

The Effects of Implementing First Through Fifth Grade Writing Strategies

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The Effects of Implementing First Through Fifth Grade Writing Strategies

A Field Study Report

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Education Specialist

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ABSTRACT

MICHELLE L. HASTINGS. The Effects of Implementing First Through Fifth Grade Writing Strategies (Under the direction of DR. BENITA BRUSTER.)

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine if implementing school wide writing strategies would increase student writing fluency.

Method: This quasi-experimental design study used archived data collected from a rural elementary school located in Middle Tennessee. The data was compiled from pre and post writing assessments that students took once they had participated in structured writing strategy lessons.

Results: The results of this study indicated that first through fifth grade students showed an improvement in writing after participating in the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) writing strategy lessons. Students in the fifth grade showed the most significant improvement; however, first and second grade made significant improvement as well. Third and fourth grade made the least significant improvement. Also, there was no significant difference between the writing of male and female students, which indicates that genre was not an issue.

Conclusion: The results of this study indicate that using the SRSD school-wide has helped to improve students writing. The school should continue to use this program throughout the remainder of the school year.

Additional Research: Further research is needed to determine how to include kindergarten in the writing program. Also, there is not enough information about male and female students struggle with writing to determine which gender struggles most. Either of these research topics will benefit this school and the teachers to make accommodations for students.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

American educators have spent countless hours determining the best teaching practices to improve student reading and mathematics that the relevance of student writing has fallen to the way side. Students are able to use their writing to fill in gaps of knowledge which enhances student understanding. However, the time it takes to teachers to teach writing and students to practice writing in today's fast paced classroom makes writing most vulnerable for time sake and certainly not a priority.

National Commission on Writing (2005) identified writing as "the most important way in which states translate their policies to the public" (p. 6). Written communication is used through speeches, articles, or policy papers explaining what policy makers and state leaders have done and changes that have been made. Tax policies and laws are two examples of written communication that should be clear and precise for readers to understand, otherwise, Americans would be directly affected by poorly written communication (National Commission on Writing, 2005).

Of course, not everyone will work for the government and write policies, but now many large and small employers are requiring writing samples to decide whether to hire or promote individuals. Writing has become a "threshold skill," yet, no one wants to take on the challenge of teaching students to write (National Commission on Writing, 2006, p. 3). Education leaders should make writing a priority having school leaders and policymakers at the state and local levels turn their focus to writing and provide training and resources to improve writing. The National Commission on Writing (2003) calls for a "writing revolution" so our students can fill the missing gaps and revive their writing ability (p. 3). In order to comply, states should be

required to include a “comprehensive writing policy” in their education standards that increases the current amount of time students spend on writing by double (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 3). Clear writing standards should be developed for each grade level and in all subject areas, so students can be prepared to write for the purpose.

Fluent writers are not just students that write in great lengths, they are able to generate ideas or write on demand; continue writing while revising; and able to produce a writing quickly without major mistakes (Bruton & Kirby, 1987). However, early research of writing fluency focused on “word counts of total and per-minute production by writers, and the distinction between “skilled” and “unskilled” writers” (p.89). The need for fluent writers has become a predominant concern for school systems.

Identifying the best teaching practice to overcome this is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Administrators have undergone much preparation to embrace the new assessment requirements; however, the uncertainty of test expectations have been pending until recently. The 2015-2016 school year will be the first year that teachers will teach Tennessee Common Core State Standards (TNCORE) exclusively to all grade levels. The TNCORE is a set of clear standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts courses. They were developed to bridge learning gaps between grade levels ensuring every student graduating high school is prepared for their college endeavor or the workforce. The standards reflect rigorous learning benchmarks set by countries whose students currently outperform American students on international assessments (About Common Core, 2013). The emerging of TNCORE has required a new assessment format that students will be assessed by this school year. Tennessee has titled its new assessment as Tennessee Ready (TNReady) and the students will be required to answer constructed response questions fluently by responding clearly and using adequate grammar and punctuation.

Although many school districts have spent thousands of hours and funding preparing, the continued changes have placed them at a disadvantage. Due to the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program's (TCAP) low-reading scores in previous years, reading improvement has been the main focus for assessment preparation. The significance of reading and writing being taught together, rather than just teaching reading, has occurred to educators whose students are required to participate in annual writing assessments scheduled for fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade levels. With the new TNReady Assessment, writing is measured from third through eleventh grades. This will place a higher demand on administration, teachers, and students indicating the need for an implementation of a school-wide writing plan, which is the focus of this research.

Embracing the idea that reading and writing should be taught together can improve student success as well as raise test scores as students will have a purpose to perform the tasks simultaneously. Although students may write sentences in some form of sequential order, this does not necessarily mean that they can create a coherent paragraph. It is imperative that students begin to develop a written form of communication, learn to write with a purpose using self-generated ideas, and are capable of citing text evidence from what they have read.

TNCore requirements have raised expectations by requiring constructed responses for standardized assessments with a combination of citing text evidence and selecting correct answers for multiple choice questions. Students must learn to write coherently to clearly communicate what they know about subjects.

An elementary school in a rural community was the focus school examined in this study. The relatively small rural school district had approximately 988 enrolled students in the entire school district. The focus school served 289 students in grades first through fifth. Of the 289

students, 151 were male and 138 were female. The ethnic group breakdown of students is 254 white, 14 black, 13 multiracial, six Hispanic, and one Asian. This rural school was a Title I school, which indicated there was a high number of at-risk students who attended. There was a high level of free and reduced lunch program participants at 66.2%, which was slightly higher than the state average.

The teaching staff consists of 27 highly qualified licensed educators. The experience of the teachers included two teachers with five or less years, five teachers with six to ten years, 14 teachers with ten to 20 years, and six teachers with more than 20 years.

The rural school did not have a writing plan in place other than students were to write on a specific topic for the scheduled writing day, which takes places once a month. An obstacle the school faced was motivating the staff to actively teach their students to write fluently and with a purpose. According to the writing survey the teachers participated in, most teachers admittedly had concerns because they did not enjoy teaching writing and they felt they did not have enough resources to teach writing adequately. This led to the research question, “Does the implementation of a writing plan for first grade through fifth grade lead to improved student writing?”

First and second grade teachers were not held accountable for their students’ writing growth at the state level; therefore, teaching their students how to write was not a main priority. All students in third through fifth grades were required to participate in the 2015 TCAP Writing Assessment administered in February. Traditionally, only fifth grade students participated in the annual TCAP Writing Assessment.

In 2013, the state writing assessment changed its format to informative writing based on reading informational texts. Each year a new component has been added. In 2014, the

assessment changed to a computer format requiring students to type a constructed response based on informational texts and to cite evidence to support their writing. Originally, the assessment was designed to compare two informative essays and write two different constructed response answers. Based on test scores, this was extremely challenging for students in the district. In 2015, the assessment consisted of two informative essays and students constructed one response based on a writing prompt. This was also challenging; however, students did not seem as overwhelmed as previous fifth graders due to the fact they had been exposed to practice writings throughout the school year as well as in the previous grade. The practice writing opportunities were three practice simulations provided by the state using the Measurement Incorporated Secure Testing (MIST) software. This provided students with writing practice similar to the testing format students will undergo for the state assessment. Again, based on the writing assessment scores, students were still not prepared to perform well on the test.

The focus school's annual TCAP Assessment scores show evidence of student learning and student growth. Engel and Russell (2011), revealed evidence that students who are proficient on the annual assessments do not necessarily score well in writing. Streamlining a uniformed writing strategy instruction by combining traditional and updated instruction will provide students with skills to develop their writing. Teachers will be involved in the development of the writing curriculum for which they will be held accountable. This will require educators to evaluate their past writing lessons and select the best writing activities to help students improve their writing. Teachers will compare their writing lessons and requirements with grade levels above and below to determine how students will need to improve their writing. As a group, first through fifth, each grade level will determine the best plan for encouraging their students to write. Using this approach, teachers will not have to redo what they have already

built, but just refresh by adding to and using new writing strategies. By allowing students time to practice writing, teachers will have provided students with an equal opportunity to practice learning how to write.

Students who have been given an opportunity to write about things they know about during early school years become more comfortable when asked to write. Donald Graves (2004), a well-known advocate of teaching writing, used the approach to teach the writing process every day to improve student writing rather than teach writing occasionally, only to remind students that they struggle with writing. However, Koshewa (2011) describes how teaching writing is a struggle for teachers who do not invest in getting to know their students. Teachers who use the writing process regularly know that student-teacher conferences are more than editing a paper. Conferencing with students about writing will provide students with reassurance on their level rather than the top student in the class. Using Graves' writing process approach when designing the expectations of a school-wide writing program will ensure consistent instruction through daily and monthly writing tasks. Actively teaching the writing process is required as well as full faculty support in order to have a successful writing program.

Since the Tennessee Department of Education suggested that all school districts develop a writing program, this study will be useful to determine the development of student writing by way of the instruction and involvement provided by teachers. This study will contribute to knowledge about education and the growing need for improved communication skills using a variety of writing techniques. Teaching a combination of reading and writing together and requiring students to support their responses with thought-provoking written answers will raise the expectation level of students. Students should be prepared to write for the purpose.

If educators are teaching writing instruction on a regular basis and students are provided the opportunity to go through the writing process, then student writing should improve. Students should be exposed to a variety of written opportunities such as narrative, informative, and expository in order to truly learn how to write proficiently.

Research Questions

Does the implementation of a writing plan lead to improved student writing in first grade through fifth grade?

Do any students in first through fifth grade show a significant amount of growth after using the Self-Regulated Strategies Development writing strategies?

Does gender affect writing growth in first grade through fifth grade students?

Null Hypothesis

Implementing a writing program will not improve first grade through fifth grade students writing scores measured by the SRSD writing rubric.

Limitations

There are several potential teacher limitations associated with this study. They include: (1) negative perception of teaching writing; (2) time restraints of scheduling writing activities on a regular basis; (3) availability of materials; (4) expectations of the administration; (5) students' writing abilities; (6) cooperation in the lower grades; (7) fidelity of the student with teacher consistency; (8) fidelity of how often teachers are teaching writing; (9) scores did not receive specific training on scoring the writing; and (10) mentors were trained and then trained the in house teaching staff.

Students in first through second grade will need to engage in the writing process appropriate for their age level. While students in third through fifth grades have been exposed to

writing, the actuality of their experiencing the entire writing process may be limited. These factors could hinder their writing abilities. When students are provided with consistent writing instruction and flexibility, they are learning to write.

Reviewing the limitations, the idea that stands out most is that teachers have a lot of influence when it comes to teaching writing. Teacher negative perception of writing can affect students by having them writing for no purpose, which becomes redundant and boring. If teachers are not teaching writing on a regular basis, then students could possibly receive the wrong impression of the relevance of writing and certainly not enjoy it. This also affects the writing abilities of students. If students do not practice writing then they do not have an opportunity to improve or strengthen. However, administration plays an important role too. If they are not requiring teachers to use writing in their classrooms, then why would teachers teach it.

Fidelity issues arise when teaching writing. Teacher training was the teacher-training-teacher model based on state training due to the fact that a group of teachers received training on teaching writing and also scoring the writing. When teachers returned to school, they trained with what they experienced, which was not scoring. There was not an actual trainer to train all teachers.

Another area of limitation is following through with teaching writing on a daily basis. Lower grade level teachers might feel intimidated because their young students cannot write like the upper grade students. Emerging writing is going to look different at all grade levels for reasons such as exposure to writing, background knowledge of the subject, and grade level of the writer. These things are to be expected when students are learning to write.

Assumptions

Most students moving into the next grade level have attended the same school from first through second grade; therefore, the first assumption is that students in grades third through fifth have been previously taught basic writing skills prior to this new instruction. A second assumption is that all faculty will teach the writing program appropriately.

Definition of Terms

1. TNCORE – Tennessee Common Core, a set of clear standards for math and English language arts that were developed to ensure every student graduates high school prepared for college or the workforce (Tennessee Department of Education, 2015).
2. TNReady – Tennessee Ready, a measurement of learning for ELA and Math (Tennessee Department of Education, 2015).
3. SRSD – Self-Regulated Strategy Development, writing strategies to provide students explicit writing instruction focusing on general writing strategies and specific writing genres (Harris, Graham, Mason, & Friedlander, 2008).
4. Writing Process – A five stage process (prewriting, drafting, revising and editing, rewriting, publishing) that teaches students to write in a variety of genres, encouraging creativity, and incorporating writing conventions (Graves, 2004).
5. Power Writing- is a method for building writing fluency through brief, timed writing events (Fisher and Frey, 2013).
6. Shared Writing – teachers write students thoughts down to form a creative writing (Fisher and Frey, 2013).
7. Measurement Incorporated Secure Testing (MIST) -Is a full-featured, tiered-access test delivery system that is fully interoperable with industry-standard item banking, scoring and

reporting systems. Security is implemented and enforced system-wide, ensuring the confidentiality of test content and student data (Educational Testing, 2014).

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Written communication is everywhere, whether it is in a document, letter, email, or text message, it has been written. With this much writing, then why is the nation struggling when it comes to teaching writing? The National Commission on Writing (2003) suggested that the time has come for America's schools to undergo a "writing revolution" and make a plan to bring the art of writing back (p. 3).

Due to the fact that so many state and local governments have been affected by weak written communication, the National Commission on Writing (2003) developed "A Writing Agenda for the Nation" (p.3). The agenda suggests that the national political leaders should be actively engaged in a National Conference on Writing. The state and federal government should provide funding, additional time, and personnel to help encourage writing created environments within schools.

Higher education is also included in the agenda requiring potential teachers to participate in a writing theory and practice course. However, "writing instruction in colleges and universities should be improved for all students" (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 3). Having a strong base in writing experience would prepare individuals who enter the work force including potential teachers who will be teaching writing.

All state education leaders should revisit their state standards in kindergarten through twelfth grade to include a "comprehensive writing policy; increased amount of time spent on writing; require school districts to develop writing plans, and teach writing across the curriculum and in all grade levels"(National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 3). School districts may

benefit from developing a timeline of obtainable goals for teachers to meet. By doing this, teachers will be less overwhelmed and willing to include writing in as many lessons as possible.

Until the 2014-2015 school year, only a few grade levels were required to take a state writing assessment which required these grade level teachers to create and implement crash course writing lessons in fifth, seventh, and eleventh grades. Those had been successful most years until the recent Tennessee Common Core (TNCORE) standard and state writing assessment requirement changed. Tennessee Common Core (TNCORE) standards increased expectations that required teachers to provide rigorous instruction and in return, students' classroom performance should increase significantly. The changes required all educators to redesign their classroom teaching strategies to include teaching students how to write effectively to an appropriate audience.

There are several issues when considering how to teach students to write including lack of time, process, materials, and requirements by administration, as well as teachers' personal comfort and beliefs. As administrators began to define the writing requirements and expectations for their schools, it was important to consider all possible factors that may hinder the implementation. Administrators must decide whether to simply let teachers interpret how to apply the new state requirements or combine a structured writing program with teacher input for implementation of writing strategies.

Administrator Responsibility

Administrator knowledge, beliefs, and support for any practice is beneficial to all implemented programs within schools. It enhances the administrator's vision for the desired teaching strategies to be used as well as student outcome. Klein (2010) indicated that there was a strong correlation between principals' knowledge of the importance of writing, strong beliefs

about writing, and the success of the teachers teaching effective writing due to the fact that principals take on a key role in the development of the literacy program of their schools. It appeared that teachers were better prepared because of planned staff developments geared toward the need for effective writing instruction and “strong instructional leadership from principals.” These factors surpass the home life of students and the low socio-economic community in which students live (McGhee & Lew, 2007, p. 360).

According to McGhee and Lew (2007), there were nine areas of content knowledge that principals should know when implementing literacy in their schools:

1. School culture
2. Craft leaders
3. Children’s literature
4. Instructional models
5. Curricula
6. Options for organizing time and space
7. Assessment/content standards
8. Special interventions
9. Knowledge and research

These are extremely important for reading instruction; however, when it comes to writing, McGhee and Lew (2007) stated that “principal leadership specific to writing instruction” has had less exposure due to the fact that writing instruction materials tend to focus on what teachers need to know rather than principals need to know about the effect of writing instruction (p. 361).

McGhee and Lee (2007) developed a principles guide of writing for principals based on best writing instruction practice after visiting schools with high performance in writing. Klein

(2010) suggested that administrators should prioritize writing in their schools by practicing the following ideas and incorporating these ideas in their preparation of planning school development.

1. Articulate a vision for why writing matters.
2. Protect time to write.
3. Become a writer.
4. Celebrate writing.
5. Trust teachers.
6. Provide time for teachers to collaborate.
7. Support professional development in and out of the classroom.
8. Assess student writing and the teaching of it.
9. Share best practice in teaching writing with fellow administrators.

Principals should be an active participant in professional development opportunities, read the professional literature, and attend conferences to extend and deepen learning over time. This will help administrators to maintain knowledge of best practices when implementing writing in the curriculum.

When planning and scheduling professional developments, administrators should schedule beneficial professional development for teachers. Parents should be included in the training as well, so that they are aware of the writing process and curriculum their student will be experiencing. This training should not be short-term and forgotten, all staff development should be planned with the intent of long-term implementation and follow-ups should be planned to answer questions and “provide teachers with meaningful feedback as they use the writing process” (McGhee and Lew, 2007, p. 362) because writing is not a one size fits all technique.

Administrators must recognize writing as a process and know that there is not one book, one strategy, or even one way to teach the writing process to students (McGhee and Lew, 2007).

Planning for smooth transitions and school days can be a huge factor for schools no matter the subject. McGhee and Lew (2007) suggested administrators should “let the instructional program drive the infrastructure of the school. Construct the school schedule, allocate resources, utilize space, purchase furniture, and plan with instructional non-negotiables in mind” (p. 376). Since writing is the focus at hand, then writing should be the focus throughout the school.

Realizing “the quality of writing must be improved if students are to succeed in college and life,” it is important to inform stakeholders such as parents, board members and any other community leadership about the significance of writing expectations of students (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p.7). Bringing these members together to brainstorm ideas allowing students the opportunity to show their learned skills and talents within the community. This will ensure students and stakeholders value what is being done in their schools to meet the students’ need, as well as the school, district, and state requirements. Too often the community is only involved on the negative end of school business, so providing a positive opportunity would benefit students. For example, having writing contests would help celebrate publicly and encourage writers to publish their work (Klein, 2010).

Accountability

Although McGhee and Lee (2007) encouraged educators to just teach students to write effectively while not worrying about the state accountability testing, the reality is that the growing demand for accountability is more prominent now than ever. These standardized tests consist of three areas including objective, comparative, and accountable. The objective is based

on similar questions and testing under similar testing conditions that will provide an accurate measure of what students know (Churchill, 2015). Comparability of the student results based on the results of all the students who took the assessment. The data that is generated from standardized test is used to hold schools accountable for “student growth measures” (Churchill, 2015). Due to the change in standards and the new assessment requirements, principals must reinforce their understanding of writing and support their teaching staff by being proactive in preparation for student learning by offering relevant professional developments. Since teachers are being held accountable, the need for a consistent uniformed writing curriculum is ideal.

Holding students and teachers accountable for writing is pointless unless there is some consistency in which writing is taught throughout schools. According to Engel and Streich (2006), scores tend to be low because of lack of consistency and coherence in the way instruction was taught. In order to get an idea of how to streamline writing instruction Klein (2010), suggested ideas of allowing teachers to “celebrate success, share frustrations, and problem solve as a team” (p. 30). This would help teachers talk through and answer questions to determine what was being taught at each grade level and how writing skills were being developed as the students continued through each grade level. Engel and Streich (2006) became more specific by asking “How was writing taught? What instructional strategies were used? How much time was spent on instruction? How much writing did each child actually do? How was the writing assessed” (p. 661)?

These questions were reviewed; however, there were no uniform answers, so administrators and teachers used a developmental process to writing. Principals provided guidance so teachers would perform their best by requiring a formal way for teachers to “collect student data from writing conferences by using data charts and templates” (Klein, 2010, p. 31).

The curriculum was standardized so all students would receive a complete writing program. All teachers received the same materials to teach writing. All teachers were responsible for providing administration samples of student writings throughout the year. This required all subject areas to write and not just during language arts (Engel and Streich, 2006).

Another factor that affected the accountability was the genres being scored or reviewed. Bouwer, Beguin, Sanders, and Bergh (2015), referred to the genre preference of the students. Most students have one area they are more comfortable writing in and this would mean the score would probably waiver depending on student interest. Students should be evaluated by using a combination of writings based on a variety of genres.

Teacher Perception

Teachers may think their students' and parents' perception is that they do not care about the writing development of their child, when in fact, they may be unclear of the writing process or correct method. Parents relate to their school experiences and writing may have been unpleasant for them or may not have been an emphasis when they attended school. Another possible misunderstanding is that some parents may be illiterate. This is an example where communicating with parents both verbally and in writing will help to bridge the gap between home and school (Brashears, 2008).

Teachers may perceive writing as a chore because there is such a variety of writing styles. It is important for teachers to overcome this fear or dislike and become a "writer and model the importance of writing" (McGhee and Lee, 2007, p. 360). Teachers generally pull from "their personal histories and experience of learning to write" (McCarthy, Woodard, and Kang, 2013), which influences how a teacher may teach students to write (p. 60). Unfortunately, writing is not as appealing as other subjects; therefore, instruction can appear mundane.

Writing in the classroom is dreaded by many teachers because their perception about writing is viewed as time consuming and unsuccessful because students are unable to perform well. Many teachers believe they do not know how to teach students to write because they, themselves, do not write or like to write. Changing teachers' perception about writing will require them to either redefine or develop their own writing voice to meet the needs of the students (Cohen, 2004).

Cohen (2004) provided her graduate students with a hands-on opportunity to focus on elementary level reading and writing practice by participating in zine projects. Graduate students were asked to select topics they could use the entire semester and then Cohen walked students through a process by using a writer's workshop approach to writing. Writer's workshop is where students spend time working on an element of the writing process, engage in mini-lessons with their teacher, or participate in student-teacher writing conferencing. This process can be time consuming, but students have a visual of the entire process.

As an advocate of incorporating writing in the curriculum for students of all ages including teachers, Graves (2004) purposed, "We simply can't teach writing if we haven't experienced the process, as well as the joy of fashioning a text for our peers" (p. 89). Undergoing the writing process allows teachers to understand how vulnerable students may feel when they first begin writing; however, after much practice, students' confidence in their writing is apparent.

To help teachers become comfortable with writing, they need to experience a writing opportunity like the students experience. Then, they need the experience of walking through the five step writing process of prewriting/brainstorming, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing. This is a timely process, but just as teachers do for students, teachers need time to discuss and

brainstorm various genres to write about and build a writing bank including a variety of ideas. Things such as a letter writing, advertisement, or even writing an obituary are forms of writing that require thought. The ideas are endless, but sparking interest is an excellent way to begin (Graves, 2004).

Writing Methods

There are several writing programs that involve explicit instruction, but teachers prefer to use a writing program that is going to show results in short timeframes due to test pressure. The closest writing strategy to that is the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) writing program. Harris, Graham, Mason, and Friedlander (2008) claimed that the SRSD is merely writing strategies to provide students explicit writing instruction focusing on general writing strategies and specific writing genres. Self-Regulated Strategy Development also teaches students “how to use self-regulation strategies, including self-monitoring, self-reinforcement, and self-instructions” all while “obtaining concrete and visible evidence of their progress” (Harris, Graham, Mason & Friedlander, 2008, p.5).

Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) is divided in six stages. They include (1) to activate and develop background knowledge; (2) discuss it; (3) model it; (4) memorize it; (5) support it; and (6) independent practice. Each piece is important and adjusts when the writing genre changes (Harris et al., 2008, p. 6).

When students activate and develop background knowledge the teacher provides them the elements that the writing genre will require. Students can setup for a narrative writing or informative based on the writing task. The combination of discussing the development of the writing in both genres work simultaneously (Harris et al., 2008, p. 24).

Even though stage three, model it, could be covered with stage one and two, it is important for teachers to model what they are thinking, so students can have a visual of how to think. Thinking abstractly is an area that should be practiced as well as teaching students how to think or what thinking should look like. When modeling self-instruction, a teacher should discuss the problem definition, how to plan to fix or solve the problem, include self-check or self-evaluation, then double check yourself or self-reinforcement, and finally model how to cope with writing or be encouraging (Harris et al., 2008, p.25).

Stage four includes memorizing the mnemonic and strategies that SRSD use to help students organize their paragraphs. These are used to help students remember to use these while planning to write. Table 1 and Table 2 below include some of the mnemonics for the SRSD writing strategies (Harris et al., 2008, p. 77, 127, 159).

Table 1

Strategies for Story Writing			
POW + WWW	P= Pick My Idea	+	W= Who?
	O= Organize My Notes		W= When?
	W= Write and Say More		W= Where?
POW + C-SPACE	P= Pick My Idea	+	C= Characters
	O= Organize My Notes		S=Setting
	W= Write and Say More		P= Purpose
			A= Action
			C= Conclusion
			E= Emotions

Table 2

Strategies for Narrative, Expository, and Persuasive Writing			
POW+ TREE	P= Pick My Idea	+	T = Topic Sentence
	O= Organize My Notes		R= Reason
	W= Write and Say More		E= Ending/Explain
			E= Examine/Ending
POW+TIDE	P= Pick My Idea	+	T= Topic Introduction
	O= Organize My Notes		ID= Important Details
	W= Write and Say More		E= End

Stage five is the support stage, which refers to supporting what has been written. The writing process takes place during this stage, so students will spend more time using learned strategies to identify details and elaborate. Of course, this section requires mini-lessons and set individual writing goals to meet the varied range of students. This stage leads into the final stage where students practice writing independently. Students focus on using the SRSD writing strategies that have been introduced. Using short writings to practice the stages would increase students writing confidence (Harris et al., 2008, p.25)

Graves suggested that students should write what they know about because most writers are not on the same writing level. This does not mean that students have to choose all topics, but to start they will be much more comfortable. Students' writing goals should be to develop writing techniques to entice the reader to want to read what they have written (Graves, 2004).

Teaching students the writing process is time consuming at first, but once students learn the routine and expectations of their teacher, going through the steps of the writing process

become natural. There are five steps to the writing process (1) prewriting, (2) rough draft, (3) revision, (4) editing, and (5) publish. All of these steps are important for students to practice (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001).

The first step to the writing process is prewriting. This requires students to think of a topic to write about while considering who their audience will be. To develop ideas, the student should brainstorm ideas about the subject developing ideas. However, the students must not just “jot down a list for teacher satisfaction” (Bruton and Kirby, 1987, p.90). It is important to teacher this step, student can prepare for the writing purpose. Just as reading genres, using varied writing genres should be considered too (Graves, 2004).

Secondly, the draft stage is where students will write their ideas or the information researched by putting into their own words. At this point, written sentences and paragraphs may not be perfect. Students should read what has been written and determine if it says what they meant for it to say (Graves, 2004).

The third step to the writing process is revising, one of the most difficult for students. The students should begin this step by rereading what has been written with a critical mindset, consider other ideas to include. During this time the students can rearrange words or sentences, take out or add parts, and replace overused words. The student should reread their writing aloud to be sure it flows smoothly (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Graves (2004), claimed that “If they aren’t revising each piece then they aren’t really becoming writers” (p. 90). Once students have revised the writing, they should be able to identify the main idea or according to Graves (2004), “locate the sentence that reflects what the piece is about” (p. 90). However, as students practice and become mature writers, there are able to produce “a quality product quicker” and with very little revision (Bruton and Kirby, 1987, p.90)

Teaching students how to revise can be done by using mini-lessons to teach grammar in writing, and possibly improve both writing and language skills. For example, sentence structure and identifying and changing parts of speech within students' writing will serve additional purposes. Exposing students and adding guided practice to instruction will help students revise and edit their writing, as well as the writing of their peers (Myhill & Watson, 2014).

The fourth step to the writing process is editing. Editing writing may involve both peers and adults. Student editing requires the students to meet with peers to proofread and make suggestions to improve the writing. Next, the students should meet with an adult or teacher to make sure it is correct. Editing the students' writing consists of checking that all sentences are complete, correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, and change words that are not used correctly. This is a timely process, but it is important for students to learn how to reread, edit, and revise their original writing (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001).

During the editing step, teachers individually meet with students to have a writing conference. This does not have to last long, but essential information covered by the student should include what their writing is about; where they are in their draft; and what will happen next. Students can also use this time for writing clarification or additional help from the teacher.

The final step to the writing process is publishing. When publishing, students copy the paper in a nice handwriting preparing it for display. With TNCore standards, publishing now requires to have a typed finished product. At this time, students can share their story by reading the finished writing aloud to a group and then storing it in a published notebook or a designated area for students to have a visual of their beginning writings to their end writings (Graves, 2004). Koshewa (2011), stated "children need to maintain a collection of their work to establish a writing history" (p.52).

Graves (2004) recognized that teaching writing has changed over the years; however, there are still basic writing fundamentals that have not been taught. The first basic fundamental includes the importance of students being allowed to have choices of some of their writing topics, such as narrative, research topics or interest related writing. Next, Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) stressed importance of the need for students to receive regular feedback from their teacher and peers. Students learn to give more details when reviewing their writing because they are able to talk through what has been written. Another basic fundamental is that students ideally need three to five days to write each week. Teachers who structure daily writing allow students time to think, revisit, and expand on original writing. Students also need to see their work published (i.e. posted on board, shared with peers, or collected in a notebook). Next, students need to experience their teacher modeling writing. This allows students an opportunity to see what it is like to write by using the writing process. Finally, students need to have a collection of their work, so they can see the full picture from where they began to where they are now. Students can marvel over their writing growth (Graves, 2004).

As previously stated, there is not just one solution to teaching writing, but providing students with an opportunity to have daily mini-lessons, time to write, student-teacher writing conferences, sharing, and publishing time will certainly create a student-friendly writing environment (Cohen, 2007).

According to McCarthey, Woodard, and Kang (2014) teachers have many concerns about factors that influence writing instruction. The high demand for accountability of the curriculum leaves little time for individualized instruction. Another factor includes materials, such as low income schools have less to offer students than a high income school requiring these teachers to focus on lower level skills based learning.

McCarthy, Woodard, and Kang (2014) identified areas that writing teachers often struggle are “between their student and teacher selves, their personal beliefs and professional expectation, and their university ideologies and practical one” (p. 60). Teachers who experienced supportive administration and mentor teachers were more comfortable teaching writing (McCarthy et al., 2014). However, the need for understanding the administrations expectations, policies and curriculum is most crucial.

TNCore’s main focus is to increase the writing of students. This is not just any writing, but students are expected to learn how to write and how to express in written format what they have learned. According to Graham, Kiuvara, McKeown, and Harris (2012), elementary grade students should know the following “spelling, handwriting, typing, sentence construction (including grammar skills), and strategies for planning and revising” (p. 879). Students should also be able to write for a variety of purposes and be able to utilize technology to support evidence (Graham, Kiuvara, McKeown, and Harris, 2012).

Graham et al. (2012) conducted a study trying to identify which explicit writing instruction to use when teach writing. Graham et al. (2012) noted the results revealed “that there are a variety of evidence-based instructional procedures for improving the writing of students in the elementary grades” (p. 880). Some of the strategies used to teach writing included explicit instruction, scaffolding students’ writing, alternative methods such as type the writing, increased writing activities, and a comprehensive writing program. Although no one strategy revealed significant findings, the overall discovery was getting students to practice writing, their writing comfort, and their ability will improve (Graham et al., 2012).

Although writing fluency is an excellent area to begin, it is important to remember that fluency is only “a place to start, not the goal itself” (Linearger, 2001). Daily writing

opportunities will guide students to write for various purposes and audiences. Examples of writing experiences include quick writes, writing in response to reading, writing to solve problems, writing to complain, or writing to summarize (Linearger, 2001). Engaging in all of these writing opportunities will build writing confidence and then writing will begin to develop profound meaning.

Power Writing is a method for building fluency through brief, timed writing events (Fisher and Frey, 2013). For example, on the board, the teacher writes a word or phrase based on the content being taught. Students have one minute to write about this subject, which gives them practice to write “quickly and accurately” (Fisher and Frey, 2013, p. 97). During this time the students are encouraged to do their best writing, write as much as they can, and not to worry about mistakes. When the timer stops, Fisher and Frey (2013) stated that students should “reread what they have written, circling any errors they notice, then count and record the number of words in the margin” (97). This simple technique can be incorporated into any lesson and completed at least three one-minute intervals during the lesson. Students will track the highest number of words written on a chart and keep in their notebooks. According to Fisher and Frey (2013), the benefit of power writing is that “student writing fluency improves with practice;...students think about content while they are writing;... [and] power writing provides teachers with information about student error patterns” (p. 97).

Shared Writing is “collaborative writing experiences between teacher and students” (Fisher and Frey, 2013, p. 97-98) and where teachers record what the students share what they are thinking and the teacher writes it down. Fisher and Frey (2013) stated that this illustrates to the students that “print carries a message” (p. 98). Interactive writing is where students do the writing, but the meaning of the writing is clarified before the students write with teacher

guidance. “Both shared and interactive writing emphasize the importance of oral language development within the lesson” (Fisher and Frey, 2013, p. 98). Furthermore, teachers of both primary and intermediate grade levels have found this strategy useful for all writers, not just struggling writers.

Traditionally, writing is thought to fit under the language arts umbrella; however, the TNCore is requiring writing to be incorporated into all content areas. For example, in math there should be an emphasis on “creating a mathematical investigation plan to guide students work” (Fisher and Frey, 2013, p. 98). For instance, once students have an idea of what a number looks like, such as one million, then students have an understanding of what it will take to solve a math problem. Using the book *How Much is a Million?*, students will have a concept of what a million of something looks like. If students were given opportunities to think about the how to store a million of something, then they would need a plan.

According to Fisher and Frey (2013), the teacher guides students to formulate the wording of the investigation plan. Teachers prompt students as needed on word choice, spelling, and punctuation. Initially, the teacher asked students how much room they would need to store one million tennis balls? Students then had to develop a plan to solve the problem. The teacher models for the students the thought process of using steps to determine how much room is needed.

Using the interactive writing method, the teacher and students completed the following investigation plan by using a combination of explanation and algebraic equations. This encouraged students think about the content and helped students to generate their composition skills (Fisher and Frey, 2013).

TNCore writing standards require students to focus on writing from sources while using “informative/expository text to examine, and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content” (Fisher and Frey, 2013, p. 99). Informative and expository writing will take place in the science and social studies content area with reading materials. How well students score on this correlates with their reading and listening to the task at hand.

To begin, students need to be taught how to write from sources, such as, how to “carefully read texts and collect evidence from those text” (Fisher and Frey, 2013, p. 99). Students need to know how to break apart the text in order to master writing from the sources. Students will need practice reading text and identifying text with annotation marks (Fisher and Frey, 2013). Fisher and Frey (2013) stated the following as the most common annotation marks including “underlining for major points; vertical lines in the margin to denote longer statements that are too long to be underlined” (p. 99). There are also symbols to use such as stars and asterisks, but these should be used important and relevant information only. Marking pages with post-it notes or bookmarks will help to sequence events. Another important strategy is to circle key words or phrases to help record questions or answers that may come to mind (Fisher and Frey, 2013). The purpose of using these annotations is for students to have sources that they can refer to when writing to support what they are trying to express to the reader.

TNCore has placed a high demand on writing; therefore, students need a consistent opportunity to write throughout the day. According to Fisher and Frey (2013), experiencing a “range of writing task” by including a variety of purpose and audiences will increase student writing stamina ultimately growing into stronger writers (p. 97).

McMaster, Du, and Petursdottir (2009) studied beginning writers and noted that beginning writing prompts should consist of picture-word prompts, which would be also be used to monitor student progress. McMaster et al. (2009) stated “positive impact of teachers’ instructional decisions and student achievement are essential for progress monitoring to be effective” (p. 204).

McMaster, Du, Yeo, Deno, Parker, and Ellis (2011) determined that picture-word prompts were not suitable for the progress monitoring of older elementary students. Using story prompts with students in the second semester of first grade through fourth grade would be able to reveal adequate progress monitoring for students.

Abbott, Berninger and Fayol (2010), found that students with basic instruction would increase their spelling and their “text composing” would be increase for some students (p. 296). The results concluded that there was a remarkable stability of individual differences in spelling ability; there were greater relationships between subjects such as spelling and spelling and word reading and word reading rather than having a simultaneous relationship; and the final result was the only consistent writing or reading relationship throughout the entire study was from the word spelling to test composing (Abbott, 2010). Ultimately, writing increases vocabulary, spelling, and the ability to put ideas on paper if practiced over a long period of time. This reinforces the need for teachers to teach students how to write effectively.

Nevertheless, it is important for students to undergo progress monitoring so their educational needs can be met. All school administrators and teachers will have to look at their school’s needs and determine the best progress monitoring for them. If students are not progress monitored then they will continue getting the same instruction that may not be working.

CHAPTER III

Methods

Participants

The school of focus is located in a rural area serving 289 students in grades first through fifth; however, only 278 students participated due to students being absent during the pre and/or post test. The teaching staff consists of 27 licensed educators that include 18 teachers with master degrees and nine teachers with bachelor degrees combine. All teachers are highly qualified, which means that all teaching staff have met the requirements provided by the state to teach the students in Kindergarten through sixth grade. The number of years teaching experience include two teachers with five or less years, five teachers with six to ten years, fourteen teachers with ten to twenty years, and six teachers with more than twenty years. Of the 27 licensed educators, there are only 20 who operate a classroom on a daily basis. There is only one male teacher who is the physical education teacher.

Of the 278 students, 145 are males and 133 are females. The ethnic group breakdown of students is 243 Caucasian, 14 African American, 13 multiracial, six Hispanic, and one Asian. The focus school is a Title I school, which indicates there is a high number of at-risk students who attend. There is a high level of free and reduced lunch program participants at 66.2%, which is slightly higher than the state average.

Materials

The independent variable for this study was the implementation of writing strategies for first through fifth grade. Teachers were expected to comply with the requirements set by the writing committee and administration, including daily writing lessons embedded in weekly lesson plans and planned writing days. Teachers completed a beginning survey to determine

their feelings about writing. A duplicate survey was given to teachers near the end of the study. The results were compared to determine if their perceptions about writing changed once the school had actively selected a writing program and it had been practiced regularly. Both surveys consisted of questions pertaining to writing, feelings about writing, as well as an opportunity to voice concerns, resources needed, and a plan to overcome obstacles. This survey was created as a mixed method measure on the website <http://www.surveymonkey.com>. A data comparison and a text analysis was be completed based on the survey results.

The dependent variable was the outcome of the students' writing measured on the twenty point rubric provided by the SRSD resources that the teachers selected as the writing program for the school. There is a rubric for each writing genre: narrative, informative, and opinion. This quantitative measure runs on a continuum with the minimum score of zero and the maximum score being twenty. Although this the SRSD rubric will not be used as the actual state scoring rubric, Measurement Incorporated Secure Testing (MIST), it coincides with what will be used to score the state writing assessment. Practice writing opportunities were given monthly and scored by the writing committee. The writing committee was made up of teachers who were interested in teaching writing and the teachers who attended the SRSD state training in the summer. Each grade level had a writing committee representative, and this person scored the writing for their grade level. A total of three benchmark writing assessments were given in-house and scored by the writing committee.

The independent variable examined in this study was the teaching staff from first grade through fifth grade. Teachers were given a survey to rate how they taught writing in their classroom and how often writing was taught in their classroom. The survey questions were

developed based on the Department of Education's suggestion for principals to evaluate their schools high impact writing strategies to

Procedures

This study is a quasi-experimental design that will use archived data collected from pre-writing and post-writing assessments. The information gained from the independent and dependent variables will be analyzed to determine if students were taught writing strategies the results would show improvement. However, the best place to begin was with the teachers because they would be providing students with the writing strategies instruction.

Teachers were given a high impact writing strategies survey to be used to determine knowledge, need and opinions about writing within the school (see Appendix C for complete survey). All educational faculty was emailed a ten question survey to complete within a two week timeframe. Once the deadline was met, the survey questions were reviewed and tallied. The results provided the writing committee with teacher perception about writing and identify an area that teachers felt the weakest or needed more guidance. Of the 10 questions, there were five questions that indicated significant information important to this study. These questions revealed the amount of consistent writing instruction in the classroom as well as areas that needed improvement.

At the principal's request, the teachers were shown the survey results before the writing strategies had been decided on. The first question, how often do you provide explicit instruction on writing, revealed that teachers were barely teaching writing on a weekly basis with only 9 of 16 teachers teaching once or twice a week. Once teachers saw the results, many were surprised to learn that they were supposed to be teaching writing in their content area. The teachers admittedly answered that they did not believe that question pertained to them.

Question two, how often do you provide actionable feedback to students with opportunities for revision (i.e. adult edit/teacher-student writing conference), revealed that 5 out of 16 teachers only did this once or twice a week. There were zero teachers who did this daily. The next question's results, when students write, how often do they use the writing process (i.e. brainstorm/drafting, edit, revise and publish), were identical.

However, question four, how often do students work on a piece of writing together in pairs or small groups, revealed that most teachers never let their students work on writing together. When discussing if teachers were willing to let students work in writings together, many were concerned with disruption and behavior if peers spent much time together.

Question nine is the closest to a written response that students may be asked to do on future assessments. This question also included an example as a reference for teachers. How well do you think your current students would respond to the question below? The example is "Earth-force in the Crust," by Franklin Institute, write an essay that summarizes and explains the effects of plate movement on the earth. Be sure to refer to details and examples from the text to support your explanation. Follow the conventions of standard written English. Write your essay in the space provided on the next pages. Teachers believed this to be an unfair question based on grade level. The categories for teachers to select from included poor, fair, good, and excellent. Of the 16 participants, six on them selected poor, four selected fair, five selected good, and zero selected excellent.

Based on the first high impact writing strategies survey, there was need for a writing committee for guidance and support. The focus school's writing committee came together and discussed the need to have writing strategies in place for the 2015-2016 school year. Each member gathered information about four possible writing strategies they believed would benefit

our school. The four writing strategies selected included Writer's Workshop, The Writing Project, SRSD and Six-Plus One Trait Writing.

The committee wanted the faculty who would be responsible for teaching the writing strategies to be a part of the development of the program, so it was decided to inform the faculty by having a writing in-service day. The committee members paired with a partner and selected one writing strategy to research and present their findings. On the in-service day, it was presented to the staff that one of the school goals was to select a writing strategy. The teachers were reminded of the high impact writing survey they had participated in at the end of the last school. They were asked to consider their input while selecting the best writing strategies for the school. Teachers were split into small groups and attended a thirty minute presentation based on each writing strategy.

When teachers had completed all four sessions, everyone came back together to discuss the advantages and disadvantages they had identified during each presentation. The teachers immediately removed the Six-Plus One Trait Writing because the school had tried that in previous years and did not believe it would meet the needs of the students. The Writing Project did not appear to be as structured as the teachers would like to have in their classroom, so it was removed as well. Writer's Workshop was not popular because students would have too much freedom. Finally, the SRSD writing strategy was agreed upon by asking the teachers to vote by secret ballot with 21 teachers voting for SRSD and six teachers voting against SRSD.

The SRSD writing strategies did have an advantage because several staff members had attended the Common Core State Standard training. Another advantage was that because many teachers had already attended the SRSD training there would be faculty available to have in

house training. The TNCORE faculty that attended the year-long SRSD Writing Training were the experts who trained the staff on teaching the narrative prompt. There were three different trainings for staff members that were designed for their grade level focusing on the six stages of SRSD and how to incorporate the POW+TREE mnemonic graphic organizer.

Teachers were instructed to give their students the narrative writing prompt without providing any writing instruction. Once students finished the writing prompt, the completed writings were given to the writing committee to score. At this time, teachers were to provide students with writing mini-lessons using the SRSD writing strategies. They were to spend nine weeks focusing on the narrative writing strategy. At the end of the nine weeks, students were given post narrative writing prompt. Once again, teachers gave the completed writings to the writing committee to be scored.

After each writing prompt, the principal met with the writing committee to discuss findings for each grade level. Then the principal met with each grade level to discuss results and any significant differences identified. Teachers discussed how often and how long they taught writing as well as strategies they used to better prepare for the next writing genre. Teachers reflected on what worked and if this strategy could be used in the next writing genre.

To complete the study, the students' scores were reviewed to determine growth in writing. Teachers were given a post survey to determine if there were any changes in their presentations in the way they taught students to write.

Chapter IV

Results

Archived data was used to determine if students in grades first through fifth would benefit from the implementation of structured writing strategies. A dependent sample t-test was conducted to compare the growth between a pre and post writing. The results indicated that the mean for students who participated in the pre-writing assessment ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 3.46$) showed significant improvement in the mean for post-writing assessment ($M = 6.87$, $SD = 4.21$), $t(-15.91) = 277$, $p < .05$. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the pre-writing scores and post-writing scores. Figure 1 displays the results of the pre-writing assessment given to first through fifth grade students at the beginning of the study. The frequency of the graph represents the number of students in grades first through fifth grade who scored a minimum score of zero up to the maximum score of a 20. The pre-writing reveals that a high level of students scored between zero and five on a twenty point scale.

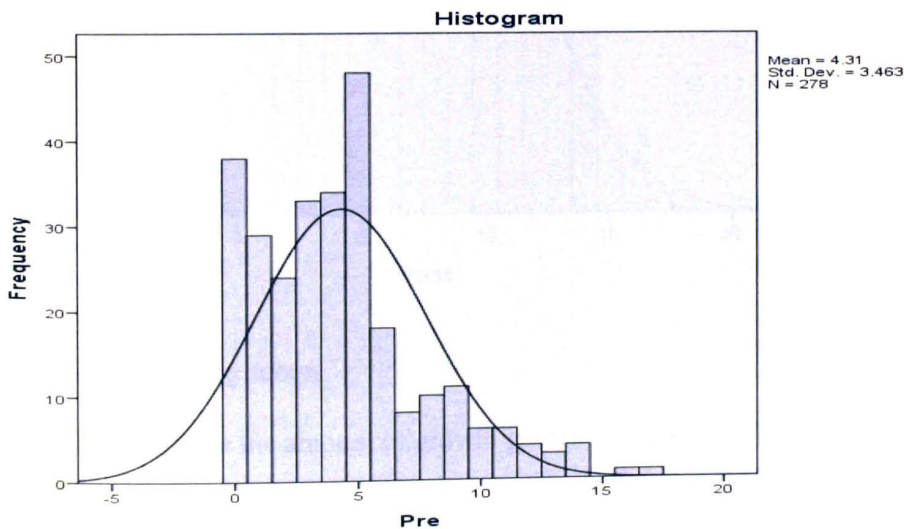


Figure 1 Pre-writing scores.

Figure 2 displays the results of the pre-writing assessment given to first through fifth grade students at the end of the study. The frequency represents the number of students in grades first through fifth who scored zero through 20 points with the lowest score being zero and the highest score being twenty. The spread of scores reveal a normal distribution of scores, which indicated that students are improving their writing with the implementation of the SRSD writing strategies

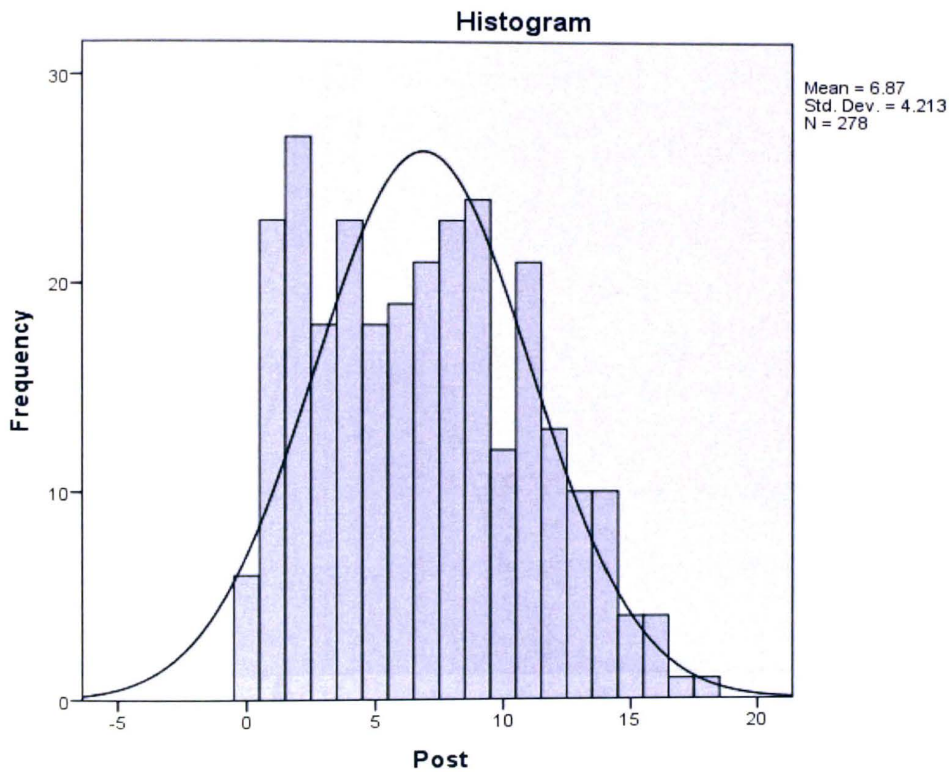


Figure 2 Post-writing scores.

To determine the amount of growth grades first through fifth grade, a One-way ANOVA was conducted. The One-Way ANOVA made a comparison to each grade level to reveal that there was a significant effect of student writing growth at the $p < .05$ level, $F(4, 273) = 6.49$, $p = 0.000$. The frequency represents the number of students who showed growth or no growth

between the pre-writing and the post-writing. The growth ranged from negative four to 13 because in the pre-writing and post-writing comparison. The majority of the growth appeared between one and seven points. There were approximately 20 students who did not show any growth and approximately 27 students who declined in their comparison post-writing. Figure 3 displays the writing growth for first grade through fifth grade.

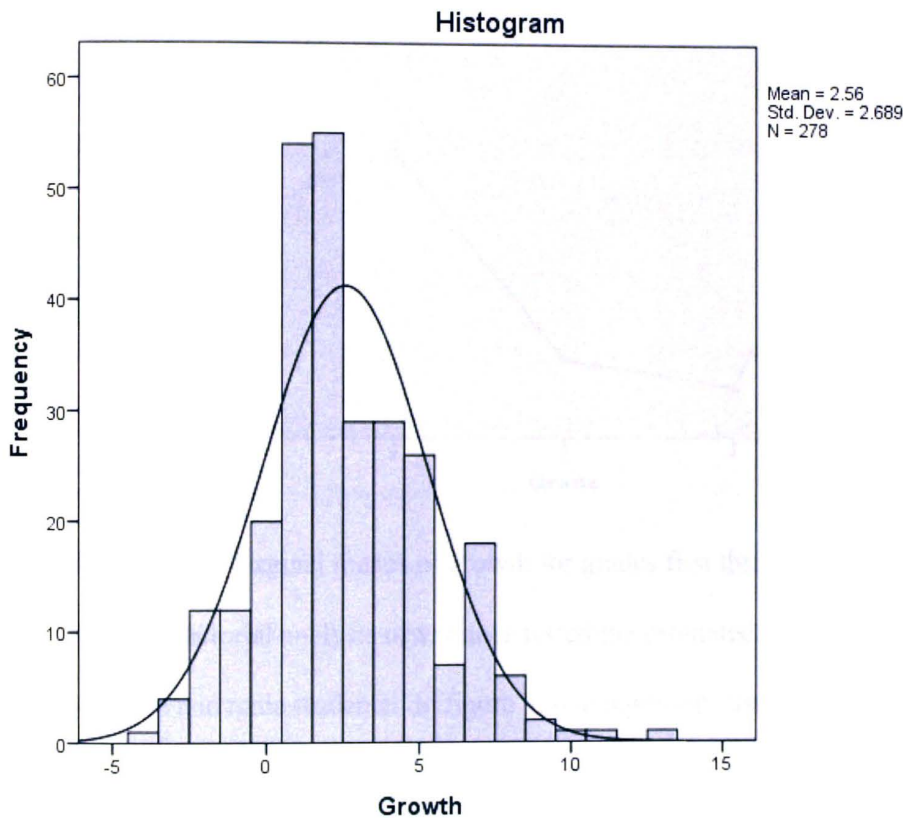


Figure 3 Writing growth.

Figure 4 shows an estimated marginal means of growth for students in first through fifth grades. Grades first through fifth grade are separated by their designated grade. This graph compared the estimated marginal growth between the pre-writings and post-writing for grades first through fifth grade. The students mean differences were compared. Students in grades first,

second, and fifth showed the most growth as an overall comparison. Students in grades third and fourth showed the least amount of growth. However, fifth grade students showed the most significant amount of growth from pre-writing to post-writing after participating in structured writing strategies lessons.

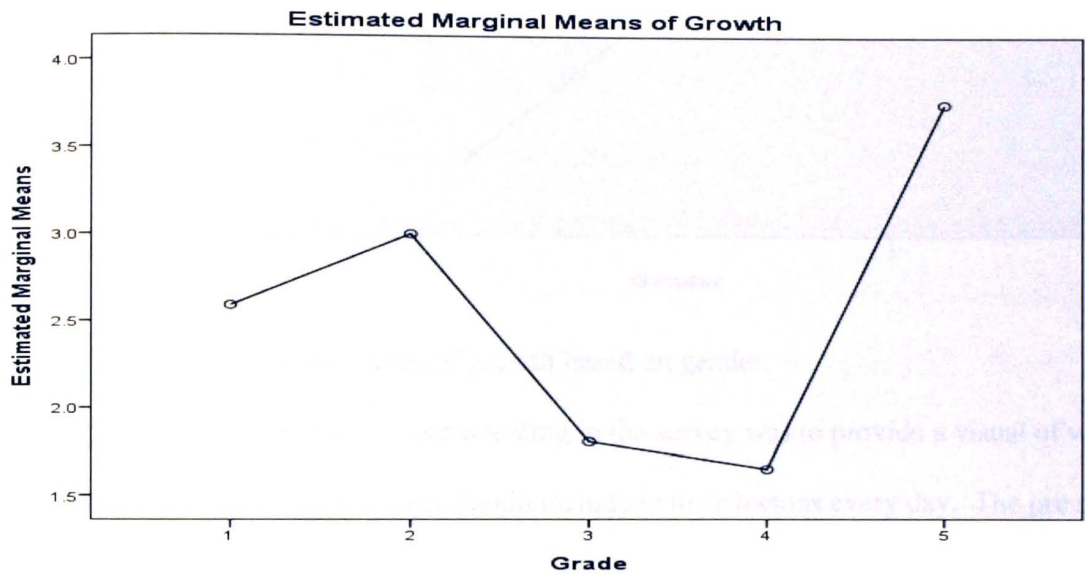


Figure 4 Estimated marginal means of growth for grades first through fifth

A 2 X 2 factorial analysis of variance tested the estimated marginal means of growth between female and male students. In figure 5, one represents the male students in grades first through fifth, and two represents the female students in grades first through fifth. Male students show a mean of $M=2.55$ and females show a mean $M=2.58$, which is represented on the left side of the chart labels estimated growth margins. Results revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female growth in writing $F(1,276) = .822, p > .365$ based on the estimated marginal means of growth.

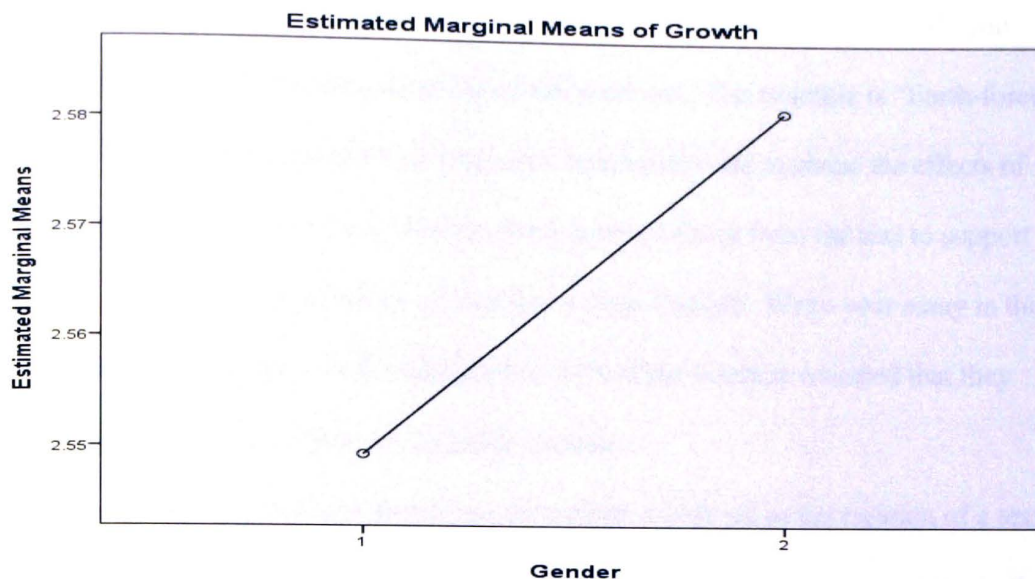


Figure 5 Estimated marginal means of growth based on gender.

The benefit of the teachers participating in the survey was to provide a visual of what high impact writing strategy teachers should include in their lessons every day. The pre and post results of the high impact writing strategy survey increased the number of participants from sixteen to eighteen due to the fact that the survey was to be taken by all teachers at the school not just teachers who taught writing. Since the survey was reviewed at the beginning of the study, the post survey participants increased by two.

The five focus questions most relevant to this study did reveal some change in instruction. For instance, question two, how often do you provide explicit instruction on writing, increased 13 of the 18 teachers are providing students with explicit writing instruction daily. However, questions four, five, and six stayed the same.

Question nine results were interesting. Although 45% of the teachers were confident in the pre-survey and post-survey that their students writing would fall between fair and good, there was a significant increase in the poor category. In the pre-survey, teachers indicated that only

40% believed their students would do poorly on a question similar to this. How well do you think your current students would respond to the question below? The example is “Earth-force in the Crust,” by Franklin Institute, write an essay that summarizes and explains the effects of plate movement on the earth. Be sure to refer to details and examples from the text to support your explanation. Follow the conventions of standard written English. Write your essay in the space provided on the next pages. In the post-survey, 55% of the teachers revealed that they believe their students would do poorly on a similar question.

Teachers did explain their response to question eight, which led to the creation of a text analysis. While analyzing the text, there was a common thread that teachers were stating in their comments that further explained their concern. In Table 3, the comments are listed and identified to grades who indicated their grade level. These responses were useful to present to the staff and discuss future training options.

Table 3

High Impact Writing Survey Text Analysis	1-2	3-5
Current writing tasks are not age appropriate	*	
Student are not ready for this	*	
Students need to continue to practice on this skill to improve	*	*
Pulling evidence from the text is a difficult strategy for students to grasp		*
Some students would really struggle completing writing		*

Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusions

The results revealed that using the SRSD writing strategies helped students become stronger writers by teachers providing explicit writing instruction on a daily basis. However, teachers will need additional training to prepare students to write to genres other than narrative and writing requirements so that students are provided with the best writing technique as well as a variety of genres. By continuing to use the SRSD writing strategies, the students can use the techniques they have learned from the narrative writing and incorporate into expository writing.

Historically, male students often struggle with reading, but there was no evidence that suggested males struggled with writing. This could be because of the gender neutral writing genres, which students have been exposed. Students will undergo informative and expository writing for the next writing genres, which may indicate gender strength or weakness.

The estimated marginal means of growth revealed that fifth grade students showed the most growth after instruction. According to the lesson plans of teachers, writing was being taught on a daily basis and students wrote daily resulting in increased writing fluency, which is how students become familiar with writing fundamentals. Holding students and teachers accountable for writing is pointless unless writing is consistently taught.

First and second-grade showed evidence of increased growth in their writing, overall their writing fluency across the grade is an issue. In order to help students in young grades develop writing fluency, teachers must include opportunities for students to write daily. This will strengthen their comfort level resulting in having better writers.

Third and fourth grade students appear to not receiving daily writing instruction or opportunity to write. Another consideration is that the teachers may be weaker writing teachers who need additional writing training to motivate students.

The development of the writing committee was very important because teachers were able to benefit and express concerns about writing instruction. However, the writing committee struggled with agreeing with the amount of writing that would be completed and which writings would be scored for pre and post writing. The concern was that teachers are already too busy and this would be extra work. The teachers came to realize the importance of writing.

However, in order for everyone to stay focused it is important for everyone to have the same understanding of adopting writing strategies to use throughout the process. By this, teachers should not try to change the requirements because it is too time consuming or difficult to teach students to write. For example, first and second grade felt the writing rubric was not age appropriate, but the realization was that it was what we, as a school, had voted to use to develop the writing strategies.

Future Research

Future research should include kindergarten writing growth. Kindergarten teachers and students do undergo a different daily routine; however, the students are still being taught to write and creative thinking skills even if the teacher is at the center of the creation.

Gaps in Literature

Due to the limited research on male and female writing scores, future research is still needed to answer the question: Does writing genre affect writing interest between male and female students? This study indicated that there was no significant difference between male and female writing scores.

Some of the gaps to consider include a writing progress monitoring plan; uniform scoring; variety of writing genre; collaboration among grade level teachers to see how to teach writing in their classroom; and administration support.

A writing progress monitoring plan will help monitor the amount of writing that takes place in all classrooms, which will be demonstrated with a pre and post writing in each genre. Teachers should be given a timeline of when to begin and end teaching writing genres and writing techniques that meet the requirements of the writing rubric for the particular genres, regardless a variety of writing instruction should be ongoing.

Uniform scoring should be consistent and scored by a writing committee to keep validity rather than varying opinions to determine valid writing growth. There is not great deal of guideline information about scoring student writing by a rubric for each genre other than items listed that each writing should include.

The genres that will be focused on include narrative, informative, and opinion. Each genre will be given ample amount of time to be taught finalizing in by undergoing a writing prompt that will be scored. Preparing students to write for a purpose has limited research because the main focus is to get students to write.

Collaboration among teachers and administrators to determine the best practice to teach writing is definitely lacking. Teachers want to know what works best to get students to pass the writing assessments and administrators just want their teachers to teach students how to write for the purpose.

Recommendations

Overall, using the SRSD writing strategies has helped teachers guide their students to improved writing. Teachers will need to continue to teach the various genres throughout the

school year. Teachers will need to make sure that they are teaching the SRSD writing strategies and then pulling supplemental resources if needed. Since teachers voted on the SRSD and the school wide writing strategy, it is important to continue its use.

Administration should consider providing staff with a certified SRSD trainer to teach steps to all teachers who will be teaching writing. Also, the writing committee should be trained by a certified SRSD trainer so scoring can be valid.

The survey that the teachers participated in should be split into groups of kindergarten through second grade and third through fifth grade. The needs of the students are different at various grade levels. There is an overall need for a consistent and writing strategy school-wide including grades kindergarten through fifth grade. It is necessary for students to experience the use of writing strategies while working through the writing process at each age appropriate level so growth and development can maintain consistency.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

School District Approval Letter

Houston County
BOARD OF EDUCATION



CATHY HARVEY, *Director*
KINNEY SPEARS, *Board Chairman*

P.O. Box 209
Erin, Tennessee 37061
Telephone: (931) 289-4148
Fax: (931) 289-5543

September 23, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to verify that Michelle Hastings may collect student data at Erin Elementary School for educational research purposes. Ms. Hastings is aware that personal student information may not be shared and she will develop a system to protect student identities. Our school board policy also states that the information will be destroyed when no longer needed for the purpose for which the study was conducted.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Kris McAskill
K-8 Director of Teaching & Learning

All participants agree to the aforementioned information.

Principal

9-24-2015
Date

Researcher

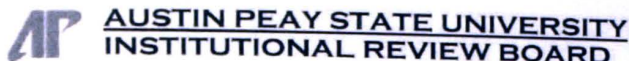
9-24-2015
Date

University Representative

Date

APPENDIX B

Approval Letter from Austin Peay State University IRB



Date: 10/16/2015

RE 15-39: The effects of a school-wide writing program

Dear Michelle Hastings,

We appreciate your cooperation with the human research review process. This letter is to inform you that study 15-039 has been reviewed on expedited level. It is my pleasure to inform you that your study has been approved, and meets the criteria for exempt from further review. Exemption is granted on the basis of 45 CFR 46.101(b)(4): research involves only the collection and study of existing data that will be provided to the PI as de-identified aggregated data and CFR 46.101 (b) (2) the use of survey procedure, adult subjects not protected under vulnerable populations, and data is anonymous. You are free to conduct the study at this time.

This approval is subject to APSU Policies and Procedures governing human subject research. The IRB reserves the right to withdraw approval if unresolved issues are raised during the review period. Any changes or deviations from the approved protocol must be submitted in writing to the IRB for further review and approval before continuing.

This approval is for one calendar year and a closed study report or request for continuing review is required on or before the expiration date, 10/16/2016. If you have any questions or require further information, you can contact me by phone (931-221-6106) or email (shepherd@apsu.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Omie Shepherd'.

Omie Shepherd, Ph. D. Chair, APIRB

Cc: Dr. Benita Bruster

APPENDIX C

High Impact Writing Strategy Survey

High Impact Writing Strategy Survey

1. How often do you provide opportunities for text based writing?

1-2 x per week	3-4 x per week	School-wide writing days only	Never
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Comment:

2. How often do you provide explicit instruction on writing?

1-2 x per week	3-4 x per week	School-wide writing days only	Never
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Comment:

3. How often do students write in response to text?

1-2 x per week	3-4 x per week	School-wide writing days only	Never
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Comment:

4. How often do you provide accountable feedback to students with opportunities for revision (i.e. adult edit/teacher-student writing conference)?

1-2 x per week	3-4 x per week	School-wide writing days only	Never
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Comment:

5. When students write, how often do they use the writing process (i.e. brainstorm, drafting, edit, revise, and publish)?

1-2 x per week	3-4 x per week	School-wide writing days only	Never
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Comment:

6. How often do students work on a piece of writing together in pairs or small groups?

1-2 x per week	3-4 x per week	School-wide writing days only	Never
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Comment:

7. How often do students write about something other than text?

1-2 x per week	3-4 x per week	School-wide writing days only	Never
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Comment:

8. How often do students engage in close reading of a complex text?

1-2 x per week	3-4 x per week	School-wide writing days only	Never
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Comment:

9. How well do you think your current students would respond to the question below?

“Earth-force in the Crust,” by Franklin Institute, write an essay that summarizes and explains the effects of plate movement on the earth. Be sure to refer to details and examples from the text to support your explanation. Follow the conventions of standard written English. Write your essay in the space provided on the next pages.

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
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Comment:

10. What writing resources do you currently use or have available in your classroom?

None	Some	Not Enough	Need
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Comment:

