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ABSTRACT

A practicum was developed and implemented to offer adolescent home schoolers a peer group academic workshop setting in which they would improve their writing prowess and social skills. The objectives for the workshop were for 10 of the 13 targeted eighth-grade students in a private home-schooling program in central Florida to participate in class discussions and in answering questions during group sessions; for 9 of the 13 students to employ the writing components necessary to improve their written communication skills by 1.5 points; and for 10 of the 13 students to demonstrate a 50% increase in encouraging each other by using positive verbal exchanges. The target group was required to take a writing pretest and posttest, to complete at least one essay using the writing process, and to participate in all group activities. All the program objectives were met, with the target group improving significantly in all areas. (Contains 24 references. Appendixes, which make up almost half the document, present a survey instrument, data, writing assessment directions, rubrics, observation forms, and instructional materials.) (Author/RS)

IMPROVING HOME SCHOOLED STUDENTS' WRITING ASSESSMENT SCORES AND PEER GROUP INTERACTIONS BY CREATING A WRITING WORKSHOP

by

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of the Fischler Center for the Advancement of
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Abstract

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This practicum was developed and implemented to offer adolescent home schoolers a peer group academic workshop setting in which they would improve their writing prowess and social skills. The objectives for the workshop were for 10 of the 13 targeted 8th grade students to participate in class discussions and in answering questions during group sessions; for 9 of the 13 students to employ the writing components necessary to improve their written communication skills by 1.5 points; and for 10 of the 13 students to demonstrate a 50 percent increase in encouraging each other by using positive verbal exchanges. The target group was required to take a writing pretest and postest, to complete at least one essay using the writing process, and to participate in all group activities. All the program objectives were met with the target group improving significantly in all areas. Appendixes include all evaluation materials and student scores.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

The target area of this practicum is located along the east coast of central Florida. Since the Kennedy Space Center operates within this area, most of the population refers to it as the Space Coast. The Kennedy Space Center is the major employer in this high tech area. However, a substantial growth in tourism and small businesses supports the local economy of this target area as well. There are no immediate expansion plans for this small town of less than 50,000 people, and most of the residents consider this part of central Florida a comfortable Florida community.

This community is experiencing a number of financial problems. Various cuts and program eliminations have resulted in a high unemployment rate and an uncertain outlook. Because of the resulting slowdown in space-related growth within the county, and existing shortages of state and county education dollars, funds within the public school system are at a premium.

As a result, there are fewer teachers and more overcrowded classrooms using minimal supplies. In many classrooms today, teachers' personal funds replenish the classes' supply cabinets. This situation sustains the low morale and uncertain outlook of the target area especially

among administrators and faculty. Thus, a number of adults in this community seek alternative schooling for their children that provides opportunities for one to one interaction in smaller classes while maintaining the necessary academic standards.

The home-schooling program is an alternative to the public classroom. This program utilizes parents' education, skills, and time. The home-schooling program allows this flexibility, and the cost of educating these children is reduced which is a factor during this time of high unemployment in this county. Additionally, the students and parents in this target area who participate in this program also want to create a larger, more comprehensive curriculum for their children by using religious as well as secular material in the classroom.

Two hundred and fifty students, all residents of this county, entered the target school, a private, home-schooling program, for the first time in 1987. When the doors to the school's only red brick building opened, students were offered a curriculum that met the minimal requirements to demonstrate proficiency on any nationally normed, student achievement test and all state assessment tests. Since that time, the curriculum has expanded to include course work that leads to both general education and specialized courses. Additionally, the school has

offered courses designed to prepare students for the technical work place, and it has provided students with developmental courses to assist them in college-level courses.

The main goal of this school has always been to produce an educational climate conducive to the emotional, personal, professional, cultural, and economic growth of the area. In an attempt to meet this goal, the target school provides a number of unique services on an ongoing basis. For example, in addition to secondary academic studies and vocational educational programs, this school has incorporated remedial education, professional counseling, cultural activities, student activities, and parent education programs into its curriculum. The target school serves over 750 local citizens with various classes, community events, and library facilities each year.

Of the 250 students who attend classes per semester at the target school, one percent is Mexican-American, .4 percent are Native American, and 98.6 percent are Caucasian. One hundred percent of these students graduate within an 11 to 12 year span.

The target group was an 8th grade class in this small, private home-schooling program. These five boys and eight girls ranged in age from thirteen years to fifteen years. Their home school classes consisted of the number of

children in their respective families. Most of the target families averaged between one and three children. None of the students in this target group were physically impaired.

As a graduate student, helping other students in various English classes evolved into a part-time tutoring position within this community and school setting. In this capacity, the writer of this practicum tutored in oral communications, English grammar, and literature. This experience afforded the writer the opportunity to work with secondary students on a one-to-one basis, within small groups, and within whole classroom settings.

Since the adolescents in the target group of the practicum were schooled in their homes, the opportunities for interaction within this group of adolescents was minimal. Heterogeneous group activities usually evolved around a Christmas drama in the winter, and if students attended the same church, religious activities on Sundays.

Academically, the scholastic records and parent comments reviewed by this writer documented students' academic abilities ranging from two grades below average to on grade level.

Because the parent is the home schooling instructor, these students learned without peer interaction on a daily basis. This situation encapsulated the student's learning environment further. What emerged was a noncompetitive

environment in which these adolescent students explored areas which interested them, at their own pace, and toward an assigned goal. The overuse of the lone, individualistic, goal structure was hard on students, and many adolescents described this type of learning environment as the lonely curriculum (Johnson & Johnson, 1991). According to the target group's responses on a teacher generated workshop survey, this type of environment sustained the problem of a lack of peer interaction on a regular basis (Appendix A, p.77).

Moreover, because of the unique nature of their classroom, the students in this target group did not have an opportunity to present or discuss their writing or ideas orally with their peers on a regular basis. The attached teacher generated survey showed that the oral communication needs of these adolescents were as great as their written communication needs (Appendix A, p.77).

Additionally, the target group responses revealed that ninety eight percent had never discussed their writing within a peer group setting. For these students, the larger audience consisted of their parents, siblings, or the readers of an occasional, optional writing competition.

Even more disturbing, 11 of these students did not read assigned stories or poems aloud to anyone other than family members. There were no demands on them to read or

speak in front of a group. Therefore, the majority of these students did not respond orally in a group setting. Usually, the same two students responded for the group. These students, as recorded on teacher-observation forms, answered and interrupted speakers in order to be heard. On occasion, rudeness surfaced in the form of sharp, command tones, negative, facial expressions, and reading or writing while others were talking (Appendix B, p.80). This defensive mode on the part of some students demonstrated and sustained an overt sense of competition within the group setting.

In order to ascertain the depth of their written communication needs, the writer administered a focused, holistically scored, demand writing pretest (Appendix C, p.82). The writing assessment lasted for 55 minutes. Though this holistically scored writing assessment reflected the writer's ability as a whole, four elements (focus, organization, support, and conventions) were focused upon using a six point rubric scale (Appendix D, p.86).

This writing assessment substantiated the need for additional opportunities and instructions in written communication skills. An analysis of this target group's writing skills breakdown disclosed a below average score of 2.0. The writing assessment average score for 8th graders

in 1995, according to the Florida Department of Education (Sheldon, 1995), was 3.5. All scores fell below 3.5 (Appendix E, p.88). The discrepancy between what was and what should have been was 60 percent.

These students needed and wanted productive ways in which they could interact more with each other while they enhanced their enjoyment, proficiency, and volume of oral and written communication. Thus, the opportunity for an innovation which solved the problem of a lack of group interaction between these adolescents and improved their oral and written communication skills surfaced in this small, private home-schooling program.

In an effort to create situations in which these students interact more with their peers while they increase their enjoyment, proficiency, and volume of oral and written communication, the following objectives were addressed:

Objective number one

At the end of 12 weeks of implementation, 10 of the 13 targeted 8th grade students will participate in class discussions and in answering questions during group sessions as evaluated by teacher observation (Appendix B, p.80).

Objective number two

By the end of 12 weeks, 9 of the 13 targeted 8th grade

students will employ the writing components (thesis statement, organizational structure, supporting details, and grammatical conventions) necessary to improve their written communication skills by 1.5 points as evaluated by a teacher administered written assessment using a six point rubric (Appendix D, p.86).

Objective number three

After 12 weeks of implementation, 10 of the 13 targeted 8th grade students will demonstrate a 50 percent increase in encouraging each other by using positive verbal exchanges as evaluated by teacher observations (Appendix F, p.91) during the first week of the study and teacher observations during the last week of the study.

Chapter II

Research and Planned Solution Strategy

Research

Today, more and more parents have chosen to home school their children. According to the Florida Bureau of Education Information (Sheldon, 1995), the number of children home schooled in the State of Florida in 1994 was 16,740. This figure has demonstrated an increase of 14,161 students entering home schooling over the last ten years. The home-schooling movement has presented challenges for educators and parents alike (Van Galen, 1987).

Some of the available literature related to two of those challenges was examined in this study. Specifically, the author researched the relationship between the social problems the targeted home schoolers demonstrated in an academic classroom setting and the need for innovations which would significantly improve the targeted group's below average writing scores.

Bliss (1989) examined the peer socialization of home schooled children and the home classroom setting. The survey/questionnaire used revealed few negative aspects of home schooled children's socialization because home school parents define socialization as extracurricular and recreational activities (Simmons, 1994). Bliss concluded,

however, from her personal evaluations, experiences, and observations that the home-schooling tutorial context does not provide adolescents with the "verbal interaction with a group on a variety of subjects" (1989, p.22).

Additionally, the mother served as the only evaluative opinion concerning a child's ideas or work. The interactive scope of the child's environment (Johnson & Johnson, 1988) became limited, and the potential for a "loss of perspective and distorted expectations" (Bliss, 1989, p.23) increased. Bliss theorized and joined Johnson and Johnson's (1988) assertion that this type of learning environment affected the academic and social achievements of the home schooled students. However, oral interaction within a group would (a) clarify students' ideas (b) provide a wider audience (c) impart a faster affirmation of concepts, and (d) contribute to self-esteem (Bliss, 1989 and Simmons, 1994).

Support for Bliss's findings concerning the negative effects of home schooling on socialization was found in the more recent study conducted by Chatham-Carpenter (1992). This researcher also questioned if "home schoolers experience less same-age peer interaction than traditionally schooled children" (Chatham-Carpenter, 1992, p.3) and whether or not these adolescents interacted effectively in a larger sphere on their own.

Social, communicative networks were examined by researcher-prepared survey forms. The survey investigated 19 home-schooling families, 20 public school families, 21 adolescent, home schooled children, and 20 adolescent, public schooled children.

The children were required to keep a record of all oral contacts over a month's period of time. Significantly, the home schoolers interacted more with children who were at least two or more years younger than they. In contrast, public schoolers interacted more with children who were within two years of their own age. This finding substantiated the researcher's hypothesis that home schoolers "...have less opportunity to interact with peers than public schoolers do (Chatham-Carpenter, 1992, p.17) within their social network structure.

Especially significant was the adolescents' view of the value of interactions. Unexpectedly, both groups ranked the value of their relationship with parents higher than that of their peers.

Both groups considered the parent an adviser, but home schoolers felt close to and supported by their parents while "...feeling less closeness towards and receiving less support from their peer friend relationships..." (Chatham-Carpenter, 1992, p.25) than the public school adolescents.

Like Bliss (1989), Chatham-Carpenter concluded that the home schoolers' communication behaviors and social skills revolved around the parent-child relationship. In academic settings, the parents functioned as the single authority and sole type of audience.

On the other hand, the public schoolers interacted and constructed a social network built on different, expressed opinions from various sources. This group of adolescents' communication behaviors and social skills centered on a broader social network: parents and peers.

The home schoolers' lack of socialization in an academic setting created what Ede and Lunsford (1994) referred to as the "common-sense view" (Ede & Lunsford, 1994, p.54). These researchers revealed that low writing assessment scores resulted when educators, parents, and students followed the belief that the best writer surfaced from a lone author's endeavor.

According to these two teachers, the lone writers in their classes produced writing samples below their academic ability. In order to improve students' writing samples and provide them with real world communication skills, these researchers investigated seven professional organizations. From the technical side of engineering to the expository side of psychology, Ede and Lunsford discovered that collaborative writing was ongoing in all

phases of the working community; the lone writer was almost nonexistent.

Recent research completed by Brockman (1994) supported Ede and Lunsford's (1994) contention that lone writers do not benefit themselves or serve the goal of a writing curriculum: to prepare students for the real world of written communication. Brockman wrote that lone writers feared conflicts that occur in group work, workloads that sometimes rest on one group member, and grades that evaluate a group as one.

Brockman sought to quash students' concerns by assigning a collaborative writing task in a high school English class. Each appointed team, two to five members, was assigned prompts taken from material in the real world and of interest to most of them.

While working together, students uncovered more information, shared their knowledge, and utilized undeveloped skills. Because of this participatory characteristic of the cooperative learning program's format, these students evolved as writers who had to work together. Brockman concluded that student writers benefited more from peer input than from lone writing or teacher comments.

Two more educators, Renegar and Haertling (1993), knew how to plan for the lone learner, but they wanted to

improve student writing abilities and prove that "...people who cooperate learn to like one another" (Renegar & Haertling, 1993, p.218). Additionally, they hypothesized from researching cooperative learning that this form of learning would provide an individual and a group a sense of academic achievement while improving writing skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1988).

To test this theory, these two researchers developed a cooperative learning project for their 7th grade literature classes. Incorporated in this project was the premise that reading skills, writing prowess, and social skills can be addressed in cooperative learning because it is a generic process which affects many different instructional outcomes simultaneously (Sharan & Sharan, 1992). However, the writings produced by these educators revealed that simply placing students near each other and allowing interaction to take place does not necessarily mean that writing skills would be improved, or that quality peer relationships would result. Like Brockman (1994), Renegar and Haertling (1993) found that students can obstruct as well as facilitate each other's learning, and the way students interact depends on how educators structure interdependence in the learning environment (Sharan & Sharan, 1992).

To this end, Renegar and Haertling used Johnson and Johnson's book, Circles of Learning (1988) as a guide.

This tool outlined four essential elements they would use in "...developing a literature guide for a book assigned to their group" (Renegar & Haertling, 1993, p.219): positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, and interpersonal and group skills.

To develop the element of positive interdependence, Renegar and Haertling established mutual learning goals. Each student had to learn the assigned material and make sure that all members of the group contributed to the overall goal by doing the same. Part of positive interdependence and individual accountability surfaced when students were held individually accountable to do their share of the work.

Renegar and Haertling (1993) noted that individual accountability was the most problematic because as facilitators they did not prepare for it from the beginning. These educators recommended individual writing assignments such as character descriptions and plot outlines be completed each week. A weekly log of individuals' contributions to group tasks emerged as another suggested writing assignment requiring individual accountability.

Especially significant was the element of face-to-face interaction. The teachers ensured that students interacted with each other on a regular basis. However, some of the

students, like those in this study's target group, were silent, uninvolved, and not contributing to the learning of others as well as themselves. Renegar and Haertling proposed that they would solve this problem in the future by assigning "...all the strong leaders together or at least in groups of two ..." (Renegar & Haertling, 1993, p.221). Ultimately, concluded these investigators, the leaders would promote each other's successful results in their higher achievements and in getting to know each other on a personal level.

The final element, interpersonal and group skills, noted as a key feature of cooperative learning was incorporated continuously in this project. Johnson and Johnson (1991) maintained that for students to develop socially in healthy ways and to be psychologically healthy and caring, committed relationships are a necessity.

Renegar and Haertling (1993) reported that even though unexpected problems arose, the basic goal for the project was realized: student writing skills and interpersonal skills improved. Students encouraged and supported each other with kind phrases taught during this study.

Continuing research in methodology which would improve students' socialization skills in the classroom and improve their writing skills, Hart (1991) compared cooperative instruction and traditional instruction for 16 weeks in two

English Composition II classes consisting of 20 students each. Though the cluster method was used to select the target students, Hart's study embodied similar dependent variables, practical recommendations, and usable strategies applicable to the target group. The independent variables were cooperative instruction and traditional instruction. The dependent variables were (a) achievement on a closed-book, multiple-choice exam; (b) achievement on writing a 50 minute, in-class, essay exam; and (c) the amount of verbal interaction and cooperation among members of the cooperative learning groups as measured by a teacher-made observation form.

The experimental group was trained in and used cooperative learning techniques. Hart incorporated team tasks, peer evaluations, reading aloud exercises, and interview activities. This group wrote declarative, persuasive, and informative papers after students analyzed grammatical errors in various classroom writing assignments.

In addition, each team was given the cooperative goals of making sure that each team member mastered the material in each assignment and passed both parts of the written assignments (grammar skills and holistic writing analyses). Members also had to ensure that other group members averaged a score of 80 percent on the Grammar Skills

Posttest with no failures.

The control group, was instructed by using traditional lecture techniques. These included "instructor lectures, class discussions, and student-teacher conferences, and structured notebooks" (Hart, 1991, p.23).

Students in both the experimental and the control group were given a pretest in the form of a 50 minute in-class essay assignment. Though there was no significant difference in the pretest mean scores of the two classes, the students who used cooperative learning techniques scored significantly higher on the posttest than the students under traditional instructional methodology. These were calculated and statistically significant at a .01 level. Hart concluded that the research confirmed the positive relationship between cooperative learning techniques, students' improved grammar and writing skills, and increased peer-interaction (1991).

Current research also indicated that how individuals and groups view competition affects peer socialization and academic skills. The I win - you lose context of traditional, individualistic competition created lone writers and lonely students according to Covington and Harris (1993). In order to diminish competition, increase student interdependence, and improve composition skills, these researchers used cooperative learning techniques with

282 middle school students.

Covington and Harris created teams and limited team interactions to two brief sessions: one prior to performance evaluations and one during the tabulation of team scores. The team scores represented a computation of points derived from individual contributions within each team. Teams competed against a preannounced team goal defined as "the score achieved by most teams of students" (Covington & Harris, 1993, p.153) at the same age. This strategy was Covington and Harris's attempt to simulate a social process in which students compare and evaluate their own performance based on peers' scores or a set norm.

Covington and Harris concluded that when students obtained success through cooperation, a sense of human similarity and shared responsibility surfaced. Furthermore, these students demonstrated that the key to success or failure rested on their ability to improve over previous scores. This shift in focus contributed to minimizing the sense of competition within the groups which contained both low and high performers.

Holubec (1993) examined the competitive aspects hindering the socialization and academic accomplishments of 12 young, naval air traffic controllers as they completed their training program. Each trainee was randomly assigned to three-member teams in a cooperative learning program.

The twelve-member control class's (the cooperative learning team's) achievements were compared to 50 other traditionally trained classes studying the same unit. Hence, the independent variable was cooperative versus traditional instruction.

Holubec's (1993) dependent variable resided in the overall goal of getting trainees to work together in order to accomplish a mutual goal: achieve a score of 70 percent or better on the final exam. In addition, Holubec hypothesized that the accomplishment of a mutual goal required trainees to be involved in discussions of material with each other, to help each other understand the material, and to encourage each other to work harder than traditional, competitive instruction demanded.

The cooperative learning environment proved superior. "None of the trainees who participated in cooperative learning failed the unit" (Holubec, 1993, p.8). Furthermore, all trainees from the experimental group were observed as acting confidently, independently, and knowledgeably when necessary on the job.

Holubec concluded that there was a definite correlation between the amount of positive, task-related conversation and higher scores. Specifically, oral interactions containing "statements about the content of the task, directions, reading, echoing, or task management"

(Holubec, 1993, p.6) contributed to the higher scores. On the other hand, Holubec noted that competitive, humorous, and negative statements had the opposite effect on trainees' scores. The scores were lower.

Holubec's overall goal, getting trainees to work together in an effort to obtain a unit score of 70 percent or better, was exceeded. By using the cooperative learning method, the experimental group's score was 12 points higher, 82 percent. In addition, these trainees emerged, according to Holubec, more capable of carrying out their individual responsibilities.

The writer noted that contributing to the success of this study was the fact that the experimental group's leader had been trained in various academic and interpersonal cooperative learning techniques. Additionally, this key individual had daily plans prepared for team activities, unit assignments, and individual tasks. In essence, this person was responsible for the effectiveness and the success of this study.

Starr (1991) also found conversation a useful tool in group activities. Specifically, she investigated how teachers and students could coach short-term cooperative learning groups, and whether modified cooperative learning groups would work to improve peer interaction and composition prowess in English classes.

Like Holubec (1993), Starr (1991) encouraged students to discuss issues and solve problems by thinking aloud in groups. Conversation, Starr (1991) noted, surfaced as a necessity because the exercise was planned to demand interaction on the part of the students.

Starr (1991) used short-term, coached cooperative learning groups with 37 general psychology students and 11 upper-level students. Each group consisted of three general psychology students and one coach, an upper-level student. They met to test two key elements of cooperative learning: group goals and individual accountability.

As a group, they determined and resolved problematic issues that the instructor had selected. There was a significant difference in students' essays concerning controversial issues, according to Starr. Moreover, students enjoyed the peer interaction and learned the material more quickly in coached group sessions.

In modified cooperative learning, Starr tested groups within classes. The term modified was used because individual rather than group grades were given due to an expressed dislike of group grades on the part of the students. However, each group pooled, analyzed, and interpreted experiments and surveys in the cooperative learning style.

After their shared activities, students wrote an

individual report on the experiment or survey project for their individual grade. Student evaluations at the end of the activity, using a rating scale of 1 to 5, revealed that students favored cooperative group work to traditional instructional classes. Starr reported that "the quality of students' individual written reports had improved as well as classroom face-to-face interactions" (Starr, 1991, p.36).

Starr's study seemed to mirror other current investigations concerning the importance of conversation as part of socialization and its influence on written compositions. In 1994, researchers Kaszyca and Krueger (1994) incorporated peer conversation with their efforts to entice and support writers as they discovered, developed, and utilized questions.

Literature research topics were assigned to small groups in tenth, eleventh, and twelth-grade classes. Because the groups had to research their literature topics and answer the assigned questions, over time students realized that by talking to their peers about the material, the assignment was easier and more fun. Kaszyca and Krueger noted that when students needed to answer questions, collaboration led to answers that created a better writing sample and conversation among the peer groups. Conversation in small groups, according to these

researchers, surged as a useful learning tool. A tool which "...gives students the language for expressing their learning and gives them independence and confidence as writers and thinkers" (Kaszyca & Krueger, 1994, p.62).

This investigative report emphasized that conversing students, whether orally or in writing, constructed a conduit in which lone learners evolved and improved as collaborators in a cooperative learning group.

This group evolved to include parents and their responses to student drafts and finished papers. A wider audience created a positive, community response to students' writing while exemplifying collaboration in a cooperative setting.

Collaborative writing as an innovation in a classroom setting was scrutinized by educator and researcher, Dale (1994). Her study centered around a ninth-grade English class and its teacher during one quarter of a school year. During this time, Dale and a university instructor examined three processes: group processes, individual writers' processes, and collaborative writing processes.

First, the two educators created student writing groups containing three students each. Students were selected and placed by the teacher's evaluation of observed oral and written communication skills. Video tapes and interviews were used to evaluate interactions within groups

and writing processes before, during, and after the study.

In order to appraise the writing group as a whole, no specific instructions were provided as to the process these groups were to use. Students were told, however, "to write the paper from one perspective and counter argue at least one of the oppositions's major points" (Dale, 1994, p.66). Dale, like Kaszyca and Krueger (1994) hypothesized that a situation dealing with a conflict would produce more collaborative interaction within the group, and students would experience hearing other view points from fellow readers and writers.

In fact, the students did become more aware of a sense of audience. They also realized the need for and benefits of planning and revising once they heard their writing and the peer comments. According to Dale, this study proved that collaborative writing in this sample group produced students with "...more thoughtful, sophisticated writing habits" (Dale, 1994, p.68).

The writing habits and increasing needs of adult student writers' caused Kirch (1991) to seek another teaching method and find the definitive answer for improving writing skills. Thus, an investigation of the specific objectives and techniques needed to expedite and improve writers' focus, organization, details, and conventions was conducted.

In-the-classroom observations of lone writers and cooperative groups made it clear to Kirch that there were distinct advantages for students and teachers in the cooperative classroom. First, Kirch reported that collaborative writing sessions appeared to be the catalyst for students improving their writing skills more quickly. Second, Kirch viewed writing sessions as motivational sessions that encouraged students to view the work of fellow students as examples and reinforcements for completing their own writing assignments. Kirch decided that the writing process skills--prewriting, drafting, revising, and proofreading--and cooperative learning skills could coexist and enhance participants' written and oral communication skills.

The cooperative learning groups described by Kirch in her research attained improved people skills as well as superior writing skills. Kirch attributed both of these acquisitions to teachers planning specific academic and social objectives within the cooperative learning program.

Continuing to seek ways in which students' people skills and writing skills can be improved required a review of Davis's (1988) research in the English classroom. By intentionally incorporating socialization skills, writing needs, and evaluation demands, this English instructor and classroom researcher devised a strategy which was

dependent upon the use of student writing. Davis's strategy also encouraged, involved, and focused 12th grade writers.

First, Davis (1988) presented students with an exercise in sentence revision. The sentences were derived from the students' writing assignments. This researcher reported that not only did this tactic increase class discussion, but it made students aware of the kinds and number of errors made in the writing process.

Then, Davis (1988) devised a card catalogue containing students' errors. This index documented the composition errors by kind and group which enabled Davis (1988) to construct mini-lessons, student conferences, and course work in the weakest areas of students' writing.

To maintain students' focus and encourage the writing process, this educator provided credit points for circled, corrected writing errors. Most of these errors entailed spelling, punctuation, and subject-verb agreement.

Davis noted that this technique evolved from years of trial and error with students, small groups, and the writing process. During that time, more responsible writers emerged and better writing techniques appeared in the 12th grade English classroom.

From first grade to senior high, the process approach to writing, according to Proett and Gill (1986), has guided

writers through four steps which begin, guide, assist, and reflect the writer's work while diminishing errors and frustration (Aversa & Tritt, 1988). This approach to writing incorporated and or rearranged its parts so that writings evolved as accomplished art.

Any art form has more meaning when its origin is understood. Proett and Gill professed that when observed students began the art of writing, they required questions about what topic, style, and format would lead them to a finished product. Directions in choosing a focus and gathering pertinent information appeared in the form of a prewriting stage.

During this stage, stressed these writers, brainstorming techniques coexisted in the prewriting stage. For example, brainstorming or brainwriting involved students in as many ideas as possible on a single topic; clustering engaged students in literally drawing circles on a page surrounded by related information; and the Venn Diagram required students to compare and contrast pertinent information. These prewriting activities are usually accomplished in groups; however, Proett and Gill (1986) recommended them for individual efforts as well.

Other sources of information, listed by these researchers, which appeared similar and drew from the writer's immediate knowledge of the topic are listing,

word bank, and mapping. Oral activities, such as debating the merits of the list to be discussed, occurred as thought-provoking exercises as well.

Moreover Proett and Gill established a second step in the writing process: the first draft. Drafting is the writer's attempt to communicate and develop a particular idea (Proett & Gill, 1986). Albeit rough in form, several decisions must converge in this strategy. First, What is the purpose of the writing? Does the writer need to inform, describe, persuade, confirm or entertain? Then, the decision arises as to what form the essay should take: editorial, essay, or short story. And finally, what voice relays the writer's purpose?

At the same time, Proett and Gill observed writers asking and re-asking questions, or discovering new ideas that significantly differ from predrafting perceptions. Now the writer has entered into the second step in the writing approach where it becomes most obvious that writing is recursive; it circles back upon itself (Aversa & Tritt, 1988; Proett & Gill, 1986).

Once the actual writing process was completed, students edited or proofread their work. Revising the first or second drafts depended on the student's ability to shift from being a writer to being a reader. Every rereading raised the possibility of change. According to

educator Nancie Atwell, "students need to know that writers select" (Atwell, 1987, p.137).

Teachers, wrote Tchudi and Mitchell (1989) contribute to this writing process directly by assisting students as they visualize and discover options. For example, these two educators recommended ignoring grammatical or punctuation errors while editing a work the first time. Concurrent readings are used to uncover problems in "effectiveness, clarity, organization, style, and structure" (Tchudi & Mitchell, 1989, p.241).

Forming peer editing groups and hearing works read by other students assisted researchers in evaluating this phase of the writing process as well. Incorporating the adolescent's need to orally participate in learning, enhanced this age group's ability to find "...for themselves what they need to know..." (Bowser, 1993 p.38). Atwell (1991) maintained that when revision is encouraged, not as a punishment but as a natural process, students' perceptions of this activity surfaced as part of their writing process kit not as part of their Achilles heel.

The relationship between this review of literature and this practicum was to seek research on the challenges facing educators and parents involved in the home-schooling program. Specifically, this writer examined practices and studies which dealt with similar social problems home

schoolers demonstrated in an academic setting, and the need for innovations which would significantly improve the targeted groups' below average writing scores.

Solution Strategy

In sum, according to the practices and research reviewed, the targeted, adolescent students would benefit from a strategy consisting of cooperative learning and the writing process. Cooperative learning as espoused by a large sample of this author's research addresses the target group's needs because it is a teaching strategy that focuses on the total development of the student. As Bliss (1989) and a number of other researchers indicated, cooperative learning would assist this writer in the socialization needs as well as in providing home schoolers with a sense of what Ede and Lunsford (1994) described as real world skills.

Researchers Proett and Gill (1986) provided the blueprint for incorporating the writing process in the cooperative learning academic setting. Because this process incorporated group as well as individual activities and accountability, it surfaced as a more than adequate means of improving the target group's writing assessment scores.

CHAPTER III

Method

The following procedures were conducted in this study which created an expository writing workshop utilizing the process writing approach in a cooperative-learning environment. Implementation took place two times a week for two hours during a 12 week span.

During the first session of week one, the writer spent 10 minutes explaining procedures for the writing workshop to students and visiting parents. Then, the writer spent 20 minutes defining, discussing, and providing examples of expository writing and the writing process approach. The overhead projector displayed writing samples on the board, and a prepared chart showing the steps to the writing process was utilized to enhance this introduction.

Upon completion of this preview, the writer taught and modeled four prewriting techniques, the first step in the writing process approach, for 45 minutes. The four techniques are freewriting, clustering, brainstorming, and mapping. For the next 10 minutes, students used at least two of the prewriting techniques. Students were told that they would continue to practice each technique during the next session.

The writer conferred and checked students' efforts during this initial exercise and throughout the 12 weeks of

implementation. Specifically, the writer circulated through the workshop talking with individual students, reading what they wrote, encouraging their efforts, and assisting as needed. Students conferred with each other concerning their work.

Students took a five minute break at this time and the parents left. Once students returned, the writer continued the first session by introducing the term cooperative-learning skills. The writer led a brief, ten minute group discussion on what the social skill of cooperation sounds like and looks like (Appendix G, p.94). Students listed and discussed situations in which they received cooperation in accomplishing a goal.

During the next five minutes, the writer assigned students to heterogeneous groups. The groups were offered seating on bean bags, arm chairs, floor mats, or desk chairs provided by the writer.

As students sat in the newly formed groups, the writer conducted a five minute minilesson on what debriefing looks like and sounds like. In order to debrief students at this point and demonstrate the activity further, the writer asked students to form their small groups and to fill in their group charts on what debriefing looks like and sounds like (Appendix H, p.96) for the next five minutes. For the

last 5 minutes of this session, students continued practicing the prewriting techniques introduced in the earlier session.

Beginning the second session of this first week, the writer and students practiced for 20 minutes the four prewriting techniques discussed in the first session. Following this activity, the writer debriefed the entire group in a five minute discussion exercise by asking the questions: What did you like/dislike about the prewriting exercise? Which technique is your favorite and why? The writer collected all prewriting samples.

A five minute break was provided at this time. While students took a break, the writer evaluated the prewriting samples. Upon returning from the break, the writer conducted a five minute minilesson on writing for an audience. In order to evaluate students' understanding of this minilesson, the writer waited five minutes for individual written responses to the following questions: What does the term sense of audience mean? Why is it important to a writer? The writer collected all responses.

Next, the assigned, small groups discussed and listed their likes and dislikes, composed the small group's name, listed any outstanding characteristics of group members, and selected the group reporter. This activity took 25 minutes.

The writer spent the next five minutes distributing and explaining the portfolio folders to be used for students' notes and drafts. These folders were stored in a drop file box which remained in the front of the workshop. Each name was alphabetized in the file box so that it was easy for students to retrieve and replace their folders each session. The writer spent two to three minutes answering students' questions concerning the folders. For the next ten minutes, prewriting samples were returned, discussed, and placed in students' folders. The writer spent the following 10 minutes explaining and answering questions concerning the rubric which was used as an evaluator of students' expository writing samples and posttest writing assessments (Appendix D, p.86).

Discussing the poster on encouraging (Appendix I, p.98) consumed the next 5 minutes. Afterwards, the writer allowed students 5 more minutes in their small groups to begin listing words or phrases which tell what encouraging looks like and sounds like.

During the next five minutes, the writer conducted a five minute minilesson on the steps to narrowing a writing topic. Students and the writer thought out loud as they listed topics they knew about. The writer used the board to show students how and why to discard some topics and add others. Students worked together for the next 15 minutes

as they selected their topics and explained their choices to the workshop.

Small group discussions occurred during the last 20 minutes of this session. Students selected a topic for their group expository writing exercise.

During the first session of week two, the students used 10 minutes to finalize their topic selection. They used the following 25 minutes to work on a one page expository writing sample utilizing the steps in the writing process approach. The writer conferred with each group as needed and asked questions to stimulate students' thinking about their topics.

For the next five minutes, the writer conducted a minilesson on selecting the correct words. The writer provided students with an opportunity to use this strategy by asking students to answer the following question: What words might you use to express suspense, bravery, or fact? Students rejoined their smaller groups, and for the next 10 minutes, they completed a group list of words that was presented to the workshop by a group selected reporter.

As students remained in their small groups, they continued to write for 20 additional minutes on topics of their own choosing. The writer conferred with and assisted students as needed.

Students took a five minute break at this point.

After the break and before students returned to the group writing assignment, the writer debriefed students for the next 15 minutes on the social skill of encouraging. Students were asked to answer the following question: What else can you add to the chart on encouraging each other? After students made their individual lists, they joined their groups to form a consensus and send a reporter to the chart with a word or phrase. The writer continued to model encouraging remarks while conferring with the groups or the students as needed. For the remaining 30 minutes of the session, students continued to work on their group writing assignment.

Beginning the second session of week two, students wrote on their group writing assignment for 20 minutes. The writer conferred with students and assisted as needed. Students conferred with each other.

For the next five minutes, the writer conducted a minilesson on inferring the relationship between the listed characteristics and the selected topic. The writer referred students to the prewriting technique of clustering an idea. Using this prewriting method, the writer and students thought out loud as the writer listed the important details of the sample idea, listed possible sequences, and examined possible relationships between the details, idea, and sequences.

This strategy was attempted by students in their smaller groups for 30 additional minutes. They practiced using the details they generated for their one-page group writing sample.

After this group writing session, a five minute break was given. Then, students used the next 30 minutes to complete the group writing assignment using the writing process approach. The writer collected all group writing samples.

At this time, students added another word or phrase to the chart on encouraging others. This activity was completed in 5 minutes.

Students began the prewriting process on their individual writing assignments. During the final 25 minutes of this session, the writer continued to confer with students as needed. Students conferred with fellow students about their work.

During the first session of week three, the writer returned students' group writing samples. The writer allowed the groups 15 minutes to review the writer's comments and/or questions noted on their writing samples. To answer individual group questions, brief conferences occurred in each group during this time. Afterwards, students continued to write for 20 minutes as they continued the prewriting process on their individual

topics.

A minilesson on creating a rough draft was conducted for 20 minutes. Using the overhead projector, the writer showed and discussed student samples of drafts. Then the writer led students as they orally answered the following questions: What is the writer's main focus during the drafting stage? Why do we call this writing sample a rough draft? Students worked in their small groups for an additional 10 minutes as they took the ideas generated in the group discussion and apply them to their own writing.

A five minute break was given at this time. Upon returning from the break, each student continued to write for 20 minutes as they continued the prewriting and/or drafting process.

For the next 15 minutes, the writer asked each group to respond to the following instructions: Evaluate and list what your group did well together and what did not work for you as a group. Then, each group's designated reporter read the list to the workshop. Each member of the group explained a portion of the list when called upon.

Students continued to write on their topics for the remaining 20 minutes of the session. At this time, students changed, deleted, or added topics as well.

The second session of the third week began with the students writing for 20 minutes on their expository writing

sample. Following this writing time, the writer conducted a ten minute minilesson on how topic sentences summarize the unifying idea of a paragraph. In order to debrief the students concerning topic sentences, the writer asked the students to orally respond to the following question: What are the characteristics of a good topic sentence? Then, in their smaller groups, students discussed and composed a paragraph with a topic sentence. The writer provided 20 minutes for this exercise.

Students continued to write on their expository writing sample for the next 20 minutes. The writer continued to confer with students as needed and modeled positive, encouraging comments to students.

At this time, all students took a five minute break. Upon returning from the break, students worked on their drafts for the next 20 minutes.

The writer used the next 5 minutes to review and reinforce the encouragement chart. Then students returned to their small groups and contributed at least one word or phrase on the poster (Appendix I, p.98). Students continued to write on their expository writing sample during the last 20 minutes of this session.

During the first session of week four, students began the first session by continuing to write their expository drafts for 20 minutes. The writer conducted a 10 minute

minilesson on how to recognize and eliminate inflated language. First, the writer defined inflated language. Next, the writer provided examples of euphemisms, jargon, and cliches young writers use today. Then students were asked to contribute to the list as the writer wrote using the board.

The writer asked students for an oral response to the following question: Why would good writers want to eliminate inflated language? Finally, students rejoined their smaller groups to check their writing for inflated language. This activity extended for five additional minutes.

Students took a five minute break at this point. Upon returning from this break, students continued to write their drafts for 20 more minutes.

The writer conducted a five minute minilesson to teach students a part of the social skill encouraging, how to voice positive comments about students writing. To check for understanding, the writer asked students to write a brief response to the following two questions: What did you learn? Where do you think you can use this strategy?

For the next 20 minutes, the small groups discussed, reviewed, and practiced using positive comments as students read their drafts out loud. Each student shared with the entire workshop a brief summary of how positive comments

affected their thoughts about their drafts. The writer monitored students' comments as the small groups worked together. Students remained in these groups for the remainder of this session as they resumed working on their writing.

During the second session of week four, the students continued to write on their drafts for the first 20 minutes. Afterwards, the writer conducted a 10 minute minilesson on developing details, reasons, and examples. The writer debriefed the workshop by asking the following question: What else can writers use which support their topics? Students worked in their small groups for an additional 15 minutes and formulated at least two examples, details, reasons, etc. which were relevant to their topics.

Students took a five minute break following this exercise. Upon returning from the break, students continued to write on their expository drafts for the next 20 minutes. During this time, the writer asked students to report positive comments made within their small groups.

At this time, the writer conducted a five minute minilesson on the importance of listening to fellow students' ideas. The writer referred students to the poster (Appendix J, p.100) on which they contributed at least one word or phrase which looked like or sounded like the characteristics students exhibit as they listen to fellow

students' ideas. This activity took place for 10 additional minutes. Once this activity was complete, students worked on their drafts for 30 minutes.

During the first session of week five, the writer provided students 20 minutes to work on their drafts. Next, the writer conducted a five minute minilesson on questions to consider before and during the revision process (Appendix K, p.102). A writing sample was projected using the overhead projector and read aloud to the workshop. The writer used the questions and asked students for additional relevant questions. Then students entered their small groups to apply the questions to their own writing and possibly generate additional questions. This activity utilized an additional 20 minutes.

Once students completed the exercise, they continued to work on their drafts or the revision process for 25 minutes. The writer conferred with individual students, checked the status of their work, and evaluated student needs.

Students took a five minute break at this point in the session. Upon their return, students wrote for the next 20 minutes in their small groups.

Before students used the last 15 minutes of this session to continue working on their drafts or revisions, the writer asked students to examine the social skill of

encouraging others. Students used 10 minutes to discuss and answer the following question: How did you feel when you heard an encouraging word or phrase from your classmates?

During the second session of week five, students wrote for the first 20 minutes. Afterwards, the writer allowed students to continue working on their revisions for 30 additional minutes. The writer eliminated the planned minilesson on using a thesaurus because this book was already being used in small group work and by individuals.

Then, students took a five minute break. When students returned from this break, they continued to work on their revisions for an additional 20 minutes.

For the next 25 minutes, the writer conducted a debriefing exercise concerning the social skill of listening. Students were asked to recall the types of details, words, or actions which keep their attention and help the listener see writers' ideas or focus as they work together in small groups, individually, and in the workshop. (During session one of this week, the students concentrated on the social skill of listening in an earlier minilesson.)

For the remaining 30 minutes of this session, students worked on their revisions. The writer continued to monitor students' listening skills and writing prowess as students

developed their writing samples.

During the first session of week six, the students continued working on their revisions for the first 20 minutes. The writer continued to confer with students in an effort to help them strengthen their writing sample.

Continuing in this effort, the writer conducted a 15 minute minilesson on the overused "be" verbs. The writer had one student list the common "be" verbs as the students call them out. Next, because the writer wanted to offer a more "hands on" method, a writing sample that contained some common, overused "be" verbs was passed out to each student. Then the writer took the first sentence in the writing sample and demonstrated how to change the verb or change the sentence in an effort to eliminate the overused "be" verbs instead of showing these samples on the overhead projector.

The writer used an additional 15 minutes and asked the entire workshop to eliminate the "be" verbs in the writing sample's sentences. Students rejoined their smaller groups, completed the exercise, and examined their writing in order to eliminate the overused "be" verbs. The writer collected the corrected writing samples from this exercise before students worked on their revisions for 20 additional minutes.

Afterwards, students took a five minute break. Upon

returning from the break, the writer gave students 20 more minutes to work on their revisions.

The writer continued to reinforce the social skills of encouragement and listening by changing group members and explaining to the entire workshop group that in the real world they work with numerous types of people and groups. Moreover, students needed an opportunity to get to know each other better and strengthen their encouraging and listening skills by challenging them in a different small group. This activity utilized five minutes of the session's time.

Next, the writer solicited words or phrases from the workshop which were added to the social skills' charts on encouraging and listening. This large group activity took 10 minutes, and it concluded after the writer solicited two volunteers to read the charts as they existed at that time. The writer monitored students' use of these social skills as they continued to work on their writing samples for the remainder of this session.

During the first 20 minutes of the second session of week six, students continued to work on their revisions. For the next five minutes, the writer conducted a minilesson on sentence combining. The writer reviewed students' knowledge of short, simple sentences. The samples were then used to demonstrate how these same

sentences will express what the writer wants to say by becoming longer more complex sentences. During the next 15 minutes, the entire workshop changed three sentences together, and then students rejoined their smaller groups and completed the sample sheet distributed by the writer. As a final exercise, the writer asked students to apply this concept to their own work.

Students took a five minute break at this time. Once the break was concluded, students continued to work on revisions for the next 20 minutes.

For the next 15 minutes, the writer shared observations and solicited student reactions to these observations from the total workshop setting. For example, the writer observed poor listening habits in small group discussions. Therefore, the writer asked the following questions of the entire group: What are the three listening strategies we discussed earlier in the session? How do they minimize the effects of conflict in our group discussions?

For the remaining 25 minutes, students continued to revise their writing samples. The writer continued to confer with students offering feedback on needed changes in their writing. Students conferred with fellow students about their work.

During the first session of week seven, students used

the first 20 minutes to continue revising their writing samples. Next, the writer conducted a five minute minilesson on how to use Proett and Gill's (Proett & Gill, 1986) "Revision Sheet" (Appendix L, p.104). The overhead projector was used to display a writing sample as the writer demonstrated how students use this revision tool. For the next 15 minutes, students were debriefed on this exercise by using these sheets individually. The writer monitored students' use of this revising tool and offered additional assistance as needed.

Additionally, for the next 20 minutes, students continued to work on their revisions on an individual basis. The writer continued to conduct miniconferences with each student.

At this time, students took a five minute break. Once the break was concluded, the writer asked students to exchange their writing samples with fellow students in their small groups. For 20 minutes, each student read and noted any additional changes, additions, deletions, or substitutes which improved other students' writing sample on a new, blank revision sheet provided by the writer. The writer instructed all students to sign the revision sheets and return them to the student with his or her writing sample.

Afterward, students returned to the larger group seating area. Within this setting, the writer conducted a 15 minute debriefing session concerning the social skills of encouraging each other and listening to each other. Each student was asked to respond to the following question: How does it make you feel when someone is really listening to you?

Once this exercise was concluded, students returned to their small groups. In these groups, students worked on their revisions for the final 20 minutes of this session.

During the second session of week seven, the writer conferred with students as they worked in small groups on their revisions for the first 20 minutes of this session. Students continued to confer with each other concerning their work.

Again, the writer conducted a five minute minilesson on the fourth stage of the writing process: editing or proofreading. The writer and students used 20 minutes discussing and developing a list of things writers look for during this process. The completed list was posted in the room so that students could refer to it as they worked.

As a debriefing exercise, the writer asked students to sit with their smaller groups and use the

next 15 minutes to answer the following question: How can writers use this list in the workshop setting and on an individual basis? Each group selected one student to report the consensus of the group to the workshop.

Students took a five minute break at this time. Once the break was over, the students reported their group answers to the workshop. Then, students began using the developed list as they continue to work on their writing for the remainder of this session.

During the first session of week eight, students began by continuing to edit their writing samples for 20 minutes. Afterward, the writer conducted a 10 minute minilesson on how to read and mark as a proofreader. A writing sample was displayed on the board by an overhead projector. Reading the sample slowly, the writer moved across each line touching each word with a pen to focus students' attention on the words and errors as they are seen. The writer demonstrated and explained some of the proofreading marks as necessary on the sample. Students were provided with a proofreading marks guide.

Next, students practiced using proofreading marks as they edited a sample paragraph for 10 minutes. Then, the writer used the overhead projector

to show the correctly marked paragraph on the board so that students could check their own work.

Upon completion of this exercise, students returned to their small groups and continued working on their writing sample for 20 minutes. The writer continued to monitor students' understanding and use of the editing/proofreading process. Students continued to confer with each other.

Students took a five minute break. After this break, students continued to edit their work for 65 additional minutes. The planned 15 minute review of encouraging others and listening to others was deleted because editing was progressing slower than planned and group conversations and student conferences were extremely beneficial at this point. Students continually conferred with each other as editors, and the writer conferred with each student and assisted as needed.

During the second session of week eight, the students edited/proofread their work for the first 20 minutes. The writer decreased assistance as students continued to work in groups.

For the next five minutes, the writer conducted a minilesson on commas in a series. Students checked and corrected a teacher prepared paragraph sample for

an additional 10 minutes. The writer had students exchange their papers with one other student in the workshop. Once this student had checked and signed off on the paper, all paragraph samples were collected by the writer.

While the writer checked the paragraph samples from the previous exercise, students continued editing for 20 minutes. Afterward, students took a five minute break.

When students returned from this break, they continued to edit/proofread their writing for the remainder of this session. The writer completed the paragraph evaluations and conferred with students.

During the first session of the ninth week, the writer allotted the first 20 minutes for students to edit their work. Then, the writer conducted a 15 minute minilesson on another proofreading skill, checking for missing words and missing word endings like "s," "es," or "ed." The entire workshop proofed a writing sample projected on the board. The writer handed out copies of a two paragraph writing sample in which words and endings were missing. Each group was given 10 additional minutes to proofread and correct the paragraphs. Group one checked group two's proofreading, and group two checked group three's

proofreading, etc. Then each group took at least one sentence and explained what corrections were needed. The writer collected all paragraphs.

Afterward, students worked on their writing samples for 20 minutes. The writer monitored students' proofreading and assisted as needed. Students conferred with each other on their work.

Students took a five minute break. The writer evaluated the paragraphs collected earlier.

As students returned, the writer handed out the proofread paragraphs from the earlier exercise. Students continued proofreading and conferring with each other on their work for 20 additional minutes. The writer conferred with students as needed.

Within the next 20 minutes, the writer reviewed and debriefed students in the social skill of encouraging. Students wrote on a piece of paper something that they wanted to do but thought they could not do.

Students in group one and group two drew one piece of paper from a hat. The writer paired off students in group three with students from group one and students in group two with students in group four. Students had two minutes to demonstrate how they would encourage their partners to try things they wanted to

do but thought they could not do. Then, the writer paired off different students by pairing group one with group four and group three with group two.

Following this exercise, the writer asked students to rejoin their writing groups. In these groups, students worked for 20 minutes on their writing sample and conferred with each other about their work.

During the second session of the ninth week, students worked on their writing samples for the first 20 minutes. Following this writing activity, the writer conducted a 10 minute minilesson on how questions may be used as transitional paragraphs. Other student writing samples demonstrating abrupt shifts in content were projected on the board using the overhead projector.

Each student wrote at least one question which moved a reader from one section to another section of the displayed sample. Then for the next 15 minutes, students in their smaller groups proofread their own writing samples for the same problem. The writer sat with each group for two to three minutes in order to assist as needed. Additionally, the writer encouraged students to use this exercise and the next 20 minutes to assist each other as they continued editing their

papers.

Students took a five minute break at this time. Upon returning, students edited their work for an additional 20 minutes.

For the next 10 minutes, the writer asked students to discuss the social skill of listening to each other. Specifically, students would orally answer the following question: How can you tell when other people are listening to you? Next, the writer asked each group to select two students for the next activity on listening. The writer handed one student from this selected pair a very short newspaper article. One to two minutes was provided for the student to read and prepare. Then, this student's task was to tell the other student about the article as the pair sat in front of the small group. The remainder of the pair's group listed what listening looks like and sounds like. The reporter selected by each small group shared the group's list with the entire workshop. The writer monitored each group's effort.

Students used the last 20 minutes of this session to work on their writing samples. The writer reminds the reader that students' writing samples and writing stages varied. With this fact in mind, the

writer continually moved throughout the workshop encouraging and assisting students as needed.

During the first session of the tenth week, students used the first 20 minutes to work on their writing samples. Next, the writer conducted a five minute minilesson on final copy. A prepared checklist (Appendix M, p.106) was be used to enhance and clarify this discussion. To evaluate students' understanding of this minilesson, the writer asked students to take an additional five minutes and respond orally to the following question: What additional questions may be included on the final copy checklist? Students' questions were added to the final copy checklist poster.

For the next 20 minutes, the writer began student-teacher editing conferences in a quiet corner while the rest of the workshop continued to edit or work on the final copy checklist. Students read their writing to the writer. The writer listened and responded with phrases which explained what was heard, felt, seen, or was confusing as the student read the writing sample. For example, after students finished reading their work, the writer responded by saying, "When I heard the part about ..., I felt ..., or when I heard the part ..., I became confused about ...

Students took a five minute break. Upon returning, the writer continued student-teacher conferences, and students continued editing and polishing their final drafts for 20 more minutes.

Within the next 15 minutes, the writer reinforced and debriefed students on the social skills encouraging and listening. The entire workshop was asked to brainstorm for any additional words or phrases which could be added to the charts on encouraging and listening. Then, students took their individual lists to their small groups and selected one word or phrase which could be used in a game of charades.

For the next 15 minutes, students in small groups selected, choreographed, and presented an addition to one of the charts on encouraging others or listening to others. Fellow groups had one minute to guess the word or phrase. The group which guessed the word or phrase sent a designated recorder to write in the new information.

As the last 20 minutes of this session wound down, students edited or polished their final drafts. The writer continued to conduct student-teacher conferences.

During the second session of week 10, students

spent the first 20 minutes polishing their final drafts. Then, the writer conducted a five minute minilesson on the two parts of publishing. In order to evaluate students' understanding of this process, the writer asked students to take an additional five minutes and respond in writing to the following question: What are the parts necessary to publishing your writing sample? Give one reason why they are important to you as a writer.

Then, students formed their small groups and took 15 minutes to combine their lists of why these two parts are important to writers. The students selected a reporter who presented the list to the workshop.

Students took a five minute break at this time. When the students returned, they reformed their small groups and continued polishing their final copies for the next 20 minutes.

The writer used the next 25 minutes to debrief students on the social skills of encouraging others and listening to others. Students were asked to use the charts they had developed to answer the following question: If you could teach everyone in this county to encourage others and to listen to others, what would you tell them to do first? Each small group

selected a reporter who presented the consensus of the group to the workshop.

Students used the last 25 minutes of this session to continue polishing their final copies. The writer collected all of the writing samples which were ready to be xeroxed. Conferencing among students and the writer occurred briefly as the writer continued to circulate around the room.

During the first session of week 11, students polished their final copies for the first 20 minutes. The writer collected any final copies which were ready to be xeroxed.

Next, the writer conducted a fifteen minute minilesson on how to construct a workshop book. Before students began this process, the writer checked with each student to make sure that supplies were adequate. Then, students started the first three steps in this process.

For the next 20 minutes, students continued to polish their final copies. The writer collected any copies that were ready to be xeroxed. During the five minute break, the writer made copies of students' work.

Upon returning from their break, most of the students continued polishing their final copies for

the next 25 minutes. Others checked their xerox copies, completed the first three steps in making a book, assisted other students, or prepared for the author's seat.

Using the next 5 minutes, the writer continued to debrief students on the social skills of encouraging others and listening to others. The writer and each student told one verbal way and one nonverbal way in which at least one person in the workshop demonstrated encouraging others and listening to others.

During the last 30 minutes of this session, students finalized the polishing of their work, checked their final copy checklist, and assisted other students. Some students used this time to finish the first three steps in the book making process.

During the first session of week 12, the writer used the first 55 minutes to conduct a writing assessment. Upon completion of this posttest, students took a five minute break.

Afterward, the writer conducted a five minute minilesson on the purpose of the author's page. Students used an additional 15 minutes to answer the following question: What information should be included on the author's page of your book? In their

small group settings, students discussed and created a list of items that should be included on the author's page and proceeded to write their individual pages. Upon completion of this task, students took turns sharing these pages with their groups.

Students worked on the next three steps in the book making process during the next 10 minutes. The writer assisted students as needed and checked to make sure that each student had adequate supplies.

As the end of this session approached, the writer briefly shared with students some of the words, phrases, and actions had been used to encourage her and to listen to her over the last few weeks. Students were given 10 minutes to share any new ways in which they could encourage others and listen to others. The writer asked students to incorporate some of these new techniques as they rejoined their small groups to work on their writing samples for the remaining 20 minutes of this session.

During the second session of week twelve, the writer used 30 minutes to conference with each student individually concerning his or her writing assessment scores, final copy, and book binding. While the writer conferred with students, the students continued to work on their books and/or final copies. Students

conferred with each other as they worked.

Next, the writer conducted a minilesson on the author's chair. Students were reminded of their experiences as they read their drafts to each other in the small group sessions; however, as students read from the author's chair, they were reading a polished, final copy. The workshop did not critique this writing. The writer reminded students of the charts created during this workshop on encouraging and listening to others as they appreciated the efforts and successes of each writer. After a five minute break, students used the remainder of the session to share their book-bound, expository writing sample with the entire workshop.

CHAPTER IV

Results

In an effort to create situations in which these students could interact more with their peers while they increased their enjoyment, proficiency, and volume of oral and written communication, the following objectives were addressed:

Objective number one

At the end of 12 weeks of implementation, 10 of the 13 targeted 8th grade students would participate in class discussions and in answering questions during group sessions as evaluated by teacher observation (Appendix B, p.80). This objective was met.

Teacher observations of student participation were documented on a weekly basis. Teacher generated observation forms (Appendix B, p.80) were used to document the number of students who participated regularly in class proceedings and in answering questions during group sessions.

During the first two weeks, very little eye contact occurred on a student to student or student to teacher basis (Appendix B, p.80). However, beginning in week three through week six, a steady increase in eye contact was observed and noted. From week six to the end of the

session, eye contact, student to student and student to teacher, continued to increase.

While observing in the area of one person speaking at a time, the writer noted a very high incidence of this behavior during the first three weeks of the workshop. As the increase indicated, the group activities produced the change in students' confidence and comfort within the total workshop setting thereby increasing the individual students' overall participation.

Students participated more in asking questions during the middle weeks, three through seven, than at any other time during the workshop. The workshop activities centered on constructing topic sentences, eliminating inflated language, developing details, reasons, and examples as well as beginning the revision process. Additionally, the writer encouraged students to ask questions.

Ten out of 13 of these students remained on task and involved throughout the workshop. One of the students was absent for five sessions, and two other students were absent for three sessions. It was very difficult to get these students caught up. Moreover, there were always one or two who needed additional, stronger encouraging from time to time. At this point, the writer used students' mothers as observers. Their notes were added and compared to the writers.

The time spent modeling and teaching students how to critique another student's writing assisted in improving students' ability to disagree in a pleasant way. As shown on Appendix B (p.80), the number of students who disagreed with one another in a pleasant way did increase as the workshop continued.

In a like manner, students began to acknowledge the good ideas of fellow students. Though this positive behavior did not surface until the fifth week and the numbers are not high, the increase and obvious improvement is significant.

On the other hand, the majority of these students did not demonstrate an overwhelming inability to follow directions. The teacher's vocabulary had to be modified so that students could follow and understand directions more easily.

Unlike the increases in positive behaviors during the 12 week workshop, negative behaviors decreased. The obvious rivalries began to significantly decrease during the seventh week. This writer attributed the change to three reasons: group activities in which students had to help each other in order to succeed, setting ground rules which required students to help each other in order to succeed, setting ground rules which did not allow laughing at the mistakes, comments, or ideas of others, and modeling

good social skills with students.

Objective number two

By the end of 12 weeks, 9 of the 13 targeted 8th grade students would employ the writing components (thesis statement, organizational structure, supporting details, and grammatical conventions) necessary to improve their written communication skills by 1.5 points as evaluated by a teacher administered written assessment using a six point rubric (Appendix D, p.86). This objective was met.

Student expository-writing skills were assessed by using a 50 minute pretest and posttest in-class essay assignment (Appendix E, p.88). The assessment was based on the format used by the Florida Department of Education (Appendix C, p.82 and Appendix D, p.86).

The pretest was administered prior to the first day of the workshop, and the scores for these eighth graders were below average at 2.0. At the end of twelve weeks, a post test was administered. The difference between the average pretest score and the posttest average score of 3.4 was a significant difference of 1.4.

A rubric, ranging in scores from one through six, was used as mandated by the Florida Department of Education. Each essay was read and scored by two different readers, the writer and an English teacher who serves as a state scorer. There were no scores more than one-half of a point

higher or lower than the score given by the other reader (Appendix E, p.88 indicates the average of the two scores).

Objective number three

After 12 weeks of implementation, 10 of the 13 targeted 8th grade students would demonstrate a 50 percent increase in encouraging each other by using positive verbal exchanges as evaluated by teacher observations (Appendix F, p.91) during the first week of the study and teacher observations during the last week of the study. This objective was met.

Evaluating the target group's improvements in the social skills of encouraging each other, listening to the ideas of others, and cooperating within a group was conducted through the use of a pretest and posttest teacher observation form (Appendix F, p.91), and the incorporation of two other forms which specifically recorded positive social skills in the area of encouraging and listening (Appendix I, p.98 and J, p.100). Pretests were conducted during the first two sessions of the workshop. This time allowed for the establishment of three heterogeneous, small groups. Two of these groups consisted of 4 students, and one group, due to the odd number of students, contained 5 students. Each group was observed for changes and growth in these social areas for a minimum of 5 minutes each session.

On average, each group listened actively one time during the first two sessions. During the same time period, the writer did not observe any of the group members using any encouraging words or phrases. However, eight times students contributed within the group writing assignment. The writer reinforced this effort by requiring the students to share ideas and skills, orally and in writing in order to complete the group assignment.

At the end of the 12 week workshop, a significant increase was observed and noted on a posttest, teacher observation form by the writer (Appendix F, p.91). During the last session, students using active listening skills had been recorded 11 times. For example, students asked questions during minilessons, they were less restless, and they physically moved their upper bodies forward when others spoke. In addition, students were observed taking notes in large and small group sessions, and some students were able to orally restate main points presented by the teacher in minilessons or by students in group discussions. This observation is significant because there was only one noted instance of this social skill on the pretest (Appendix F, p.91) during the first session of this workshop.

Additionally, the writer noted a slight increase in students' use of encouraging words within their groups.

Two of the three groups used two encouraging words or phrases during the last session.

The third and final area observed as part of the posttest was how often students contributed to their group. The pretest had revealed minimal contributions from group members during the first session of this workshop; however, during the last session, an increase of 13 observed times was noted by the writer. This observation revealed a significant increase of 38.5 percent.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

One of the goals of this target home-schooling program was to provide curricula which prepared students for higher education or future employment upon completion of a 12 year program. In order to assist students and parents in reaching this goal, the author plans to share the results of this practicum with the targeted home-schooling administration, parents, and students. Additionally, meetings will be requested with other home-schooling programs in the county in order to incorporate this practicum's cooperative learning objectives, strategies, and results into their writing curriculum. This incorporation could help the target home-schooling program accomplish, more effectively, its mission of helping students achieve their educational or employment goals.

Additionally, the parents of home schoolers are eager to learn writing process skills and to increase peer group activities. Some of the parents, especially those who observed or requested one to one

sessions with the writer, have already incorporated the writing process in their home studies. Other parents have called and requested more writing workshops or private tutoring.

In an effort to meet the needs of this fast growing segment of our county and state, the writer plans to propose to Nova Southeastern University that more graduate students who do not presently teach be accepted and encouraged to work with the home school community in an effort to enhance their required academic classes as well as complete their final assignment, the practicum. The home-schooling parents and students would benefit. Nova Southeastern University and the graduate student would benefit as well. It is a win-win situation that needs to be utilized for the future of two growing student populations: the home schoolers and the graduate students.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

Appendix A

STUDENT SURVEY

1. How many students are in your home-schooling English class? Out of the 13 students participating in the workshop, only two, a set of twins, had one other person in their home-schooling English class. English class.
2. How much time do you spend a week in your English class? Five students averaged 35 minutes five days a week. Six students averaged 30 minutes three to four days a week, and two students said the time and subject depended on what theme was for the week or month.
3. What do you enjoy the most in your home-schooling English class? Reading was listed by 12 students. Reading and creative writing was listed by two students.
4. What do you enjoy the least in your home-schooling English class? English grammar lessons and writing was the response written by 10 students. Three students did not like anything about English classes.
5. How often do you have group discussions about your reading or writing assignments? "Never" was the

response from all 13 students.

6. Would you like to do more with your peers? "Yes" was the response from all 13 students.
7. If the answer to number six is yes, please use the space provided to list what type of activities you would like to do with your peers.
   Games appeared on four responses, but on every response, students wrote "anything."
8. How often do you share your reading or writing with anyone other than your parents? "I don't" was the response from 12 students, and one student responded by saying, "I don't want to."

Appendix B

Appendix B

OBSERVATION OF CLASS

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR	# OF TIMES BEHAVIOR WAS OBSERVED			
	WEEKS			
	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12
* Student makes eye contact with classmates and/or teacher.	4	13	56	94
* One person speaks at a time.	20	15	29	34
* Student asks questions.	6	28	30	18
* Student is involved and on task.	64	55	61	65
* Student disagrees in a pleasant way.	0	5	11	17
* Student acknowledges the good ideas of others.	0	2	4	6
* Student follows directions.	50	56	56	61
NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR				
* Student overtly competes with another student (i.e. points out fellow student errors, laughs when fellow student makes a mistake, finds fault with fellow student clothing, work, etc.)	21	12	9	3

Appendix C

Appendix C

Writing Assessment Directions

Today you are going to do a writing exercise that will provide important information about your ability to write. It is important for you to do as well as you can. You may use the sheet of extra notebook paper as a planning sheet. This sheet is used to list ideas, plan, and organize what you will write. The prompt on the sheet turned over in front of you explains what you are going to write about and gives you some ideas for planning your writing.

After using your planning sheet to plan what you will write, begin the writing in your folder. You may continue your writing on the next page as well. You do not have to fill up both of these pages, but you should be sure that you have responded to the prompt.

Extra paper and pencils are provided on the table in front of you. You will write about something that is real, but remember, you are to write only about the prompt.

All desks must be cleared of everything except your pencils and paper. You may not use a dictionary or any English resource books.

You may write in cursive or print, and please be

sure that it is legible. I must be able to read your writing in order to score your efforts. Your writing should show that you can organize and express your thoughts clearly and completely.

You have the next 55 minutes to plan and respond to your prompt. I will let you know when you have ten minutes left. If you finish early, you should use the time to edit and revise your writing.

I will read the prompt out loud while you read along with me. I suggest that you read the prompt again for yourself and then plan what you will write.

Are there any questions? Please turn the paper in front of you over and begin.

Select ONE of the following prompts:

1. Everybody is a hero.

Before you begin writing, think about what the characteristics are of a hero. Now explain why you do or do not believe that everybody is a hero.

2. Everyone has a hero.

Before you begin writing, think about one of your heroes. Now explain why this person is a hero to you.

Appendix D

Appendix D

Rubric

Focus:	Clearly shows the writer has a unifying idea or point about the topic.	1.5
Organization:	Sentences and paragraphs connect to form a beginning, middle, and end which carries the writer's idea or point.	1.5
Supports:	Details explain, define, or provide examples which support the writer's idea or point.	1.5
Conventions:	Correct use of punctuation, grammar, spelling, and capitalization.	1.5

Appendix E

Appendix E

Prettest Writing Assessment Scores

Student #	Score
1	3
2	3
3	1
4	1.5
5	2
6	3
7	1.5
8	2
9	3
10	1
11	1.5
12	2
13	1.5

Appendix E

Posttest Writing Assessment Scores

Student #	Score
1	5
2	4
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	5
7	4
8	2
9	4
10	2
11	2.5
12	3
13	3

Appendix F

Appendix F

Teacher Observation Form

Pretest

Group #'s

	# of Times
Listens actively:	
Group #1	__0__
Group #2	__1__
Group #3	__0__
Uses encouraging words:	
Group #1	__0__
Group #2	__0__
Group #3	__0__
Contributes to group:	
Group #1	__2__
Group #2	__3__
Group #3	__3__

Appendix F

Teacher Observation Form

Postest

Group #'s	# of Times
Listens actively:	
Group #1	__3__
Group #2	__4__
Group #3	__4__
Uses encouraging words:	
Group #1	__2__
Group #2	__1__
Group #3	__2__
Contributes to group:	
Group #1	__5__
Group #2	__7__
Group #3	__9__

Appendix G

Appendix G

COOPERATION

LOOKS LIKE	SOUNDS LIKE
Three guys putting a bike together for a 4H project.	Dad talking to me and my brother.
Boys and girls playing a baseball game.	The coach hollaring plays, and the moms cheering.
A student studying for a test with his or her mom.	"OK, you know this one. Let's do it again."
Tug of War game	Everybody grunting and yelling at each other to pull harder.
Mom's teaching a class to home school student.	"Now today we're going to read about Maine.
Two girls cleaning up the kitchen.	"I will help you, so we can get out of here.
The entire family in the garden weeding.	"Dad, I hate this job." I know son, but we like to eat."
A girl struggling to make a rope bracelet.	"I'll help you. I used to make all kinds of braided jewelry."

Appendix H

Appendix H

DEBRIEFING

LOOKS LIKE	SOUNDS LIKE
Someone looking for answers in papers.	Papers moving, book pages turning.
Questions in writing or talked about.	Students talking and questioning everything.
A war conference room Men bent over a big desk Smokey room.	People talking at once. Noisy, phones ringing.
A round table full of knights discussing war.	Loud voices, strategies and problems discussed.
A big or little conference	Lots of talking, one person leads.
Two or more investigators sitting/talking together.	"Uh, yea. OK, let's do it that way. How's that work out?"
A teacher asking questions in a group. Everyone has to participate.	"How can your group use this writing process?"

Appendix I

Appendix I

POSITIVE SOCIAL SKILLS

ENCOURAGING

GROUP 1

SOUNDS LIKE:

Compliment person, "it's ok," clapping or cheering, "good job," "You can do it," "God's with you," hugs, pat on the back, "good one," "good job," "sounds like a pro to me"

LOOKS LIKE:

Shake hands when they finish, high five, pat on the back, smiles, agree when you can, clapping or cheering

Group 2

SOUNDS LIKE:

"Think good times," "we're here for you," "I love it, write more," "you can do it," "one thing at a time works"

LOOKS LIKE:

Smiling at each other, shaking hands, slap on the back, clapping, hugs, bend forward and smile

Group 3

SOUNDS LIKE:

"I love it," "do some more," "we all make mistakes," "keep going, it'll get easier," "God does not make junk," "you're in a room with friends mostly," "it's ok, we all mess up," "no one will laugh at you"

LOOKS LIKE:

Clapping, high five, hats up in the air, cheering, smiling

Appendix J

Appendix J

POSITIVE SOCIAL SKILLS

LISTENING TO FELLOW STUDENT IDEAS

STUDENTS:

GROUP 1

Sit quietly, try to concentrate on what's said, be open to others' ideas, look them in the eyes, be polite, might lean forward toward person, think about what you can learn, nod head if you agree with person,

GROUP 2

Ask reader or speaker questions, "I like your paper, tell me more," list important words, sit in circle, put papers on the floor, sit in half-moon shape, "How did you do that?"

GROUP 3

Listen quietly until others finish, ask student "Why" questions, hold your head up, look at speakers, feet on floor, have compassion for speaker, don't laugh if person messy up, smile at person

Appendix K

Appendix K

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE AND DURING REVISION PROCESS

1. Have I expressed my ideas clearly so that my audience will understand what I am saying?

2. Have I supported my conclusion with enough facts and sources?

3. Are there other ideas that I should add to my writing?

4. Are there other words that I can use to make my writing more exciting and interesting?

5. Are there better ways that I can express my ideas?

Appendix L

Appendix L

PROETT AND GILL REVISION SHEET

Read your own paper. Then do the following:

1. Count the number of sentences in your paper. _____

2. List the first word in each of the first ten sentences.

1. _____	6. _____
2. _____	7. _____
3. _____	8. _____
4. _____	9. _____
5. _____	10. _____

3. If you find that you repeated the same first word too many times, make changes.

4. List the verbs in each of the first ten sentences.

1. _____	6. _____
2. _____	7. _____
3. _____	8. _____
4. _____	9. _____
5. _____	10. _____

5. Could you substitute more active verb? If so, do.

(Proett & Gill, 1986, p.52)

Appendix M

Appendix M

CHECK YOUR FINAL COPY

___ I wrote in ink.

___ My copy is as neat as possible.

___ I have indented each new paragraph.

___ My margins at the top, bottom, and sides of the are straight.

___ I have checked my punctuation.

___ I have checked my spelling.

___ The members of my group have checked my final copy.

___ I have reread my final copy to be sure it is correct.

___ I have my name in the top right hand corner of the front page.

___ My paper is stapled together.

CS215767

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