MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO WRITE THROUGH THE USE OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This action research project involved the implementation of a program designed to improve student motivation to write through the use of children's literature. The targeted populations were students in one kindergarten class and one third grade ELL class in two elementary schools. Both schools were located in a mid-western community. The problem of lack of student motivation to write was documented through teacher observation checklists, student surveys and student writing samples.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed students' poor self-confidence in writing, perceived lack of purpose for writing and little social context to share student work as contributing to poor motivation to write.

After reviewing professional literature and evaluating the classroom writing tasks, the teacher researchers developed a list of possible solutions: utilizing children's literature to provide background knowledge and meaning to writing assignments, building self-confidence through journaling, and providing opportunities for students to share their with peers. The teacher-researchers designed a series of lesson plans to foster a motivation to write.

Overall, presenting students with children's literature, as a way to create meaningful writing assignments and providing opportunities to share, fostered student motivation to write. The conclusion of this intervention resulted in students who gained confidence in their ideas and beliefs through the sharing of meaningful writing. However, although students gained confidence in writing the quality of their writing was dependent on their academic ability.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Student lack of motivation to write in the classroom typically led to poor writing skills. The students of the targeted kindergarten and third grade classes exhibited lack of writing production and little use of phonemic awareness when writing to communicate. This in turn, interfered with student confidence and motivation, limiting writing independence. Evidence for the existence of this problem included observation, writing production, as well as student surveys.

Immediate Problem Context

When examining data as a result of an action research project it is necessary to provide information regarding the conditions in which the immediate problem exists. This information is vital to provide context and allow researchers to analyze the problem in regard to the outside contingencies which could possibly affect results. The action research problem identified in this paper was located at two distinct sites.

Site A

Site A was located in a suburb of a large metropolitan area in a Midwestern state. This school was one of four which make up a combined school district. Site A was a six year old building housing grades three through five. The school had various wings which separated

grades to some extent. Grade level hallways included a pod, which was an open area with tables and chairs. These three areas, or pods, were designated for general use and were often used by support staff when instructing students, as well as cooperative classroom groups. The library, where the computer lab was located, was situated near the east side of the building by the third and fifth grade classrooms. Art and music rooms were positioned at the opposite end of the building from the library near the third and fourth grade classrooms. The nurse, secretaries and principal resided in the offices on the east side of the school; this was also the main entrance of the building. Perpendicular to the entrance was a long hallway that attached to another school in the district which was the instructional building for students in kindergarten through second grade. Along this hall was the entrance to a large gymnasium and a multipurpose room which housed a kitchen and was used for teacher meetings. Across the hall from the main office was the teacher lunchroom.

The teacher researcher's classroom at Site A was located at the south end of the building in the fifth grade wing. It was shared with a special education teacher and a paraprofessional. The room was separated with a six foot long portable partition with a teacher's desk and ten chairs on each side. The room also contained a wall of cabinets on each side of the room, as well as a closet, white board sink and bathroom on the special education side of the classroom. The side of the room of the teacher researcher faced the door and had a white board, coat hooks and a water cooler. Desks were set up in a U-shape facing the board.

Site A had a unique demographic profile. According to the State School Report Card (2008a), Site A had a total enrollment of 545 students. The racial ethnic background of these students was as follows: 94.9% White, 0.2% Black, 2.6% Mexican-American, 1.3% Asian, and 1.1% Multi-Racial. Additionally, 3.7% of students were identified as having limited English

proficiency at Site A. Limited English proficient students were those students eligible for transitional bilingual programs. The school had identified 4.6% of the student population as having low income status. Low income students were those students eligible to receive free or reduced lunches. The mobility rate of this population was 2.3%. Above the state average, the attendance rate for this population was 96.1%. Furthermore, there was no truancy at Site A.

The certified staff of this school numbered 40. There was one administrator, the principal. Residing in her office area was one nurse and one full-time secretary. A part-time secretary worked every afternoon. Certified support personnel in the area include a social worker and a school psychologist, both of whom worked half-time at the school, but full-time in the district. Student Services personnel also included one full-time and one part-time reading teacher, one teacher of English Language Learners (ELL), one gifted teacher, one speech teacher, one librarian, one educational technology teacher and four special education teachers. The physical education teacher worked full-time for the school while the band, art and music teachers worked part-time. At third grade and fourth grade there were seven regular education teachers each, while at fifth grade there were eight teachers. Throughout the building there were six paraprofessionals who worked supporting students' in academic work or with children who have behavioral needs. A building technical assistant was available for technical support for teachers or students during the day. The average class size was 24 at Site A (State School Report Card, 2008a).

Of the staff, 100% were White and only two certified staff members were male. Teachers have taught an average of 10.7 years at an average salary of $54,686. At this time 63.8% of them had Masters Degrees (State School Report Card, 2008a).

There were many activities that occurred at Site A. In the morning there were band lessons which took place during regular class time. At lunch there were many activities such as Rainbows that support students from broken homes. The Service Club recycled paper and often worked in the afternoon picking up paper from the classrooms. During the day, many students had an opportunity working around the school putting up art work or mentoring younger students. After school students could join intramural sports, Homework Club, Service Club, Art Club or Book Club depending on their interests. A popular activity was to be a student coach for intramurals for the younger students.

Site B

Site B was located in a suburb of a large metropolitan area in a Midwestern State. This school was one of four which made up a combined school district. Site B was a 45 year old building housing grades pre-kindergarten through sixth. The school was one level and had three main wings that separated grade levels surrounding the central core of the building which included a courtyard. The first wing, located on the east side of the building, housed one pre-kindergarten, four new full-day kindergartens, and four first grade classrooms. The second wing, located on the south side of the building, housed four second grade and four third grade classrooms. The third wing, located on the west side of the building, housed four fourth grade, four fifth grade, and four sixth grade classrooms. The central core of the building located north contained the main office, teacher's lounge, music room, art room, several resource rooms, speech therapist's rooms, library, and computer lab. The gym was located adjacent to the library. A multi-purpose room was located adjacent to the main office. Currently, a new 10,650 square foot addition was being constructed which included four new flexible classrooms, new student and staff bathroom facilities, three resource rooms, and new student lockers. A new parking lot

was being added along with a new site access drive for bus use only. Completion was planned for fall of 2009.

The teacher researcher's classroom was located on the east side of the building. Three other full-day classrooms shared a wing. The classroom contained four tables in the center of the room where students did their work. The classroom also had different areas set up to represent the following learning centers: math, science, art, writing, housekeeping, blocks, computers, puppets, and reading. The classroom had a western theme to it which included a handmade covered wagon that students were allowed to sit inside and read. The reading corner had two cozy chairs, a star-shaped side table and lantern, and a rug with a western star on it. A cowboy hat accented the teacher researcher's desk which was placed next to the wall where a WANTED ALIVE AND LEARNING sign was found. Above the reading area, a word wall was visible that listed common sight words and environmental print.

Site B, according to the State School Report Card (2008b), had a total enrollment of 605. The racial-ethnic background of these students was as follows: 61.0% White, 6.9% Black, 23.6%, Mexican-American, 3.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.2% Native American, and 4.5% Multi-Racial. Additionally, 16.9% of students were identified as having limited English proficiency. The school identified 23.5% of the student population as having low income status. The mobility rate was at 12.2%. Above the state average, the attendance rate for this population was 94.9%. There was no truancy rate reported.

The certified regular education teaching staff numbered 28. There was one principal, one vice principal, one nurse, and two full-time secretaries. Certified support staff included one social worker, and one early childhood coordinator. Student services personnel included two full-time reading teachers, three teachers of English Language Learners (ELL), two speech

pathologists, one library director, one educational technology director, one primary special education teacher, and two intermediate special education resource teachers. Also employed were two physical education teachers, two music teachers, one art teacher, and one band director. Additional support staff included four instructional aides, two library/technology aides, and three one-on-one aides. The average class size numbered 21 (State School Report Card, 2008b).

At Site B, 100% of the certified teaching staff was White and only two were male. Teachers have taught an average of 10.3 years. The average teacher's salary was $51,696. The percentage of teachers that had earned a Masters Degree was 60.2% (State District Report Card, 2008b).

Co-curricular activities found at Site B were as follows: School Newspaper, Yearbook, Japanese Club, Scrapbook Club, Rainbows (for students from broken homes), Computer Club, Homework Club, and Lunchtime Monitors Before and after school, there was a daycare program in place for working parents.

The Surrounding Community

The research presented in this paper was representative of two schools in two separate school districts. Community A was a combined school district serving kindergarten through eighth grade in the western suburbs of a large metropolitan area. Community B was a school district also serving kindergarten through eighth grade in the southern suburbs of the same metropolitan area.

Community A

The district for Community A included four schools: a middle school, two intermediate grade schools and a primary school. The total district population was 2,625. Of this population 88.8% were White, 0.4% Black, 6.0% Hispanic, 3.0% Asian or Pacific Islander and 1.8%

Multiracial. Demographically, the district staff was 100% White with 10.1% being male and 89.9% being female. There were a total of 138 district staff members at this time. With this staff the average class size for the district was as follows: kindergarten, 22.6; grade one, 23.4; grade two, 24.8; grade three, 23.8; grade 4, 27.5; grade 5, 24.9; grade 6, 27.6; grade 7, 29.5; grade 8, 31.1. The pupil to teacher ratio was 21:1 at the elementary level and the pupil to certified staff ratio was 15.5:1. The average instructional expenditure per pupil in the district was $4,857. Within this district teachers had an average of 10.7 years of experience with 36.2% having a Bachelor's degree and 63.8% having a Master's degree. The average teacher salary District A was $54,686 (State District Report Card, 2008a).

The metropolitan area surrounding Community A covered 6.8 square miles and had a population of 13,098. One of the oldest communities in the state, it was founded in 1836, and incorporated in 1873. As the village bordered three waterways it was understandable that it was a popular destination with the construction of a major canal in the 1830s. Many of the immigrant workers who worked on the canal remained and settled in the area. In the mid 1800's limestone quarrying was instrumental in the growth of the community. At the time of the research project, the village government was working to create recreational and commercial use of the canal and the limestone quarries by rejuvenating these properties (Village Website, 2008a).

Community A was predominately populated by an affluent Caucasian community. The demographics of the population were as follows: 95.2% White, 0.8% Asian, 3.0% Latino, 0.3% Black and 0.7% Other. According to the 2000 Census, most people identified themselves as European. The largest identified ethnic groups were 32.8% Polish, 25.5% German, 20.6% Irish, and 12.1% Italian. The median household income was $70,563. This reflected that 86.5% of the population had graduated from high school, while 21.1% had obtained a bachelor's degree and

10.9% had obtained a graduate or professional degree. Among the professions held by residents of Community A, management, professional or related occupations were held by 44% of the population, and sales and office occupations were held by 26% of the population. Major employers in the village include a national laboratory, refinery and construction firm (Village Website, 2008a).

There were many ways of gaining access to Community A. There were two major interstate highways which provided access to the major metropolitan area as well as the outlying suburbs. Community A had a downtown train station which connected the community with the surrounding city and suburbs. Additionally, there was a bus service which would take residents within village boundaries in door-to-door service for a nominal fee. Residents of Community A had three airports available to them, the closest one being 16 miles away. Although no hospital resided within Community A there were many hospitals in the surrounding area, the closest being 11 miles away (Village Website, 2008a).

There were many recreational opportunities in Community A. The area included many forest preserves which offered a venue for biking and hiking. The village boasted a champion golf course as well as three others. The downtown of Community A had many shops and restaurants, and the park district offered facilities and programs for everyone. Other places to visit included museums, historic churches, a Hindu Temple, a national laboratory, Lithuanian and Slovenian cultural centers and the historic canal. Community A had 14 places of worship (Village Website, 2008a).

Community B

Site B was one of four schools in a unit school district. The district consisted of three elementary buildings that housed grades pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, and a fourth junior high building that included seventh through eighth grades.

Approximately 1,551 students attended the four schools within the district. Of that total, 61.2% of the student body was White, 22.6% was Mexican-American, 7.5% were Black, 3.2% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1% was Native American. The attendance rate for the district students was listed at 95.2% with a 11.9% mobility rate. There was no chronic truancy rate reported within any school in the district (State School Report Card, 2008b).

The ethnic breakdown of the 106 district staff members identified 97.2% as White, 0.9% as Mexican-American, and 1.9% as Asian/Pacific Islander. Only 14.2% of the district's staff was male. The average number of years of experience for district teachers was 10.3 years. Approximately 60.2% of those teachers had earned at least a Masters degree. The average teacher's salary was $51,696, which was $9,000 less than the state average. Administrators were paid an average of $110,518, which was about 5% higher than the state average for administrators (State District Report Card, 2008b).

The pupil to teacher ratio within the district was 16.6:1 and the pupil to administrator ratio was 193.9:1. The average class size was shown as 22.1:1. The most recent operating expenditure per pupil was listed as $8,544. The equalized assessed valuation per pupil in 2005 was determined to be $414,680 (State District Report Card, 2008b).

Community B was located in a growing suburb of a large metropolitan area in a Midwestern state. The village's population had grown from its incorporation in 1927 to its current population of 19,725. It had the history of a thriving business and residential community.

The village was known for its amenities of the suburbs and opportunities of the city. The broad commercial and industrial base assured quality municipal, educational, and recreational services. Housing was plentiful, from rental units to town homes, condos and senior housing, and many single family residences (Village Website, 2008b).

The community provided opportunities for family fun. Facilities included playgrounds, sports fields, ice rinks, a skate park, an aquatic park, a public golf course, a park district that offered a fitness center and a variety of sports, activities, and arts (Village Website, 2008b).

Churches of many faiths were located in the community. Religion played a vital role in the community, addressing both spiritual and social needs of the members and the community as a whole (Village Website, 2008b).

Community B was located near one major interstate and several major thoroughfares. Although there was no train station located in this community, railway stations were located in nearby communities. Bus service was available to residents for a nominal fee, allowing travelers access to the city or outlying suburbs. There were two major airports within a 30 to 45 minute drive.

National Context of the Problem

Writing is a necessary part of life and more important than ever to gain success in the world. There is not an area in life that does not utilize writing as method of communication. The importance of writing has even been acknowledged by the public domain. “Two-thirds of the public would like to see more resources invested in helping teachers teach writing. And 74 percent think writing should be taught in all subjects and at all grade levels” (National Writing Project, 2008, p.1). This sentiment expresses the fear educators have in our students’ writing

skills. Not only did teachers realize a writing problem existed in our national education system, but the public was aware of this deficit as well.

Students have a grasp of the basic elements of writing, but educators must seek to improve student writing skills. Writing to communicate basic meaning is necessary was a skill many students did well, but that did not mean they were writing well. Teachers needed to develop and implement strategies to address the writing deficiencies of today's students. Writing is an essential part of life. People use it to communicate everyday for business, for social interaction and for fun. Writing has risen to an unprecedented level with the age of technology. Although pundits talk about going to a paperless society, this does not mean people will stop writing, even with the rampant use of cutting and copying by students in school. Even though traditional writing forms are not used consistently by today's youth when writing for social purposes, they are writing more than ever through text messaging, emailing and instant messaging. However, the conventional writing process is alive and well and necessary for student success after their academic careers are completed.

Many studies and national assessments have been done to suggest that the writing of students has not been progressing as well as educators and administrators have hoped. According to Olson (1995) the average classroom contained few students who could write well; the majority of students had basic writing skills that included writing to communicate. Olson reflected on a study in which portfolios were developed as part of a federal program by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 1992. In this research a national representative sample of fourth and eighth graders portfolios was explored. Over 3,000 students included three pieces of their best work. In evaluating this data the author stated, "The best writing that students produce as part of their classroom work is still not very good" (Olson, 1995, p. 1).

In another study, Manzo (1999) reported that only 16 % of students in grades four and eight, as well as 22 % in grade twelve had not mastered basic writing skills. The author stated that few students could write appropriate to their grade level in a way that was accurate, interesting and organized. In making this statement Manzo was examining test results of the National Assessment of Education Progress. This result was not surprising because it is well known that students needed to improve their writing skills, however, what needed to be done was unclear.

This assessment and evaluation of children's writing abilities was evidence of a national problem with our students' ability to write well. The article by Manzo stated that six states/territories have fewer than 15% of their students writing proficiently. "The sobering side of the coin is that such a small portion of students… can write the effective, fully developed response that is required for proficient writing" (Manzo,1999, p. 2).

It is not as if we were making progress in the strategies we are implementing. Miners (2008) addressed the most recent National Assessment of Education Progress report saying that top educators, including those in government positions, were expressing great admiration for current writing test scores, painting them as a historical apex. Miners explained that he found this incredulous as there has been no significant gain in the percentage of students meeting proficiency standards since the last test was given in 2002.

The theme of these articles was clear. As a nation student writing skills were lacking and need to be addressed. Although the problem was clear the solution is still ambiguous, due in part to the myriad of influences that affect student achievement. Teachers cannot control all variables that affect student success, or lack thereof, but they can focus on classroom instruction and methods.

In the next chapter the teacher researchers will present evidence of the lack of writing production and little use of phonemic awareness when writing to communicate exhibited by the targeted students. Then the teacher researchers will examine the current literature to identify probable causes for the apparent lack of motivation of students that results in deficient writing skills in today's classroom.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to investigate the problem of lack of motivation to write, this research team developed three instruments. These were the student pre intervention writing survey, teacher observation checklist and reading response journal entries. The student writing surveys were given in September 2009 to the third grade students at Site A and kindergarten students at Site B. The teacher observation checklist was begun at the same time and continued to be utilized for the entire time the intervention was implemented.

The student writing survey (see Appendix A) was given to the students during the second week of September. Students at both sites were provided class time to complete the survey. This instrument was used to investigate the students' feelings about the task of writing in general. Students were asked if they liked writing, whether they felt writing was easy for them and if they thought writing was important. Because the teacher researchers were investigating if a social context motivates students to write, the survey also addressed students' feelings about sharing their writing. Results of the surveys are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Student Pre Intervention Writing Survey Results for 3rd Grade Students

			
I like to write.	4	3	3
I find it easy to write.	6	3	1
I think writing is important.	4	4	2
I have enough time to write in school.	6	3	1
I like to write about something I have read.	6	2	2
I like to share my writing with others.	4	2	4

Note. n=10

At Site A the survey was administered to 10 third grade students with the results shown in Table 1. One of the most noticeable responses for this survey was that only one student indicated they had difficulty in writing, inferring that most students feel some competence at the task. Interestingly, although six students said they found writing easy, only four liked to write. Motivation to write therefore is not always based on a students' perception of their writing ability. Students who felt they write well but did not like writing may see writing as an activity that lacks meaning. Furthermore, though six students felt comfortable in their ability to write, only four students felt comfortable sharing their writing with others, indicating that students may not see writing in a social context or they felt their writing was too unimportant to share with others. Writing may be seen as a means of communication not connected to the verbalization of ideas and not used meaningfully after it is completed. This conclusion was also supported by the

fact that six students responded neutrally or negatively about liking the writing process, while the same number of students felt that writing in itself was not very important which may indicate a positive correlation between the two attitudes. Additionally, there were indications of a potential for lessons that motivate students to write because only six students indicated they enjoyed writing about what they have read and had enough time in school to write, which is only a little over half the number of students sampled.

Table 2

Student Pre Intervention Writing Survey Results for Kindergarten Students

			
I like to write.	14	3	2
I find it easy to write.	6	5	8
I think writing is important.	15	3	1
I have enough time to write in school.	13	4	2
I like to write about something I have read.	12	6	1
I like to share my writing with others.	18	1	0

Note. n=19

At Site B the survey was administered to nineteen kindergarten students. Findings revealed that while the vast majority of the targeted kindergarten students liked to write and felt it was important, only about one third found the activity easy to do. It can also be noted that kindergarten students tend to want to please their teacher, so the large number of positive responses in all categories may reflect that tendency.

The teacher researchers' observation checklist (see Appendix B) was begun at the same time the student writing survey was implemented. In this instrument the teacher researchers observed students' reaction to writing assignments given in class. The observation of the students allowed teacher researchers to gather information regarding student attentiveness to the writing task. In particular, teacher researchers gathered data regarding the students' engagement in the writing assignment through words and actions. Teacher researchers made note of how well the students attended the read aloud and writing assignment instructions, their participation in the story discussions, positive responses to writing prompts and their willingness to share their writing with others. Results of the surveys are shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3

Teacher Observation Checklist for 3rd Grade Students

Ten students over three weeks for 30 responses	Yes	No
Student attends to read aloud	30	0
Student participates in story discussion	24	6
Student attends to teacher's instruction of the writing prompt	27	3
Student gives positive verbal response to writing prompt	7	23
Student immediately focuses on writing activity	25	5
Student interacts with others to generate writing ideas	4	26
Student provides more text/pictures than previous journal entries	n/a	n/a
Student provides greater detail than previous journal entries	n/a	n/a
Student voluntarily shares their writing with peers	12	18

Note. n/a = not applicable at this time. n=30

At Site A, the observation over three weeks was completed for 10 third grade students over the course of three weeks to get baseline data. As a result of this data it can be seen in Table 3 that students were overwhelmingly engaged in having a story read to them as 100% of the students attended to the read aloud. Additionally, students participated in the story discussion 80% of the time. This data indicated that students were interested in the stories, made connections with children's literature and enjoyed discussing stories with each other. However, there appeared to be a great contrast between the 100% of the students who were attentive to the read aloud and the 80% who attended to the writing instructions compared to the 23% of the students who verbalized their positive feelings regarding writing about the story. Students may be unused to talking about their feelings toward writing or they may have felt it was unimportant to express them. It is also interesting to note that 87% of the time students did not interact with others to generate ideas for their writing which might indicate that students see writing as an independent, isolating activity which lacks a social context. Additionally, students took opportunities to share their writing with others as a post writing activity only 40% of the time even though they were all attentive to the story and most participated in the discussions of the stories. Students' willingness to participate in story discussions compared with their relative lack of interest in sharing their writing could be construed to mean that students do not find their writing meaningful enough to share or they lack confidence in expressing their ideas in writing.

Table 4

Teacher Observation Checklist for Kindergarten Students

Nineteen students over three weeks for 57 responses	Yes	No
Student attends to read aloud	57	0
Student participates in story discussion	40	17
Student attends to teacher's instruction of the writing prompt	44	13
Student gives positive verbal response to writing prompt	22	35
Student immediately focuses on writing activity	18	39
Student interacts with others to generate writing ideas	38	19
Student provides more text/pictures than previous journal entries	n/a	n/a
Student provides greater detail than previous journal entries	n/a	n/a
Student voluntarily shares their writing with peers	57	0

Note. n/a = not applicable at this time. n=57

At Site B, the teacher observation checklist was completed for 19 kindergarten students over the course of three weeks as well. The data revealed a remarkable 100% of the students attended to the story being read aloud to them. Student participation in story discussion was found to be 70% of the time. It is important to note that this percentage may reflect the portion of student population that was either too timid to respond or English Language Learners (ELL) that lack confidence in vocabulary and/or expressive language skills. Additionally, data showed that 77% of the students attended to the teacher's instruction of the writing prompt, 39% gave a positive verbal response to the writing prompt, and only 32% focused on the writing activity at hand. The teacher researcher at Site B noted that many of those students needed directions repeated or voiced concern over not knowing how to write or spell words correctly. The teacher

researcher also observed that 67% of the students interacted with others to generate writing ideas or asked for help from their peers. Data also revealed that 100% of the kindergarten students voluntarily shared their writing with peers, even the more apprehensive ones.

Furthermore, the reading response journal (see Appendix C & Appendix D) was used as a tool to evaluate student motivation to write. This was not a timed writing response. Each week after a story was read and discussed students were given a writing prompt in which they had as much time as they wanted to complete it. Afterwards students who volunteered shared their writing with other students which in turn generated post story discussions. The teacher researchers used this data to identify student motivation through the quantity of writing, the amount of detail in the writing and the connections students' had made at the third grade level. The teacher researcher who analyzed the kindergarten journal entries identified the students' stage of writing based upon Hall and Cunningham (1997, pp. 71-73) describing the five stages of writing/spelling development.

Teacher researchers analyzed the reading response journals students completed. The writing samples appeared to fall within the expectations of the students' academic ability range. Those students who performed at or above grade level in other academic areas performed equally proficient in their reading response journals demonstrating their confidence at the task. Students who completed these journal responses seemed to be motivated by the quantity of their response. Often these responses were a litany of favorite scenes from the story with little detail or critical thinking which could be the result of not discussing writing ideas with their peers beforehand. Those students who regularly performed below grade level wrote little and often did not answer the question of why they thought a particular scene was the favorite part of the story. These students demonstrated little motivation, a lack of ideas and their writing reflected the fact that

they felt the task was unimportant. Students of moderate ability wrote about their favorite part of the story and explained why they liked it in simplistic terms. However, they did no more than the minimal amount of work asked by the teacher researcher. Because students felt no connection with what they produced no students wrote about connections they had made with the story.

Through analysis of this data it is the teacher researchers' conclusion that many students were unmotivated to write because they lack confidence in writing. They see writing as an isolated, independent activity that has little meaning after it is completed. Writing also lacks meaning for them because students do not see how writing is used after it is completed. Furthermore, writing is seen as a separate activity from socialization and students do not make the connection between the two forms of communication. Providing a social context for writing would provide a purpose for the doing the task and support students in their efforts through modeling and feedback from peers during discussions. Also, students sharing their writing peers would create a meaning for their work and foster student confidence in writing.

Probable Causes

After a thorough review of the literature the teacher researchers identified three probable causes for the lack of student motivation to write. These causes include writing assignments that lacked purpose, a lack of student confidence when writing, and a lack of social context for student writing. After reviewing the literature regarding possible causes, the teacher researchers established an action plan to motivate students to write.

Students were often unmotivated to write because their purpose for writing was unclear or lacked meaning. It was vital for teachers to create writing opportunities for students which allowed them to make personal connections. As a result, children fostered an interest in the subject and ownership in the final results. According to Gay (1976), some problems in the

classroom associated with meaningless writing included the overuse of basal readers and workbooks when teaching literacy. Also, a great portion of the reading children did in school was textbook reading which lacked interest and style. These books were designed to impart great quantities of information in a way that was easily understood, but often pedantic. They left children with no concept of structure, organization or context for meaningful writing. "Writing is not an irrelevant activity. It is what being human is all about" (Gay, 1976, p.93).

We know that good writing is interesting and meaningful, so it may seem obvious that basal readers and text books did not provide the support children need for modeling good writing; but the fact was not usually addressed. As a result of the overwhelming use of these texts, writing was often taught independently of good reading. Additionally, these writing lessons often promoted students writing in isolation with little context or support. This does not mean teachers were not concerned with the lack of student motivation to write. The National Reading Research Center conducted a poll of reading and classroom teachers in the U.S. "Results revealed that research on how to enhance children's interest and motivation for reading was the top priority" (Koskinen & Morrow 1993, p.162). Teachers were very aware of what children needed and were looking for answers.

These teachers realized their goal was to create lifelong learners and lack of motivation to write was a key obstacle for students to achieve this goal. Evidence of student attitudes toward writing was heard in the complaints they voiced before a writing assignment. This disinterest in writing had impact beyond the classroom. "If our students do not view reading and writing in the classroom as an enlightening and fulfilling experience, then how can we expect them to actively integrate reading and writing into their lives?" (Lindsey, 1996, p. 1). It was vital to make writing activities meaningful and engaging to students to create this fulfilling experience.

Further evidence of the need to implement writing practices was seen when students did not complete assignments, showed little productivity or did not care to edit their work. Why should students invest their time in assignments that have little meaning for them? Otten (2003) suggested that intrinsic motivation was not something many undeveloped, unmotivated writers had. Students needed to be made aware of the value of writing in the classroom as well as in their lives by providing purposeful activities for them.

A second probable cause of why students were unmotivated to write was that they lacked confidence. Most people did not enjoy doing activities at which they were not proficient and children were no different when it came to enjoying writing and becoming competent writers. Lienemann, Graham, Leader-Janssen and Reid (2006) reminded us that writing is a difficult and demanding activity that many students find difficult to develop to a level of proficiency. As a result of the complexity of writing well, students who were developing writers were overwhelmed and often felt unsupported in their beginning efforts.

Many students were not provided opportunities in school to explore the writing process. Receiving a paper marked in red pen did not provide a nurturing environment for a developing writer. Students, especially young children, often felt pressured to write a passage perfectly and were intimidated by the constructs of grammar, organization and spelling. According to Richgels (1995) children need opportunities to discover phoneme-grapheme correspondences on their own and to see teachers model and highlight this skill. Writing is a complex task requiring multiple steps, however many teachers did not break down the writing process into steps. Also, teachers frequently identified errors and offered suggestions when critiquing papers with intent of helping students. However these teaching techniques often had the opposite effect, undermining the confidence of developing student writers.

It was not always easy to see when students lacked confidence, but that did not mean it did not exist. According to Bruning & Horn (2000), on the attitudinal side, there was much evidence of our failing to develop positive beliefs and motivation toward writing. Furthermore, they stated that "…the root source of motivation to write is a set of beliefs about writing, many of them tacit" (Burning & Horn, 2000, p. 25). Consequently, when students lacked confidence and had difficulty writing, they often tried to hide their deficits. "The fact that writing is difficult, however, does not mean that struggling writers have no idea how to cope with it. Copying is one example of a coping strategy, and others are repeating ideas in different words…" (Collins & Collins, 1996, p. 54).

These common classroom occurrences were ways students hid the fact that they did not understand the writing process and felt too embarrassed to address the fact. These students were looking for ways to avoid writing on their own and building student confidence in writing was one way to motivate them. In building student confidence teachers needed to recognize the complexity of writing when instructing students in the process. "Anita Brookner recognized this when she called writing the enemy of thoughtlessness" (Saddler, Moran, Graham & Harris, 2004, p.3).

Furthermore, the lack of motivation of many students to write was a result of a having no social context when writing, which was the third probable cause the teacher researchers found in the literature. "The ability to write is a key component in children's development of communication skills and contributes to their academic success" (Graham & Harris, 2005). According to Stonier & Dickerson (2009) writing fostered a sharing of ideas between students as well as an exchange of their creative expressions and understandings. Eliminating the social context of writing hindered the most important purpose of writing which was to communicate.

Students lost the opportunity to have a "…sharing activity to help children understand the real purpose for writing and engage with authentic audiences" (Glasswell, Parr & McNaughton, 2003, p. 498).

It is understandable that students would suffer from a lack motivation to write if the writing process was seen as an isolated independent activity. This was what occurred when the social context of writing was eliminated. Alternatively, the importance of social interaction was evidenced by Koskinen & Morrow (1993) when she explained that "children reported in interviews that choosing what they did and with whom, was a motivating factor" (p. 164). There were other consequences of doing without the social element in the writing process including the fact that students were denied scaffolding support when learning new material. Additionally, they were barred from experiencing the immediate meaning of their writing, brainstorming new ideas, engaging with role models and exploring their feelings about writing by not being able to share their writing.

Beyond a lack of confidence, unmotivated students did not have to invest themselves in learning if they remained unseen and unheard. Social context changed all of that. It engaged children in learning and focused on their abilities and interests. It provided opportunities for cooperative work, a skill necessary for life beyond the classroom. According to Otten (2003), working in cooperative groups sparked critical thinking and conversation in the writing process and competition as well as being introduced as a motivating factor. All these advantages were lost if students were not allowed to communicate with others during the writing process.

Students were unmotivated about writing for many reasons. Among the most prominent was the fact that many students felt that writing in school lacked purpose and was not meaningful to their life. For this reason many students showed apathy toward literacy and did not take the

writing opportunities presented to them to improve their skills. They might copy assignments or repeat the same idea over and over in different ways to make it look as if they were completing their work. As a result of lack of effort in writing students often lost confidence to write. This only widened the gap between skilled writers and developing writers. Losing confidence created an unending cycle for unmotivated writers who continued to struggle. Finally, students were often unmotivated to write because they were provided little opportunity to share their writing. A lack of social context when teaching literacy prevented students from taking ownership of their work and fostered reluctant writers.

In the next chapter the teacher researchers will offer solutions for the lack of motivation in writers. Practical strategies will be offered for the three factors contributing to the lack of motivation of students when writing: writing assignments lack meaning for students, students have a lack confidence when writing and writing assignments provide no social context.

CHAPTER 3

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Review of Literature

The teacher researchers focused on three areas during the literature search. The possible solutions for the lack of motivation to write include making writing meaningful through the use of children's literature, using journals to build self-confidence, and providing opportunities for children to share their writing. After reviewing the literature regarding possible solutions, the teacher researchers established objectives to develop instructional materials that would improve student motivation to write.

Research has shown that students benefit in many ways from engaging in children's literature. Picture books are one way to motivate and encourage students' writing. This can be accomplished by sharing book experiences in small or large group settings that lead to meaningful discussions and writings. Paquette (2007) found that picture books served as good examples of the six qualities of effective writing and provided scaffolding for students to incorporate effective writing attributes to original compositions. Paquette (2007) aimed to incorporate a common language among students by introducing the six traits of writing as an effective approach to show how the traits relate to books. By utilizing book discussions and analyzing how authors use various qualities of good writing such as ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions, students were encouraged to model their own

stories after the experts. Such exposure has shown that children benefit academically and socially when inspired by high-quality picture books that can be shared with peers.

According to Nolen (2001), a study on kindergarten students' emergent motivation to read and write was dependent upon the classroom literacy culture. Findings suggested that young students who were given opportunities to make meaningful connections to children's literature showed an increase in the enthusiasm to write. When picture books were used as a motivating factor, students revealed the desire to write about the stories or to create their own.

In order to motivate students to write and have them gain skills necessary to communicate well, students must be provided with engaging and meaningful projects that encourage them to apply skills they've been taught (Frey, 2003). The author focused on the craft of writing, including mechanics, punctuation, word choice and fluency skills as the components that aided students' writing abilities. According to Frey (2003), if an essay is unorganized and poorly constructed the message will be lost. When given photo essay projects, students were allowed to express ideas using both visual and textual information. This allowed text to be supported in their writing and the quality of writing to be enhanced by the images that were selected.

Scully and Roberts (2002) made a case for the value of play in early literacy and offered examples of ways teachers can create more playful phonics, read aloud and expository writing experiences. Some activities that were utilized were phonics with frogs, slide blending, word hunt, and word building. Students' expository writing was supported by the use of tangible objects, paintings they created or field trips that were taken. Scully and Roberts (2002) found that students whose early literacy experiences included pleasurable activities were more

motivated to pursue the challenging tasks associated with learning and were more likely to develop a life-long love of reading and writing.

Journal writing, the second possible solution found in the literature for improving lack of motivation, has also been shown to provide an opportunity for students to build confidence in their writing abilities. Journaling offers time in which students are allowed to see themselves as readers and writers. According to Gentry (1985), children's writing attempts should no longer be considered mistakes, but a mirror into what children know about words and how they represent that word knowledge. All children go through five stages of spelling/writing development, but at different ages and for different periods of time. A young child's writing and spelling, as well as an older child's writing and spelling, reveals to the teacher what the students know about words and how it connects to phonics.

To better understand the process of journal writing and its benefits, Hall and Cunningham (p. 71-73) described the five stages of writing/spelling development:

1. Stage 1: Pre-communicative or Pre-phonemic Stage: This is the stage before children know much about letters and sounds (phonemes). Spelling and writing at this stage consists of scribbles and random letters.
2. Stage 2: Semi-phonetic Stage: The second stage can be seen when words are represented by a letter or two. The letters young children write are usually the first letters heard in a word or the first and last letter.
3. Stage 3: Phonetic Stage: Vowels appear in the third stage, but not necessarily the correct vowel.
4. Stage 4: Transitional Stage: In this stage, sounds are represented and spelling tends to reflect an English spelling.

5. Stage 5: Correct Spelling: This stage pertains to older students. Few five-year-olds spell all words correctly, unless limited to words that are familiar or well-known to them.

An action research project that studied the early stages of writing inside a kindergarten classroom documented additional benefits to journal writing. According to Awbrey (1987), students were allowed to move around the classroom freely to collaborate with peers while writing in journals. As time progressed, it was discovered that students copied less from each other and attempted to use phonemic/inventive spelling independently. Interest increased in sitting in the author's chair to share their work. The word, author, soon held a sense of pride for the students. Ultimately, the purpose for writing had emerged!

Additionally, journal writing was utilized by a first grade teacher who created a writer's lunch club where children freely wrote about any topic and shared it with fellow writers. The club capitalized on relationships that were supported in small group settings and involved writing and motivation. The club was voluntary, although the instructor encouraged less confident students to attend. The teacher hoped to use this strategy to address children's interests, and reach them at their skill level while making writing meaningful and relevant. Benefits to the club included promoting independent writing, fostering self-confidence, showing writing as meaningful, highlighting letter-sound relationships, allowing expressions of individuality and creativity, as well as motivating children to write (McCarry & Greenwood, 2009).

The third possible solution for the lack of motivation to write is the opportunity for students to share their writing. Fitzpatrick (1993/1994) explored a study that paired up sixth-grade students with kindergarten children to read and write collaboratively on a regular basis. The study found that developing a sense of ownership or attachment was important in fostering

positive attitudes toward reading and writing. Teacher researchers found that there was a need to connect skills and strategies to real-life contexts so they become relevant to students. A survey conducted with the kindergarten children indicated much enthusiasm for reading and writing with a partner. Twenty-five of the 27 children stated that they had positive feelings about making books together. None of the children expressed negative feelings (Fitzpatrick, 1993/1994).

Another study that offered students the opportunity to share writing became the focus in Wilson's article (2008). The teacher strived to give students a meaningful connection with what they wrote. As a result the teacher initiated several activities to engage students in writing. First, the students were asked to identify and discuss adults they admired. These adults were invited to give write-talks. Writers shared what they had done, explained the purpose the writing served, and described why the type of writing was important. An example given by Wilson (2008) was that of an older brother that shared song lyrics his band wrote and another individual that shared an online game schedule that was created. The students generated a list of potential questions to ask the adults and used the adults' writing as examples to discuss aspects of reading or writing that was relevant to the curriculum. The write-talks helped students to see the value of authentic writing and how it leads to quality writing.

Additionally, a primary school teacher that hoped to motivate students to write meaningfully chose to allow sharing in another fashion. According to Stonier and Dickerson (2009), the instructor found it difficult to meet the varied needs of students and keep them excited or engaged in the writing process. As a result, the teacher chose to establish collaboration with high school students and the second grade students inside the classroom. The students shared stories and plays that they authored. In doing so, students offered each other encouragement and feedback, often through letter writing and play productions. The instructor

concluded that these strategies incorporated many successful elements that increased excitement, relevance, confidence, and competence. Findings supported the belief that by employing effective instructional strategies, teachers found that student motivation to write and share experiences increased.

Furthermore, the focus of any good writing program has been found to be one that allows students to show off their talents. Hall and Williams (2000) stood behind the claim that setting aside time for students to share their stories was the most important part of the writing process. Students learned from one another. This also gave students the opportunity to develop their listening and speaking skills.

Project Objective(s) and Process Statements

As a result of using children's literature, response journals and opportunities to share writing, during the period of September 2009 through January 2010, the students of the targeted kindergarten and third grade ELL program will increase their motivation to write, show growth in journal writing and gain confidence enough to share what they have created.

As a result of increased instructional emphasis on the utilization of children's literature and journal writing, during the time period of September, 2009 to January 2010, the targeted kindergarten and third grade ELL students will increase their motivation to write. The results will be measured by a review of student writing samples based on teacher-constructed journal prompts, as well as an analysis of student behavior and writing based on the teacher observation checklist.

In order to accomplish the objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Choose children's literature to read aloud
2. Create journal prompts
3. Create student writing survey (pre intervention and post intervention)
4. Develop assessment tools to determine growth and achievement in writing

Methods of Assessment

The major focus of the assessments will be to determine the effect of children's literature and journal writing on student motivation to write. This will be determined through the student writing survey, student writing samples, and the teacher observation checklist. First, a student writing survey will be administered the first week of the project to determine students' initial perceptions of writing. This will give the teacher researchers baseline information from which to measure student growth. Secondly, writing samples will be taken twice a month to monitor student confidence when writing. Furthermore, a teacher observation checklist will be administered weekly to collect data regarding student behavior and production as a result of increased motivation to write. Lastly, a post intervention student writing survey will be administered to provide teacher researchers with data regarding the students' motivation to write.

Project Action Plan

When	Strategy	Participants	Why
▪ September ▪ ▪	▪Administer student pre-intervention writing survey ▪Model and implement children's literature/journal lesson (weekly) ▪Collect student journal samples(bi-monthly) ▪Complete teacher observation checklist (once a week)	▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B	▪To determine students' perceptions of writing ▪To provide meaningful text and motivate journal writing ▪To collect evidence of writing growth ▪To collect evidence of writing growth
October ▪	▪Implement children's literature/journal lesson (weekly) ▪Collect student journal samples (bi-monthly) ▪Complete teacher observation checklist (once a week)	▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B	▪To provide meaningful text and motivate journal writing ▪To collect evidence of writing growth ▪To collect evidence of writing growth
November ▪	▪Implement children's literature/journal lesson (weekly) ▪Collect student journal samples (bi-monthly) ▪Complete teacher observation checklist (once a week)	▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B	▪To provide meaningful text and motivate journal writing ▪To collect evidence of writing growth ▪To collect evidence of writing growth
December ▪	▪Implement children's literature/journal lesson (weekly) ▪Collect student journal samples (bi-monthly) ▪Complete teacher observation checklist (once a week)	▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B	▪To provide meaningful text and motivate journal writing ▪To collect evidence of writing growth ▪To collect evidence of writing growth
January ▪	▪Administer student post-intervention writing survey ▪Implement children's literature/journal lesson (weekly) ▪Collect student journal samples (bi-monthly) ▪Complete teacher observation checklist (once a week)	▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B ▪Students at Site A and Site B	▪To determine students' perceptions of writing ▪To provide meaningful text and motivate journal writing ▪To collect evidence of writing growth ▪To collect evidence of writing growth

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this action research project was to determine the effects of creating meaningful writing assignments, exposing students to children's literature and providing a social context for written work on students' motivation to write. In order to accomplish the targeted objectives, the teacher researchers implemented a reading and writing intervention in which the teacher researchers read and discussed children's literature with students and provided students with an opportunity to respond to the story through journal writing. Afterwards, students were given an opportunity to share their writing with the teacher researchers and their peers. The following paragraphs provide a detailed, chronological summary of the action research plan.

Week One Through Three

In the first week the teacher researchers provided groundwork for the action research project. The teacher researchers explained to the students that they would be participating in activities involving reading and discussing children's literature by responding to stories through journal activities. It was explained to students that the goal of the intervention was to see if this type of activity influenced student motivation and confidence in writing. The teacher researcher at Site A distributed 12 permission slips, 10 of which were returned. The teacher researcher at Site B also distributed 19 permission slips, 19 of which were returned. At Site A, the permission

slip was distributed to students to have parents sign and return to school. This form was necessary to allow their student data to be included in the research results. At Site B, the permission slips were distributed to parents at a Parent Orientation Meeting and were returned the first week of school. All students participated in the intervention; however, those students who did not return a signed permission slip did not have their data included in the research results. Furthermore, students at Site A and Site B were not required to sign letters of assent due to their age.

During the three weeks prior to implementing interventions, the teacher researchers gathered information about student attitudes toward writing. As a result, pre intervention surveys were given to students during regular classroom time (see Appendix A). The survey was identical for both the third grade students at Site A and the kindergarten students at Site B. This tool utilized face icon responses giving students three choices to answer questions regarding how they feel about different aspects of writing. A smiley face, neutral face and sad face corresponded to positive, neutral or negative attitudes about the task. At Site A, students completed the survey independently after they were given an explanation of the survey. At Site B, the pre-reader students had the happy, neutral and sad faces explained to them and then the teacher researcher read each question to the students as a group as they answered the questions independently. The teacher researcher at Site A distributed 12 surveys and all were returned. The teacher researcher at Site B distributed 19 surveys and all were returned. The data was then collected for analysis.

In addition to the student surveys, teacher researchers also utilized a teacher observation checklist to gain information regarding student attitudes about writing prior to implementing interventions (see Appendix B). After assigning a written response from students, the teacher

researchers at Site A and Site B observed each child's reaction to the task and noted it on the teacher observation checklist. One category of observation included student behavior, such as attentiveness, participation, following directions, and quality of work. Another category of observation included student verbalization. This focused on factors such as participation, commenting on the assignment, interacting with others, and the voluntary sharing of writing. The teacher researchers completed a teacher observation checklist for each student, 12 students at Site A and 19 students at Site B. After completing the student observations, the teacher researcher compiled the data for analysis.

Lastly, the teacher researchers collected student writing samples prior to intervention as a tangible exhibit of student attitudes toward writing. At Site A and at Site B the teacher researchers assigned a written response in the form of student journals (Appendix C & D). At Site A the teacher researcher used this authentic data to identify student motivation through the quantity of writing, the amount of detail in the writing and the connections students had made at the third grade level. The teacher researcher at Site B analyzed these kindergarten journal entries and identified the students' stage of writing based upon Hall and Cunningham (1997, pp. 71-73) describing five stages of writing/spelling development.

Weeks Four Through Eight

During the next weeks, Weeks Four through Eight, the teacher researchers implemented interventions. At both sites the teacher researchers read a selection of children's literature to students and asked them to respond to the story by writing about their favorite part of the story. These reflections were done on a weekly basis. The goal of this intervention was to create meaningful and interesting writing experiences for students. The teacher researchers read a children's book each week, introducing the book theme with a student discussion in order to

activate a student's prior background knowledge. Previewing the story also fostered student interest and supported them in their written response. An identification of the title, author, and illustrator was made and then a picture walk was used to encourage student predictions and generate curiosity about the story. After the book was read to the students, the class discussed it, focusing on the lesson learned from the book. Following this, students were asked to write about their favorite part of the story and tell why they liked it. Students were given as much time as needed to write their responses. Upon completion, teacher researchers asked for volunteers to share journal entries with their classmates. The children's writing samples were collected by the teacher researchers each week to be compiled for analysis. In doing so, the teacher researchers were looking for greater quality or quantity in student writing performance.

At the same time each week the teacher researchers completed a teacher observation checklist for each student. Throughout each lesson, students were observed in what they said or did as evidence of their attitude toward writing. In particular, the teacher researchers at each site observed students for evidence based on attention to the story, interaction with peers, participation in the activity and focus on the writing assignment.

Week Nine Through Week Fifteen

The interventions described above continued in Weeks Nine through Fifteen. At each site, the teacher researchers read children's literature aloud to the students and required students to create a written response to the story after a group discussion. The teacher researchers continued observing students and completing the teacher observation checklists.

At Site A, the teacher researcher observed that the same students participated or did not participate in the verbal portion of the activity. As a result it was determined that students needed more prompting to generate conversation after the book had been read. Consequently, very

specific questions were provided for students to reflect upon and share in group discussions. These questions related to specific parts of the story as well as making connections with the literature. Additionally, the same students would always share their writing while others remained silent. To better engage all students, volunteers were asked to share their writing first, but all students eventually had to participate in reading what they wrote. Furthermore, throughout the seven weeks, students were asked to offer a positive comment to each student after they had read their written response. In this way the teacher researcher was able to continue the social context for the intervention and promote student confidence as writers.

At Site B, the teacher researcher also found the same students, week after week, eager to discuss story events and share journal entries while others sat quietly. In order to include all students in the discussion and the sharing of journal entries, the use of Popsicle sticks labeled with students' names were randomly drawn. This strategy proved to be successful in allowing all students to have equal time in discussion and sharing. During the course of sharing time, as Popsicle sticks were drawn, students were called upon to sit in the special Author's Chair to show and tell about their journal entry. Judging by the broad smiles and giggles, authors and audience members alike were pleased to participate in this endeavor. Students were observed giving positive praise through the use of clapping and pleasing comments while others happily took a bow or curtsey.

Week Sixteen

Week Sixteen was the final week of the project. The intervention was implemented as it had been since Week Nine. Teacher researchers at each site talked to the students about the completion of the intervention and thanked them for their cooperation. At this time, a post intervention survey (see Appendix E) was given to students to determine if their attitudes toward

writing had changed over the course of the sixteen week project. These surveys were identical to the pre intervention survey and were administered in the same manner.

At Site A, the teacher researcher distributed 12 post intervention surveys and all were returned. The teacher researcher at Site B distributed 19 post intervention surveys and all were returned. Finally, all data was gathered: the pre intervention survey, the post intervention survey, the teacher observation checklists and the student journal responses. This information was compiled and analyzed against the data collected in the first three weeks of the project. The teacher researchers would determine if providing students with meaningful writing experiences, exposure to children's literature and a social context for writing changed students' attitudes toward writing.

Presentation and Analysis of the Results

The teacher researchers collected data over a 16-week time period. During this time several different methods were used to retrieve and compile data regarding students' motivation to write. Student surveys were distributed in Week One and Week Sixteen to determine changes in the students' views about writing. Also, a teacher observation form was utilized weekly to note student attitudes about writing. Furthermore writing samples were obtained weekly to analyze in relation to student motivation to write.

The results of the pre intervention survey (see Appendix A) and post intervention survey (see Appendix E) at Site A is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Student Writing Survey Results Comparing Week One Results To Week Sixteen Results of the Intervention at Site A

Statements						
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I like to write.	4	5	3	4	3	1
I find it easy to write.	6	6	3	3	1	1
I think writing is important.	4	5	4	4	2	1
I have enough time to write in school.	6	5	3	2	1	3
I like to write about something I have read.	6	6	2	3	2	1
I like to share my writing with others.	4	5	2	4	4	1

Note. n= 10

Overall student attitudes toward writing as seen in analyzing the pre intervention writing survey and the post intervention writing survey, Table 5, improved marginally after implementing a writing intervention over 16 weeks. The number of children surveyed who stated they do not like to write decreased by 20%; these students now felt good or neutral about approaching writing tasks assigned in school. This could be a result of the amount and type of writing which permeated their school day; these assignments may be seen as a matter of routine and acceptance by students. It is interesting to note that although students feel more comfortable with written assignments, the number of students who felt that writing was easy for them stayed the same over the course of 16 weeks. The more students wrote did not make the task easier, unlike most tasks in which the practice of a skill fosters confidence.

In the third statement children were asked if they felt writing was an important activity. The shift down 10% in the disagreement column and the subsequent shift up 10% in the agree column could be interpreted in two ways. Either a student who did not think writing was important has begun to think it has value or there was a two part shift where a student who did not think writing was important is neutral about the task now and a student who was neutral about writing now feels it is valuable. The latter interpretation may be more likely as, in general, student beliefs toward writing as seen in Table 5, do not tend to dynamic shifts in attitudes.

The next statement asks students if they felt they had enough time to write in school. Table 5 shows a decline in students who agree or feel neutral about this statement. In fact, 20% more students felt they did not have enough time to write in school. Given the fact that students are given increasingly more difficult assignments throughout the school year it is understandable that more students felt they did not have enough time to write. A possible cause for this change in student attitude could be the fact that student writing skills develop at different rates while the school curriculum and assignments increase in complexity at a regular rate, regardless of student developmental levels.

Additionally, students were asked if they liked to write about something they read. In the beginning of the intervention 20% of the students stated that they did not like to write about something they read, however, at the end of 16 weeks 10% of students stated they did not like to write about what they read. As a result 10% more students felt neutral about participating in a written response to literature. One rationale for the small movement in student attitudes about written responses is that the picture books used for this intervention were all familiar to the third grade students. The children had these classic books at home or had the books read to them many times before in school. As a result the stories did not generate the excitement or engagement as a

new story might have done. Since the books were familiar to the students, the written response would also seem redundant. At the beginning of this intervention it was decided to use the same books for both the third grade students and the kindergarten students who were participating in the study.

Lastly, students were asked if they liked to share their writing. This category showed the greatest change in student attitudes about writing with an increase of 10% for those students who liked to share their reading responses and an increase of 20% for those students who felt neutral about sharing their journal writing. It is interesting to note that student responses were identical in the first category as for those in the last category; the attitudes students have about liking to write corresponds with how they feel about sharing their writing. This 30% improvement in the students' attitude toward sharing their writing speaks to the power of social interaction in connection with academic skills. Social interaction is one way to make the curriculum meaningful to students. It can be seen that regardless of the children's writing skills, students more confidence with the ideas they did put in writing.

A teacher observation checklist (see Appendix B) was utilized each week over the course of 16 weeks. Teachers looked for student motivation to write by observing their actions and verbal responses to a writing assignment after a class read aloud. The results of the teacher observation checklist at Site A are shown below in Table 6.

Table 6

Teacher Observation Checklist for 3rd Grade Students From The First Three Weeks Compared to The Last Three Weeks at Site A

Ten students over three weeks for 30 responses during each interval	Weeks 1-3		Weeks 14-16	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Student attends to read aloud	30	0	30	0
Student participates in story discussion	24	6	21	9
Student attends to teacher's instruction of the writing prompt	27	3	25	5
Student gives positive verbal response to writing prompt	7	23	11	19
Student immediately focuses on writing activity	25	5	21	9
Student interacts with others to generate writing ideas	4	26	0	30
Student provides more text/pictures than previous journal entries	n/a	n/a	21	9
Student provides greater detail than previous journal entries	n/a	n/a	9	21
Student voluntarily shares their writing with peers	12	18	24	6

Note. n/a = not applicable at this time. n=30

The first observation the teacher researcher made was to see which students were attending to the read aloud. It can be seen that even though students were familiar with the material, they enjoyed having the stories read to them. Of the students who were read to, 100% of them were attentive to the read aloud. During the readings students often commented on what was going to happen next, either to demonstrate a favorite part of the story or to prove their knowledge to their peers. This commenting on the story often provided a focal point for story discussions after the story was read. Participation in the story discussion declined 10% from the beginning of the intervention to its completion. This may be a result of familiarity with the read

aloud stories week after week, which over time may have caused students to feel apathetic toward the activity. Furthermore, lack participation in the story discussions could be the result of the natural personalities of students over time, where quiet students assumed a naturally passive role during the read-aloud after the initial excitement of starting a new activity waned.

The third observation the teacher researcher made was how attentive students were when given instructions for the writing prompt. Table 6 shows a 7% decline in attentiveness when the teacher researcher instructed students on the writing assignment. In these instances some students were still thinking about the story and not ready to move on to the next task. Also, as a result of being familiar with the routine, students had a tendency to block the teacher out because they already knew what was expected of them.

Once the writing instructions were given the teacher researcher listened for positive verbal responses from students regarding the assignment. The data shows that positive verbal responses to journal writing increased by 14% over the course of the intervention. This increase in positive verbalization may be a result of student comfort levels. When the intervention was begun students did not know what to expect. Many children thought their work was going to be graded or they worried the assignment would be done wrong. Once students realized that the purpose of their reading response journals was to share ideas with others, many of them relaxed and looked at it as a pleasant and comfortable class activity. Those students who were reluctant writers seemed to become more vocal over time about their dislike of the assignment. They did not respond more frequently than the students who felt this was a positive activity, but the students who did not like writing made their reluctance known.

Next the teacher researcher observed students to see if they immediately focused on the writing activity. A decline of 13% occurred over the course of the intervention showing that

students were less inclined to immediately start their assignments. Often students explained their delay in taking up the writing task by telling the teacher researcher they were thinking about what they wanted to write before beginning their reading response journal. Other students said they were tired or wanted to finish their snack before beginning the activity.

Before students began to write the teacher researcher provided an opportunity for students to share ideas with each other. At the beginning of the intervention 13% of students shared their ideas with classmates. By the end of the intervention no students shared their ideas with a peer before writing. The teacher researcher observed that competition between students prevented them from exchanging ideas about what their favorite part was or coalescing details to add to their writing. As a result of this competitive spirit, the teacher researcher found it difficult to induce students to fully engage in the story discussion before beginning their reading response and had little success in having students exchange ideas before writing.

As a result of student competitiveness and the isolation they put themselves in when writing, student journal responses increased in production 70% of the time. However students included greater detail in writing their journal responses, only 30% of the time. Most students looked favorably on their increased production and saw themselves doing better than their peers because of it, even if they exhibited poor quality writing. Despite the teacher researcher's praise for detailed responses, many students continued to believe they did better than their peers if they filled up more paper.

The last observation the teacher researcher made was in regard to students sharing their writing with others. This was one area of the intervention that was extremely successful. Students increased their participation in sharing their writing from 40% in the first weeks of the intervention to 80% during the last weeks of intervention. The teacher researcher observed great

enthusiasm from students in this aspect of the writing intervention. Students liked being the center of attention and often shared more ideas than they had written to keep the spotlight on themselves. A part of this phenomenon was a result of children becoming more comfortable with the process of reading response journals and realizing that they could write what they were thinking because there was no grade attached to the activity.

Student writing samples (see Appendix C & Appendix D) were the last evidence gathered by the teacher researcher. This student work provided an opportunity for the teacher researcher to see if the children, during the course of the intervention, grew confident enough with the journal response activity to increase the quantity or quality of their writing. As seen in Table 6, 70% of the time students increased their writing production. As stated earlier, students were very competitive with each other when engaging in the writing activity. They would not share ideas and felt that the amount they wrote was more important than the quality of their writing. This can be seen by the fact that greater detail was added to the journal responses only 30% of the time.

Third grade students are still in the early stages of their writing development skills and keeping this in mind it is understandable that students felt they were doing well by producing longer responses. Because these children are beginner writers, it may be assumed that they would have a more difficult time identifying good writing with rich detail. Additionally, students were simply asked to write their response to children's literature after it was read to them and as a result no writing instruction was implemented. The lack of details in the student responses can be attributed to the limited scope of the assignment, the developmental stage of the student writers and the lack of engagement in exchanging ideas before writing. Given these circumstances, showing an increase in production was the one way students at this age could demonstrate their motivation to write.

The result of the pre intervention survey and the post intervention survey at Site B is shown below in Table 7.

Table 7

Student Writing Survey Results Comparing Week One Results To Week Sixteen Results of the Intervention at Site B

Statements						
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I like to write.	16	17	1	2	2	0
I find it easy to write.	8	9	5	5	6	5
I think writing is important.	14	19	4	0	1	0
I have enough time to write in school.	12	15	5	4	2	0
I like to write about something I have read.	14	19	5	0	0	0
I like to share my writing with others.	16	19	3	0	0	0

Note. n= 19

According to the pre intervention and post intervention surveys given to kindergarten age students, Table 7 showed a slight overall increase in student attitudes toward writing. Following 16 weeks of intervention, results showed a 5% increase in students that liked to write, another 5% felt neutral toward the task of writing, and 10% of the students no longer disliked writing. Several students were observed making comments during the pre intervention and post intervention surveys that they wanted to write like their big brothers and sisters.

In analyzing the ease of writing, the teacher researcher noted a 5% favorable increase in the post survey, 26% remained neutral in both surveys, and only 5% of students no longer felt that writing was easy. This statement, however, was difficult to assess at this grade level since

many kindergarten students have not had much exposure to writing before entering school. Also, many students enter kindergarten without a strong knowledge base of letters and sounds.

In measuring the importance of writing, 100% of the students from the post intervention survey agreed that writing was something all people needed to learn. This was a moderate 26% increase from the pre intervention survey. One particular student was heard stating, "If kids learn how to write, they can get a good job." Another student claimed, "I want to be a teacher, so I need to know how to write, too!" Other students continued to chime in with favorable comments about the necessity of learning to write.

In considering the amount of class time given for writing, students revealed a 16% increase in favor of enough time to complete journal entries and other student-selected writing. The teacher researcher observed that by the end of the 16 weeks of intervention, many of the kindergarten students chose to create stories inside the classroom writing center, rather than doing other activities during free choice time.

The most obvious change, resulting in favor of the intervention, was the data that revealed 100% of students liked writing something they have read and 100% liked to share their writing with others. The kindergarten students displayed much enthusiasm toward the stories read aloud to them, and even more so during their time spent in the "Author's Chair" sharing their creations.

In addition to the pre intervention and post intervention student surveys given, a teacher observation checklist (see Appendix B) was utilized over the course of 16 weeks. Student motivation to write was assessed by observing actions and verbal responses during a journal writing assignment following a class read aloud. The results of the teacher observation checklist at Site B are shown below in Table 8.

Table 8

Teacher Observation Checklist for Kindergarten Students from the First Three Weeks Compared to The Last Three Weeks at Site B

Nineteen students over three weeks for 57 responses during each interval	Weeks 1-3		Weeks 14-16	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Student attends to read aloud	57	0	57	0
Student participates in story discussion	31	26	44	13
Student attends to teacher's instruction of the writing prompt	53	4	57	0
Student gives positive verbal response to writing prompt	53	4	55	2
Student immediately focuses on writing activity	50	7	53	4
Student interacts with others to generate writing ideas	38	19	42	15
Student provides more text/pictures than previous journal entries	n/a	n/a	5	52
Student provides greater detail than previous journal entries	n/a	n/a	5	52
Student voluntarily shares their writing with peers	44	13	57	0

Note. n/a = not applicable at this time. n=57

Notably, the most dramatic difference following the given intervention was the 100% of students found successfully attending to the story and another 100% that voluntarily shared their writing with peers. Even though the strength of writing ability fluctuated, the enthusiasm for the children's literature and sharing of journals was remarkable.

Comparing the results in Table 8 over the course of the time frame, there was an increase in favor of the intervention in the following areas: student participation of story discussion, attendance to writing prompt directions, positive verbalization to writing prompts, focus on writing activity, and the use of peer interaction to generate writing ideas. However, only 26% of students surveyed provided more text/pictures than earlier journal entries and only another 26% provided greater detail. This, of course, may be contributed to several underlying factors such as: students lacking a strong foundation base in letters and sounds, bi-lingual or non-English speaking students, students with fine motor difficulties, and students with no preschool or little prior knowledge in the area of academics.

Finally, journal writing samples (see Appendix C & Appendix D) were gathered to additionally assess the motivation and confidence level of the students. In addition to filling out teacher observation checklists, the teacher researcher reviewed each reading response journal entry according to Hall and Cunningham's five stages of spelling/writing development (1997, pp. 71-73). As noted in Chapter 3 in this action research project, the following are the five stages:

1. Stage 1: Pre-communicative or Pre-phonetic Stage: This is the stage before children know much about letters and sounds (phonemes). Spelling and writing at this stage consists of scribbles and random letters.
2. Stage 2: Semi-phonetic Stage: The second stage can be seen when words are represented by a letter or two. The letters young children write are usually the first letters heard in a word or the first and last letter.
3. Stage 3: Phonetic Stage: Vowels appear in the third stage, but not necessarily the correct vowel. The long vowels appear correctly represented first, but there is an attempt at short vowel sounds as well.

4. Stage 4: Transitional Stage: In this stage, sounds are represented and spelling tends to reflect an English spelling. When kindergarten children are bright and given the opportunity to write each day, many reach this stage rather quickly.
5. Stage 5: Correct Spelling: This stage pertains to older students. Few five-year-olds spell all words correctly, unless limited to familiar words that are well-known to them.

Analyzing the student journal writing samples, the teacher researcher found the following stages of spelling/writing development: During Weeks 1-3 of the intervention, from the 19 kindergarten students observed, 52% were at Stage 1, 38% were at Stage 2, and 10% were at Stage 3. There were no students at Stages 4 and 5. However, during Weeks 14-16, out of the 19 kindergarten students observed, 32% were at Stage 1, 21% were at Stage 2, 37% were at Stage 3, 10% were at Stage 4. There were no students at Stage 5. Therefore, it was apparent that the intervention has had a positive effect on the improvement of spelling/writing development in kindergarten students.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As observed by the teacher researchers the interventions to motivate students to write by exposing them to children's literature in an effort to provide background knowledge for meaningful writing assignments, as well as an opportunity for sharing their writing had some effect on in-class student motivation to write.

Site A

At Site A, third grade students settled into their traditional academic characteristics after the initial excitement of the new program had worn off after several weeks. This meant that those students who liked to write continued to be motivated, creating writing that was interesting,

detailed and of good quantity. Students who were reluctant writers, based on the pre intervention writing survey, appeared motivated and produced a greater quantity of writing at the beginning of the intervention, however, this eagerness waned as the intervention became routine.

In the pre intervention and post intervention writing surveys at Site A, students who stated they did not like to write decreased by 20%. What is not reflected in the survey is that the teacher researcher at Site A had a close relationship with students because of the small group learning environment and comments were made by some students to suggest they filled out the survey with the intention of pleasing the teacher researcher. Students were well aware that the goal of the intervention was to motivate students to write and in stating this in the post intervention survey some students appeared to want the teacher researcher to be successful. Additionally, no students stated they found it easier to write after 16 weeks of intervention and only 10% of students felt neutral instead of negative about liking to write about something they had read.

Furthermore, an analysis of student writing samples did not demonstrate strides in motivating students to write. At the beginning of the intervention some students increased their writing production. However, they were not thoughtful about what they wrote and often repeated the same idea many times in their journal responses. This was often a result of the child's sense of competition with other students rather than a reflection of exposing them to children's literature and creating background knowledge to support writing efforts. As the intervention activity became routine, many of these students regressed to their old writing habits and were unmotivated to write journals of substantial quantity.

The teacher researcher at Site A observed that elements of the intervention to motivate students to write were successful due to the fact that students were more enthusiastic to share

their writing with others. An analysis of the pre intervention survey and the post intervention survey showed a 75% decrease in students who did not like to share their writing with peers. Furthermore, the Teacher Observation Checklist showed a 100% increase for students who voluntarily shared their writing when comparing results from the first three weeks to the last three weeks of the intervention. It is interesting to note that students felt better about sharing their writing despite the fact that they did not feel writing was easier for them after 16 weeks of intervention. Students also benefited from the exposure to children's literature and the resulting explanation and discussions of stories despite the fact that they did not want to convey what they learned or give opinions in writing. This was evident when students shared their writing. Often students read their journal response and continue engaging others with ideas they had about the story beyond what they had written.

The teacher researcher at Site A was satisfied with the intervention in its general format, however, would recommend some changes in the intervention if it was to be implemented in the future at the third grade level. At the beginning of the intervention students were motivated to participate in the writing activity, however, as time went on their enthusiasm lessened. As a result the teacher researcher at Site A would recommend making a more appropriate book selection, allowing variations in the journal response questions and providing a longer period of time to work with students during each intervention session.

The teacher researcher attributed some decline in the effectiveness of the intervention to the fact that the children were very familiar with the stories that were chosen for the read aloud. Many students said they had the books at home and had read them many times before. At the onset of the intervention the teacher researchers at both Site A and Site B agreed to use these stories because they were recognized as exemplary examples of good children's literature.

However, the third grade students were not curious about many of the books because they had read them before.

Furthermore, students were asked to write about their favorite part of the story for the journal response activity. The same question was used for the third grade students at Site A and the kindergarten students at Site B to maintain continuity in the intervention. Yet, it became evident as the intervention progressed that this question was too simplistic for third grade students and did not challenge them to write. Students at this grade level were capable of higher level literacy skills including prediction, making connections, opinion, and comparison. The teacher researcher at Site A would recommend that a variety of more challenging response questions be implemented in future use of this intervention.

Lastly, the limited time of the pull-out program for the teacher researcher at Site A, greatly restricted the implementer's ability to make adaptations to the program. It also necessitated strict time limits on the students' ability to work through the intervention in its entirety, from listening to the read aloud, brainstorming ideas, writing journal responses and sharing their writing. This time restraint was a reason why longer, more challenging books were not used during the course of the intervention. Depending on the school schedule and student activities, the children sometimes felt rushed in completing the journal activity. It would be recommended in the future to provide an amount of time for the intervention that would allow adjustments to be made if necessary and accommodate an unhurried pace for students to complete the activity.

Site B

At Site B, the kindergarten students showed much enthusiasm at the inception of the writing intervention and remained so throughout the program. Results of the pre intervention and

post intervention student writing surveys reflected this overall eagerness to write. Despite their enthusiasm, the young students came into the classroom with a varying degree of background knowledge concerning letters, sounds, and phonemic awareness. Others lacked experience or confidence in fine motor areas such as handwriting. Unfortunately, this prevented the students from reaching a higher level of competence in writing.

Additionally, results of the post intervention student survey revealed a mere 5% favorable increase in the ease of writing which supported the fact that handwriting at this grade level was not an easy task for all involved. The teacher researcher observed many students requesting assistance in spelling the words they wished to write. In turn, students were encouraged to use inventive spelling or "brave spelling" to sound out words on their own. Students with limited academic skills continued to show difficulty in independent writing behavior. These students needed reassurance that their efforts were worthy of praise.

In reviewing the student journal writing entries at Site B, the teacher researcher noted a slight upward mobility in regards to Hall and Cunningham's five stages of spelling/writing development (1997, pp. 71-73). At the onset of the intervention, 52% of the students were performing at the early pre-phonetic stage of writing which consisted of scribbles or random strings of letters. At the semi-phonetic stage, 38% used one or two letters to represent words. Only a small 10% of students wrote at the phonetic stage where upon vowels and consonants were attempted.

Between Weeks 13-16, however, there was an increase in more advanced levels of spelling/writing development by the students at Site B. Specifically, only 32% were writing at the lowest pre-phonetic stage, 21% at the semi-phonetic stage, and 37% were succeeding at the phonetic stage of spelling/writing development. Yet, the profound difference of using children's

literature to motivate writing was apparent when 10% of the kindergarten students reached the higher transitional stage in which real sounds were used to represent words. This upward trend supported the positive effects of the implementation that had taken place inside the classroom.

During the course of the writing intervention, the teacher observation checklists showed a remarkable 100% success level in attending to children's literature selections and an equally successful level of voluntary sharing of journals. Despite varying writing abilities, students did not lack enthusiasm taking turns in the "Author's Chair" to display their creations. Even the more shy students or those with limited English smiled from ear to ear when it was their turn.

Recommendations to improve the outcome of the action research project for this grade level would be the following:

- To begin writing intervention later in the school year after knowledge of letter sounds, and phonemic awareness has increased.
- To extend the period of intervention in order to give additional time to learn for students with limited academic experience or limited English usage.
- To expand the level of response journal questions in order to encourage higher level thinking skills rather than simply asking for the student's favorite part of the story.
- To encourage better use of the classroom Word Wall to make use of sight words and high frequency vocabulary to promote writing confidence and stronger level of independence.

Surprisingly, at the close of the action research project, students at Site B often chose to use free classroom play time to write inside journals or create their own stories. Some students chose to work alone and others formed groups to create classroom books. All students showed an interest in sitting in the Author's Chair to share their work of "heart." It was apparent that inside this classroom, a love for writing had grown.

Therefore, teacher researchers at both Site A and Site B found that by presenting students with children's literature created meaningful writing assignments and provided opportunities to share, which in turn fostered student motivation to write. The conclusion of this intervention resulted in students who gained confidence in their ideas and beliefs through the sharing of meaningful writing. Additionally, student journal production increased in relation to the children's academic abilities. Overall, most students stated they enjoyed writing in response to children's literature.

Reflections

In reflecting on the intervention to motivate students to write, the teacher researchers gained many insights by taking a lead role in the action research project. The research journey, however, took a slightly different path than the teacher researchers had intended. Like many other educational investigators, the teacher researchers assumed that the results of the uncomplicated intervention would be obvious. Yet, in implementing this intervention the teacher researchers were surprised by many occurrences, including how the students reacted to the intervention.

Site A

Most students at Site A appeared enthusiastic about participating in the project, but for several students their excitement was short lived. After several weeks the academically lower students were accepting, but not enthusiastic about the application of the intervention. Additionally, the teacher researcher was surprised by the competitiveness of the students. The third grade children were friends and enjoyed sharing their writing however, they were very resistant to discuss their favorite part of the story before participating in the journal response. They feared that others would steal their ideas. Additionally, most high achieving students

looked to quantify their success by providing a greater output in their journal response. They appeared more concerned with winning a competition of their own creation than in clearly communicating their ideas about the story.

The teacher researcher's feelings about the process changed during the course of the intervention. At the beginning there was a feeling of optimism and hope that all students would benefit from the intervention. As weeks passed the teacher researcher became frustrated at the lack of cooperation by students to discuss the story and brainstorm ideas before writing the journal responses, despite continuous initiatives by the teacher researcher. It also quickly became evident that the low achieving students were not going to sustain their engagement in the process. The climate of the research setting began to change when students realized that all the books would be familiar to them and new material would not be introduced. Students seemed disappointed that they would not have more input in choosing the stories that were read to them. Furthermore, the division between high achieving and low achieving students seem to become more evident as time passed as seen in student attitudes and performance. By the end of the project the teacher researcher felt restricted by the intervention guidelines and would have like to initiate the intervention again with a different story selection and more time to implement the process.

The teacher researcher learned much about student attitudes and interests from implementing the intervention. Students appeared to crave stories that were new to them and had themes relevant to their lives. Also, because the books were familiar to students from a young age, many students now saw them as inappropriate for third grade. Furthermore, the extent to which the students wanted to please the teacher researcher and make the intervention a success surprised the teacher researcher.

Site B

Despite the enthusiasm for the use of children's literature, it was apparent that many of the kindergarten students at Site B could not get over their fear of the "unknown" when it came to spelling. The teacher researcher originally thought the excitement over the literature would encourage students to step out of their comfort zone and be more than willing to try their hand at "brave" or "inventive" spelling. The students enjoyed the stories and cheerfully volunteered to show and tell about their journal responses, but the quantity of writing was sparse. It was surprising to see that even the emergent readers were not challenging themselves as much as the teacher researcher thought they would.

During the process, the teacher researcher found the need to give additional praise and encouragement for students' use of the classroom word wall or sight words within their writing. When students requested help with spelling, the teacher researcher reminded them to use the word wall and use their kindergarten sounds to do "brave spelling." As a result, some of those students took the initiative to utilize the word wall appropriately, but some simply copied random words that did not apply to the literature response.

The teacher researcher was pleased with how the students supported one another through the entire process. Many students helped one another with sounding out words, while some pointed out words displayed on the classroom word wall. Other students volunteered to help with illustrations for their struggling classmates. Remarkably, all students were cheerful audience members and proud authors during the sharing process.

In conclusion, the teacher researchers at both Sites A and B thought the intervention would have had a more positive effect on motivating students to write if only the students' level of understanding was taken more into account, and a wider selection of stories and journal

response questions were given. Having made an inaugural investigation, the teacher researchers now feel more confident in implementing educational investigations independently in the future to improve pedagogical skills and student achievement. As a first attempt at an intervention the teacher researchers felt it was effective in motivating students to write, but agree that some areas need to be refined to attain better results. The teacher researchers recommend that others in the field of education implement action research early in their careers in order to gain insight into the effectiveness of one's own teaching and leadership skills.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

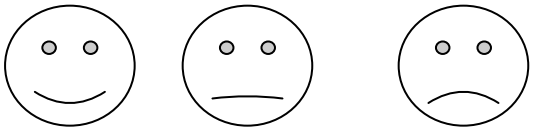
Name _____ Date _____

Student Writing Survey

Pre-Intervention

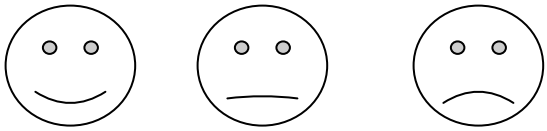
Color the face that shows your answer.

1. I like to write.

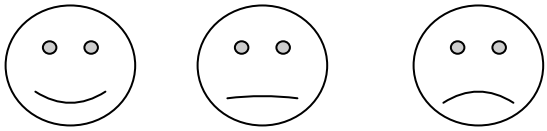


2. I find it easy to write.

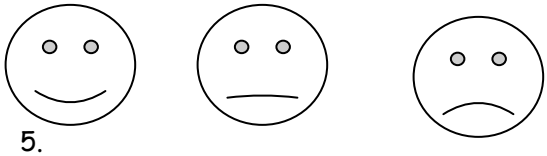
2. I think writing is important.



3. I have enough time to write in school.

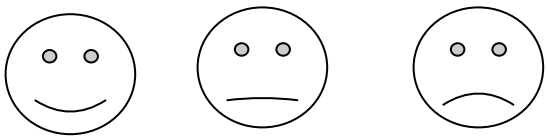


4. I like to write about something I have read.



5.

6. I like to share my writing with others.



Appendix B

Name_____ Date_____

Teacher Observation Checklist

	Yes	No	Comments
Student attends to read aloud			
Student participates in story discussion			
Student attends to teacher's instruction of the writing prompt			
Student gives positive verbal response to writing prompt			
Student immediately focuses on writing activity			
Student interacts with others to generate writing ideas			
Student provides more text/pictures than previous journal entries			
Student provides greater detail than previous journal entries			
Student voluntarily shares their writing with peers			

Appendix C

Name _____ Date _____

What is your favorite part of the story? Why?

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Appendix D

Name _____ Date _____

What is your favorite part of the story? Why?

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Appendix E

Name_____ Date_____

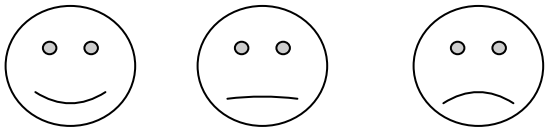
Student Writing Survey

Post-Intervention

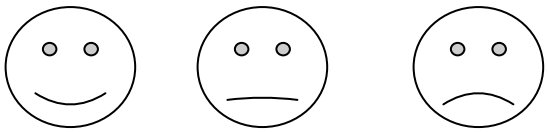
Color the face that shows your answer.

1. I like to write.

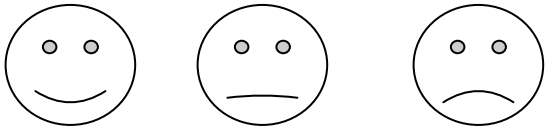
2. I find it easy to write.



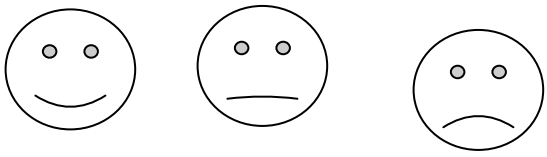
3. I think writing is important.



4. I have enough time to write in school.



5. I like to write about something I have read.



6. I like to share my writing with others.