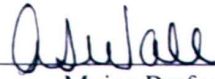


**WRITING ASSESSMENT SCORES AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF A DISTRICT WRITING MODEL**

JANICE M. COOK

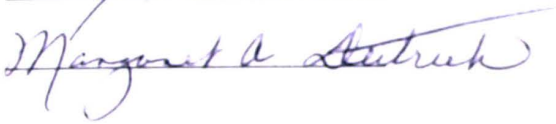
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I am submitting herewith a Field Study written by Janice M. Cook entitled "Writing Assessment Scores after the Implementation of a District Writing Model". I have examined the final copy of this field study for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist, with a major in Administration and Supervision.

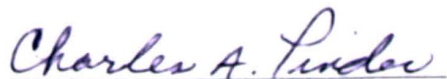


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Date

July 13, 2006

**WRITING ASSESSMENT SCORES AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A
DISTRICT WRITING MODEL**

A Field Study

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

Austin Peay State University

by

Janice M. Cook

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST

August 2006

DEDICATION

This field study is dedicated to my family
for their support and assistance
as I have furthered my education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Anne Wall for her assistance and resources. I would also like to thank Dr. Carlette Hardin and Dr. Margaret Deitrich for their advice and help.

Further thanks go to my coworkers at Rossvie Middle School. Tami Lightner was especially helpful with data collection and provided an ear when needed. The teachers on my team, the Flying Hawks, were a source of continuing support as I completed the many steps of the study.

I would like to thank my husband Steve, and my two children, Jennifer and Christopher. They were supportive and helpful throughout.

Finally, I would like to thank my friend Robbin Johnston for her friendship and support.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the effect of the District Writing Model on the test scores of students at a middle school. The effect on the overall score and effect based on gender, race, and socioeconomic status were evaluated. Using a pair-wise matched sample of students and t tests for independent samples, findings indicated there was no significant difference ($p=.05$) in the scores for the students who took the test in 2003 ($n=267$) and 2005 ($n=267$).

It was concluded that although the average score rose, no significant difference was observed in the writing scores of the groups. However, trends in the demographic data may be of use to educators. Additionally, further studies are recommended that evaluate the District Writing Model for a longer period of time and examine other schools with different demographics.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I, INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Research Questions and Hypotheses.....	5
Significance of the Study and Applications.....	6
Limitations.....	7
Assumptions.....	7
Definition of Terms.....	7

CHAPTER II, REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Importance of Writing.....	9
Gender, Ethnicity, and Low Socioeconomic Issues.....	10
Examination of Writing Improvement Programs.....	11
Six Trait Writing.....	16
Summary.....	20

CHAPTER III, METHODOLOGY

Introduction.....	21
Research Design.....	21
Subjects.....	21
Instrument.....	22
Procedure.....	22
Analysis.....	23

CHAPTER IV, PRESENTATION OF DATA..... 24

CHAPTER V, DISCUSSION..... 38

REFERENCES..... 43

APPENDICES..... 46

 A. School System Letter of Request 48

 B. School System Permission Letter..... 50

 C. School System Change Request 52

 D. School System Response to Change Request 54

 E. IRB Approval Letter 56

VITA..... 57

List of Tables

Table 1, Matched Sample/Score to Gender.....	26
Table 2, Matched Sample/Score to Socioeconomic Status	28
Table 3, Matched Sample/Score to Ethnicity.....	30
Table 4, <i>t</i> test Total Matched Sample 2003 to 2005.....	31
Table 5, <i>t</i> test Males Matched Sample 2003 to 2005.....	32
Table 6, <i>t</i> test Females Matched Sample 2003 to 2005.....	33
Table 7, <i>t</i> test Socioeconomic Status- Non Participating in Free/Reduced Lunch Program Matched Sample 2003 to 2005.....	34
Table 8, <i>t</i> test Socioeconomic Status- Participating in Free/Reduced Lunch Program Matched Sample 2003 to 2005.....	35
Table 9, <i>t</i> test Ethnicity- Minority Matched Sample 2003 to 2005.....	36
Table 10, <i>t</i> test Ethnicity- Majority Matched Sample 2003 to 2005.....	37

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, assesses writing proficiency. The NAEP has conducted six writing assessments since 1969. In 2002, NAEP results in writing showed that the percent of students achieving at the proficient level or better was only 28 percent in grade 4, 31 percent in grade 8, and 24 percent in grade 12. There was also a significant gap in the writing test results for ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Kozlow & Bellamy, 2005).

Although the school system that was the focus of the study shows results that are considerably higher than many of the other school systems in the United States, the goal is for all students to gain proficiency on the writing assessment. In 2003, at the middle school level, the state of Tennessee showed 83% proficient, while the school system studied showed 82%. The middle school studied showed 87% proficient. The average score was 4, or in the competent range.

In 2003, the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges recommended a writing agenda for the nation's public schools. Some of the items the commission recommended included increased student time spent writing, measurement of results, writing across the curriculum, and teacher training. (The Neglected R, 2003). Although the Six Trait Writing Program was not specifically mentioned, the implementation of a writing plan was suggested. Six Trait Writing is often adopted by school systems as a writing plan.

The Tennessee school system studied has incorporated all of these initiatives into its current curriculum. The state of Tennessee mandates testing using the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) Writing Assessment. The other items are implemented as part of the District Writing Model, which centers around Six Trait Writing.

The school system implemented the District Writing Model in the 2003-2004 school year. The model was part of a district-wide literacy initiative. The initiative was devised on a three-year implementation schedule, with 2005-2006 being year three.

The school system uses a variety of measurements to determine the effectiveness of the initiative. Classroom observations, information from literacy coaches and consultants, and teacher feedback help the system evaluate the program. Now that the initial three-year implementation plan is complete, the time is appropriate for detailed examination of the available data.

The county's writing scores have been rising since 2002. In 2002 the system's overall score (percent of students scoring competent, strong, or outstanding on the TCAP Writing Assessment) was 77%, the next year the system also received a 77%. In 2004, the average was an 82%. In 2005, the average rose to an 83%. These averages shows a trend towards higher scores. In all of those years, the middle school scores were the same or higher than the system scores. However, the elementary and high school scores were often lower than the system.

The school system is working to increase the number of students performing at proficiency or above on the TCAP Writing Assessment. Although many score well on the

test, many others still score at a limited, flawed, or deficient level. The goal is to improve all scores, but especially to bring everyone to proficiency.

In order to improve writing scores for the county, the school system instituted the District Writing Model in 2003-2004. The school district purchased materials and training from Northwest Regional Educational Laboratories for the Six Trait Writing Model. By calling the program the “District Writing Model”, all members of the school system have ownership of the program.

The system’s focus was on the addition of one or two writing traits at a time. Teachers were given a chance to utilize the traits and gain familiarity with them before other traits were added. The goal was to have the entire model implemented with noticeable gains or growth within three years. Benchmarks were set to determine if the program implementation was occurring on schedule.

Initially, language arts teachers received training in the teaching and scoring methods related to Six Trait Writing during summer workshops. Selected teachers were given advanced or additional training during the school year. The training was in the form of a full day in-service at a central site. The trained teachers took on a leadership role in the school by assisting their peers in the implementation of the program. Training occurred at the building level for all teachers during several sessions of the scheduled professional development days, often led by the building-level teachers that had been to the earlier workshops and training sessions. The amount of hours spent in training varied from school to school.

Teachers were taught the meaning of each trait, what indicators to look for at each of the six levels on the rubric, and were given multiple opportunities to practice scoring

sample pieces using the rubric. Teachers were taught how to construct effective prompts for writing assignments. Group discussions of sample piece scoring helped ensure that scoring was consistent.

All teachers received posters of the six traits for their classrooms. Teachers received copies of the rubric to be shared with their students. Many schools incorporated the rubric into their school planner that was given to each student at the start of the school year.

The emphasis was on all teachers using a common language and a common means of assessment for writing. Ruth Culham (2003) writes:

Student writing improves when the traits are used in a systematic way in the classroom and in the school. We must build curriculum that maintains a shared view of what ‘good’ writing looks like that remains constant throughout the school years, K to 12. (p. 13)

Schools within the system implement the program in different ways. Some schools have school-wide writing events where each student must write on the same prompt at the same time. Other schools allow individual teachers to implement the program in his or her own way, setting a guideline for the number of writing events that are to be completed in a particular period.

Content area teachers are also using Six Trait Writing. Fulwiler (1988) stresses that writing is, “one of the issues of instruction that cuts comfortably (or not) across all disciplinary lines” (p. 65). Content area teachers were given specific training on prompt writing and scoring for their particular subject area needs. Observation from lesson plans

and classroom visits indicate frequent use of the Six Trait Writing Model in all subject areas.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the program is successful. Students arrive at the next grade knowing the vocabulary and expectations of each trait. Writing is taking place in each classroom in each school on a regular basis.

Purpose of the Study

This study will assess the effect of the implementation of the District Writing Model on student writing achievement. The researcher will utilize data from the TCAP Writing Assessment taken each spring by the students in a suburban Tennessee county.

The study will use TCAP Writing Assessment scores from a middle school in Tennessee, which opened in 1998. The study will assess any significant difference between race, gender, and socioeconomic status as defined by the free and reduced lunch program.

Administrators and teachers can utilize the information to enhance the instruction received by the students. Both teachers and administrators can continue efforts to increase the number of students scoring proficient as measured by the state's writing assessment.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Four research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Is there a significant difference between the TCAP Writing Assessment scores before implementation of the District Writing Model and after?
2. Is there a significant difference in the TCAP Writing Assessment scores before and after implementation of the District Writing Model based on gender?

3. Is there a significant difference in the TCAP Writing Assessment scores before and after implementation of the District Writing Model based on socioeconomic status?

4. Is there a significant difference in the TCAP Writing Assessment scores before and after implementation of the District Writing Model based on ethnicity?

Four hypotheses were proposed for this study:

1. There is no statistically significant difference between the TCAP Writing Assessment scores after the implementation of the District Writing Model.

2. There is no statistically significant difference between the TCAP Writing Assessment scores after implementation of the District Writing Model based on gender.

3. There is no statistically significant difference between the TCAP Writing Assessment scores after implementation of the District Writing Model based on socioeconomic status.

4. There is no statistically significant difference between the TCAP Writing Assessment scores after implementation of the District Writing Model based on ethnicity.

Significance of the Study and Applications

Through the identification of score differences with implementation of the District Writing Model, and the differences in gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity, the study will identify areas of concern that impact the teaching and administration of the District Writing Model. By understanding the impact of the District Writing Model on scores, the school system can tailor the program to meet the needs of all learners.

Limitations

Several limitations existed in this study:

1. This study was limited to students at a middle school in a Tennessee County, who took the TCAP Writing Assessment in 2003 and 2005.
2. The students who took the test in 2003 before implementation were compared to the students who took the test in 2005 after implementation. This is not a comparison of the same students' scores from 2003 to 2005.
3. The assessment used is only one assessment of writing effectiveness. The full range of writing effectiveness is difficult to assess with a single thirty-five minute test taken annually.
4. The group was matched based on gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity only. No group matching was performed based on any other reported test scores.

Assumptions

The following was assumed for this research:

1. The teachers implemented the District Writing Model consistently.
2. The scores were reported accurately in the state documents.

Definitions of Terms

1. District Writing Model- a common approach, used in the school system being studied, for teaching writing in kindergarten through 12th grade, using the Six Trait Writing Model.
2. Six-Trait Writing- a writing program developed by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland, Oregon. The program uses a common vocabulary and a shared

vision to teach writing. The six traits of writing include ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Presentation is provided as an additional point for consideration once students have mastered the six basic traits of good writing.

3. TCAP Writing Assessment- a writing assessment in which students must write a rough draft essay in response to a prompt within a limited time. Eighth grade students have 35 minutes to complete the essay. Eighth grade students write an expository essay (an explanation). The writing samples are graded holistically by trained teachers at the state level.

4. Writing Process- The writing process is a set of stages that a piece of writing goes through as the writer polishes the work. The writer conferences with the teacher and peers as the process unfolds. The stages are prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing. The stages are recursive. The writer moves back and forth between stages as needed to enhance or complete the writing.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Importance of Writing

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Report in 1994 showed an increasing achievement gap between the highest and lowest achieving groups in reading comprehension of fourth grade students. The fourth grade students showed 38 percent were proficient. Eighth grade students scored about 33 percent for proficiency in literacy, and twelfth graders scored about 40 percent for proficiency. These numbers indicate a need to strengthen literacy skills for American students (Carr, 2002).

Strong literacy skills are more important than ever before. Carr discusses the need to be sure that students understand the importance of literacy in their lives. Of course, college bound students need strong literacy skills, but, even in planning a vocational career, literacy is crucial. “Mechanics, electricians, plumbers, and members of other skilled trades require the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information” (Carr, 2002, p. 17).

Writing skills in particular are in need of strengthening. In a report by the National Commission on Writing for America’s Families, Schools, and Colleges (2003), the need to revolutionize student writing is proposed. The report stresses the importance of writing skills for educational and career success. The writing skills students learn in school are the building blocks they use in their future careers. In writing, students learn to put together the things they have learned.

Hunt (2004), a teacher in Colorado, wrote a powerful statement about teaching and learning writing. She wrote:

Is there anything we can teach students that is more important than being able to produce compelling, clear writing? I don't think so. Writing is power, writing is what can propel students forward or hinder virtually every dream they have (p. 103).

Writing skills affect all areas of learning. Students need to be able to express themselves in writing.

Gender, Ethnicity, and Low Socioeconomic Issues

The TCAP Writing Assessment Test is not disaggregated for gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. Current research suggests that gaps exist in these areas. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 requires states to examine test data to determine if the sub groups are making the same gains in testing, compared to other groups and the tested group as a whole. The reporting of disaggregated data has put added emphasis on lessening the gaps for these groups. The NCLB Act requires test score parity across racial and ethnic groups by 2014 (Carlson, 2004).

In a recent Newsweek article, Tyre (2006) reported that boys are falling behind in education today. Eighth grade girls score an average of 11 points higher on standardized reading tests, and they score 21 points higher than boys do on standardized writing tests. High school boys are losing even more ground to girls. Twelfth grade girls score 16 points higher than boys on standardized reading tests, and 24 points higher than boys do on standardized writing tests.

In a Minnesota study, boys showed many gender differences. Boys were more likely to be placed in special education programs and remedial programs. Boys were more likely to be suspended and participate in risk taking behaviors. Impulsivity was higher in boys. Academic achievement was similar for boys and girls. However, the authors report that more boys performed at the lower levels, and more girls performed at the higher levels (Du, Weymouth, & Dragseth, 2003). Additionally, all of the writing performance assessments showed girls significantly outperformed males.

Socioeconomic status is a concern for educators as well. Tajalli and Opheim (2004) report, "Researchers consistently find that one of the most important influences on student achievement is socioeconomic status (SES) of students" (p. 44). In general, more affluent students perform better.

Ethnicity is another focus area for the disaggregation of test scores. Hedges and Nowell (1999) completed a study of the black-white gap in achievement test scores. They found that the black-white gap in achievement is large and decreasing very slowly over time. The bottom of the test-score distribution is becoming more equal, but at the top blacks are underrepresented.

Like the situation with boys, black students are more likely to be placed in less demanding classes. They are also placed more often in special education programs (Roach, 2004).

Examination of Writing Improvement Programs

Several researchers have studied writing improvement programs. The programs all attempted to increase writing scores for the population for which they were developed. However, the programs did not all utilize the same teaching strategies or assessment

methods. While some programs included the Six Trait Writing Model as part of their improvement programs, they also included additional components.

Jarmer, Kozol, Nelson, and Salsberry (2001) completed a study entitled “Six Trait Writing Model Improves Scores at Jennie Wilson Elementary”. This study is primarily concerned with Six Trait Writing Model effectiveness, but does include other strategies as part of its plan. The Kansas school taught a new trait each year. They utilized mini-lessons to teach writing skills. Students learned to evaluate sample pieces based on the six traits. Then the students applied their newly learned skills to their own work. Students were allowed to choose their writing topics, and they shared a variety of literature by different authors.

Several means were used to assess the results. The fifth graders took the Kansas writing assessment. Fourth graders took the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). All students in the school took a pre and post-writing test at the school level to use for comparison purposes.

After three years, the researchers reported improvement each year. The fifth grade scores on the state writing assessment were the same or higher than district and state averages. The school level testing showed improvements also. According to Jarmer, et al., (2001):

By grade level, the students increased their scores (moving from a 1 or 2, to a 3, 4, or 5) on the average of 54% for kindergarten when writing or dictating a story; 92% for first grade in narrative writing; 68% in third grade in narrative writing; 40% in the fourth grade in narrative writing; and 42% in the fifth grade in narrative writing (p. 5).

Kowalewski, Murphy, and Starns (2002) completed an action research project of fourth and fifth graders in Illinois. They identified problems in the students including a lack of skill in organization and revision in the writing process. Solution strategies were investigated and were implemented as teaching strategies.

Instruction using the Writing Process and Six Trait Writing were the main thrust of the Kowaleski program. Teachers also utilized modeling of good writing skills, use of rubrics and reflection, portfolios, and an emphasis on audience for the emerging writers. Time to write at least four days a week was included in the program. The sites were provided with a systematic 10-week action plan. The 10-week plan moved to 13 weeks during the actual study.

The assessment methods were student and teacher scored rubrics for baseline and final writing pieces. Assessment also included student reflections and portfolio rubrics. The researchers report a marked improvement in student writing at all three sites of the study.

The researchers observed that time was a crucial problem when attempting to increase student's writing skills. The goal of writing one hour a day four times a week was difficult to accomplish. They also discussed the subjectivity of writing assessment. Even with a rubric for evaluating student work, it is hard to eliminate subjectivity. The teachers and the students in this study completed all of the assessments.

Garcia, Meyer, and Walsh (2002) described a program that targeted first and second graders in a writing improvement program. They observed the following regarding the need for a writing improvement program:

As evidenced through our research, students have overall poor writing skills.

These problems have stemmed from the following issues: lack of student motivation, high state standards, poor assessments, lack of basic skills instruction, language differences, unbalanced writing programs, and differing school and home values (p. 18).

Initial writing rubrics and interest surveys were given to the students. Those products as well as teacher observation indicated a lack of writing skills. These surveys supported the necessity for a program change. Additionally, the lower grades previously had no implemented writing program.

The teachers intervened using three basic categories. The first category was mini-lessons on targeted skills. A second category was the use of portfolios. A third main area of intervention was conferencing with individual students about their work. The workshop approach to teaching writing along with daily time for writing made a difference in student attitude and achievement.

The researchers reported an increase in the quality and quantity of writing based on results shown in rubrics at five scheduled assessment periods throughout the intervention. The teachers felt that the interventions were successful, but they cited a lack of time for writing as an issue to overcome. The researchers mention another interesting thought. The improvement process is long term; results may unfold over a long span of time (Garcia, et al., 2002).

Jerome and Gilman (2003) conducted research with third grade students in Indiana. Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) test scores were

compared before implementation of a writing program and two years after the implementation.

North Vermillion Elementary School implemented a school-wide writing improvement program. Teachers received training and were given the opportunity to observe other teachers teaching writing. Students learned the writing process, responded to prompts, and learned to use state rubrics. They had daily writing times, published student books, and journals (Jerome & Gilman, 2003).

These researchers also determined that the improvement program was effective. There was a significant difference in the test scores with implementation of the writing program (Jerome & Gilman, 2003).

In a study by McIntyre and Leroy (2003), a young boy was assisted with his literacy development. The authors utilized interventions similar to those used in many writing improvement studies. Bobby was afforded choice in his writing assignments. Reading materials were picked that would pique his interest. A home link was created with assignments to get the family involved in his learning. The authors stressed the need to provide time for writing and constructive feedback for writing improvement.

A final study in this section was conducted by James, Abbott, and Greenwood (2001). A nine-week writing workshop was held in a fourth grade classroom. The Six Trait Writing Model was combined with a process-writing model and graphic organizers. During the first nine weeks, only the higher achieving students received instruction. The second nine weeks the lower students received instruction. They had writing instruction for 30 minutes a day. While all scores improved, the low group made the most progress.

The authors suggest that the low-pupil teacher ratio in the low group could be a factor in the improvement.

All of the studies showed positive changes with implementation of a writing program. Though the programs varied in method, duration, and testing methods, the positive results are encouraging to other schools and communities that are seeking methods to raise writing test scores.

Six Trait Writing

Six Trait Writing started with a trait-based approach to writing developed in the mid 1980's. In 1983, teachers in the Beaverton School District in Oregon used research on the writing process and the emergence of analytic scales to provide a foundation for what became the Six Trait Writing model. Analytic scales are the individual components of good writing, which later become known as traits. Writing process plus the use of traits are the main parts of the model.

Researchers at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) developed the formal program that linked an analytic assessment tool to the writing instructional model. They based their work on the work of teachers in Beaverton, Oregon and Missoula, Montana. They also used the work of Paul Diederich to develop their model. Diederich found numerous factors that were common to readers that evaluated student work. His factors developed into the Six Traits used in the model today (Kozlow & Bellamy, 2004).

The Six Traits are ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. The traits are described in more detail as follows:

1. Ideas: Ideas are the content of the message. When the ideas are strong the overall message is clear not garbled. Ideas encompass the main theme of the writing and include relevant anecdotes and details.

2. Organization: Organization is the structure of the piece. This includes the thread of the central meaning of the work and the pattern of logic. The connection between the ideas are strong and the piece closes with a sense of resolution.

3. Voice: Voice is the soul of the piece or the personal tone and flavor of the writing. Voice is the sense that a real person is speaking to you and cares about the message of the work.

4. Word Choice: Word choice is the use of rich, colorful, or precise language. The writer should avoid jargon or redundancy and focus on language that moves and enlightens the reader.

5. Sentence Fluency: Sentence fluency is the rhythm and flow of the language. For optimal sentence fluency, the sentences should vary in structure and length, and play to the ear, not just to the eye, much the same way as music.

6. Conventions: Grammar and mechanical correctness are the conventions of writing. Punctuation, paragraphing, capitalization, grammar and usage, and spelling are all important components of this writing trait (Culham, 2003).

Recently another trait has been included for assessment. The newest trait is presentation, which refers to the way the piece appears on the paper. For this reason, Six Traits are sometimes called 6 + 1 Trait Writing (Culham, 2003).

The rubric used for the Six Trait Writing Model is based on a 1-5 scale. A one is the lowest score on the scoring continuum. A score of one means that the author is not yet showing any control; they are beginning to write. A two means that the author is emerging. A three means the author is developing. A four is effective or maturing, and a five is strong (Culham, 2003). Each trait is evaluated and scored separately using a detailed rubric based on the scoring continuum.

Teachers evaluate writing using the rubrics or scoring guides NWREL provides. Teacher use of the rubric keeps scoring more consistent and objective. The teacher should incorporate vocabulary from the scoring guides to comment on student work. For example, the teacher could say that the topic was narrow and manageable if the score received a 5 for ideas. The students will learn to make the connection between their writing and the language used in the rubric.

Students can use the scoring guide or rubric to evaluate and strengthen their own writing as they complete the writing process. Students should write with the rubric in front of them. In essence, students learn the specific criteria for writing and how to apply it to their own work (Smith, 2003).

Training and materials for teachers are provided by NWREL. (Kozlow & Bellamy, 2004). It was reported that 15,000 teachers had received training in the program over a span of 15 years. Participants come from all 50 states and 17 countries. (Kozlow & Bellamy, 2004).

An examination of the NWREL website was useful in determining the effectiveness of the Six Trait Writing Model. One study found and summarized on the NWREL website looked at traditional writing process instruction versus teaching the use

of the six-trait analytic assessment scoring criteria for revision. This study, unlike others discussed previously, focused primarily on using the traits. Three traits were emphasized: ideas, organization, and voice. In those three traits, gains of .84, .55, and .87 were reported (Study findings, 2005).

Bellamy, of NWREL, summarized information on studies of Six Trait Writing. He discussed five small scale studies that support the effectiveness of Six Trait Writing. The studies all were conducted at single schools and usually only involved one grade level of students. The studies all used pre and post scores. All but one of the studies was only for one year. The article reported the following (Bellamy, n.d.):

1. Jennie Wilson Elementary: improvement in all grade levels K-5th ranging from 40% to 92%.
2. Kent School District: increase in the number of students meeting benchmark standards in all traits, ranging from 8.6% to 32.2%.
3. Pilot SAS Writing Assessment: growth in the percentage rate meeting the scoring criteria of 12%.
4. Hartly Elementary School: positive growth in average scores in all traits ranging from 1.79 to 2.09 on a 5-point scale.
5. The Saudi Arabia/ARAMCO School: increase of 7% in the number of students meeting or exceeding the district writing standard.

A major study is being conducted currently by NWREL to accurately measure the effectiveness of the Six Trait Writing Model. A need for further research into the effectiveness of Six Trait Writing and the professional development model of training is needed.

Summary

The importance of writing is clear. Today's students need a strong focus on writing skills. The research shows many successful models for writing improvement programs exist. A suburban county in Tennessee is using one such program, the Six Trait Writing Model as their District Writing Model. The implementation of a writing program, regardless of the components of the program, seems to be a strong indicator of gains in writing scores. The additional time spent writing plus the use of proven strategies backed by research proved to be successful for the studies in the literature review.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The review of literature emphasized the need to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the District Writing Model. Based on this need, this study looked at the effect of the District Writing Model on middle school students at a suburban Tennessee middle school. This study examined the effect of the District Writing Model in general, and the effect based on gender, ethnicity, and economic status.

The students at the middle school who took the TCAP Writing Assessment in the years 2003 (before implementation of the District Writing Model) and 2005 (the second year after implementation) were the subjects for the study. A database was developed with names, numbers, test scores, and demographic data for both test groups. Analysis of the data determined answers to the research questions as well as providing information in general about the District Writing Model.

Research Design

Subjects

The students at the middle school who took the TCAP Writing Assessment in 2003 and 2005 were the research subjects for this study. Approximately 275 students took the test on each of the testing dates.

Permission was sought from the Institutional Review Board and the school system used in the study. There was no risk to the participants since all data was previously existing and available from the school system and the state website that contains the educational testing statistics.

Instrument

The instrument was the TCAP Writing Assessment administered in the spring of each year. In the TCAP Writing Assessment, students must write a rough draft essay in response to a prompt within a limited time. Eighth grade students write an expository essay (an explanation) in thirty-five minutes. The writing samples were graded holistically with the emphasis placed on the whole impact of the essay. Student essays were scored using a rubric with a six-point holistic scale. The scale used the following scores: a six was outstanding, a five was strong, a four was competent, a three was limited, a two was flawed, and a one was deficient.

Procedure

The researcher utilized the student names and scores for each of the two relevant years. The school itself has test data for each of the relevant years, but it was summarized, and only percentages for proficient and above proficient were listed. The data was not in the correct format for use in the study. Therefore, a detailed list of names and scores was provided to the researcher by the testing coordinator for the school system. A database was created using the Microsoft Excel program.

Demographic information for the 2005 data was accessed from the state testing information site using building level administrative access. This information was added to the database. The demographic information was not available for the writing assessment, but each student also took the yearly TCAP test. The students in the study had individual TCAP demographic data available from the state testing website. The demographic information was collected for each student and mated to their Writing Assessment scores for the purposes of the study. The 2003 test data was not available

from the state website since the students have graduated. The demographic data was accessed from the school system's database from central office. Any student with incomplete data was eliminated from the study. Since the state does not match demographic information with the writing assessment, this part of the study proved valuable. Once the database was complete, student names were erased from the database. Student names were not used in the study.

For the purposes of preparation for the t tests to be performed, the data was organized based on the year the subjects took the Writing Assessment. The data was also separated by gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity based on the year the subjects took the Writing Assessment. Groups were selected and matched for 2003 and 2005 based on gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. In order to maintain the pair-wise matching of the participants, it became necessary to eliminate some participants from the study.

Analysis

The students' scores were compared using t tests for the 2003 and 2005 school years, and to compare gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. The t tests were two tailed and assumed equal variance.

The Excel program's data analysis tools were used to perform the tests to determine if the null hypotheses would be accepted or rejected. The significance level was set at 0.05.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

This study was undertaken to determine the effect of the District Writing Model on student performance on the TCAP Writing Assessment. The overall test scores and demographic data were examined to determine the effect. The questions for the study were:

1. Is there a significant difference between the TCAP Writing Assessment scores before implementation of the District Writing Model and after?
2. Is there a significant difference in the TCAP Writing Assessment scores before and after implementation of the District Writing Model based on gender?
3. Is there a significant difference in the TCAP Writing Assessment scores before and after implementation of the District Writing Model based on socioeconomic status?
4. Is there a significant difference in the TCAP Writing Assessment scores before and after implementation of the District Writing Model based on ethnicity?

Demographic Data

Demographic data for the 2003 and 2005 was collected as well as student TCAP Writing Assessment scores. A matched sample was selected using pair-wise matching based on the three demographic characteristics, gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. The selection of the matched sample required the elimination of 49 students from the full sample. The final matched sample contained 267 students in each of the two relevant years.

The state does not collect or publish data for the Writing Assessment based on demographics. As a result, this data is valuable for the teachers and administrators as an aid to guide instruction or intervention.

Trends in the matched sample score to gender data for 2003 revealed that a disproportionate number of males, 16%, scored a 3. Only 3.6% of females achieved a similar result. The males were underrepresented in the higher score levels of 5 and 6. Twenty-five percent of males scored a 5, while 38.2% of females scored the same. Of the males, 6.1% scored a 6, while 13.2% of the females scored a 6. The 2005 data shows males overrepresented in the lower test scores of 3 and 4. Compared to 3.6% of females, 8.3% of males scored a 3. Males scoring a 4 totaled 57.2%, while 45.5% of females scored the same. The scores alternated to show an under representation of males in the higher scores of 5 and 6. Males scoring a 5 totaled 25.8%, while 36% of the females scored the same. Compared to 13.9% of females earning a score of 6, 5.3% of males achieved the same score (See Table 1).

Table 1

Matched Sample/ Score to Gender

2003

2005

Score	Gender	Number of students	Percent of Sample	Score	Gender	Number of Students	Percent of Sample
1	Male	1	.76%	1	Male	0	0%
	Female	0	0%		Female	0	0%
2	Male	3	2.2%	2	Male	4	3.0%
	Female	3	2.2%		Female	1	.73%
3	Male	21	16.0%	3	Male	11	8.3%
	Female	5	3.6%		Female	5	3.6%
4	Male	65	49.6%	4	Male	75	57.2%
	Female	58	42.6%		Female	62	45.5%
5	Male	33	25.1%	5	Male	34	25.9%
	Female	52	38.2%		Female	49	36.0%
6	Male	8	6.1%	6	Male	7	5.3%
	Female	18	13.2%		Female	19	13.9%

Notes:

Total male: 131 (49.0%) Total female: 136 (50.9%) Total sample/year: 267

The matched sample score to socioeconomic status data for 2003 showed that students who were eligible for the free or reduced lunch program were overrepresented in the 3 score, however, they were underrepresented in the highest score area of 6. Of the students on the free/reduced lunch program, 25.9% scored a 3, compared to 5.6% of the students not receiving free/reduced lunch. No student who was eligible for the free or reduced lunch program scored a 6, but 12.2% of the students not on free/reduced lunch achieved a 6. The 2005 data showed that students who were eligible for the free or reduced lunch program were again overrepresented in the 3 score, but they were underrepresented in the 6 score. Of the students on the free/reduced lunch program, 14.8% scored a 3, while only 3.7% of those students not on free/reduced lunch scored a 3. Only 3.7% of students on the free/reduced lunch program scored a six, compared to 11.2% of the students not on the free/reduced lunch program. (See Table 2).

Table 2

Matched Sample/ Score to Socioeconomic Status

2003

2005

Score	SES	Number of Students	Percent of Sample	Score	SES	Number of Students	Percent of Sample
1	N	1	.46%	1	N	0	0%
	Y	0	0%		Y	0	0%
2	N	5	2.3%	2	N	2	.93%
	Y	1	1.8%		Y	3	5.5%
3	N	12	5.6%	3	N	8	3.7%
	Y	14	25.9%		Y	8	14.8%
4	N	99	46.4%	4	N	111	52.1%
	Y	24	44.4%		Y	26	48.1%
5	N	70	32.8%	5	N	68	31.9%
	Y	15	27.7%		Y	15	27.7%
6	N	26	12.2%	6	N	24	11.2%
	Y	0	0%		Y	2	3.7%

Notes:

N= Not on free/reduced lunch

Y=Free/reduced lunch program

Total N: 213 (79.7%) Total Y: 54 (20.2%) Total sample/year: 267

The matched sample score to ethnicity data for 2003 showed a disproportionate percentage of minority students in the lower test scores of 2 and 3. Minority students scoring a 2 totaled 7.6%, compared to .49% of majority students. While the percentage of majority students scoring a 3 were 7.9%, the percentage of minority students who scored at the 3 level totaled 15.3%. The 2005 data showed minority students also overrepresented in the 2 and 3 scores. Compared to 4.6% of the minority students who scored a 2, .99% of the majority students yield similar results. The percentage of minority students who scored a 3 totaled 10.7% compared to 4.4% of the majority students. (See Table 3).

Table 3

Matched Sample/ Score to Ethnicity

2003

2005

Score	Ethnicity	Number of students	Percent of Sample	Score	Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percent of Sample
1	Majority	1	.49%	1	N/A	0	0%
2	Minority	5	7.6%	2	Minority	3	4.6%
	Majority	1	.49%		Majority	2	.99%
3	Minority	10	15.3%	3	Minority	7	10.7%
	Majority	16	7.9%		Majority	9	4.4%
4	Minority	26	40%	4	Minority	38	58.4%
	Majority	97	48%		Majority	99	49.0%
5	Minority	21	32.3%	5	Minority	15	23.0%
	Majority	64	31.6%		Majority	68	33.6%
6	Minority	3	4.6%	6	Minority	2	3.0%
	Majority	23	11.3%		Majority	24	11.8%

Notes:

Total Majority: 202 (75.6%) Total Minority: 65 (24.3%) Total sample/year: 267

A t test for independent samples ($p=.05$) was used to compare the TCAP Writing Assessment scores for the two years. Although the data analyzed supported the null hypothesis for the study, the demographic trends are of value to teachers and administrators as they design instruction to benefit all learners. The trend showed a rise in mean score (see Table 4), which is a positive event for this middle school, even though a statistically significant change did not occur. Examination of the t test showed there was no significant difference in the Writing Assessment test scores. Therefore, the original hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between the writing test scores after the implementation of the District Model was supported (See Table 4).

Table 4

t test Total Matched Sample 2003 to 2005

Year	# of Students	Mean Score	SD	SE Mean	df	T Value	P Value
2003	267	4.360	0.896	0.055			
2005	267	4.408	0.819	0.050			
					532	-0.66	0.513

Separate t tests ($p=.05$) were also completed using each of the three variables: gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. Results showed there was no significant difference between 2003 and 2005 based on the three above variables. Therefore the original hypotheses that there was no statistically significant difference between the

writing test scores after the implementation of the District Model based on gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status was supported.

A *t* test was completed to examine the differences based on gender. Males taking the Writing Assessment in 2003 were compared to males taking the Writing Assessment in 2005. The results are reported in Table 5 below.

Table 5

t test Males Matched Sample 2003 to 2005

Year	# of Students	Mean Score	SD	SE		T Value	P Value
				Mean	df		
2003	131	4.145	0.895	0.078			
2005	131	4.221	0.797	0.070			
					260	-0.73	0.467

An additional *t* test was completed to examine the differences based on gender. Females taking the Writing Assessment in 2003 were compared to females taking the Writing Assessment in 2005. The results are reported in Table 6 below.

Table 6

t test Females Matched Sample 2003 to 2005

Year	# of Students	Mean Score	SD	SE Mean	df	T Value	P Value
2003	136	4.566	0.849	0.073			
2005	136	4.488	0.803	0.069			
					270	-0.22	0.826

A *t* test was completed to examine the differences between students taking the TCAP Writing Assessment in 2003 and 2005 based on socioeconomic status. Lower socioeconomic or disadvantaged students were defined as students who were receiving free or reduced lunch during the school year examined. The Writing Assessment scores for 2003 and 2005 were compared for students who were not participating in the free or reduced lunch program. The results are reported in Table 7 below.

Table 7

t test Socioeconomic Status – Non Participating in Free/Reduced Lunch Program
Matched Sample 2003 to 2005

Year	# of Students	Mean Score	SD	SE Mean	df	T Value	P Value
2003	213	4.455	0.898	0.062			
2005	213	4.488	0.781	0.053			
					424	-0.40	0.687

An additional *t* test was completed to examine the differences between students taking the TCAP Writing Assessment in 2003 and 2005 based on socioeconomic status. Lower socioeconomic or disadvantaged students were previously defined as students who were receiving free or reduced lunch during the school year examined. The Writing Assessment scores for 2003 and 2005 were compared for students who were participating in the free or reduced lunch program. The results are reported in Table 8 below.

Table 8

t test Socioeconomic Status – Participating in Free/Reduced Lunch Program Matched Sample 2003 to 2005

Year	# of	Mean	SD	SE	df	T Value	P Value
	Students	Score		Mean			
2003	54	3.981	0.789	0.11			
2005	54	4.093	0.896	0.12			
					106	-0.68	0.495

A final set of *t* tests were completed to examine the differences between students taking the TCAP Writing Assessment in 2003 and 2005 based on ethnicity. Minority students included all non-Caucasian members of the student enrollment. The Writing Assessment scores for 2003 and 2005 were compared for students who were identified as members of any minority population. The results are reported in Table 9 below.

Table 9

t test Ethnicity – Minority Matched Sample 2003 to 2005

Year	# of Students	Mean Score	SD	SE		T Value	P Value
				Mean	df		
2003	65	4.108	0.906	0.12			
2005	65	4.092	0.805	0.10			
					128	+0.10	0.923

The last *t* test completed also examined the differences between students taking the TCAP Writing Assessment in 2003 and 2005 based on ethnicity. Majority students included all Caucasian members of the student enrollment. The Writing Assessment scores for 2003 and 2005 were compared for students who were identified as members of any majority population. The results are reported in Table 10 below.

Table 10

t test Ethnicity – Majority Matched Sample 2003 to 2005

Year	# of Students	Mean Score	SD	SE Mean	df	T Value	P Value
2003	202	4.441	0.852	0.060			
2005	202	4.510	0.800	0.056			
					402	-0.84	0.400

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

An examination of writing assessment scores after the implementation of a District Writing Model was the purpose of this study. The school system used in the study is working to increase the number of students performing at proficiency or above on the TCAP Writing Assessment. Although many score well on the test, many others still score at a limited, flawed, or deficient level. The goal is to improve all scores, but especially to bring everyone to proficiency. In order to determine the system's progress in moving all students closer to levels of proficient or better, this study focused on four research questions and corresponding hypotheses:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the TCAP Writing Assessment scores after the implementation of the District Writing Model?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference between the TCAP Writing Assessment scores after implementation of the District Writing Model based on gender?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between the TCAP Writing Assessment scores after implementation of the District Writing Model based on socioeconomic status?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between the TCAP Writing Assessment scores after implementation of the District Writing Model based on ethnicity?

The null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between the writing test scores after the implementation of the District Model was supported for each research question and hypotheses formulated for the study.

Trends

Although the null hypotheses were accepted, trends in the data provide some interest for educators. Trends in the data show that the overall mean score for the population's tested did increase from 4.360 to 4.408. This trend does indicate improvement, even if differences have not yet reached levels high enough to be considered statistically significant.

The NCLB Act requires test score parity across racial and ethnic groups by 2014 (Carlson, 2004). The data trends show that students in these groups are not achieving at the same level as other students who were tested. The *t* test scores show that statistical significance for males, students on free or reduced lunch, and minority students might be reached in upcoming years if the current trend continues. Educators can use the demographic data to design instruction or intervention that increases test scores for students who are minorities, of lower socioeconomic status, and male.

Model Implementation

It is important to note that the results from this study cannot be generalized throughout the system because many schools have varying demographics. Schools with a more diverse population might yield different results. Each school also implements the District Writing Model with some variation.

Variations in the implementation of the model can be detected amongst the teachers in a particular school as well. Language arts teachers in the school studied

implemented the District Writing Model with the greatest intensity since the model fits with the content standards they are expected to teach. Benchmark testing for language arts is currently taking place three times yearly to evaluate the standards, giving added incentive to use the writing model for classroom instruction.

Content area teachers are adding writing into their curriculum at inconsistent and variable levels. Some content area teachers have indicated a reluctance to take time away from teaching their tested standards to pursue activities they perceive as additional requirements to their curriculum.

Staff Development

Teacher training is an issue to be aware of concerning the implementation of the Six Trait Writing Model. As new teachers enter the teaching profession or transfer into the school system, they need to be trained. Not only should they be trained to understand the District Writing Model, but they must also be made aware of the stated or unstated expectations regarding usage of the District Writing Model in the particular school where they are assigned. Simply distributing a rubric to the faculty concerning the District Writing Model during opening staff development activities is not sufficient to ensure teachers are trained to adequately and consistently score student writing samples.

Training at the building level should continue to occur for all teachers in the system. Additional practice scoring the traits together as a faculty would help ensure common grading expectations linking the various subjects and grade levels. The dedication of a specific staff development day to this training would also help to ensure that teachers are all aware of the building expectations concerning the District Writing

Model. Follow-up training at a weekly faculty meeting might also encourage teachers to incorporate more writing opportunities into their curriculum.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. This study did not evaluate student or teacher attitudes about the District Writing Model. Many of the studies discussed in the literature review included affective measures of success. Future studies should include measures to determine student or teacher attitudes or effect on student motivation based on use of the District Writing Model.
2. Future research should allow a longer time for the District Writing Model to be in use before examining the effect of the program. The incremental changes might reach statistical significance after a longer period of implementation. The researchers from a previously discussed study agree that longer time is needed for evaluation of writing programs. The improvement process is long term; results may unfold over a long span of time (Garcia, et al., 2002).
3. Future research should also attempt to track the same students over time. The student's elementary school and high school TCAP Writing Assessment scores could be used for a look at the growth of the individual student.

Possible Ramifications of this Research

Why should a school system use a District Writing Model if a statistical difference was not found in the analysis completed in the study?

1. An important factor is that the students in the school being studied are making gains in their mean score. Growth has occurred, even if it is not dramatic in the short term.

2. As stated earlier in this field study, anecdotal evidence suggests that the program is successful. Students arrive at the next grade knowing the vocabulary and expectations of each trait. Writing is taking place in each classroom in each school on a regular basis.

3. In 2003, the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges recommended a writing agenda for the nation's public schools. Although the Six Trait Writing Model was not specifically mentioned, the implementation of a writing plan was suggested (The Neglected R, 2003).

4. The District Writing Model has not been in use long enough in the school system being studied. More time is necessary to adequately assess statistical significance of this initiative in this school system.

The District Writing Model is one of the tools a teacher uses to teach effective writing skills. Research shows that the Six Trait Writing Model can be effective in raising test scores in writing. Continuing use of the District Writing Model coupled with additional measurement of its effectiveness over time are the recommendations indicated by the results of this study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

School System Letter of Request

February 12, 2006

Janice Cook
Language Arts Teacher, Rossvie Middle School
2347 Ellsworth Dr.
Clarksville, TN 37043

Dear Sallie Armstrong:

This letter is my request to conduct research in the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System.

Target population of the study: Eighth grade students that attend/attended Rossvie Middle School and took the TCAP Writing Assessment.

Test scores from the TCAP Writing Assessment will be used. Three years before the implementation of the District Writing Model and the three years after implementation will be used.

The purpose of the study is to determine the possible difference between the test scores before the implementation of the District Writing Model and after the implementation (the effect on student writing achievement with implementation of the District Writing Model).

Since the information being sought is available from the school system, no surveys will be used.

The results will be used for my Austin Peay Field Study, the culminating project of the E.d.S. degree at the university. I would also share results with my principal and the school system.

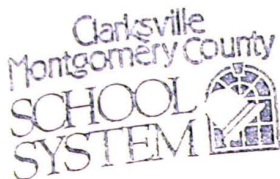
Knowledge of the effectiveness of the implementation of the District Writing Model would benefit the school system and myself as a teacher and future administrator. The research directly supports student achievement.

Janice Cook
Janice.cook@cmess.net
Wk (931) 920-6150
Hm (931) 647-6802

Appendix B

School System Permission Letter

Appendix B



Sallie Armstrong
Curriculum & Instruction Director

Board of Education 621 Gracey Avenue Clarksville, Tennessee 37040
931-920-7819 Fax: 931-920-9819 email: sallie.armstrong@cmcss.net

February 17, 2006

Ms. Janice Cook
2347 Ellsworth Drive
Clarksville, TN 37043

Dear Ms. Cook:

Your research, survey, and/or research project proposal which is to determine the possible difference between the test scores before the implementation of the District Writing Model and after the implementation has been approved by the research committee. The date of approval was February 16, 2006.

Now that you have approval from the research committee, you may contact the principal(s) for approval. The principal(s) has the final authority and responsibility for approving or disapproving research conducted in their building.

Please read the Research Policy and Procedures Handbook for all information concerning research in Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools.

If you have questions, please call my office at (931) 920-7819.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sallie Armstrong".

Sallie Armstrong
Director of Curriculum and Instruction

SA/ph

Appendix C

School System Change Request

Janice M. Cook
2347 Ellsworth Dr.
Clarksville, TN 37043

Dr. Clara Patterson
Clarksville-Montgomery County School System
621 Gracey Avenue
Clarksville, TN 37040

Dear Dr. Patterson:

I am currently completing a Field Study at Austin Peay State University. My Field Study is entitled "Writing Assessment Scores after the Implementation of a District Writing Model".

Originally I indicated that I would be using the scores for three years before implementation and three years after implementation in my study. Due to the unavailability of the scores for the full time period, I changed the analysis to look at scores from the 2002-2003 school year and the 2004-2005 school year.

Please indicate that the change is acceptable and in agreement with the school system's original response to me allowing me to look at the changes after implementation.

Thank you,
Janice Cook

Appendix D

School System Response to Change Request



Dr. Clara Patterson
Director of Educational Services
Board of Education 621 Gracey Avenue Clarksville, Tennessee 37040
931-920-7820 Fax: 931-920-9820 clara.patterson@mcnss.net

Ms. Janice Cook
2347 Ellsworth Drive
Clarksville, TN 37043


Dear Mrs. Cook:

I received your request today in regards to your Field Study at Austin Peay State University. The Field Study, entitled "Writing Assessment Scores after the Implementation of a District Writing Model", received initial approval on February 17, 2006.

I understand that originally you had planned on using the writing scores for three years before implementation and three years after implementation of the District's Writing Model for analysis. Due to the unavailability of the scores for the full time period, I am accepting your request to amend the data collection and understand you will now examine writing 2002-2003 school year only as a baseline for the study.

If you have any questions, please call my office at (931) 920-7819

Sincerely,


Dr. Clara Patterson
Director of Educational Services

Appendix E
IRB Approval

State University
College of Graduate Studies

February 16, 2006

Janice M. Cook
2347 Ellsworth Drive
Clarksville, TN 37043

RE: Your application regarding study number 06-005: The effect of the implementation of a district writing model on the writing achievement of seventh grade students.

Dear Janice M. Cook

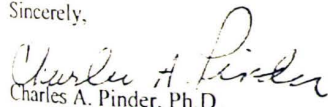
Thank you for your recent submission. We appreciate your cooperation with the human research review process. I have reviewed your request for expedited approval of the new study listed above. This type of study qualifies for expedited review under FDA and NIH (Office for Protection from Research Risks) regulations.

Congratulations! This is to confirm that I have approved your application through one calendar year. This approval is subject to APSU Policies and Procedures governing human subject research.

You are granted permission to conduct your study as described in your application effective immediately. The study is subject to continuing review on or before February 16, 2007, unless closed before that date. Enclosed please find the forms to report when your study has been completed and the form to request an annual review of a continuing study. Please submit the appropriate form prior to February 16, 2007.

Please note that any changes to the study as approved must be promptly reported and approved. If you have any questions or require further information, contact me at (221-7415; fax 221-7641; email pinderca@apsu.edu). Again, thank you for your cooperation with the APSU IRB and the human research review process. Best wishes for a successful study!

Sincerely,



Charles A. Pinder, Ph.D.

Chair, Austin Peay Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Ann Wall

www.apsu.edu

P.O. Box 4458 • Clarksville, TN 37044 • P: (931) 221-7414 • F: (931) 221-7641

VITA

Janice M. Cook was born in Illinois on November 5, 1963. She attended schools in a variety of places as the child of a military parent. She graduated from high school in Enterprise, Alabama in 1981. She graduated from Austin Peay State University in 1993 with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. In 1997, Janice graduated from Austin Peay State University with a Masters in Education.