have a clear idea about how their writing should look and sound. At this time, students can proofread classmates' writing.

Publishing

The last step in the writing process is publishing. Students prepare the final drafts of their writing pieces to be shared with others. The selected pieces may be bound into a

book. Not all writing drafts have to be published. Haager and Klingner (2005) reported that “it is through sharing their published ‘real’ books that students feel like ‘real’ authors” (p. 261).

Writer’s Workshop

One strategy that incorporates the process approach of writing instruction is an interdisciplinary writing technique called writer’s workshop. Even though research on the effectiveness of writer’s workshop on writing achievement has been limited, each component is researched based. Since the 1980s, process writing has been promoted by writing advocates as the most authentic way to teach writing at the primary, secondary, or university level because it mirrors the craft of writing professionals (Allen, 2003).

Writer’s workshop allows students to practice their writing skills with a five-step writing process pioneered by Graves (1983). The teacher guides the students through prewriting, first draft, revision, editing, and publishing (Poindexter & Oliver, 1998). This approach builds on Bruner’s (1981) idea that learning is dependent on how information is structured and organized. The focus is on “how” to learn rather than “what” to learn.

The writer’s workshop incorporates a short, focused minilesson of no more than 10 minutes. According to Calkins (1994), the minilesson is a time when teachers bring together the students, similar to a “huddle at the start of a football game” (p. 193), into a group that produces a shared experience, whether it is through a mentor-text; poem; show-n-tell; or a group sharing activity called “Y’all Know What?”, when the child says “Y’all know what?” and the class answers “No, what?” That child shares what he wants us to know for that day. From sharing experiences, ideas for story writing are born. This

gathering of students builds children's background knowledge while helping them to construct connections between events and their lives. The minilesson may take place at the beginning or the end of the writer's workshop. Some teachers have found it beneficial to have the students begin their independent writing and then schedule a minilesson in the midst of the writer's workshop to ease the transition from one writer's workshop component to another.

The minilesson focuses on strengthening students' area of need by modeling effective writing techniques. This strategy is in line with Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of observing and modeling behaviors instrumental to learning new skills. In writer's workshop, students observe specific behaviors during the minilesson, instructional strategies that help and support children in their own writing. Students may observe instructional strategies that are necessary to be effective writers, such as the use of proper punctuation. Procedural concerns also may be addressed during the minilesson, such as the logistics of how writer's workshop is carried out in a specific classroom. It also can be a time "to create a warm glow" (Calkins, 1994, p. 194), that is, an opportunity to listen to varied pieces of great literature followed by independent writing. The minilesson is an example of scaffolding inherent in constructivism, "clear demonstrations, explicit teaching, guided assistance, and independent practice" (Dorn & Soffos, 2001, p. 48).

Following the minilesson, students spend a block of time engaged in independent writing. During this time, it is imperative that students have a choice as to what topic they are going to write about. According to Kissel (2008), "These choices continue to build

motivation during writing" (p. 56). During this time, the teacher circulates around the room, providing encouragement and support where needed. After offering support to the writers, the teacher will confer with several students about their work. Conferencing conversations are a mutual exchange between teacher and student or student and student. The purpose of the conference is to "elicit a clear understanding of the writer's thinking and an accurate rendering of that thinking in the writing" (Luidens, 1995, p. 63).

Calkins (1994) considered conferencing as "at the heart of the writing workshop" (p. 223). Conferencing is similar to the "participant observation" mentioned by Graves (1983). Conferences and interviews allow the teacher and student, or student and student, to talk freely about student achievement, progress, understanding, and feelings. Calkins (1986) stated the conferencing is crucial to understanding students as writers because it is the time for the teachers to become researchers of the students by listening, seeing, and learning all there is to know about the writers.

According to Vygotsky (1978), conversation and discussion in the classroom are fundamental to language experiences and development. In peer conferencing, students are prompted to offer suggestions to improve each other's work (Wagner, 2001). During conferencing with their students, teachers assume a twofold role. First, they nurture students' confidence in writing. Second, they must focus on the content rather than the mechanics of the students' composition (Wilcox, 1997). These experiences provide a natural social setting through which children can organize and internalize their new knowledge.

Thomas (2000) claimed that the writing class must be chaotic in order to emphasize composing. Writer's workshop is not a quiet time. Students and teachers are actively engaged in the process of writing or talking about writing. Through conferencing and sharing, students are receiving continued feedback from their peers and their teacher. Dorn and Soffos (2001) stated that "writing is by nature a social process" (p. 2). Writer's workshop helps students to assume various roles. As writers, they learn to share their work with a group, ask good questions, and provide positive feedback (Meyers & Pough, 2002). Conferencing enables students to analyze problems in their writing and discuss ways to solve them. The focus of conferencing must be how to help students to improve as writers rather than how to improve a particular piece of writing.

Peer and teacher conferencing supports Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD theory, which is supported by the writer's workshop approach. In this model of learning, the "zone" is the difference between what children can do alone and what they can do with assistance. The focus is on acquiring more knowledge, and according to Vygotsky, the ability to achieve higher levels of knowledge depends on the learners' interactions with others.

It is a difficult task that can sometimes be discouraging for struggling writers to retrieve vocabulary, articulate thoughts, and communicate these thoughts in a coherent way. However, in writer's workshop, teachers use scaffolding to guide writers along so that feelings of abandonment will not occur (Furr, 2003). Vygotsky defined scaffolding as the "role of the teachers and others in supporting the learner's development and providing support structures to get to the next stage or level" (as cited in Raymond, 2000, p.176). Scaffolding gives students the opportunity to build on prior knowledge and skills.

As the learners' abilities increase, the scaffolding provided is removed in a systematic format. The learners are then able to achieve the task without assistance.

The final portion of the workshop is devoted to sharing time. Teachers often use an author's chair to give students a sense of ownership over their writing. The author's chair is any chair designated for authors to sit in as they share their written work. Sharing time provides students with a real audience for their work. After a student has shared a writing piece, the group gives feedback and makes suggestions for improvement (Wagner, 2001). Sharing time benefits the sharers and the listeners. This time gives the writers an opportunity to celebrate accomplishments and to give ideas to those listening.

The process of writer's workshop allows the students' voices to emerge. Young children have much to say, whether verbally or through the written word. Their stories express who they are not only as writers but also as people (Kissel, 2008).

Much is known about the components, strategies, and framework of writer's workshop. Many children have been instructed using this instructional strategy, which incorporates the process approach to writing. What is not known is whether writer's workshop strategies are effective in improving writing development. No research has validated the efficacy of writer's workshop programs (Feinberg, 2007). As with any instructional strategy, each has its strengths and weaknesses; writer's workshop is not any different.

Although implementing writer's workshop is more difficult for teachers to manage than traditional writing instruction, there are some clear advantages for students. With this approach, students are more engaged and interested in writing. Students who

learn the writing process through the workshop approach are more comfortable sharing their writing and taking risks as they write. As a result, the classroom becomes a community where students develop the ability to reflect and grow as writers and people.

Strengths

Dyson and Freedman stated that the 2003 National Writing Project reported a strong relationship between writing performance and writing process instruction (as cited in Fearn & Farnan, 2007). This research was supported by Smith (2000), who suggested that teachers have found that writer's workshops are effective in helping students to master the principles of process writing. This assertion supported the idea that writing workshops improve the feelings and attitudes of students about writing, as well as how they feel about themselves. In addition, students may need to feel that their individual stories are being understood and expressed. Feinberg (2007) stated that writer's workshop allows the "children's distinct voice to be heard" (p. 30).

In addition, the flexibility of scheduling writer's workshop may be a considerable strength. According to Haager and Klingner (2005), "Writer's workshop is very appropriate for heterogeneous classrooms because students work at their own levels and receive feedback appropriate to their individual needs" (p.242). In accordance with the statement from Haager and Klingner, another strength of writer's workshop is the differentiation of instruction. Contemporary classrooms are inclusive of students with diverse backgrounds and diverse needs. Academically, culturally, socially, and linguistically are some identifiers in the diverse student population. In addition to background diversity, children have a range of learning styles and disabilities.

Tomlinson (2000) explained differentiation of instruction as teachers responding to the diversity of individual needs within their classrooms by diversifying their instructional strategies. B. Hall (2009) stated that “differentiated instruction does not change WHAT is taught; it changes HOW it is taught” (p. 1). Tomlinson suggested four ways to differentiate in the school setting: content, process, products, and learning environment. Writer’s workshop and its components typify instruction that is differentiated.

Content is identified as the objectives and skills that students need to acquire. Through pre- and posttests, students’ needs are recognized. Students can then retrieve information in different ways during the workshop model. The content, which is specific to that student, can be accessed through peers, word walls, different texts, or conferencing with the teacher.

Process is identified as all students are working toward a common goal while exhibiting varying skills and performance tasks. While acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to complete the task, students engage in many different supports. The constructivist approach to learning is evident in writer’s workshop, exemplifying the differentiated process. Product is the end product of the lesson. Utilizing rubrics or creating their own writing piece, either in story, mural, play, or poem form are examples of differentiated products.

Learning environment for writer’s workshop is important because although it is structured, it also is relaxed. The students have the choice to work in small groups or by

themselves anywhere in the room. The guidelines have been set previously, allowing students to have access to the teacher, information, supplies, and peers when needed. Tomlinson (2000) suggested that instruction can be differentiated by incorporating any one or all of these four elements.

The role of the teacher during writer's workshop and in implementing differentiation of instruction is a critical one. The teacher's role during writer's workshop is that of facilitator and guide, monitoring, assessing, encouraging and offering assistance where needed. For differentiation to be successful, it is necessary for teachers to engage all the students while providing a strong curriculum (Tomlinson, 2000). Writer's workshop incorporates all of these elements, thus allowing students to be active participants in their learning.

Writer's workshop provides opportunities for practice with a writing coach. Just as students need to practice reading and math skills on a frequent basis, they also need to write often to improve their writing ability (Calkins, 1986). Writers' workshop provides this opportunity for all learners. This approach has the advantage of providing an outlet for children whose creativity allows them to write easily as well as the necessary structure and format needed for struggling writers to succeed (Mandel, 2000).

Students have shown success when their teachers use a direct, systematic approach that teaches specific strategies for academic problem solving (Keaton et al., 2007). Haager and Klingner (2005) noted that "explicit, direct instruction in strategies improves the quality quantity of the writing of students with disabilities" (p. 245). Writer's workshop provides ways for students to work at their own levels, that is, in their

ZPDs, while receiving appropriate feedback and intensive instruction suited to their individual needs (Haager & Klingner, 2005).

According to Hubbard and Carpenter (2003), the writer's workshop approach to writing instruction has been successful with second language learners. Choosing topics, writing for authentic audiences, and scaffolding teacher-peer support are the foundation for literacy skill acquisition in the English language learner (ELL) classroom. They also found that while working through the process approach to writing, it is imperative that ELLs continue to read and write in their native languages. Students' literacy skills and mastery of English are best developed through mastery of their first language.

Weaknesses

Lucy Calkins is the founder and director of the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project, which began in 1981. Since that time, thousands of teachers have been trained in the workshop strategy of teaching writing. In a survey of teachers involved in the Lucy Calkins Project, teachers reported that they were dissatisfied with the lack of direct instruction, as in a teacher's manual, and that writer's workshop does not incorporate phonics in their daily instruction. Feinberg (2007) reported on this dissatisfaction when she surveyed teachers in the Lucy Calkins Project housed at the Teachers College in New York City. Feinberg also found that many teachers felt "that [the] Lucy Calkins methodology lacks real content" (p. 30). Feinberg also uncovered other concerns about the writer's workshop program. For example, teachers reported that scheduling requires 1 hour per day. This high time allotment was considered by the teachers to be excessive.

Other concerns about writer's workshop surfaced while addressing the effectiveness of the program on writing development of low-performing students. Harris, Graham, and Mason (2006), while investigating the effectiveness of self-regulated strategy development (SRSD), found that struggling writing students improved their writing skill by systematic, explicit, and intensive instruction. Writer's workshop has many of the same components as SRSD, namely, teacher-student interaction, frequent writing times, and peer interaction. Both SRSD and writer's workshop develop writing through the process approach. However, Harris et al. found that low-performing students achieved greater success with SRSD strategies than with writer's workshop strategies. The flexibility and the student-centeredness of writer's workshop proved to be too unstructured for the struggling writers. More explicit instruction is needed to attain the greatest amount of growth in low-performing students.

Writer's Workshop Sample Lesson

The following lesson was adapted from Calkins and Mermelstein (2005).

1. Lesson Focus: Writing Words
2. Minilesson (5-10 minutes)

Activating prior knowledge: Call students to the carpet where a wide selection of familiar books are stacked for the boys and girls to see. Tell the children that they are going to write like the authors they admire. Explain that these authors use words and pictures just like many of them do. Tell the children to watch how you decide what letters to write on a page.

Teaching: Draw a picture or have one drawn already. Tell the children you are going to write something about your picture. Pretend to be thinking, as a child would, about what they were going to write. For example, if you had drawn a boat, you could say "I made a boat." Then break down the sentence into individual words, sounds, and letters, engaging the children to help. You will be modeling how to write this sentence, on chart paper.

3. Writing Time (20-40 minutes)

The children will then try to write on their own what they have done together with you.

4. Conferencing (During writing time)

As you circulate around the room, observe and interview to try and understand what each child is attempting to do. You may have to reteach the content of the minilesson or make a decision to accept what the child has written or drawn. With the assistance of the teacher, conferencing helps the child to define their goals.

5. Sharing (5-15 Minutes)

Sharing is implemented as in either an entire class or small group setting, or as a partner activity. While you were circulating around the room, you may have noticed a particular child writing and working to sound out and write a particular word. If so, you would then choose that child to share how they worked to write down that word on their paper. You would ask the children to reread their own work and see if they had a word that they could share. Then you would ask everyone to try to write a word you suggest.

Summary

Children love to write. As beginning writers, they are excited about writing and sharing their stories. McCarrier, Pinnell, and Fountas (2000) commented, “Witness their enthusiasm as they make marks on paper, frosty windows, and any other surfaces available to them” (p. xv). The overarching goal of educators is to develop students’ voices and confidence in print. The challenge is to keep students’ enthusiasm alive while also introducing them to the way the written language works. Writing is a complex process with many different aspects. Educators must find a balance between the pull of academic accountability and developmentally appropriate practices, as well as a way to guide children through this process through the use of more effective instructional strategies. Writer’s workshop is an effective instructional strategy supported by the theories of Bandura, Bruner, and Vygotsky. Writer’s workshop will provide them with the necessary tools to become productive, independent writers who are successful in their writing throughout life.

The NCLB (USDoE, 2001) has stressed the need for increased academic accountability, creating new pressures for teachers and administrators. Developmentally appropriate practices, as defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (as cited in Bredekamp, 1987), are being replaced with more academic activities designed to raise achievement scores. The child is the primary focus of developmentally appropriate practices, which then drive curriculum and instruction (Charlesworth, 1998). Ketner, Smith, and Parnell (1997) asserted, “Central to the developmentally appropriate practices perspective is the notion that children should be in control of their own

learning" (p. 212). Teachers and administrators alike are struggling to find a way to meet the demands of academic accountability and still promote developmentally appropriate practices. This is often a delicate balancing act that challenges even the most experienced educators.

Section 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative, quasi-experimental, nonequivalent control-group design was to identify the effect of writer's workshop on student achievement. Although research-based teaching strategies have proven successful with emergent writers, there continues to be a gap between application and research. This gap can be addressed by incorporating daily writing activities.

This investigation was conducted to determine whether there is a difference between the writing achievement of students taught through writer's workshop versus students taught through the county's writing curriculum. The independent variable of instructional writing strategies was defined as writer's workshop and the county's language arts writing curriculum. The dependent variable, writing achievement, was defined as a numerical score from a rubric used in the county's public schools (C. Hall et al., 1999) and illustrated in *Kindergarten Literacy Standards Anchor Papers* (GCPS, 1994).

The numeric rubric for the developmental stages is as follows: 1 for Pictorial Writer, 2 for Squiggler/Verbal Story Teller, 3 for Letter Shaker/Copier, 4 for Sound Maker/Labeler, 5 for Emerging Writer, 6 for Developing Writer, 7 for Focusing Writer, 8 for Experimenting Writer, 9 for Engaging Writer, and 10 for Extending Writer.

The study was guided by the following hypothesis:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer's workshop and students taught through the county's writing curriculum.

H_{a1}: There is a significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer's workshop and students taught through the county's writing curriculum.

The hypothesis was designed to assess the growth of Kindergarten children's writing achievement using a numeric score from a rubric used in the county's public schools (C. Hall et al., 1999).

I used a quasi-experimental, nonequivalent, control-group design. Both groups of students were convenience samples selected in accordance with the school's entrance data and the software program Elementary Class Assigner by MacKinney Systems. Six kindergarten classroom teachers and 90 students participated in this quasi-experimental, nonequivalent, control-group design. The instruction for all six classes complied with the county's curriculum as designated in the county's Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS), which are the crucial elements that students are expected to master in a specific grade (see Appendix C). A rubric used in the county's public schools (C. Hall et al., 1999) established the baseline data for this quantitative study.

The literacy coach distributed and collected the writing samples for all Kindergarten classes involved in the study. She has been involved with the study since the initial meeting, when I asked permission to conduct the research at this school. The

school's coach has been very supportive of this research and outcome. The literacy coach has several years of experience working with students and teachers in reading and writing instruction. Through classroom observations, student-teacher involvement, modeling, and research, the literacy coach has helped to implement strategies that have been successful in the classroom and have directly impacted student achievement.

At the beginning of this study, the literacy coach assessed the participants' writing sample according to the rubric and the anchor papers. This first assessment served as the pretest. At the end of the study, the writing assessment was assessed using the same rubric and anchor papers. The data collected and assessed at the end of the study served as the posttest. As the researcher, I analyzed both sets of data submitted from my literacy coach by inputting the scores into SPSS v.14 to perform an independent-measure *t* test. The statistical data retrieved from the independent-measure *t* test assisted me in comparing the pretest data against the posttest data from the control and experimental groups to determine the significance of writer's workshop on writing achievement in the Kindergarten classroom.

Research Design and Approach

I used a quasi-experimental, nonequivalent, control-group design for this quantitative study because the participants were not a randomized selection. Intact classrooms chosen without random assignment are the justification for use of the quasi-experimental design. According to Trochim (2000), the quasi-experimental design is similar to an experimental design but uses preexisting groups rather than randomly assigned groups. Comparing and analyzing the effects of two instructional methods for

developing the writing skills of Kindergarten students was another rationale for the nonequivalent pre- and posttest design. The nonequivalent group design includes an experimental or treatment group and a control group structured as a pre- and posttest design.

Creswell (2003) stated, "In this design. . . .the experimental group A and the control group B, are selected without random assignment. Both groups take a pre-test and a posttest. Only the experimental group receives treatment" (p. 169). Trochim (2000) concurred that the experimental group will receive the treatment, in this case writer's workshop instruction, and the control group will not receive treatment.

The methods used to determine the classes for this study were in compliance with the standards and procedures designated by the county's public school system.
At the time of the study, the research site was using the software program Elementary Class Assigner to form classes with random sampling. Participants were then chosen from a convenience sampling, the naturally formed Kindergarten classrooms, thereby ensuring no bias in the selection of participants.

Setting and Sample

The student participants were chosen from a pool of 150 students registered for Kindergarten at the research school, a public school located in a northeastern suburb of Atlanta. Students were assigned classes based upon the software program Elementary Class Assigner, which holds comprehensive student information, including student records and enrollment information. A nonprobability sample was determined by utilizing enrollment data and class selection data maintained by the admissions office of

the research school to compile the population of these classes. Single-stage sampling enrolled 45 students in the experimental group and 45 students in the control group for this study. All participants were divided in terms of entrance data, gender, and age.

The research school enrolls 1,100 students in Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 5. The ethnicity of the school, based upon 2007 SASI information, is as follows: 34% White, 29% Black, 23% Hispanic, 8% Asian, 5% Multiracial, and 1% Indian. At the research school, 25% of the student population participates in the Free Meals program; 8% of the student population participates in the Reduced Meals program.

Six teachers were chosen to participate based upon their willingness, interest, and instructional expertise. A teacher questionnaire was distributed to all participating teachers to investigate their attitudes toward writing and writer's workshop. With the assistance of the literacy coach, I chose three teachers to participate in the experimental group incorporating writer's workshop strategies as part of their daily writing program. This determination was made based upon their knowledge of writer's workshop and their willingness to use this writing strategy in their classrooms. The three teachers chosen to participate in the control group acknowledged that they had little experience with writer's workshop and would prefer to follow the county's language arts curriculum, which did not engage in daily writing activities. The participating teachers were given a consent form to sign. The consent form informed the participants about the study, conveyed that participation was voluntary, explained the risks and benefits of participation, and empowered the participants to make an informed decision. All teacher participants had

extensive experience working in a Kindergarten classroom, and all held master's degrees in related fields.

Treatment and Data Collection

Treatment for this study was the instructional strategy of writer's workshop. Baseline data for the study came from writing samples provided by the participants and their correlation to the county's writing rubric (C. Hall et al., 1999) and the *Kindergarten Literacy Standards Anchor Papers* (GCPS, 1994). Both writing strategies were implemented over a 9-week marking period. A uniform writing prompt was administered to the experimental and control groups by the respective teachers of each of the six Kindergarten classes at the beginning of the study. Writing samples, without names, were collected by the school's literacy coach from the 45 students in the experimental group and the 45 students in the control group. The literacy coach assessed and scored the writing samples to maintain a nonbiased interpretation of the pre- and posttest data.

The samples were analyzed according to standardized procedures (C. Hall et al., 1999) and aligned and illustrated in the anchor papers (GCPS, 1994). The writing assessment followed a numeric rubric score for the developmental stages: 1 for Pictorial Writer, 2 for the Squiggler/Verbal Story Teller, 3 for the Letter Shaker/Copier, 4 for the Sound Maker/Labeler, 5 for the Emerging Writer, 6 for the Developing Writer, 7 for the Focusing Writer, 8 for the Experimenting Writer, 9 for the Engaging Writer, and 10 for the Extending Writer. During the 9-week study, three classroom teachers provided writing instruction to 45 students in the control group by using writing strategies that did not incorporate daily structured writing activities. Over the same period, three classroom

teachers implemented writer's workshop strategies daily for 45 minutes to 45 students in the experimental group. Writer's workshop strategies used with the treatment group included the following elements:

1. Minilesson – A brief teacher generated lesson, focusing on a particular skill.
2. Independent Writing – A structured activity that requires students to write on a topic of their choosing.
3. Conferences – An approach that involves the teacher circulating through the classroom and meeting individually with students to discuss their writing.
4. Sharing Time – A structured opportunity for students to share and discuss their writings with their classmates.

Following the same procedure used during data collection for the pretest data, the writing prompt was again given to the 90 participants. I collected this writing sample, which served as the posttest for the study, at the end of the 9-week study. As the researcher, I conducted an analysis of the pre and posttest data utilizing SPSS v.14 and the research strategy the independent-measure *t* test to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in outcomes between the treatment and the comparison group.

Instrumentation and Materials

The literacy coach, who was the scorer for this study, used the county's writing rubric (C. Hall et al., 1999) and the anchor papers (GCPS, 1994) to score the pre- and posttest results from the 45 students in the experimental group and the 45 students in the control group. The writing rubric and the anchor papers are organized according to 10

developmental stages of writing: A to D for emergent stages and 1 to 6 for beginning stages. For the purpose of this study and in an attempt to quantify data, I renumbered theses stages as 1 to10. These stages, which correspond to the writing standards created by the Georgia Writing Advisory Committee, identify the developmental stages of writing reflected in a student's writing sample:

1. Stage A: The Pictorial Writer

   Writing is drawing of objects.

2. Stage B: The Squiggler/Verbal Story Teller

   Writing is scribbles or patterns.

3. Stage C: The Letter Shaker/Copier

   Writing is playing with letters, which may include the child's name.

4. Stage D: The Sound Maker/Labeler

   Writing is labeling of pictures. Words the child writes begin to include the appropriate letters and sounds.

5. Stage 1: The Emerging Writer

   Writing has little or no topic development, organization, and/or detail.

6. Stage 2: The Developing Writer

   Writing has beginning topic development, organization, and/or detail.

7. Stage 3: The Focusing Writer

   Writing has clear topic even though development is incomplete.

8. Stage 4: The Experimenting Writer

   Writing has a topic that is clear and developed.

9. Stage 5: The Engaging Writer

   Writing has a well-developed topic. There is a clear beginning, middle, and end.

10. Stage 6: The Extending Writer

    Writing has a fully developed topic with rich details.

This writing rubric is used in all county schools as the basis for assessment of students' writing in Kindergarten to Grade 5. These developmental stages and anchor papers are components of the county's writing curriculum and literacy standards, which identify the areas of writing reflected in a student's writing sample. Within each of these stages are more specific sets of skills that characterize the stage. These specific skills are operationalized in the anchor papers (GCPS, 1994) to facilitate objective evaluation of progress.

Reliability

The reliability of the rubric (C. Hall et al., 1999) was established using the anchor papers (GCPS, 1994). The anchor papers illustrate and bring to light the scoring rubric stages. An evaluator assessing students' writing benefits from the visual interpretation presented in the anchor papers. They assist in highlighting the differences among various rubric scores.

Validity

Content validity was used in order to ensure the validity of these measures. Teachers across Georgia are required to review the writing standards, anchor papers, and all the components of the literacy standards. The county's language arts curriculum is

designed in accordance with the developmental writing stages, the GADoE’s (2005) developmental writing rubric, the quality core curriculum (QCC) and Georgia performance standards (GPS). The GADoE referred to validity by stating, “Content validity is assured by establishing a close correspondence between the curriculum….and the rubrics used to score student compositions” (p. 12). Quantifying the developmental stages of writing based upon the handbook (C. Hall et al., 1999) assisted in ensuring the validity of this rubric. The developmental writing stages range from a low of 1 to a high of 10, which represented the continuum from emergent writing skills to beginning writing skills.

Students in the experimental group engaged in daily writing activities during the writing block of 45 minutes. Students in the control group did not engage in daily writing activities. However, the students in the control group adhered to writing activities designated by county’s language arts curriculum and the AKS. The formal pre- and posttests were administered and evaluated by the literacy coach in accordance with the developmental stages and the anchor papers. Each writing sample was scored from 1 to10 on the county’s writing rubric to provide a minimum amount of evaluator judgment and provide maximum objectivity.

Each writing piece for the pre- and posttest data was analyzed and scored according to the rubric. A score determined by the literacy coach was then assigned for each student. Each student, to ensure anonymity, was designated a number from 1 to 45. As the researcher, I inputted the data for the 45 students in the experimental group and the 45 students in the control group. I analyzed the data according to the independent-

measures *t* hypothesis test by using SPSS v.14 to determine whether there was a significant difference between instructional strategies and writing achievement.

Data Analysis

I conducted this quantitative study to determine whether there was a significant difference between the independent variable of instructional writing strategies, defined as writer's workshop, on the dependent variable, students' writing achievement, defined as a numerical rubric score for the following developmental stages: 1 for Pictorial Writer, 2 for the Squiggler/Verbal Story Teller, 3 for the Letter Shaker/Copier, 4 for the Sound Maker/Labeler, 5 for the Emerging Writer, 6 for the Developing Writer, 7 for the Focusing Writer, 8 for the Experimenting Writer, 9 for the Engaging Writer, and 10 for the Extending Writer.

The hypothesis for this study was the following:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer's workshop and students taught through the county's writing curriculum.

H_{a1}: There is a significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer's workshop and students taught through the county's writing curriculum.

Comparing the pre- and posttest data of the 45 students in the experimental group and the 45 students in the control group constituted an independent measures research design. These hypotheses were tested to determine whether there were significant differences in the scores from the control group and the experimental group. I used the

independent-measures *t* test to evaluate the mean difference of each sample to determine whether there is a significant difference between the two sets of scores. According to Gravetter and Wallnau (2005), “The independent-measure *t* statistic uses the data from two separate samples to help decide whether or not there is a significant mean difference between two populations or between two treatments conditions” (p.254).

I used SPSS v.14 to conduct the independent-measures *t* hypothesis test on the pretest and posttest data from both groups. I then compared the data by conducting a two-tailed independent-measures *t* test with α =.05. The independent-measures *t* test was used for the data being collected from two separate samples, namely, the experimental group and the control group.

Participants’ Rights

Permission to conduct the research was received from the principal of the research school and from Walden University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB approval #12-23-08-0290969). This consent to conduct research was then filed at the research department of the county’s public schools. All students’ names and identifiers were omitted from all data. Anonymity was of the utmost concern. The participants’ work and responses were reported as group results only and for the sole purpose of this study.

Section 4: Presentation and Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative, quasi-experimental study was to determine the effectiveness of writer's workshop on students; writing achievement. I compared writer's workshop, incorporating daily writing, and the county's writing curriculum, which did not incorporate daily writing, to determine whether writing workshop had a significant impact on students' writing.

The participants were 90 kindergarten students enrolled in a northeastern suburban elementary school outside of Atlanta. The students were randomly placed in six Kindergarten classes. During the 9-week study, three classroom teachers provided writing instruction to 45 students in the control group by using writing strategies that did not incorporate daily structured writing activities. Over the same period, three classroom teachers implemented writer's workshop strategies daily for 45 minutes to 45 students in the experimental group. A uniform writing prompt was administered to the experimental and control groups by the respective teachers of each of the six Kindergarten classes at the beginning of the study. This writing sample was used as pretest data. Following the same procedure as the pretest, the writing prompt was again given to the 90 participants at the end of the 9-week study. This writing sample was collected and analyzed, and served as the posttest data for the study. Included in this section is a discussion of the research tools and the data analysis, followed by a summary of the findings.

Research Tools

The data collection tools used for this study were the county's writing rubric (C. Hall et al., 1999) and the anchor papers (GCPS, 1994). Both tools were used to score the pre- and posttest results from the 45 students in the experimental group and the 45 students in the control group. The writing rubric is organized according to 10 developmental stages of writing: A to D for emergent stages and 1to 6 for beginning stages. For the purpose of this study and in an attempt to quantify the data, I renumbered these stages as 1 to 10. These stages correspond to the writing standards created by the Georgia Writing Advisory Committee and identify the developmental stages of writing reflected in a student's writing sample. The anchor papers exemplify the quality of writing expected at each developmental stage of writing for each grade level.

Students in the emergent writing stages from Stage 1: Pictorial Writer to Stage 4: Sound Maker/Labeler are drawing pictures, beginning to associate letters with sounds, and separating words with spaces. In Stage 5: Emerging Writer, students incorporate inventive spelling without any organization or detail. A topic begins to develop with simple word choices and sentence patterns for students writing in Stage 6: Developing Writer. In Stage 7: Focusing Writer, students show a clear topic, even though development is incomplete. Writers have a well-developed clear topic in Stage 8: Experimenting Writer. A clear beginning, middle, and end, along with a well-developed topic, become evident in Stage 9: Engaging Writer. In the final developmental stage of Stage 10: Extending Writer, the writing has a fully developed topic with rich details.

At the beginning of the 9-week study, the six teachers involved presented their students with a writing prompt, “On the way to school, I saw... .” The resulting writing sample was assessed by the literacy coach according to the developmental continuum described previously. As the researcher, I inputted data from this assessment into SPSS v.14 program as pretest data.

For the duration of the 9-week study, three classroom teachers provided writing instruction to 45 students in the control group by using writing strategies that did not incorporate daily structured writing activities. Over the same period, three classroom teachers implemented writer’s workshop strategies daily for 45 minutes to 45 students in the experimental group. During this 9-week period, my role was to be a facilitator, motivator, and supporter to the six teachers involved in the study.

After completing the 9-week study, the writing prompt, “On the way to school I saw...,” was administered again to all 90 participants in the study by the literacy coach. The writing sample was assessed by the literacy coach according to the developmental continuum. I then imputed the data, which became the posttest data for the study. I analyzed the data by using the independent-measure *t* test in SPSS v.14. It was my responsibility to analyze the results derived from the statistical program to determine whether there was a significant difference in the instructional strategies on writing achievement.

My many roles as researcher designer, data collector, analyst, and interpreter were important throughout this process. As researcher designer, my role was to ensure that this study was an accurate measure of the effectiveness of writer’s workshop, the data would

be replicable, and the results would reflect the effects of writer's workshop. As data collector, my role was to ensure that the data were collected under normal conditions and accurately reflected student learning. In analyzing the data, it was important to extract the applicable and pertinent data. My role as interpreter was significant. Synthesizing the information, interpreting it, and considering future applications and implications to the students in my classroom, as well as the larger context, were crucial in making this study important.

I used SPSS v.14 to conduct the independent-measures *t* test on the pretest and posttest data from both groups. The independent-measures *t* hypothesis test was used to evaluate the mean difference of each sample to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two sets of scores.

Data Analysis

Research Question and Hypothesis

The following research question and hypothesis guided the study: Is there a difference between the writing achievement of students taught through writer's workshop versus students taught through the county's writing curriculum?

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer's workshop and students taught through the county's writing curriculum.

H_{a1}: There is a significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer's workshop and students taught through the county's writing curriculum.

Interpretation

I conducted this quantitative study to determine whether there was a significant difference between the independent variable of instructional writing strategies, defined as writer's workshop, on the dependent variable, students' writing achievement, defined as a numerical rubric score for the developmental writing stages from Stage 1: Pictorial Writer to Stage 10: the Extending Writer. The null hypothesis stated that there would be no difference between the writing achievement scores of students instructed to write using writer's workshop and the scores of students instructed using the county's writing curriculum. The alternative hypothesis stated there would be a significant difference between the writing achievement scores of students instructed to write using writer's workshop and the scores of students instructed using the county's writing curriculum.

Comparing the pre- and posttest data of the 45 students in the experimental group and the 45 students in the control group constituted an independent0measures research design. The hypothesis was tested to determine whether there were significant differences in the scores from the control group and the experimental group. The pre- and posttest scores for the control group and experimental group are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Control Group: Pre- and Posttest Scores From Kindergarten Literacy Standards

Stage	Description	Control	
		Pretest	Posttest
1	Pictorial writer	0	0
2	Verbal story teller	0	0
3	Copier	2	0
4	Labeler	15	7
5	Emerging	18	17
6	Developing	10	20
7	Focusing	0	1
8	Experimenting	0	0
9	Engaging	0	0
10	Extending	0	0
Total		45	45

The difference between the pre- and posttest scores for the control group was calculated by comparing the means for the pre- and posttests. The mean score for the pretest was $M = 4.88$, and the posttest mean was $M = 5.33$, indicating an average gain of .53 to advance to higher writing stages. Higher writing stages were an indication of higher writing achievement, as it appears on the writing rubric.

Table 2

Experimental Group: Pre- and Posttest Scores From Kindergarten Literacy Standards

Stage	Description	Control	
		Pretest	Posttest
1	Pictorial Writer	0	0
2	Verbal Story Teller	0	0
3	Copier	2	0
4	Labeler	10	0
5	Emerging	24	7
6	Developing	9	15
7	Focusing	0	19
8	Experimenting	0	4
9	Engaging	0	0
10	Extending	0	0
Total		45	45

The difference between the pre- and posttest scores for the experimental group was calculated by comparing the means for the pre- and posttests. The mean score for the pretest was $M = 4.89$, and the posttest mean was $M = 6.84$, indicating an average gain of 1.95 to advance to higher writing stages, as indicated by the writing rubric. Data analysis revealed a significant difference in the writing achievement of the students who were using writer's workshop. The statistical differences between both groups' mean scores are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Mean and Standard Deviations for Control and Experimental Groups

Group	*M*	*SD*
	Pretest scores	
Control group	4.80	.842
Experimental group	4.89	.775
	Posttest scores	
Control group	5.33	.769
Experimental group	6.84	.824

The mean score for the control group's pretest ($n = 45$) was $M = 4.80$, with an $SD = .842$. The mean score for the posttest was $M = 5.33$, with an $SD = .769$.The mean score for the experimental group's pretest ($n = 45$) was $M = 4.89$, with an $SD = .775$. The mean score for the posttest was $M = 6.84$, with an $SD = .824$. The data analysis indicated that the experimental group had significant higher writing achievement. The posttest mean scores were 5.33 ($SD = .769$) for the control group and 6.84 ($SD = .824$) for the experimental group.

To compare the data from the control group and the experimental group, I conducted an independent *t* test. If there was a significant difference between the groups'

mean scores and *p* values, a determination was made to accept or reject the null hypothesis. Table 4 illustrates the data derived from the independent-samples *t* test.

Table 4

Independent-Samples t *Test Analysis for Posttest Scores*

	t score	*df*	Significance
Difference	-8.992	88	.000

I conducted an independent-samples *t* test to evaluate the hypothesis that students taught through writer's workshop would achieve a higher score in writing than students taught through the county's writing curriculum. The test was significant, $t(88) = -8.992$, $p = .000$. The results were commensurate with the research hypothesis. Students in the experimental group, who were taught through writer's workshop ($M = 6.84$, $SD = .824$), achieved higher scores than those students in the control group, who were taught through the county's writing curriculum ($M = 5.33$, $SD = .769$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means ranged from -1.177 to -1.845. Figure 1 shows the growth distributions for the two groups.

According to Greene and Salkind (2003), a boxplot graph provides a vivid representation of the variables. The median for each variable is shown by a circle on the line figure. The visual representation is indicative of a greater increase in writing growth from the pretest to posttest in the experimental group versus the control group. This visual illustrates the difference between the writing achievement of students taught through writer's workshop versus students taught through the county's writing curriculum.

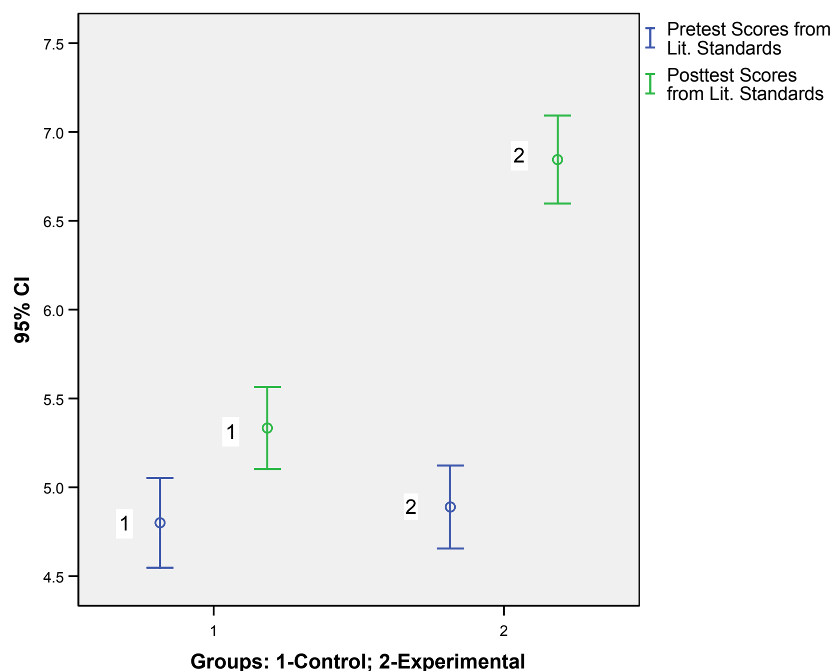

Figure 1. Boxplots of pre- and posttest growth in control and experimental groups.

Possible Alternate Interpretations of the Findings

An alternate interpretation of the findings could be attributed to the amount of writing the students were exposed to prior to the study. Mayer (2007) explained that providing many opportunities for writing creates a strong writing foundation. She maintained that when the writing opportunities are abundant, writing success is ensured. Data were collected during the last marking period of the Kindergarten year. Many students were involved in various writing lessons, homework, and class work, depending on the individual teachers. The amount of writing the students were engaged in would affect the assessment of their writing.

Another interpretation of the findings can be attributed to the diversity of each Kindergarten class participating in the study. The classes were formed from random

selection. The school's demographics were derived from SASI in the following percentages of 34% White, 29% Black, 23% Hispanic, 8% Asian, 5% Multiracial, and 1% Indian. In addition, 25% of the student population participates in the Free Meals program, and 8% of the student population participates in the Reduced Meals program. These percentages may be generalized for the six Kindergarten classes involved in this study.

The various language levels of students and their families are not similar from class to class. The research site had a diverse population with a percentage of bilingual students in each class. The bilingual students are identified as either NEP or LEP. August and Shanahan (2006) summarized the findings from a National Literacy Panel working with developing literacy in second-language learners. They concluded that bilingual students' literacy development is directly impacted by individual differences in English language proficiency. Students who exhibited minimal English proficiency would exhibit difficulty in their writing development.

How writing is supported and utilized at home can impact children's writing capabilities. Dunsmuir and Blatchford (2004) indicated that children's positive attitudes toward writing, preschool attendance, and fine-motor skills are factors in students' writing capabilities. Similar to Dunsmuir and Blatchford's research, August and Shanahan (2006) concurred with the National Literacy Panel's research that the number of home language experiences can influence the writing development of bilingual students. This assertion confirmed that the students participating in the research may have

been at various levels with various skills, all of which influenced their writing abilities and outcomes.

Conclusion

The purpose of this quantitative, quasi-experimental study was to determine the effectiveness of writer's workshop on student achievement in the Kindergarten classroom. One research question drove this research: Is there a difference between the writing achievement of students taught through writer's workshop versus students taught through the county's writing curriculum?

In an attempt to have uniform data from the six Kindergarten classes, a writing prompt, "On the way to school, I saw...," was administered at the beginning and end of the study to 90 randomly selected students. The data were collected and analyzed, and used for pre- and posttest data. The study addressed the writing of Kindergarten students in the experimental group, who experienced writing instruction daily, versus the students in the control group, who did not write daily. I used SPSS v.14to conduct the independent-measures *t* test to evaluate the mean difference of each sample to determine the effectiveness of each instructional strategy.

The alternative hypothesis was accepted because there was a significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer's workshop and students taught using the county's language arts curriculum. Six of the 10 developmental writing stages produced interesting results in both groups. At the onset of the study, all students were identified as being between Stage 3: Copier Stage and Stage 6: Developing Stage. The pretest means for the control group ($M = 4.80$) and the experimental group

(*M* = 4.89) indicated no significant difference between both groups.

At the end of the 9-week study, there was a significant variance in the results compared to the pretest data. All students achieved between Stage 4: Labeler Stage and Stage 8: Experimenting Stage. The posttest mean for each group indicated a significant difference between the control group (*M* = 5.33) and the experimental group *M* = 6.84). The control group's posttest results revealed that the majority of the 45 students were in Stage 5: Emerging Stage and Stage 6: Developing Stage. For the experimental group, the posttest results identified that the majority of the 45 students were in Stage 6: Developing Stage and Stage 7: Focusing Stage (see Table 5).

Table 5

Pre- and Posttest Scores From Kindergarten Literacy Standards

Stage	Description	Pretest		Posttest	
		Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental
1	Pictorial writer	0	0	0	0
2	Verbal story teller	0	0	0	0
3	Copier	2	2	0	0
4	Labeler	15	10	7	0
5	Emerging	18	24	17	7
6	Developing	10	9	20	15
7	Focusing	0	0	1	19
8	Experimenting	0	0	0	4
9	Engaging	0	0	0	0
10	Extending	0	0	0	0
Total		45	45	45	45

The data from this quantitative study were collected and analyzed to reveal a significant difference, $t(88) = -8.992$, $p = .000$, in writing achievement between the students who were taught using writer's workshop strategies and the students who were taught using the county's writing curriculum. The null hypothesis was rejected because it stated that there was no significant difference in writing achievement between students

taught through writer's workshop versus students taught through the county's writing curriculum. The findings confirmed a significant difference in writing achievement between students who were taught using writer's workshop strategies versus students who were taught using the county's writing curriculum.

Significant growth was made in the experimental group versus the control group. I concluded that implementation of writer's workshop had a significant effect on writing achievement. Incorporating daily practice in a writing program that uses the specific strategies of writer's workshop results in higher writing achievement.

Calkins (1986), Graves (1985), and Wood Ray (2001) are only a few of the many researchers who have supported teaching writing through a process approach. Calkins tried to keep in mind "that we are teaching the writer not the writing" (p. 228). Graves asserted that although the product approach to writing does produce specific skill growth, "rarely does it result in the child's use of writing as a tool for learning and enjoyment" (p. 4). The process approach allows students to work on the components of writing and not solely on the product. Wood Ray stated that the product approach's focus is on pieces of writing, as opposed to writer's workshop, whose focus is on "writer's who use writing to do powerful things in the world in which they live" (p. 5).

Applebee and Langer (2006) discovered from writing assessments that using strategies such as brainstorming with others, organizing one's paper before writing, working in groups, and making changes to fix mistakes, resulted in writing achievement. Drafting, editing, revising, and dialoguing with peers or teacher are all part of the writer's workshop model. Students and teachers have many interactions with one another during

writer's workshop. Conferring with students demonstrates Vygotsky's (1978) idea of scaffolding one's learning. A teacher scaffolds a student's learning by offering supports to new learning and then gradually removing the supports as the student incorporates the learned behaviors independently. Applebee and Langer also found that the more frequently students engage in writing practice, such as daily writing in writer's workshop, the higher their gains in writing achievements.

Section 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of writer's workshop on the writing achievement scores of Kindergarten students. The participants were Kindergarten students from an elementary school located in a northeastern suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. Scores from 90 students were collected and analyzed to determine the effect of daily instruction through writer's workshop on their level of writing. I analyzed the pretest data for both groups. The scores were gathered from the writing assessment rubric (C. Hall et al., 1999). For the duration of the 9-week study, following the pretest, the control group was instructed using the county's writing curriculum, which does not incorporate daily lessons and daily writing. The children in the experimental group were exposed to writer's workshop, which includes systematic lessons and daily writing, for 45 minutes daily. The posttest scores were gathered and analyzed using the same assessment/rubric used for the pretest analysis. The scores of the experimental and control groups' pretest scores were compared to both groups' posttest scores by using SPSS v.14 to determine significance.

In 2002, a problem in writing was identified by the USDoE. According to the report, only one quarter of American students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 were considered at or above grade level in writing. Tachibana (2008) found that although writing scores have increased over the years since the report from the USDoE, this improvement has been slight. Tachibana stated, "But despite the gains, only a third of eighth graders and fewer

than a quarter of high school seniors tested at or above the proficient level, defined as competency over challenging subject matter” (p. 1).

In an attempt to identify effective writing strategies, I conducted this study to address one research question: Is there a difference between writing achievement of students taught through writer’s workshop versus students taught through the county’s writing curriculum? The following hypothesis also was addressed:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer’s workshop and students taught through the county’s writing curriculum.

H_{a1}: There is a significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer’s workshop and students taught through the county’s writing curriculum.

To measure the effectiveness of the writer’s workshop strategy on Kindergarten writing achievement, I collected and analyzed pre- and posttest data. Both writing strategies were implemented over a 9-week marking period. A uniform writing prompt was administered to the experimental and control groups at the beginning and end of the study. The assessments acted as the pre- and posttest data for the study. I used SPSS v.14 to test the hypothesis to determine whether there was a significant difference between instructional strategies and writing achievement. The independent-measures *t* test indicated that the null hypothesis should be rejected. The independent *t* test resulted in $t(88) = -8.992$, $p = .000$, two-tailed. The difference was significant. The experimental group increased in writing achievement on the posttest data as compared to the control

group. The experimental group scored a combined 51% in Stage 7: Focusing Stage and Stage 8: Experimenting Stage. In contrast, the control group scored a combined 2% in Stage 7 and Stage 8. There was a significant difference in Kindergarten writing when students were exposed to daily writing, systematic lessons, conferring, and sharing. These data supported current research about the importance of daily writing for developing writers. Research has shown that writing daily within a systematic, planned writing lesson produces engaged writers (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 2004).

I used a quasi-experimental, nonequivalent, control-group design for this quantitative study. Six intact classrooms were the justification for the quasi-experimental design. Comparing and analyzing the effects of two instructional methods for developing the writing skills of Kindergarten students was the rationale for the nonequivalent, pre- and posttest design. The nonequivalent group design, as defined by Trochim (2006), includes a pretest and a posttest, with the experimental group receiving treatment, in this study, writer's workshop. Intact classrooms were the justification for the quasi-experimental design, making random selection of participants impossible.

Interpretation of the Findings

Although there has been an abundance of research on the teaching of writing and process versus product writing, little research has been conducted on the effectiveness of specific instructional strategies on writing achievement. Research from the National Commission on Writing in 2003 stressed that the amount of time spent on writing had to be doubled and applied liberally across the curriculum (as cited in Applebee & Langer, 2006). The same report, which took statistics from Grades 4, 8, and 12, also indicated that

in Grades 4 and 8, there was a notable increase in writing achievement. However, absent was any significant change in writing achievement in Grade 12. The findings from the present study will add to the body of existing research, contribute to evidence on best practices for emergent writing strategies, and help to fill in the research gaps in the area of early literacy. Good instructional strategies for emergent writers may provide the framework that will support children through all of the writing stages, from their initial experience with writing throughout elementary school and beyond.

The independent *t* test supported the hypothesis that writer's workshop significantly impacts writing achievement. Students in the experimental group demonstrated more growth in their level of writing from pre- to posttest. The experimental group saw 75% of the participants scoring in Stage 6: Developing Stage and Stage 7: Focusing Stage. The control group saw 82% of the participants scoring in Stage 5: Emerging Stage and Stage 6: Developing Stage, indicating that the majority of students in the experimental group scored higher than the majority of students in the control group. I concluded that daily writing, systematic lessons, conferring, and sharing, positively impacted these students' level of writing.

Researcher's Reflections

During this 9-week study, I observed the classroom environment, student motivation to write, student excitement, and engagement with the teachers of the six participating classrooms. The notable student and teacher reactions merit further discussion.

The students in the control group experienced a minimal level of motivation or engagement, as observed by the researcher. As I watched the control group, the majority of students moaned and expressed their dislike for writing by saying, “not again,” and “how much do we have to write?” when asked to take out their journals. When given the opportunity to write or engage in another activity, most students chose another activity. While discussing writing with the three classrooms teachers of the control group, I was informed that they each had attempted writer’s workshop with previous classes. They determined that their students “could not do writer’s workshop.” They stated that their students “did not know the routine,” which led to frustration from teachers and students.

As the researcher, my thought was that in order for writer’s workshop to be successful, all of the classroom routines have to be practiced repeatedly to avoid frustration. If there is ample frustration, teachers will become discouraged, resulting in their discontinuing writer’s workshop. I established that the participants and the teachers in the control group lacked the enthusiasm and excitement to write.

Based upon the teacher questionnaire and the teachers’ responses, it became evident that a common thread linked the control group teachers. Their attitude toward writing on a personal level was one of dislike. They felt that they were “not good at it.” A frustration arose when I asked them to discuss why they did not like it. Two of the three teachers reported that during their own school experience writing was “always difficult.” The teachers did not “feel comfortable expressing themselves through writing but would rather talk” to express themselves. The third teacher of the control group expressed that “writing was never stressed” during her school experience. She claimed that the emphasis

was “more on how you wrote, ya’ know, the mechanics of it all.” I suspect that these preconceived ideas about their own writing experience directly impacted their teaching of writing.

The teachers and the students in the experimental group had a different story to tell. As the researcher, I observed the 45 students in the experimental group being motivated to write daily. The students chose to write during their free time, writing stories and making books to put on the classroom’s bookshelf. When given the opportunity during “Read-Write” centers, most students chose writing. They engaged in writing that ranged from labeling pictures to writing stories filled with details while incorporating a beginning, a middle, and an end to their stories. One student from the experimental group told me that his class was “becoming little authors!” When the schedule had to be changed and writer’s workshop was cancelled, students were heard asking, “Why are we not doing writing today?” Many students were excited about writing, when they said things like, “Yay, we get to write in our journals today!”

The teachers of the experimental group reported greater success. “Working with small groups allowed me to provide individual instruction based on the students’ needs,” stated one teacher. One of the teachers from the experimental group was skeptical about writer’s workshop from the beginning of the study, but once the routines were established, she became more confident with the process. “Once we got the routine down, the kids enjoyed it and followed through with it. We all seemed to grow as writers. As the children’s excitement grew,” she said, “they became more confident in their writing.”

As I looked over the questionnaires from the teachers of the experimental group, their responses were quite different from those of the control group. These teachers "loved writing." They all felt that this love of writing was instilled during their early literacy experiences and home experiences. One of the teachers informed me that her "mother writes all the time. She writes letters, poems, and always put notes in my lunch and book bag all through school. She still writes me notes!" These teachers believed that students should "write all the time, whenever possible." I was enlightened by the discussions with all of these teachers. They provided further evidence about the ongoing process involving teacher attitudes, student attitudes, and motivation.

The writing strategies developed during writer's workshop addresses each child's individual strengths and weaknesses. Conferencing allows the teacher to differentiate instruction based upon the needs of individual students. Calkins (1994) stated, "Conferencing is at the heart of writer's workshop" (p. 223). The students' conversations during conferencing validated their level of engagement and excitement. These interactions allowed the students to exchange their ideas with each other and with their teacher. Knowledge was constructed through conversations, interactions, and observations. The structure of writer's workshop encourages interaction and the observation of modeled behavior, leading to independent adoption of that behavior, while building upon prior knowledge and skills.

Vygotsky (1962) supported the idea of social interaction in the construct of knowledge. The importance of these social interactions was the foundation of the development of the ZPD, achieving knowledge with guidance and assistance, leading to

acquiring knowledge without assistance, and resulting in independent learners. Bruner (1981) reiterated Vygotsky's theory of social interaction and knowledge acquisition. Writer's workshop incorporates scaffolding as a major component of learning. A teacher provides the initial support system for students. As the students become more independent, the scaffolding is dismantled eventually, leading to complete independence.

Bandura's (1986) social learning theory is evident throughout the framework of writer's workshop. Bandura theorized that children learn from observation and modeling of the desired behavior. Students' observation of the desired writing expectation during the minilesson mirrors Bandura's theory. The children not only observe and model the teacher but also can do the same with their peers to acquire the desired behavior.

Haager and Klinger (2005) commented:

> Literacy and language learning take place in context of meaningful activities in a social community that emphasizes interaction and real communication. They provide ways for students to each work at their own level and receive appropriate feedback and intensive instruction suited to their individual needs. (p. 241)

Students in the experimental group were in classrooms exhibiting these writer's workshop behaviors. The classrooms participating in the experimental group exhibited behaviors that supported the existing research of Bandura (1986), Bruner (1981), and Vygotsky (1962) that scaffolding and social interaction assist in constructing learning.

The posttest results indicated that the majority of students in the control group were in Stage 6: Developing Stage; the posttest results for the experimental group indicated that the majority of students were in Stage 7: Focusing Stage. In contrast, one

student from the control group was assessed at Stage 7: Focusing Stage. This result may be interpreted as suggesting that both bilingual and monolingual students benefit from daily writing and direct writing instruction.

These results can impact the special education population of students, who benefit from explicit systematic instruction (Haager & Klinger, 2005). Students with learning disabilities could improve their writing skills by participating in a writing program that incorporates the writing process, as in writer's workshop. Also needed would be the immediate feedback that is evident in conferencing. These elements would help to improve the writing achievement of students with special needs.

Writer's workshop, with its specific writing strategies, conferencing with individual students, and self-selected topics, also can meet the needs of the ELL population. The immediate feedback and topic choice demonstrated in writer's workshop will give ELL students' writing a voice. Writing instruction that is process oriented and student focused, such as writer's workshop, will develop ELL students' confidence, as de Jong and Harper (2005) confirmed. The results showed that writer's workshop had a significant effect on writing achievement scores, which may impact the diverse populations of the multicultural classrooms across the county.

Implications for Social Change

Aiding in closing the existing African American achievement gap, ELLs acquiring English proficiency, emergent writers attaining higher levels of writing achievement and growth, and the special education population achieving improved

writing skills can be direct results of implementing writer's workshop instruction. Writer's workshop can assist in bridging the learning gap for each of these groups.

A longitudinal study spanning 20 years was conducted on the school effects of personnel and curriculum on student scores (Konstantonopoulos, 2006) to investigate school effects on student academic achievement and determine how these effects changed over time. Konstantonopoulos (2006) discovered that an "important part of achievement differences within schools is due to teachers" (p. 279). These school effects have been proven to be effective in raising achievement (Konstantonopoulos, 2006). Therefore, within the school, using a writing strategy that positively impacts writing achievement can ultimately support closing the African American and ELL achievement gap.

All avenues need to be investigated to address the achievement gap. Even though this study focused on one area, it also addressed bigger issues facing society, such as discrimination, disabilities, gender differences, and other social issues. Therefore, this research directly addressed problems associated with the issues of the Black- White achievement gap, and the Latino-White achievement gap, as well as socioeconomic status (SES).

Schools and districts that see the relevance of this research and implement this writing strategy may produce a population of students with a marked advantage over students who are not instructed in writer's workshop. Having effective writing skills is an important part of communication. Writing skills are valuable in the early development of confidence and improved self-image, both of which may be tied to academic success. Research has shown that students with a positive self-concept scored higher on academic

benchmarks, with the result being higher achievement (Tran, 2008). Effective writing skills are necessary to be successful lifelong learners in a global environment. In order to compete on a global scale, it is imperative that students have the confidence to express themselves through writing. Whether it is welcomed or not, the entire educational community is competing internationally. Arguments can be made about the fairness of competition on international achievement. The evidence is compounding that programs like writer's workshop can increase student achievement test scores and competencies in writing, thereby helping to ensure the effectiveness of their communication skills. This outcome cannot help but improve the standing of America's students on the world stage. Therefore, caution must be exercised in limiting the potential benefits of writer's workshop. The implications of this study can best be summarized by what a student expressed during peer conferencing: "Writing is awesome!"

In effect, it is more accurate to describe the implications of this study, not as simply stating the benefits of a Kindergarten writing program, but by addressing varying areas of achievement, self-image, school effects, SES, and its inequalities, along with ELLs and special education students.

Recommendations for Action

There are many recommendations for action based upon the findings of this study. The results of this study need to be read and discussed by all stakeholders in the educational arena. Parents expect the best writing program available for their children to give them every advantage and opportunity for success. The issue of quality writing programs is important to educators. The current trend is to develop new writing

strategies. The best strategy may very well be writer's workshop, initiated in the 1970s by Graves (1983) and supported by Calkins (1994). According to Wood Ray (2001), after gaining knowledge about learning theory, writing, and best teaching practices, the belief is "this is the best way to go about the teaching of writing" (p. xii).

A critical issue is the impact of different SES and out-of-school-factors as they relate to the Black-White achievement gap. Berliner (2009) studied out-of-school-factors on poverty and achievement, determining that "if families find ways for their children to attend public schools where poverty is not a major school challenge, then, on average, their children will have better achievement test performance" (p. 4). To close the achievement gap and even eliminate the gap by 2014, as required by the NCLB (2001), it is crucial that teachers address not only student outcomes but also student input factors, statuses, and out-of- school factors. These factors have a significant effect on student achievement scores. This study addresses the achievement gap issue by adding to the existing knowledge base in support of writer's workshop as it relates to the benefit of all children. It is critical for all students to have the foundations in writing necessary to be successful in today's classrooms, particularly in the high-stakes testing environment.

Hubbard and Carpenter (2003) reported that instruction for ELLs would benefit from scaffolding instruction. A daily program with systematic direct instruction and continuous immediate feedback to help scaffold the children from dependence to independence is supported within writer's workshop. Much has been written about the importance of scaffolding learning during the writing process (Calkins, 1994; Dorn & Soffos, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding assists children to construct their own

learning. In addition, as students work to master the English language, their writing of stories through writer's workshop instruction can improve their English language skills (Hubbard & Carpenter, 2003).

The current emphasis in my school district is for balanced literacy that incorporates reading and writing strategies such as read-alouds, shared reading, reader's workshop, modeled writing, shared/interactive writing, and writer's workshop. The district also is considering a greater emphasis on writer's workshop as a component of the county's balanced literacy framework, which includes best practices in reading and writing that have resulted in a rigorous and complete instructional program for all students. The components of a balanced literacy framework include read-alouds; shared reading; modeled writing; shared/interactive writing; minilessons; guided practice; and independent practice for reading and writing, including word work in phonics.

Children's success in school is dependent on a variety of components. This study has shown that writer's workshop can provide the necessary skills that may improve their chance for success. It is imperative that teachers, administrators, and parents understand the complexity and importance of the writing skills of their children. A continuity of instruction from school to home may be highly beneficial. Shirvani (2007) conducted a study on the effects of parent-teacher communication on students' school behaviors. The findings suggested that parental involvement directly impacts student achievement. For this reason, it is important that parents consider augmenting instruction by continuing the writer's workshop program at home.

Recommendations for Further Study

The focus of this study was to determine whether writer's workshop significantly impacted the writing achievement of students in the Kindergarten classroom. Recommendations for further study include more studies conducted, such as this one, which will add to the limited amount of research about the effects of writer's workshop on writing achievement at various grade levels. There is a need for more research on the impact of writing strategies on achievement. Additional research needs to be done, specifically at the elementary level in Kindergarten to Grade 5. It is essential to students' success. In addition, this study should be replicated between and among grade levels, schools, and populations. The results of such future studies would be an examination of different outcomes that could ultimately determine the effectiveness of writer's workshop across the educational spectrum.

Another recommendation might be to use various assessments to measure the effectiveness of writer's workshop. In this study, pre- and posttest, and independent-measures *t* test were used to measure the effectiveness of writer's workshop. Future researchers might consider using other assessments and other statistical measures.

Finally, more research should be conducted to compare the writing scores from the criterion-referenced competency tests to students taught using writer's workshop and those not instructed in writer's workshop strategies. In this time of standardized testing, accountable pay, and pressure to compete nationally and globally, it is imperative that best practices be investigated to obtain optimum results.

Conclusion

The purpose of this quantitative, quasi-experimental, nonequivalent, control-group design was to identify the effect of writer's workshop on Kindergarten students' writing achievement. I determined that there was a significant difference in writing achievement between students taught through writer's workshop and students taught using the county's writing curriculum. Over 9 weeks, 45 Kindergarten students in the experimental group engaged in daily writing, systematic minilessons, and conferring; 45 students in the control group engaged in writing activities that were less structured and less frequent.

I concluded that the writer's workshop's components of daily writing, structured minilessons, and conferring had a positive impact on emergent writing in the Kindergarten classrooms. Data were derived from pre- and posttest results (C. Hall et al., 1999). After analyzing the pre- and posttest data for both groups, I determined that there was significant growth in writing in the experimental group versus the control group. Of the 90 participants involved in this study, 24% scored higher in the experimental group than the control group. This outcome is indicative that emergent writers can benefit from writing instruction that incorporates daily writing, structured minilessons, conferring, and sharing.

While conducting this research, I determined that although the research on the components of writing instruction has been significant, research on the effects of these writing strategies on writing achievement has been inadequate. It is my opinion that the effect of various writing programs on writing achievement has not been thoroughly

researched. Future studies should investigate various writing strategies to determine their effect on writing achievement, focusing on specific populations.

Finally, the outcome of this research may guide educators, administrators, and curriculum personnel to take a closer look at the writing instruction in their own schools and districts. Allowing flexibility in schedules, supporting teachers, and providing appropriate staff development may result in creating an environment that is conducive to implementing writer's workshop. Addressing the issue of research-based writing instruction and writing achievement is imperative during this current era of high-stakes testing. The ability to communicate, express oneself clearly, and write well are mandatory life skills that are used locally, nationally, and globally. Clear written expression allows people to share ideas, knowledge, and themselves, all of which then become the foundation for school, work, and life.

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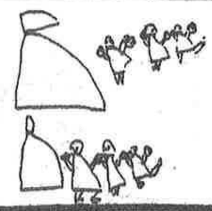
Appendix A: Developmental Stages of Writing

Appendix A

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF WRITING

Instructional handbook for Kindergarten and First Grade

1. Stage A: The Pictorial Writer
   - For this child, writing is drawing or manipulating objects.
   - The child may know alphabet letters, but does not apply them.
   - The "story" can be told with the child's oral language.



2. Stage B: The Squiggler/Verbal Story Teller
   - The child attempts to write in scribbles or patterns.
   - In a computer setting a child may type letters randomly.
   - The child's oral story as well as the pictures may become more elaborate
   - The child is beginning to make a connection between written symbols and the story.
   - The child may attempt to record letters and numerals that are becoming familiar like O.8.12.

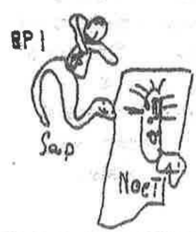
lukjyhtgf
nmhgftunn
zxxccvretyukk
zaswfemkoluxccvwa
jbkjhy

3. Stage C: The Letter Shaker/Copier
   - The child writes random letters he may or may not know, and will sometimes incorporate his name.
   - The child may copy letters or words he sees around the room, by hand or on the computer.
   - The child may or may not distinguish between letters and words.
   - The oral story often incorporates the random letters or copied words.

shells

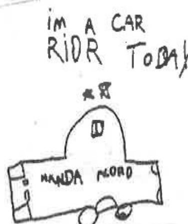
thamethskwy tvn straw may whale

octopus



4. Stage D: The Sound Maker/Labeler
   - The child is beginning to make letter/sound connections.
   - The child may label parts of the picture and use them in the oral story.
   - The child has a story concept and tells you what the story is.
   - The child may begin to separate words with spaces.

im A CAR
RIDR TODAY



5. **Stage 1: The Emerging Writer**

- Little or no topic development, organization, and/or detail.
- Little awareness of audience or writing task.
- Errors in surface features prevent the reader from understanding the writer's message.

IPiKUPTros

6. **Stage 2: The Developing Writer**

- Topic beginning to be developed. Response contains the beginning of an organizational plan.
- Limited awareness of audience and/or task.
- Simple word choice and sentence patterns.
- Errors in surface features interfere with communication.

7. **Stage 3: The Focusing Writer**

- Topic clear even though development is incomplete. Plan apparent although ideas are loosely organized.
- Sense of audience and/or task.
- Minimal variety of vocabulary and sentence patterns.
- Errors in surface features interrupt the flow of communication.

grndhgs hibrnat undr v grond. brs hibrnat n a kav. bats hibrnat n a kav.
foza go n v yuds and slep.
frogs go undr v yatr and n v sand.
snaks go undr logs nd hibrnat.
ths is oll i no ubot hibrnashun.

8. **Stage 4: The Experimenting Writer**

- Topic clear and developed; development may be uneven. Clear plan with beginning, middle, and end. Beginning and/or ending may be clumsy.
- Written for an audience.
- Experiments with language and sentence patterns. Word combinations and word choice may be novel.
- Errors in surface features may interrupt the flow of communication.

9. **Stage 5: The Engaging Writer**

- Topic well developed. Clear beginning, middle, and end. Organization sustains the writer's purpose.
- Engages the reader.
- Effective use of varied language and sentence patterns.
- Errors in surface features do not interfere with meaning.

THE BUTTER FLYS FLOWERS

ONE DAY THAIR WAS A FLOWER GROWING IN THE GRASS. A BUTTER FLY CAME AND SAID HELLOW BUT THE FLOWER DIDD NOT SAY NUTHING SO THE BUTTER FLY LOOKED AT IT AND SAID THISS MUST BE A FLOWER SO HE OPEND HIS MOUTH RILL WHIDE AND ATE THE FLOWER.

THE END.

THE MISSTREY UNDR MY BED

I WhNT TO BED ONEC IT WAS DRAK IN MY ROOM I FALY A SLEP MAVIS WAS UNDR A BED. THER WAS A BUA BUT BAGI IT WAS I CALLED. SAMRO IS UNDR MY BED. She LOOKED UNDR MY BED. IS UNDR MY BED. She LOOKED UNDR MY BED AUGN MAVIS IS UNDR MY BED.

10. **Stage 6: The Extending Writer**

+ Topic fully elaborated with rich details. Organization sustains writer's purpose and moves the reader through the piece.
+ Engages and sustains the reader's interest.
+ Creative and novel use of language and effective use of varied sentence patterns.
+ Errors in surface features do not interfere with meaning.

Appendix B: Teacher Questionnaire

Please respond to these questions via my school e-mail. If there is something you would like to expand on and would rather discuss with me, please call at my home number. Thank-you for taking the time to answer these questions. It is appreciated.

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. Of those, how many in kindergarten?
3. What is your under-graduate degree in?
4. What is your Master's degree in?
5. What is your philosophy for teaching writing to kindergarteners?
6. What is your attitude towards writing?
7. Are you familiar with writer's workshop? If so, briefly tell me what you know.
8. What are your expectations of student's during the writing instruction?
9. Have you had professional learning in writer's workshop strategy?
10. Do you have any other comments about writing that you would like to add?

Thank-you for taking your time to answer these questions!

Appendix C: Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) Kindergarten

Writing (Grammar, Usage, Mechanics, and Spelling)

- use left to right and top to bottom directionality in writing (GPS) (KLA E 2009-48)
- begin to use capitalization at the beginning of a sentences and punctuation (periods and question marks) at the end of sentences (GPS) (KLA E2009-49

Writing Across Genres

- write or dictate to describe familiar persons, places, objects, or experiences (KLA F2009-50)
- explore prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (KLA F2009-50)
- write legibly in manuscript own first and last names with initial capital letters, self-selected and teacher-selected words, and upper and lower case letters of the alphabet (GPS) (KLA F2009-52)
- begin to develop a draft from pre-writing (GPS) (KLA F2009-53)
- begin to develop a sense of closure (GPS) (KLA F2009-54)
- begin to use describing words (GPS) (KLA F2009-55)
- pre-write orally or in writing to generate ideas (graphic organizers) (GPS) (KLA F2009-56)

Writing –Narrative

- write a story that involves one event (GPS) (KLA F2009-57)
- use drawings, letters, and phonetically spelled words to share information (GPS) (KLA F2009-58)

Writing (Informational)

- write a piece that involves one topic(GPS) (KLA F2009-59)
- use drawings, letters, and phonetically spelled words to share information (GPS) (KLA F2009-60)
- publish a final copy (GPS) (KLA F2009-61)

Writing (Persuasive)

- state an opinion (GPS) (KLA F2009-62)
- use words, illustrations, or graphics to support an opinion (GPS) (KLA F2009-63)
- begin to use formats appropriate to the genre (letter and poster) (GPS) (KLA F2009-64)

Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

Walden University, Minneapolis, MN, Educational Doctorate in Education

Coppin State University, Baltimore, MD, Master's in Education

Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA, BS in Elementary Education

AWARDS

- Teacher of the Year, Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2010

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1999-Present	Kindergarten Teacher
1987-1999	Grade 2 and Kindergarten Teacher
1978-1982	Grade 2 Teacher