MOTIVATING PRIMARY STUDENTS TO WRITE

USING WRITER'S WORKSHOP

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this action research project is to motivate elementary students in writing, specifically in the areas of creativity, detail, and accuracy. The teacher researchers wanted to develop self-motivated and knowledgeable writers. This project was conducted from September 2nd, 2008 to January 30th, 2009. The targeted students enjoyed learning about the writing process and became more confident in their writing abilities during the duration of the project.

The teacher researchers created and implemented a Writer's Workshop curriculum that was rich with multiple intelligences. Mini-lessons were conducted to develop their students' writing skills. Throughout the process, different intelligences were used to motivate the students.

After implementation of the Writer's Workshop Program, the percentage of students who felt positive toward writing increased from 55% to 72%. Twenty-two percent to 39% of the parents felt that their children spent more free time at home writing and we able to think of creative writing ideas. Before interventions, 21% of the students were interested in writing about any topic. After the Writer's Workshop Program, 34% enjoyed writing stories in all categories. The students especially enjoyed writing stories and letters. After analyzing writing samples, the students improved overall by 25% with writing mechanics, creativity, sentence structure, and adding story elements. The teacher researchers observed more positive behavior towards writing in the classroom and therefore the action research project was successful. We recommend the Writer's Workshop for a primary writing program.

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CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Writing is an essential part of academic success. Many primary students lack motivation and confidence in their ability to write. The research literature suggests several reasons for this, including lack of teacher training, lack of school writing curriculum, and district emphasis on reading and not writing. The teacher researchers have seen that their students in the targeted first and second grade classes do not apply writing skills or creativity as demonstrated in their weekly writing samples and observations made by the teachers. The intent of this research project was to increase student motivation, creativity, and accuracy in the area of writing.

Immediate Problem Context

Three teacher researchers, all from the same public elementary school, collaborated on conducting research for the project in their first and second grade classrooms. The teacher researchers wanted to know why first and second graders are not motivated to write creatively, use detail, and apply correct grammar skills to their writing, and what they could do differently in their classrooms to address these issues.

Data was collected for this project by three teacher researchers at one school in three separate classrooms. Class A and Class B were first grade classrooms and Class C was a second grade classroom. The following information was obtained from the 2006 state school report card, which was posted on the school district's website. In 2006 Site A had a total enrollment of 731 students. The ethnic composition of the student body was: 79.9% Caucasian, 7.7% Asian, 5.2% Multi-racial/Ethnic, 5.5% Hispanic, 1.6% Black, and .1% are categorized as Native American. In the school, 4.9% of the students had a limited English proficiency. The percentage of students

living in low-income households was 2.5%. Fifty one percent of the students were male and 49% were female in the school. The high school graduation rate was 85.8% for male students and 88.3% for female students.

In 2006 the total number of teachers in the district was 458. The average yearly salary for full-time teachers in the district was $47,579. The percentage of teachers in the district holding a bachelor's degree is 54.6% and 45.4% hold a master's degree or above. The percentage of teachers district-wide who held emergency or provisional credentials was 3.1%. The average number of years of teaching experience in the district was 6.8. The percentage of teachers in the district who were male was 17.8% and 82.2% female. The percentage of teachers in the district who were Caucasian were 98.5%, 0.7% Hispanic, 0.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.2% African America, and 0% Native American. The average student to teacher ratio in the district was 18.5 to 1 teacher at the elementary level. The average class size for first grade at Site A was 24 and for the district was 23.8. The average class size for second grade at Site A was 24.1 and for the district was 23.6. Site A consisted of 11 kindergarten classrooms, 11 first grade classrooms, and 10 second grade classrooms. Because the school district is affluent, has educated parents, and knowledgeable teachers and administrators, students should have the resources necessary for receiving effective writing instruction.

The students received 360 minutes per week of special classes in 2006. These classes included: physical education, music, art, computer lab, and library. The students also received 90 minutes of literacy instruction per day, which primarily included reading. The language arts curriculum followed the Harcourt Brace reading series with supplemental guided reading resources. Everyday Math was used by the school's math curriculum goals. The science curriculum followed the Scott Foresman series and resources from Houghton Mifflin were

available for teachers in the area of social studies. The district used the Measures of Academic Progress assessment (MAP), which was a standardized test that focused on literacy and math skills. This assessment was taken three times a year. In addition to the MAP test, Teacher C also assessed students using the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT). The OLSAT measures abstract thinking and reasoning abilities.

The district's average administrator's salary was $96,364. Site A had one principal with three years of administrative experience. There was a first year assistant principal new to the district. The office was staffed with one 12 month secretary and two 10 month secretaries. There was also a full-time nurse in the building. The school had two full-time English as Second Language (ESL) instructors. Three reading specialists assisted the students and collaborated with the teachers. There were two special education teachers. One full time social worker, one psychologist, one occupational therapist, and one physical therapist made up the special needs professional staff. The school had five physical education teachers, two music teachers, and two art teachers.

The school's drive for literacy and reading were major goals for the district. The teachers and administrators attended various workshops on literacy stations and guided reading procedures. Word study analysis skills were created and implemented by teachers and administrators. As a result of the workshop, all teachers at site A were able to create literacy station manipulatives such as sentence-making strips and word family flash cards. The school also had various reading incentives with the Read at Home Program, Ozzies Reading Club, and Six Flags Read to Succeed Program. Site A had a volunteer program, with assistance from a volunteer coordinator. Site A had a high parental support. The parent-teacher organization

offered the following programs for the students: the Scholastic Book Fair, a Craft Fair, a Food Drive, Toys for Tots, Box Tops, and Art to Remember.

There are three schools on Site A's campus: a kindergarten through second grade building, a third through fifth grade building, and a sixth through eighth grade building. Constructed in 2005, each school building had been open for three years. The buildings include various types of technology available to staff and students. In all locations, computers are available to the teachers and students. Site A houses a computer lab with approximately 50 computers. Each pod of teachers is equipped with a Liquid Crystal Display video projector (LCD projector). Telephones are available in all classrooms as well as computers with wireless internet access.

<div align="center">Local Context of the Problem</div>

The community is located 50 miles northwest of a major mid-western city. There are five primary schools (kindergarten through grade five), two middle schools (grades six through eight), one high school (grades nine through twelve), and an at-risk preschool, housed in one of the primary schools. According to the 2007 School Report Card, the school district in this community served 7, 630 students. The total number of teachers in the district was 458 in 2007. The school district had students from three communities attending Site A. The population range of all three communities was from 20,047 to 29,886. The average population growth rate of the three communities was 135.1 percent in six years. The average population for the communities was 90.6% Caucasian, 4.9% Hispanic, 1.0% Filipino, 1.3% two or more races, and other race was 1.5%. According to the community profiles, the number of associate's degrees and bachelor's degrees was above the state average.

The average number of people per household was 2.8. The average income ranged from $66,100 to $87,200. The unemployment rate was 3.9%.

The average district instructional expenditure per pupil is $4,427, compared to the state average of $5,567 per pupil. The average district operating expenditure is $7,139, compared to the state average of $9,488 per pupil.

The Community

The community offers park district activities such as sports, camps, and other non-recreational activities. Recreational parks and golf courses are attractions in and near the surrounding area. Since the community offers various recreational opportunities, students often participate in multiple extracurricular activities which has a positive effect for some students because they were able to gain knowledge through experiences and social interactions. Some of these activities also provide opportunities for exercising and learning sportsmanship.

This is traditionally a rural farming community; however, more recently much farmland has been developed into subdivided housing, shopping developments and reconstruction and additions of major roads.

The school's mission statement is "Family, school and community coming together to create lifelong learners." The district mission statement is to "Inspire, Challenge, and Empower." The district had one preschool, two kindergarten through second grade schools, two third through fifth grade schools, one kindergarten through fifth grade school, two middle schools, and one high school. One superintendent serves the school district. Every school was equipped with a computer lab containing at least thirty computers. Each classroom could access the computer labs on a weekly basis.

According to the 2006 U.S. Census Bureau, there was a large population increase in all three communities in the past six years. There was also an increase in ethnic diversity. As the communities became more diverse, more languages entered the classroom. One challenge within the schools is to meet the needs of the students with language barriers. According to the census, crime rate were low and family income was above the state average of $50,046. The combination of the statistics reflected a safe and secure community. The teacher researchers have observed that the student behaviors within the school demonstrated respect and camaraderie, as well as a sense of confidence in the students. Due to the above average family income in the community, teachers received sufficient financial support to purchase educational supplies and resources.

National Context of the Problem

Donald Graves investigated 50 major teacher-preparing institutions in the United States and found that 24 of the states do not offer a teacher training course in writing. His research recognizes the lack of preparation of writing teachers nationally and suggests the need for more teacher insight into teaching writing.

The 1996 National Center for Education Statistics states that "Writing has been described as a recursive process, in which the writer plans, translates ideas into language, and reviews what has been written. Studies concur that weaker writers spend little time planning, while skilled writers do more planning and reviewing. More skilled writers, furthermore, pay more attention to content and organization, while weaker writers are more preoccupied with the mechanics of writing, especially spelling. Good writers are found to use a longer pre-writing period than average writers" (Carr & Goldstein 1996, ¶6). Since the students' had difficulty writing and lacked motivation, the teacher researchers intended to seek out more prewriting and organizational strategies while instructing writing.

REFLECTION

For this project, we have researched our community to better understand our learners. We have learned where they have come from and therefore that makes us better able to prepare them to become life-long learners. We feel writing is an important aspect of the curriculum and therefore writing is an essential skill. Effective writing is a life-long skill that applies to many real world applications. It is used as a means of expression, communication, and evidence of learning and understanding.

The teacher researchers also believe extracurricular activities may negatively impact some students by taking their focus off academics. These students often became too busy to complete and prepare for school assignments. The teacher researchers observed through discussion that students spend significant time on nonacademic activities such as sports, dance, family activities, and playing video games.

The teacher researchers at Site A believed the research intervention would be successful if materials, resources, and proper training were available like other core curricular areas. The teachers had seen student progress in other curriculum areas, such as reading and math because of the enthusiasm placed on the area by the school and district. The students were also enthusiastic because of the hands-on activities they encountered on a daily basis. When students are actively involved in the learning process, motivation increases and student engagement occurs.

The teacher researchers feel that the students would greatly benefit on a personal level by becoming effective and motivated writers. We have the anticipation that students can gain an appreciation for writing that could be carried with them throughout their lives. By encouraging them to be passionate writers, we believe that students will have the tools and motivation

necessary to continue through their school years successfully. Students would enjoy the writing process and look forward to ways in which it could enrich their lives.

We expect that this collaborative research process will be very rewarding and fulfilling. Each teacher researcher has a unique background that will offer different insights and perspectives towards teaching. They will learn from one another and grow professionally from this experience. The teacher researchers collectively agree that they will all become better teachers, having worked and learned through this project.

Our knowledge of this topic will continue to grow as the process continues. We believe that all students can learn, and we want to seek strategies that will reach all of our learners. This action research project will enhance our knowledge in our profession in order to reach all of our students. We chose to research and implement new writing strategies to motivate and engage our students to become effective and creative writers.

CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

The purpose of this research was for three teacher researchers to find out how to motivate their elementary students in writing, specifically in the areas of creativity, detail, and accuracy. C. Peter Magrath, president of the National Association of State Universities, reported that "eight in ten students have mastered writing basics, but only about a quarter are proficient and just one in one-hundred are advanced" (CNN, 2003, p.1). In one National Assessment of Educational Progress test, "forty-eight percent of written responses were judged unsatisfactory, fifty percent were adequate and two percent were elaborated" (CNN, 2003, p.1).

At the targeted school, the teacher researchers faced similar problems with their elementary student writers. The district in which the school is located, supplies schools and teachers with reading support and highly qualified additional instruction from specialists. The district had also funded new math programs, in 2007, to support the math curriculum. A program called Rocket Math was put in place to supplement the math curriculum. The writing program at the elementary level, however, had not received any additional support or attention. Tools and support for instructing writing and developing skills were non-existent. Many of the schools funds were dedicated to reading and math.

As confirmed on the school district's website (http://www.district_.org/ curriculum/TextScheduleK.htm), reading and math assessments took place two times per year using the Measures of Academic Progress Assessment (MAP). "The MAP is a computer adaptive test that measures a student's knowledge in reading, math, and language arts" (http://www.district.org/curriculum/TextScheduleK.htm). There were not any writing assessments implemented with the students. Funds for the Library Resource Center were also

devoted for guided reading and station materials. This extensive effort to support reading left the writing programs insufficient and unhelpful for the teachers.

The district in which the researchers teach also had in place, a mandatory ninety minutes of reading instruction each day. The results of such a heavily focused amount of time on a single subject, had proven to be very beneficial as the students were reading at higher levels; however, the other areas of language arts, like writing, were falling behind. "Writing skills are essential to effective communication, but like any skill they require practice" (Lauer, 2003, p.1).

For first and second grade students the task of writing was laborious and students lacked creativity. The teacher researchers observed students becoming frustrated and unmotivated to write thoughtfully and correctly. With the district focused on reading and math scores beginning at the kindergarten level, the focus on writing instruction was limited at the district level. According to the article *How Frequently are Elementary Students Writing*, two thirds of teachers were giving little (less than once a week) to no instruction in writing (Sunflower & Crawford, 1985). Magrath also reported that "at the elementary level, almost all students devote less than three hours per week on writing, far less than they spend watching TV" (CNN, 2003, p.1).

<div align="center">Problem Evidence</div>

Evidence for the problem was gathered in five ways: through Teacher Surveys, Parent Surveys, Student Interest Surveys, Observation Checklists, and Story Rubrics.

Teacher Survey

The teacher researchers created a teacher survey (see Appendix A) intended to assess their views on their instruction of writing. The survey was given to 29 teachers grades Kindergarten through second grade during the first week of September 2008. The teachers ranked their views on a number scale from 1, being poor, to a 5, being excellent. The table

indicates that the teachers feel that there are inadequate resources available for teaching writing. It also shows that teachers have a poor view of the school's current writing curriculum. A summary of teachers' views are presented below in Tables 1 through 5.

Table 1 . Teacher Survey Response Question One

1. My school's writing curriculum is…

Poor				Excellent
1	2	3	4	5
48%	29%	24%	0%	0%

Table 1 indicates that 48% of the teachers thought the writing curriculum was poor. Twenty-nine percent of the teachers in the building gave their writing curriculum score of two and twenty-four percent gave the school's writing curriculum a neutral score of three. None of the teachers thought the writing curriculum program was excellent. One teacher said stated, "Harcourt gives some ideas, but not many." Another teacher commented, "Luckily I know how to teach writing, but I do not think we have a set curriculum or enough resources." The results of the teachers in the survey about the current writing curriculum reflected the teacher researcher's views.

Table 2 . Teacher Survey Response Question Two

2. My resources are adequate for teaching writing.

Poor				Excellent
1	2	3	4	5
5%	48%	38%	10%	0%

Table 2 shows that 0% of the teachers in the survey thought they had enough resources to teach writing. Ten percent of the teachers thought they had an average to excellent amount of resources to work with, while 38% were right in the middle. Forty-eight percent of the

teachers surveyed gave a score of two, which is a poor to average amount of resources, and 5% thought that the resources used to teach writing were adequate. "I buy the materials myself!" quoted one teacher. Another teacher said, "I feel the school should provide writing paper/journals. I have to prepare it and provide it myself."

Table 3 . Teacher Survey Response Question Three

3. I feel prepared and confident to teach writing.

Poor				Excellent
1	2	3	4	5
5%	10%	43%	29%	14%

The results in Table 3 showed that 43% percent of the teachers felt okay when it cames to being prepared and confident to teach writing skills. Twenty-nine percent of the teachers surveyed gave a rating of four, while only 14% of the teachers felt confident to teach writing. Ten percent of the teachers were not very confident teaching writing, giving a score of two, and 5% felt very poorly about teaching writing skills.

Table 4 . Teacher Survey Response Question Four

4. I incorporate multiple intelligences concepts in my writing instruction.

Poor				Excellent
1	2	3	4	5
0%	33%	19%	38%	10%

All of the teachers gave a poor rating when incorporating the multiple intelligences into the writing curriculum and only 10% felt they did indeed use the multiple intelligences when teaching writing. Thirty-three percent of the teachers surveyed gave this questions a poor to okay response and 38% of the teachers thought they were okay to excellent in their incorporation of using the multiple intelligences in writing. Nineteen percent of the teachers were average. This

shows evidence that the teachers were inconsistent on their ways to use the multiple intelligences in writing instruction.

Table 5 . Teacher Survey Response Question Five

5. My students want to engage in writing activities.

Poor				Excellent
1	2	3	4	5
0%	24%	14%	57%	5%

The results of the final question on the teacher survey showed that only 5% of the teachers thought their students wanted to engage in writing. Fifty-seven percent of the teachers gave this question a ranking of four. Fourteen percent felt okay about their students being motivated to write and 24% of the teachers thought their students were poor to average when motivated. "I would say most kids do, but like all activities/subjects it depends on their interests," was a comment written on the teacher survey. Another teacher said that children with motor issues do not want to writing activities. Although none of the teachers thought their students were poor at wanting to write, only 5% said their students were engaged in writing activities.

Parent Survey

A parent survey (see Appendix B) was developed by the teacher researchers to determine how parents viewed their child's writing behavior and attitude. The survey was given the second week of September 2008. The parents chose their responses using a Likert Scale. The results of the parent survey indicated that the parents' views were somewhat positive but were not strong on the highest end of the scale. Tables 6, 7, and 8 show the combined parent survey results from Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher C.

Table 6. Parent Survey Summary of Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher C: Question One

1. In your opinion, does your child enjoy writing?

	Disagree				Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher A	0%	21%	26%	26%	26%
Teacher B	14%	10%	10%	33%	33%
Teacher C	0%	17%	39%	28%	17%

The results of the combined parent surveys were very similar for the three teacher

researchers. Most parents stated that their child enjoyed writing more than those who stated their

child did not enjoy writing.

Table 7. Parent Survey Summary of Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher C: Question Two

2. My child chooses to write at home in his/her free time.

	Disagree				Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher A	21%	26%	11%	26%	16%
Teacher B	10%	14%	10%	33%	33%
Teacher C	11%	28%	33%	22%	6%

Teacher's A and B showed that most of the students according to their parents either

chose to write at home or don't write at home on their own. The average percentages were lower

than both sides of the survey. Teacher C results indicated that 28% of the parents thought their

child chose to write in his/her free time.

Table 8. Parent Survey Summary of Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher C: Question Three

3. My child can come up with creative writing ideas on his/her own.

	Disagree				Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher A	11%	21%	37%	21%	11%
Teacher B	10%	10%	38%	24%	19%
Teacher C	0%	17%	33%	22%	28%

The results of Teachers A showed that 32% of the parents felt that their students could come up with creative writing ideas easily on their own. 43% of the parents in Teacher B's classroom also stated that their child could come with creative writing ideas. Teacher C's results conveyed a more positive result with 50% on the agree side of the table.

Student Interest Survey

Students were administered an interest survey (see Appendix C) prior to implementing the Writer's Workshop program. The survey asked students questions on how they felt about writing, what they like to write about, and what types of writing they enjoy. Most of students in the researcher's classrooms felt ok when writing, while a significant amount of the students felt bored. The students had a wide range of writing interests. The most popular types of writing were journals and stories. Figures 1 through 5 display the students' interests and feelings about writing.

Figure 1. Student's Feelings Toward Writing
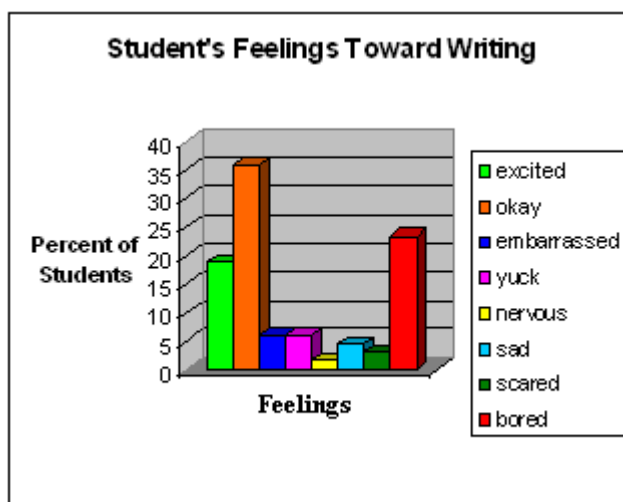
Most of the students, 36% surveyed, felt okay when it came to their feelings about writing. Twenty-three percent felt bored when writing, while nineteen percent of the students

were excited when writing. The lowest percentage of students, which was 3%, said they felt nervous when writing.

Figure 2. Student's Writing Interests
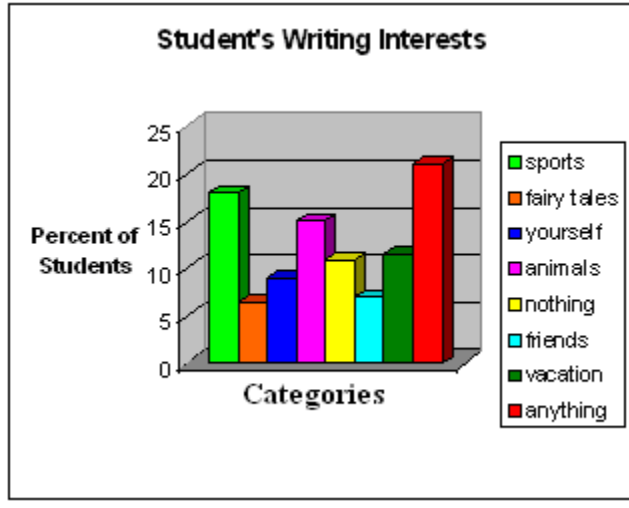
Twenty-one percent of the students enjoyed writing about anything, while 18% percent liked writing about sports. The third favorite writing activity was writing about animals with 15%. The least kinds of writing activities were fairy tales with 6.5% and writing about friends with 7%.

Figure 3. Students Favorite Types of Writing
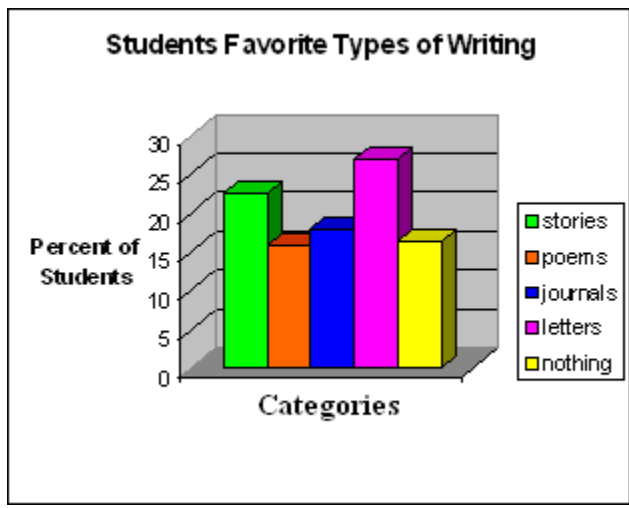
Twenty-seven percent of the students chose letter writing as their favorite type of writing, with stories as a close second with 22.5%. Eighteen percent of the students surveyed enjoyed writing in their journals and 16.5% did not like to write about anything. The least favorite writing activity was creating poems, which received 16%

*Figure 4. Students Perception of Their Own Writing*
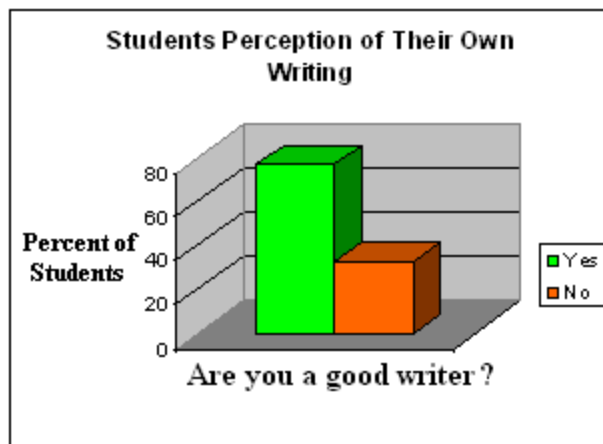
When asked if they thought they were a good writer, 77% of the students answered yes and 33% percent of the students answered no.

Figure 5. Student's Desire to Improve in Writing
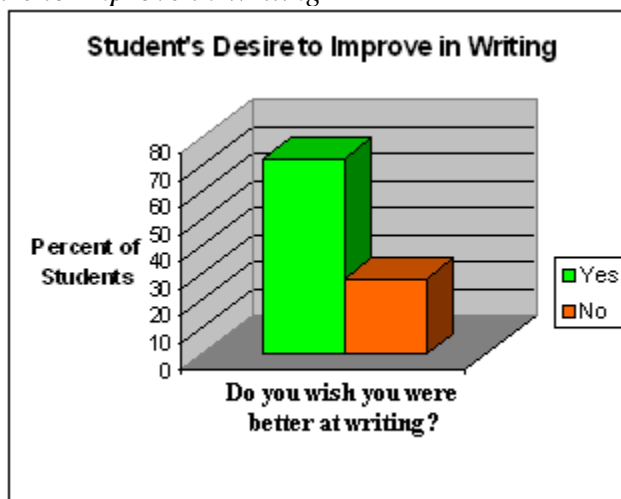
Sixty-two percent of the students had a strong desire to improve with their writing skills. Only 28% percent had no desire to get better at writing.

Figure 6. Story Rubric
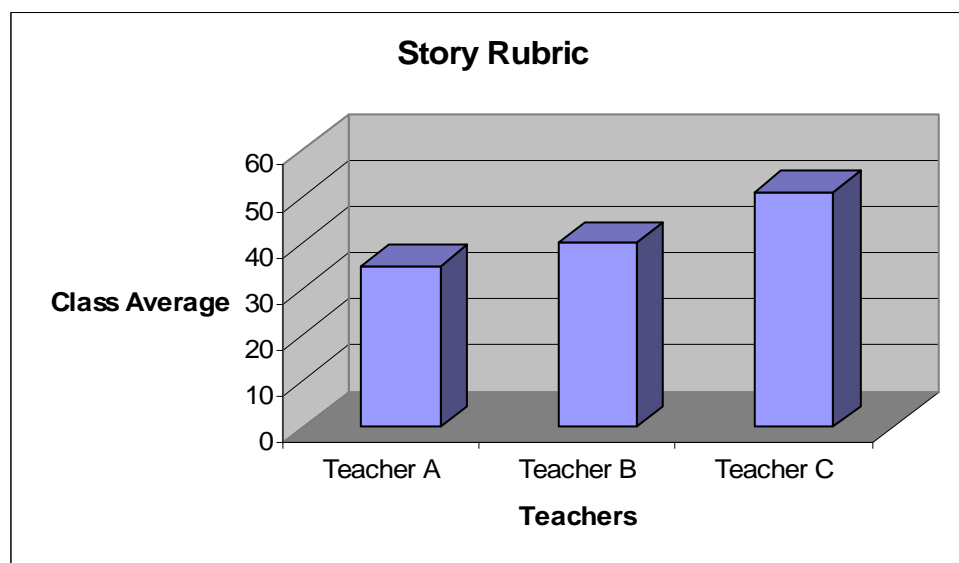
Story Rubric

All of the students Pre-writing samples were graded using a story rubric. The students scored an average of 35% in the classroom of Teacher A. Teacher B's students averaged a score of 40%. Teacher C's students averaged a score of 51% on the story rubric.

Probable Causes

Much of the literature suggested probable causes that indicated why the students' writing might have lacked accuracy, thoughtfulness, and creativity. There were three major areas that the teacher researchers found in the literature that provided insight on students' ability to write. In general, the research implied that students need adequate instructional time in the area of writing. In addition to providing sufficient time for teaching writing, the research suggested that instruction involving the use of multiple intelligences is highly motivational. Nonacademic activities and social behaviors can also play an important role in the success and progress of student writing and study skills.

The literature suggested that teachers do not spend adequate instructional time in the area of writing. While standardized tests placed a higher value on reading and math, other subject

areas started to receive less attention and less time spent on them. A study by the National

Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges recently reported that "the majority

of elementary school students spend three hours per week or less on writing assignments-that

amounts to just 15% of the time they spend watching television"(Lauer, 2003, p.1)

It was obvious from the studies and research that for a skill like reading, math, or in this

case, writing, to develop, time must be set aside daily for such instruction in order to see

improvements.

Another probable cause is the lack of multiple intelligences used during instruction.

When the problem of student motivation was discussed, the question needed to be asked, why

were the students not enthusiastically engaged in the topic? If the students were simply writing

for the sake of practicing writing, their interest and desire to do it well would be lacking.

The solution to exciting student writers and regaining their interest in the subject was

teaching to their different multiple intelligences, according to Johnson (2007). He says,

"Multiple Intelligences curriculum demonstrates increased student achievement including

improved engagement and performance" (p.4).

Just as teachers vary in style and methods, students vary in learning styles and interests.

Gardner (1983) believes that people are intelligent in a variety of ways and that it is society's

responsibility to recognize and nurture these various intelligences. In an elementary school, this

is translated into knowing the students and instructing to their intelligences in order to nurture

them appropriately.

A curriculum, geared toward reaching the different multiple intelligences, has the ability

to motivate learners. "In an educational environment, multiple intelligences encourage

instructors to create multi-facetted curriculum and engaging learning experiences" (Johnson,

2007, p. 4). Furthermore, if the writing experiences in the classroom are exciting and engaging, the students will then become more invested in their learning and become more motivated to succeed.

Finally, nonacademic stimuli may negatively affect students' behavior toward school and writing. Today's students have more distractions and activities in their lives than those of older generations. The current generation now has more video games, computer web-sites, and television stations to entertain and distract them then ever before. This has a direct effect on a student's motivation to work on school related subjects outside of the classroom.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), children spend "900 hours in school, and nearly 1, 023 hours in front of a TV" (Dowshen, 2007, ¶1). The AAP also stated that "kids in the United States watch about four hours of TV a day" (Dowshen, 2007, ¶2). Four hours added on to the end of an elementary school student's day, leaves very little time for practicing academics. This requires the time spent during the school day to be efficient and effective in order to provide the students with the best education with the time that the teachers have.

Literacy is an important part of every student's education. The goal of these action researchers is to motivate students to recognize this importance and become self motivated and inspired writers. Writing is a skill, like many others, that requires practice and patience.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

"The development of children's writing from early forms to conventional forms is best achieved through substantial time devoted to writing" (Egawa, 2008, ¶4). Three separate strategies were researched to develop their writers' behaviors. Writer's Workshop, instructing to the multiple intelligences, and using and referring to visuals and graphic organizers were the tools chosen to help develop motivated writers.

Writer's Workshop Mini-Lessons

Writer's Workshop is built on the foundation of Mini-Lessons. Mini-Lessons allow for multiple intelligences to be reached, skills to be developed, and students to stay engaged. "The most effective mini-lessons are those that are interactive" and those interactive lessons are "the most powerful tool in improving children's writing" (Kieczykowski, 2000, p.12).Writers also experience teacher conferences and the experience culminates with sharing of their work.

"Some teachers are so busy writing with their students that they never take time to deliver meaningful mini-lessons. The only way to improve the quality of writing in any classroom is through frequent and specific writing instruction" (Kieczykowski, 2000, p.5).

Jeanne Morris from Maple Elementary in Fontana, California states that modeling is very important in any primary Writer's Workshop. Part of Writer's Workshop also allows students to write about their own experiences which the teacher researchers believe will increase student motivation. Based on a writing study, it was suggested that "When teachers relate the writing activity to the students' interests, future activities, or past experiences, they help their students to answer such questions as "Why do I have to write this?" and "What is the value of

writing this?" Students are likely to become motivated if they know the answers to these questions (Law, 2007, p.2).

During the writing stage, students experience four different types of writing. These writing types include "shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, and independent writing" (Kieczykowski, 2000, p.10). This writing however is ineffective without the proper modeling done by the teacher. "Students without modeling and teacher support will never get to the independent stage of composition" (Kieczykowski, 2000, p.11).

<u>Multiple Intelligences</u>

Instructing to the multiple intelligences is a proven way to keep students engaged, tap into their prior knowledge, and introduce information in a way that is meaningful and effective. Gardner defines intelligence as "the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural setting" (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). "Since all of our students have each intelligence, it makes sense to address as many of these intelligences as possible in our classrooms and in our lesson plans" (Borek, 2003 ¶2).

A student with a musical/rhythmic intelligence is "sensitive to rhythm and pitch" (Shelton, 1992, ¶5). They can also easily remember tunes and rhythms. "Those possessing the musical intelligence enjoy playing instruments, singing, and drumming, and they like the sounds of the human voice, environmental sounds, and instrumental sounds" (Acosta, 2004, p. 7). To engage a student with a musical/rhythmic intelligence, using "poems, plays, chants, music, and songs" is best (Shelton, 1992, ¶5).

Students with logical/mathematical intelligence are "abstract thinkers" that are naturally good at "counting, organizing and prefer structure" (Shelton, 1992, ¶ 3). "Students with a high level of this type of intelligence like to develop strategies, perform experiments, reason things

out, work with numbers, ask questions, and explore patterns and relationships" (Golubtchik). An effective way to teach to these types of students is to have them participate in "critical thinking activities" (Shelton, 1992, ¶5).

Visual/spatial intelligence is the "ability to understand and create music" (Guignon, 1998, ¶4). Students with visual/spatial intelligence are "keen observers that are able to think in three dimensions and like to use metaphors" (Shelton, 1992, ¶2). This type of student benefits from using "graphs, charts, pictures and posters" (Shelton, 1992, ¶2). They also respond well to visual aids such as "overhead projectors, maps, posters, photographs, and videos" (Golubtchik).

A bodily/kinesthetic intelligent student is one that has "good body control and fine motor skills" (Shelton, 1992, ¶4). This student is "often active and animated" (Shelton, 1992, ¶4). This type of student learns through "touching, physical movement, manipulating concrete objects, and interacting with his/her environment" (Golubtchik). "Hands on learning opportunities, playing games, and performing skits" are all ways to keep a student of this intelligence engaged and motivated (Shelton, 1992, ¶4).

A student with a naturalist intelligence is "sensitive to nature and the environment" (Shelton, 1992, ¶8). Those possessing the naturalist intelligence can recognize and classify elements from the natural world and can use that ability productively" (Acosta, 2004, p.7). Engaging a student of this nature would require "working outdoors" or studying and including examples of nature (Shelton, 1992, ¶8).

Verbal/linguistic intelligent students are "sensitive to language, meanings, and the relationship of words" (Shelton, 1992, ¶1). This type of student "easily produces language, is sensitive to language, loves reading and writing, and has a good memory for words and trivia"

(Math and Reading Help). Students that are verbal or linguistically minded enjoy "vocabulary activities, grammar, poetry, essays and plays" (Shelton, 1992, ¶1).

A student who is strong in interpersonal intelligence is typically very social. They are "sensitive to others' moods, feelings, and motivations" (Shelton, 1992, ¶6). These students enjoy "socializing with friends, is a natural leader, is caring, helps friends solve problems, is street-smart and understands feelings from facial expressions, gestures and voice" (Fliess, 2006, p.2). This type of student "likes to talk with people, enjoys discussion groups, and is good at verbal problem solving" (Shelton, 1992, ¶6).

An intrapersonal student has a "sense of self and is able to understand and access one's own feelings" (Shelton, 1992, ¶7). These students generally prefer to work alone, but they do need a lot of one-on-one interaction, guidance, and reinforcement from their teacher" (Golubtchik) An effective way to teach to an intrapersonal student is allow for "journal writing and story telling" (Shelton, 1992, ¶7). You can also help them "connect in a positive way with their peers by creating opportunities for them to share their original ideas, knowledge, and research with other students" (Golubtchik).

Howard Gardner believes "that teachers need to find ways to incorporate instruction into their classrooms that encourages students to develop weaker intelligences by drawing on their strengths. This, in turn, improves both attitude toward learning and academic achievement" (Acosta, 2004, ¶8). When teachers allow students to learn in ways that are most comfortable, it increases the chances for significant learning and improving self-esteem. (Veins, 1999, ¶17).

Graphic Organizers and Visuals

The writing process is like any other skill, in that it needs to be taught and practiced. To teach the students how to develop and organize ideas, organizers and visuals were made and

posted in the classroom. In the classroom, "visual supports help students understand directions, schedules, rules, and instructional materials" (Jaime, 2007, p.260). Regarding graphic organizers, Edwin Ellis commented, "Students are more likely to become strategic learners. Reading and writing skills, communication skills, and analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills are all subject to improve when students learn to recognize these patterns of thinking, construct, and use graphic organizers" (Ellis, 2004, ¶6).

<div align="center">Project Objectives and Processes</div>

This action research project was aimed at increasing student interest, motivation, and ability in the area of writing. As a result of implementing Writer's Workshop, incorporating multiple intelligences concepts into lessons, and using graphic organizers, it was intended that the students of Researchers A, B, and C would increase their interest and creativity in their writing activities during the period of September 2008 through January 2009. The teacher researchers used rubrics, observation checklists, and interest surveys as a means of assessing student progress and increase in motivation. The teacher researchers implemented mini lessons which focused on various writing traits.

In order to accomplish the project objectives, the teacher researchers completed the following procedures:

1. The teacher researchers designed lessons using the Writer's Workshop model from Carol Kieczykowski's instructional resources to increase writing skills and creativity.

2. The teacher researchers created lessons designed to meet the multiple intelligences to increase student motivation in the area of writing.

3. The teacher researchers designed story maps, graphic organizers, and visual aids to organize student work and increase motivation.

Action Plan

<u>Prior to Documentation</u>
Before the start of school
- Copy parent surveys
- Copy parent consent letters
- Copy student consent letters
- Copy student pre-interest surveys
- Copy teacher surveys
- Copy observation checklist
- Copy rubric for student writing work
- Put together Writer's Workshop materials

<u>Week One</u> (September 2 – 5)
- Distribute and collect parent consent letters
- Distribute and collect teacher surveys

<u>Week Two</u> (September 8 – 12)
- Distribute pre-parent writing interest survey; collect and save
- Administer student pre-interest surveys
- Collect student pre-interest surveys and save
- Administer student pre-writing sample
- Complete the observation checklist while students are writing
- Use the rubric to assess student pre-writing sample
- Create student folders for Writer's Workshop

<u>Week Three</u> (September 15 – 19)
- Collect student data from pre-interest surveys and record in a table
- Introduce Writer's Workshop
- Explain rules and procedures of Writer's Workshop to students
- Implement mini-lessons
    Steps of writing process
    Introduce story elements and make posters

<u>Week Four</u> (September 22 – 26)
- Implement mini-lessons
    Graphic organizer booklets
    Topic selection
    Juicy Words
    Color Words
    Number Words

<u>Week Five</u> (September 29 – October 3)
- Implement mini-lessons
    Story building

- Incorporate the interpersonal intelligence into the mini-lesson instruction
- Continue with the writing process

Week Six (October 6 – 10)
- Implement mini-lessons
    Character Traits
- Incorporate the visual/spatial intelligence into the mini-lesson instruction
- Continue with the writing process

Week Seven (October 13 – 17)
- Implement mini-lessons
    Overused / Tired Words
- Incorporate the verbal/linguistic intelligence into writing instruction
- Continue with the writing process

Week Eight (October 20 -24)
- Implement mini-lessons
    Sensory and emotive words
- Incorporate the naturalist intelligence into writing instruction
- Continue with the writing process

Week Nine (October 27 – 31)
- Implement mini-lessons
    Vigorous verbs
- Incorporate the bodily/kinesthetic intelligence into writing instruction
- Continue with the writing process

Week Ten (November 3 – 7) Parent Teacher Conferences
- Continue with the writing process
- Complete the Observation Checklist

Week Eleven (November 10 – 14)
- Implement mini-lessons
    Homerun sentences
    Sentence stretching
- Incorporate the intrapersonal intelligence into writing instruction
- Continue with the writing process
- Analyze data from the Observation Checklist

Week Twelve (November 17 – 21)
- Implement mini-lessons
    Sentences with different beginnings
- Incorporate verbal/linguistic intelligence into writing instruction
- Continue with the writing process

Week Thirteen (November 24 – 28)
- Implement mini-lessons
  Paragraph writing
- Incorporate the musical/rhythmic intelligence into writing instruction
- Continue with the writing process

Week Fourteen (December 1 – 5)
- Implement mini-lessons
  Paragraph writing
- Continue with the writing process

Week Fifteen (December 8 – 12)
- Implement mini-lessons
  Sequencing
- Incorporate the logical/mathematical intelligence into writing instruction
- Continue with the writing process

Week Sixteen (December 15 – 19)
- Implement mini-lessons
  Sequencing
- Continue to incorporate the logical/mathematical intelligence into writing instruction
- Continue with the writing process

Week Seventeen (January 5 – 9)
- Review story elements
- Continue with the writing process

Week Eighteen (January 12 – 16)
- Administer student post-writing sample
- Complete the observation checklist while students are writing
- Use the rubric to assess student post-writing sample
- Distribute post-parent writing interest survey and collect

Week Nineteen (January 19 – 23)
- Administer student post-interest surveys
- Collect student post-interest surveys
- Analyze data

Week Twenty (January 26 – 30)
- Compile data from each researcher and enter in project report
- Destroy all data

Methods of Assessment

The three teacher researchers used three strategies to assess student writing motivation during this research project. The methods of assessments included pre- and post-surveys, pre- and post-writing samples, observation checklists, and rubrics.

The teacher researchers used parent surveys (see Appendix B) , teacher surveys (see Appendix A), and student surveys (see Appendix C) as a baseline assessment of student writing motivation and feelings about writing. The students in each classroom were given a pre-interest writing survey during the week of September 8, 2008, and a post-interest writing survey during the week of January 19, 2009. The researchers wanted to know how students felt about writing before and after the interventions were implemented. There were approximately 50 first graders and 25 second graders participating in the survey. Students recorded their responses on the survey while the teachers read the questions aloud.

The researchers used parent surveys to determine student's interest in writing from the parent's perspective. The first parent survey was distributed during the week of September 8, 2008. The teacher researchers sent home a post-parent survey during the week of January 12, 2009. One parent from each student filled out the survey and returned it to the teacher researchers.

The teacher researchers distributed teacher surveys during the week of September 2, 2009, to get information about their current feelings on the district's writing program. The researchers wanted to know how other teachers in the building felt about their writing instruction, writing curriculum, and student writing motivation. These surveys were used to support the teacher researchers' idea that the writing curriculum lacked materials and resulted in unmotivated student writing.

The researchers used student writing samples during the week of September 12, 2008, and then again during the week of January 12, 2009. All students in each classroom wrote a story without any prompts from the teacher. The researchers wanted to see if the students' writing skills and creativity improved after the strategies were implemented over the seventeen weeks of instruction.

An observation checklist (see Appendix D) was used by the teacher researchers during the pre and post-writing samples. While students completed their stories, the researchers observed each student in their classroom and recorded the results on the Observation Checklist. The students' names were coded while the teacher researchers completed each checklist. After the writing samples were turned in, the three teacher researchers used a rubric (see Appendix E) to analyze the writing skills and motivation of the students.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to motivate students in the area of writing. The teacher researchers focused specifically in the areas of creativity, detail, and accuracy in the student's writing. The multiple intelligences were used in the lessons to develop each student's individual strengths as a writer. In order to accomplish the objective, the researchers administered pre- and post- student interest surveys, writing samples, and parent surveys. A teacher survey was also used to gather information before beginning the project. The researchers used observation checklists and story rubrics to assess student writing. The Action Plan targeted 70 students in three primary classrooms. The length of the student interventions was 15 weeks beginning the second month of school.

During the first few weeks of the intervention, students were introduced the Writer's Workshop program. The children learned the rules and procedures of the program. The teacher researchers modeled and demonstrated the writing process that would be used throughout the Action Plan. Story elements were introduced by making posters that were displayed in the classrooms. Students also created Writer's Workshop folders to hold and organize all of their materials.

Each week the teacher researchers implemented mini-lessons that incorporated the multiple intelligences into writing instruction. Examples of mini-lessons included story building, character traits, overused words, sensory words, vigorous verbs, homerun sentences, paragraph writing, and sequencing. After these concepts were taught, students were expected to use the new skills in their writing. Throughout the Action Plan, students continuously worked on stories

which would take approximately 2-3 weeks to complete. After the students drafted a story, they followed the writing process which included revising, editing, conferencing, publishing, and sharing.

Every week the teacher researchers focused on a specific writing skill. Due to time constraints, the researchers found it difficult to implement the mini-lessons in their entirety. Some lessons had to be altered to fit the time frame of the school schedule due to snow days, assemblies, and school activities. A district strike also moved the whole timeline back five days. The teacher researchers shortened the following mini-lessons: sentences with different beginnings, paragraph writing, and sequencing.

<div align="center">Presentation and Analysis of Results</div>

In order to collect and compare data during the intervention several tools were created and applied. The tools were used to determine a baseline before the intervention. The initial collection methods included: a teacher survey, a parent pre-survey, a student pre-writing sample and a student pre-interest survey. In order to assess the effects of the project Action Plan, researchers used the following collection methods: a parent post-survey, a student post-writing sample, and a student post-interest survey.

The initial and final parent surveys were collected and analyzed to gather pre- and post-intervention data about each child's writing behaviors. The survey questions were about attitudes toward writing, writing in free time, and writing creatively. The parents chose a number ranging from 1-5 with 1 being disagree and 5 agree. A comparison of the pre- and post-surveys are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6.

Table 9. Pre and Post Parent Surveys Question 1

1. In your opinion, does your child enjoy writing?

	Pre				
	Disagree				Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher A	0%	21%	26%	26%	26%
Teacher B	14%	10%	10%	33%	33%
Teacher C	0%	17%	39%	28%	17%

	Post				
	Disagree				Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher A	0%	4%	22%	22%	52%
Teacher B	0%	6%	18%	35%	41%
Teacher C	5%	5%	33%	28%	28%

When the teacher researchers surveyed the parents prior to implementing the writing curriculum and 21% of the parents from Teacher A's classroom reported that they disagreed with the fact that their children enjoyed writing. A combined 28% of the parents from Teacher A's classroom reported that they disagreed with the fact that their children enjoyed writing. Seventeen percent of the parents from Teacher A's classroom reported that they disagreed with the fact that their children enjoyed writing.

The teacher researchers surveyed the parents at the conclusion of their writing program and found that the percentages of disagreeing parents declined immensely. Only 4% of the parents from Teacher A's classroom disagreed that their children enjoyed writing. Only 6% of the parents from Teacher B's classroom disagreed that their children enjoyed writing. Teacher C had only 10% of the parents from her classroom disagree that their children enjoyed writing. Every classroom saw an increase of parents who agreed their children enjoyed writing.

Table 10. Pre and Post Parent Surveys Question 2

2. My child chooses to write at home in his/her free time.

Pre					
	Disagree				Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher A	21%	26%	11%	26%	16%
Teacher B	10%	14%	10%	33%	33%
Teacher C	11%	28%	33%	22%	6%

Post					
	Disagree				Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher A	9%	17%	17%	17%	39%
Teacher B	6%	12%	6%	53%	24%
Teacher C	5%	28%	28%	17%	22%

When the parents of each classroom were asked weather or not their children wrote at home in their free time, 47 % of the parents from Teacher A's classroom disagreed and felt their children indeed did not choose to write at home. Twenty-four percent of the parents from Teacher B's classroom, and 39% of the parents from Teacher C's classroom all disagreed as well and felt that their children did not choose to write at home.

At the end of the school year, 22% to 39% of the parents in each classroom agreed to the fact that their child decided to write on his or her free time.

Table 11. <u>Pre and Post Parent Surveys Question 3</u>

3. My child can come up with creative writing ideas on his/her own.

	Pre				
	Disagree				Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher A	11%	21%	37%	21%	11%
Teacher B	10%	10%	38%	24%	19%
Teacher C	0%	17%	33%	22%	28%

	Post				
	Disagree				Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher A	0%	9%	32%	14%	45%
Teacher B	0%	6%	18%	35%	41%
Teacher C	5%	5%	22%	22%	52%

Prior to the writing program being implemented in the classrooms of the teacher researchers, few parents agreed with the statement that their children could come up with creative writing ideas independently. Only 32% of the parents in Teacher A's classroom, 43% of parents in Teacher B's, and 50% of parents in Teacher C's classroom agreed to the statement that their children could come up with creative writing ideas on their own.

After the writing program was completed, the number of parents that agreed with the statement that their child could come up with creative writing ideas independently increased significantly. Fifty-nine percent of the parents from Teacher A's classroom agreed that their child could come up with his or her own, creative ideas. Seventy-six percent of the parents from Teacher B's classroom agreed that their child could come up with their own, creative ideas. Seventy-four percent of the parents from Teacher C's classroom agreed that their child could come up with his or her own creative ideas.

Figure 6. Pre and Post Student Survey: Students Feelings Towards Writing

Pre Student Survey   **Post Student Survey**
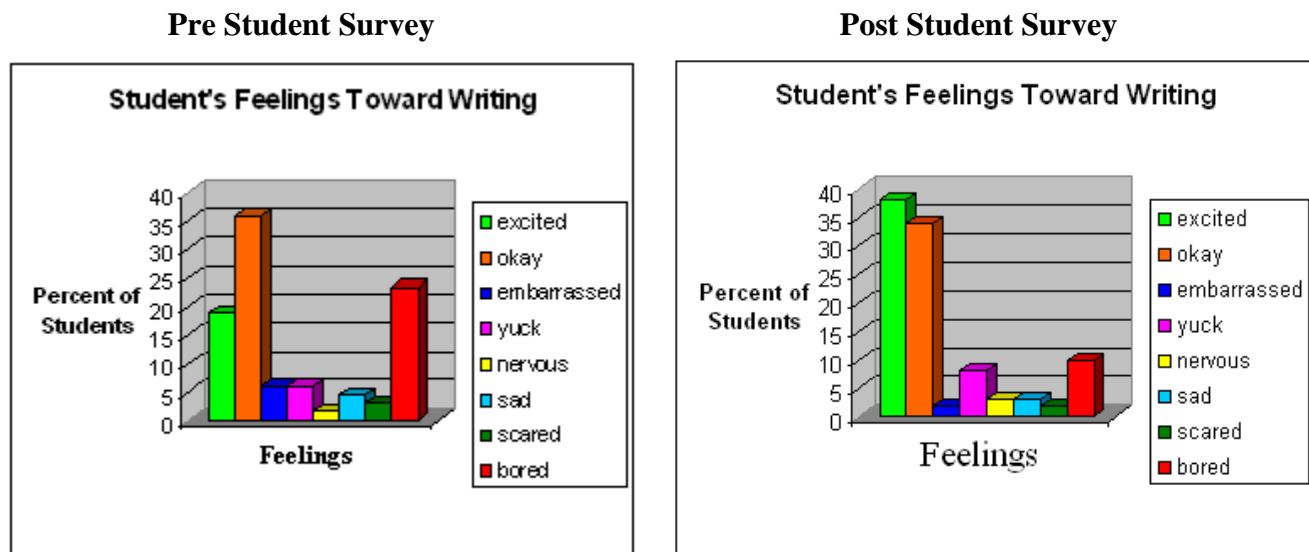
When surveying the students on their feelings toward writing, roughly 45% of the

students from the teacher researchers' classrooms reported that they felt negatively toward

writing. When the students were surveyed after they had participated in the writing program,

only 28% of the students from the teacher researchers' classrooms reported that they felt

negatively toward writing.

The survey of the students after the writing program showed an increase in positive

feelings towards writing. At the beginning of the year, 55% percent had positive feelings toward

writing. At the end of the year; however, 72% of the teachers' students felt positive toward.

Figure 7. Pre and Post Student Surveys

Pre Student Survey   **Post Student Survey**
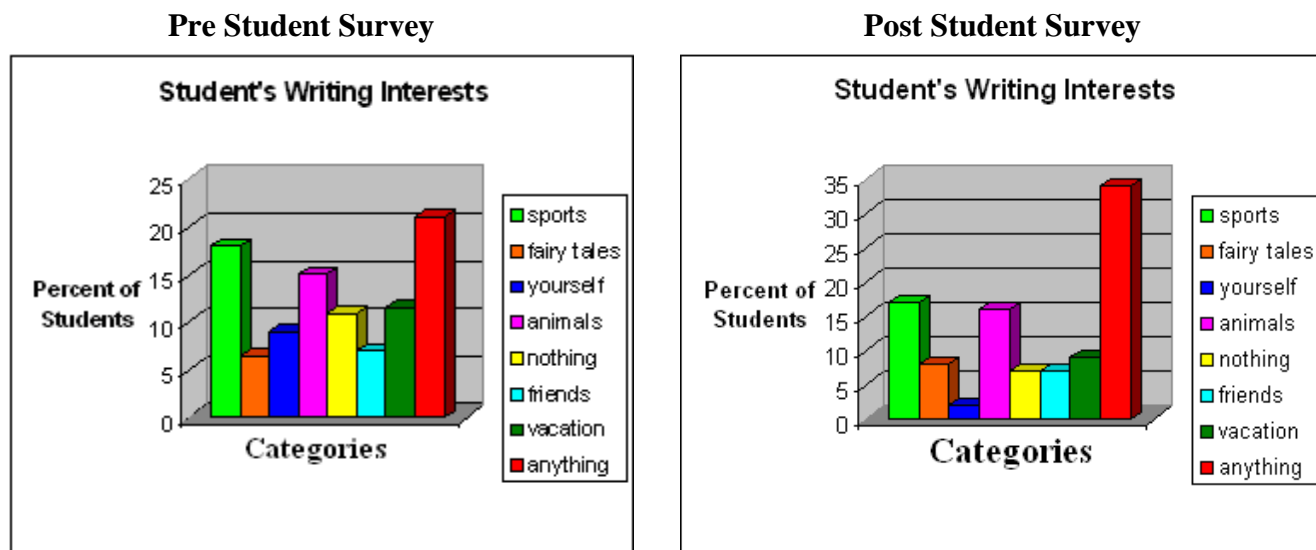
Twenty-one percent of students were interested in writing about any topic before the

teacher researchers implemented the Writer's Workshop. After the interventions, 34% of

students enjoyed writing all categories. At the beginning of the action plan, 18% of students

enjoyed writing about sports. After the interventions, 17% of students chose sports as an area of

interest. The categories fairy tales and animals both increased in percentage. The categories:

yourself, nothing, and vacation decreased in percentage. In the category of friends, the

percentage remained the same.

Figure 8. <u>Pre and Post Student Surveys</u>

Pre Student Survey   **Post Student Survey**
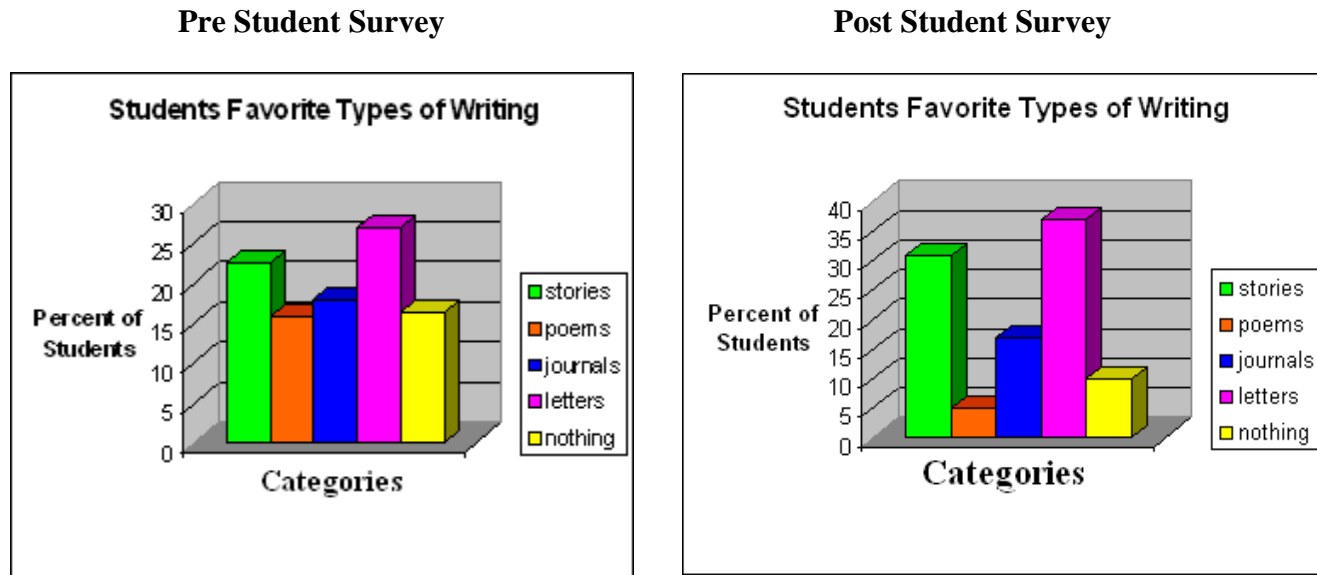
The students' favorite types of writing changed from pre to post as well. Prior to the writing program, 22% of the students in the teacher researchers' classrooms enjoyed story writing. After the writing program, 31% of the students enjoyed writing stories. This was an increase of 9%. Before the writing program, 16% of the students enjoyed writing poetry compared to only 5% after the writing program. This was a drop of 11%.

There was no change in the amount of students that enjoyed journal writing. The largest positive change between the two surveys came in the amount of students that enjoyed letter writing. At the beginning of the year, 27% of the students liked to write letters and at the end of the year, 37% enjoyed letter writing. The percent of students who reported that they liked writing about nothing went down from 17% to only 10%.

Figure 9. Pre and Post Student Surveys

Pre Student Survey

Post Student Survey
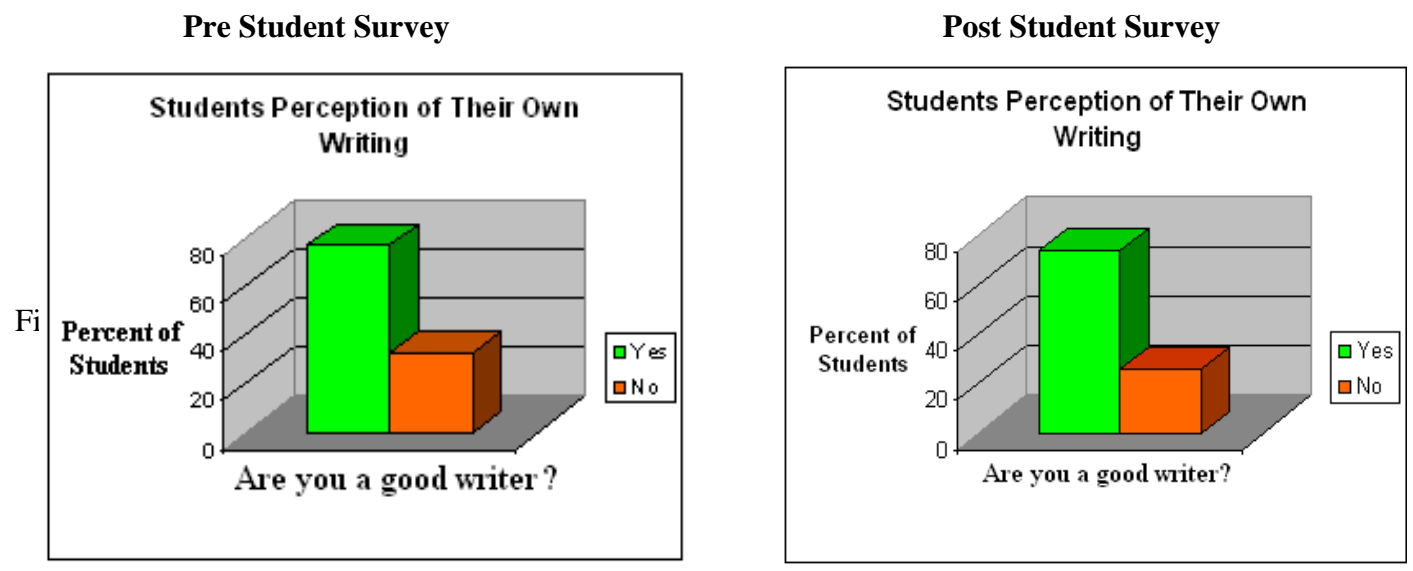
Seventy-seven percent of the surveyed students thought they were good at writing during the pre-survey. This percentage dropped to 74% after the interventions. While 33% percent of the students did not think they were good at writing before the project interventions, the number changed 26% after the interventions were in place.

Figure 10. Pre and Post Student Surveys

Pre Student Survey   **Post Student Survey**
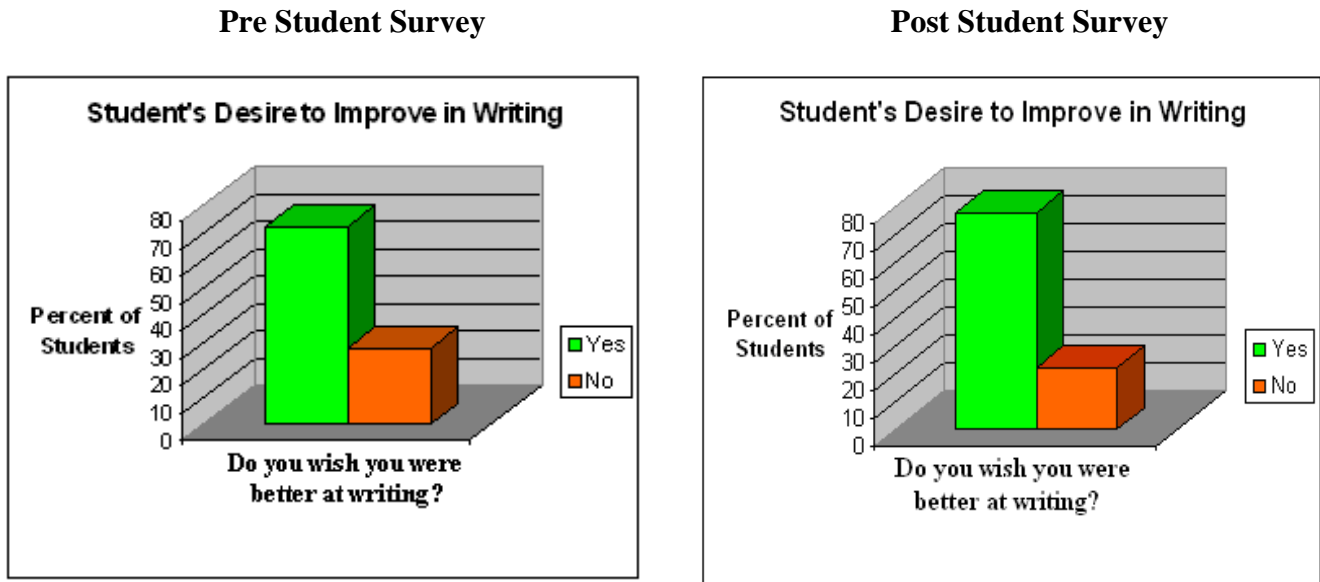
When the students were asked if they had a desire to improve with their writing skills, 72% of the students wanted to be a better writer before the writing interventions. Seventy-eight percent of the students wanted to be better at writing during the post surveys. Twenty-eight percent of the students did not want to become better at writing during the pre-survey. The number decreased to 22% during the post-surveys.

*Figure 11.*Pre and Post Story Rubric

Pre Story Rubric   **Post Story Rubric**
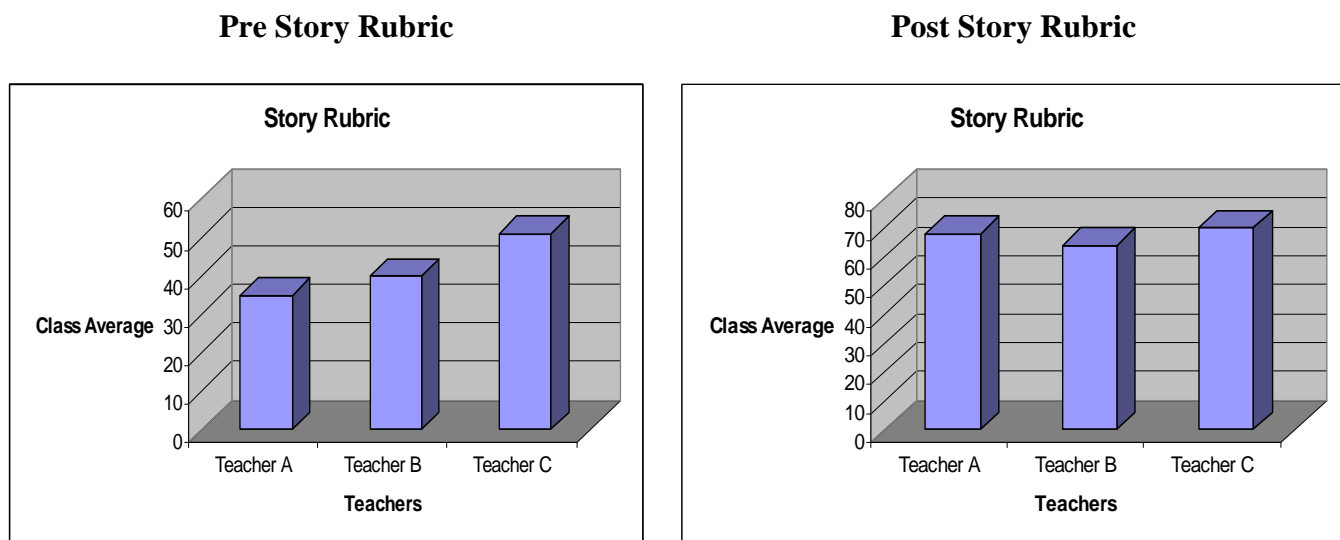
The student's post writing samples were graded using the story rubric (Appendix E). The average amount of growth amongst the classrooms was 25%. Teacher A's students average score increased by 33%. Teacher B's students average score increased by 24%. The students in Teacher C's classroom increased their scores by 19%.

Conclusions and Recommendations

After analyzing the data, the teacher researchers believe the action research project was successful. Although the data did not show major growth from the pre and post results, the overall attitude and motivation of the students increased.

A parent survey was administered to determine parent's insight toward their child's writing behaviors. It was evident from the results that the parents felt the Writer's Workshop program had a positive impact on student writing motivation. Sixty-eight percent of the parents highly agreed that their child enjoyed writing. An average of fifty-seven percent of the students chose to write in their free time according to the post-parent survey, as opposed to 45% during

the pre-parent survey. There was a 28% increase according to the parents regarding students' abilities to write creatively.

The students were given a pre and post interest survey which portrayed their attitudes toward writing. At the end of the project, 72% of the students were excited about writing. Also, 13% more students were more willing to write about any topic as opposed to teacher specified activities. Sixty-eight percent of the students enjoyed writing letters and stories after implementation of the Writer's Workshop program. In addition to the new writing program, students may also have been motivated by a school wide post office and Young Author program. Overall, 74% of the students thought they were good writers, but 78% would still like to improve in their writing.

Story rubrics were used by the teacher researchers to evaluate student writing samples. The teacher researchers found that all classrooms increased their writing with mechanics, story elements, sentence structure, and creativity. The classrooms showed an average of 25% growth.

While the teacher researchers found this writing program to be great at developing skills in young writers, they had some recommendations to others wishing to implement the same program.

One of the most important things necessary to making this program a success with students is finding time each week to complete the mini-lessons. These lessons were building blocks used to later create good writing and without them, the writers would struggle.

The teacher researchers also used school volunteers to help students along with different stages of their writing process. Conferencing with every writer was very time consuming. Using a volunteer in the classroom, could free up time to meet with other students, and keep writers moving through the writing process.

It was also very important to have materials organized in the classroom. Once students started writing and progressed through the writing process, they needed different materials at different times. Having these materials ready to go saved time for the students and allowed them to stay focused without having to wait to get the materials they needed.

The researchers taught first and second graders and found it necessary to monitor the students' motivation. They also needed to be aware of the amount of work they were doing each week. Keeping students interested and motivated was a crucial factor to their success. Overwhelming them with work would have been very damaging.

The final suggestion that the researchers had was to incorporate all grade levels within the building. They thought it would be very beneficial for the students to be able to build upon their skills each year from one year to the next. Another advantage to having the entire school doing the same writing program would be that each student would then begin to recognize terms, strategies, and techniques.

Reflections

The three teacher researchers had classrooms of students ages six through eight with various backgrounds and abilities. Each researcher brought his or her own insights and perspectives to this project and made modifications as needed based on students' needs.

Teacher Researcher A Reflection

At the beginning of this research project I must admit I was both overwhelmed and excited at the same time about this project. The idea of motivating students to write is something of great value to me and something I have not seen while teaching students in the primary grades. Most of my students in the past would groan when it was time to write. Also, writing is such a hard concept to teach in the primary grades, so when our team came up with this idea I was very eager to try some new writing motivational ideas.

Although I would like to say I followed our action research plan out to the fullest, I must admit I did have some twists and turns along the way. The hardest part for me was juggling daily time allotments to allow for other curriculum and instruction. I just didn't have enough time to get everything in during a day. I would tweak the lessons to make them fit into my schedule. I would have liked to spend more time on the mini-lessons using the multiple intelligences each week. I feel as though some of the lessons I had to rush or even skip some important elements because of time constraints. Even with the lack of time to follow through with our action plan, I was very impressed with the results of the projects. This writing project did make a difference in motivating my students to write. Before now, my students would fringe when I told them it was time to write. Today, they are asking when it is "Writer's Workshop" time and I hear lots of excitement during the writing process.

Along with the excitement and motivation, my students really began to understand the mechanics of writing. They would use "juicy" words in their stories, letters, and weekend news. They began to understand that a story needs a beginning, middle, and ending. They began using their imagination and it wasn't a chore to write anymore, it was privilege to write! Not only was I impressed with my student's writing, but I think the parents were even more impressed. I received many positive feedbacks from parents about how pleased and impressed they were of their child's writing ability and eagerness to want to write.

My students were also proud of themselves. The best part of the whole process was when my students got to share their stories they had published with the class. It was so entertaining to see their gleaming faces light up as they were reading to their classmates. As an added bonus, I let them read their stories to their last year's kindergarten teacher. Oh boy, did they love that!

This whole experience has taught me to value education more. I am a learner as well as a teacher. I taught a new writing program and learned how the benefits of this program improved the writing of my first graders. I had a wonderful bunch of students who were eager and very cooperative during my research. The excitement I put forth generated to my students, who in turn were motivated and engaged in their writing. I will continue using Writer's Workshop in my classroom and I will strive to find continued ways to improve upon it in the years to come so that this program can be used to its fullest potential to make motivated and creative writers.

Teacher Researcher B Reflection

I found this action research plan to be very educating and rewarding, while at the same time, slightly challenging to manage. One of the more important things learned during this experience was the importance of mini-lessons and student made, classroom resources. I was delighted with the way my students participated in the lessons and then referred to the posters

and other resources throughout the school year. As the school year progressed, students not only knew to refer to these posters for assistance in their writing, but they knew the information well enough to use them in explaining different steps and processes to their peers as well. I was also impressed with how the writing abilities of my below grade level readers seemed to grow steadily as their reading levels developed. In the past, it seemed that there was a significant difference between the students' levels of reading and their levels of writing.

The only obstacle that made this plan a challenge was the time constraints. Many other mandatory subjects and instruction throughout the day, made finding time to carry out the plan completely somewhat difficult. I had no reservation; however, that this research and action plan made a significant difference in my students this year.

The differences were not just noticed in the classroom for me. Parents and other family members of my students noticed an excitement for writing and an increase in creativity and a desire to express it. Families were even devoting time at home to letter writing to provide their children the opportunity that they so excitedly desired.

Teacher Researcher C Reflection

The action research project proved to be a rewarding learning experience for both myself and my students. I was excited to find methods which would motivate my students in the area of writing. However, I was also overwhelmed by the time allowed for the many activities that we had planned. In addition to time constraints, the Writer's Workshop was a new concept for me and I was anxious about using these innovative ideas in my classroom for the first time. Although there were many obstacles throughout the action research process, I believe that I met my goal of motivating my students to write.

There are many ways in which I felt the Writer's Workshop and incorporation of multiple intelligences was successful. First, I noticed a significant increase in student motivation and enthusiasm. Students looked forward to and were excited for the daily writing activities. The students especially loved publishing stories and "showing off" their final work. I think they found the writing process easier since the Writer's Workshop includes many posters and resources for the students to use. Compared to previous years, these students found it easier to think of story ideas and create a complete story. I was also glad to see how the students showed their enthusiasm for writing in other areas as well. For example, many students began asking to write in their journals during free time because they had so many stimulating ideas. I also believe that my students learned how to make their writing more exciting by adding detail, juicy words, and vigorous verbs. Many students were actually able to identify juicy words as I read stories aloud to the class. I was proud that students were also utilizing resources such as thesauruses to make their writing more interesting. I did realize however, that it will take much practice for the students to become independent writers. I still gave many reminders and encouraged the students to revise their work. The most rewarding change I observed in the students was their attitudes toward writing. They loved writing stories and were no longer intimidated and frustrated by writing. Some student still struggled, but overall, they found it easier to think of ideas and develop a well written story.

As mentioned earlier, there were a few obstacles throughout the action research process. I realized that the activities that our group had planned would not fit into our allotted time. I had to make adjustments in order to teach the necessary concepts and mini-lessons. There were also outside factors that allowed for even less instructional time in the classroom. If I were to change any part of our project, I would have allowed more time for each mini-lesson and give students

plenty of practice with each concept. I would also have liked to utilize parent volunteers on a more regular basis. Part of the Writer's Workshop program requires students to conference with the teacher to revise their stories. Having parents assist with the revising and editing portion would have been very beneficial and allow for students to publish more stories.

Overall, I am grateful to have had this wonderful learning experience. I feel as I have learned as much as my students, if not more. I realized the importance of motivating students to learn and teach to all of the intelligences. When students are motivated, they are more likely to participate, feel successful, and learn. I look forward to finding other innovative strategies to help my students in the future. I feel more confident in researching effective teaching methods and implementing them in my classroom. The risks and work are definitely worth the reward. Another area I greatly benefited from was collaboration. I found it especially rewarding to work with the other teacher researchers in my building. We were able to share ideas and resources in order to discover the best possible teaching methods for the students. In conclusion, the action research project has strengthened my professional growth as an educator.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Teacher Survey
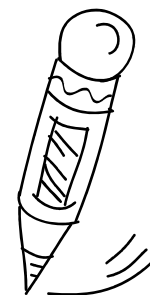
1. My school's writing curriculum is…

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Poor   Excellent

2. My resources are adequate for teaching writing.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Never   Always

3. I feel prepared and confident to teach writing.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Never   Always

4. I incorporate multiple intelligences concepts in my writing instruction.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Never   Always

5. My students want to engage in writing activities.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Never   Always

APPENDIX B

Parent Survey

Please circle one number to best answer each question about your student.

1.   **In your opinion, does your child enjoy writing?**

                    1   2   3   4   5

            Disagree   Agree
                    .

2.   **My child chooses to write at home in his/her free time.**

                    1   2   3   4   5

            Disagree   Agree

3.   **My child can come up with creative writing ideas on their own.**
                    1   2   3   4   5
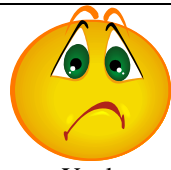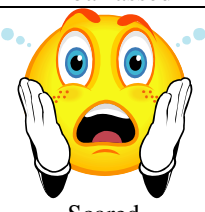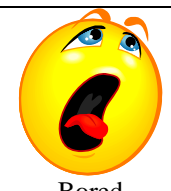
            Disagree   Agree

Comments:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
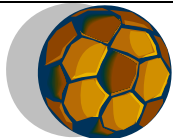
APPENDIX C

Student Interest Survey
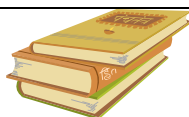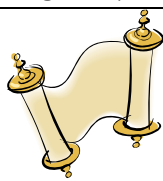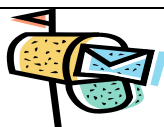
1. How does it make you feel when you write at school?			
Excited	Okay	Embarrassed	Yuck
Nervous	Sad	Scared	Bored

2. What do you like to write about?			
sports	Fairy Tales	Yourself	Animals
Nothing	Friends	Vacation	Anything

3. What kinds of things do you like to write?				
Stories	Poems	Journals	Letters	Nothing

4. Do you think you are a good writer?	
Yes	No

5. Do you wish you were better at writing?	
Yes	No

APPENDIX D

Observation checklist

	Not at all	Somewhat	Completely
<u>Student is working independently</u> • Works without prompts • Not distracted • Not distracting others			
<u>Student is generating ideas</u> <u>independently</u> • Generates own ideas • Ideas are supported • Writing flows			
<u>Student is working efficiently</u> • Taking their time • Working at an efficient pace • Staying on task			
<u>Student is using proper tools for</u> <u>assistance</u> • Uses word wall • Uses words of the week • Uses classroom posters			
<u>Student is revising work before</u> <u>turning it in</u> • Independently checks for errors • Independently recognizes and corrects mistakes			

<u>Student has a positive attitude</u>
• Self motivated to complete
  assignment
• Has a positive attitude toward
  complete assignment			

APPENDIX E
Story Rubric

Scoring Scale ⟹ Criteria ⇓	1	2	3	4
Story Elements -Characters -Setting -Problem -Solution	The story contains 0-1 indicators.	The story contains 2 indicators.	The story contains 3 indicators.	The story contains 4 indicators.
Mechanics -spelling -punctuation -grade appropriate spelling	The story contains 9 or more mistakes.	The story contains 6-8 mistakes.	The story contains 3-5 mistakes.	The story contains 0-2 mistakes.
Complete Sentences	Contains 3 or more fragments or run-ons.	Contains 2 fragments or run-ons.	Contains 1 fragment or run-on.	All sentences are complete.
Creativity -vigorous verbs -juicy adjectives -variety of sentences -imaginative	Zero to one indicators are evident in the story.	Two indicators are evident in the story.	Three indicators are evident in the story.	All indicators are evident in the story.

Score _____ /16

Teacher Comments: _____

_____

_____