ABSTRACT
                A practicum was designed to motivate primary students
to increase the quantity and improve the quality of their writing.
Publication of student works was the prime motivating factor. Other
objectives were to develop in students a more positive attitude
toward writing and gain the agreement of teachers that the publishing
of their students' written work would enhance their classroom writing
programs. After 12 weeks of the implementation of the publishing
center, the quantity and quality of writing increased. Also, student
surveys indicated a more positive attitude toward writing, and
teachers agreed that the publication of students' works enhanced
their writing programs. The publishing center will continue to
operate in future years and will be expanded to include kindergarten
and grades four and five. (One table of data is included; 28
references, an attitude survey for teachers, a writing attitude scale
for students, a sign-up sheet for the publishing center, and a
writing process handbook for teachers are attached.) (Author/RS)

IMPLEMENTATION OF A PUBLISHING CENTER TO ENHANCE THE

WRITING PROCESS FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS

by

Karen L. Wasson

A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Center for Advancement
of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science.

The abstract of this report may be placed in a
National Database System for reference.

May/1993

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ABSTRACT

Implementation of a Publishing Center to Enhance the
Writing Process for Primary Students.
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University,
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Descriptors: Computer-Assisted Instruction; Elementary
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Revision (Written Composition); Student Motivation;
Thinking Skills; Writing (Composition); Writing
Instruction; Writing Processes; Writing Research;
Writing Skills

    This report describes the writing process and how
it relates to creative and critical thinking.   It
focuses on current research of how the writing process
is best taught to primary students.   The primary goal
of the project was to motivate primary students to
increase the quantity and improve the quality of their
writing.   Publication of student works was the prime
motivating factor.   Other objectives were to develop in
students a more positive attitude toward writing and to
gain the agreement of teachers that the publishing of
their students' written works enhances their classroom
writing programs.   The pros and cons of using
technology to teach the writing process to young
children are presented.   Publication, an often
forgotten stage of the writing process, is considered
by researchers to be crucial to the development of
writing in young children.   The implementation of a
publishing center in an elementary school is described.
    After 12 weeks of the implementation of the
publishing center, the quantity and quality of writing
increased.   Also, student surveys indicated a more
positive attitude toward writing, and teachers agreed
that the publication of students' works enhanced their
writing programs.
    A writing process handbook for teachers was
developed and shared with other educators.   The
publishing center will continue to operate in future
years and will be expanded to include Kindergarten and

grades four and five. Appendices include teacher and student attitude scales and a student and editor sign-up schedule. Attachments include a writing process handbook for teachers.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it
reports are entirely my own. Where it has been
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accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial
practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect
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CHAPTER I

Purpose

School and Community Setting

The setting for this practicum was an elementary school centrally located in a large, fast growing metropolitan city. In the past decade this city increased its population by over 300,000 people. There is an average of 5,000 people moving here each month.

Although gaming is the city's major industry, its lifestyle and demographic profile is similar to that of the rest of the nation. Seniors over 65 are the fastest growing age group. This age group is, however, proportional to the national average of 12.4 percent.

The city's "baby boom" population is larger than the national average due to the economic growth of the area, 45 percent compared to an average 32 percent nationally. This age group has increased 56.4 percent over the last decade. This gain has led to another population increase in the under five age group which has increased by 53.6 percent in the last decade.

The median age of this city's residents is 34.5. The median household income is $32,499 which is higher than the national average.

Although it is conceived to be a transient city, it should be noted that over 50 percent of the population has resided here for more than ten years and 61 percent are homeowners.

According to a 1990 census, 75 percent of the population is White, nine percent Black, 11 percent Mexican American and five percent were listed as "other".

Fifty-five percent of the residents are married. Thirteen percent have never been married. Nineteen percent are divorced, and 11 percent are separated or widowed.

There are no children in 67 percent of the households. Fifteen percent have one child in the household. Twelve percent have two, and six percent of households have three or more children.

The county based school district draws from a population of over 800,000 and an area of 7,910 square miles. It is the largest school district in the state educating approximately 60 percent of all students in

the state. According to 1991 statistics, this district
ranks fourteenth in size by pupil enrollment in the
United States. It serves over 129,000 students and
employs over 14,000 people. Its minimum general
operating budget for the 1991-92 school year was
$497,965,281.

Since both the general population and the student
population have increased at a much higher rate than
projected by any of the County's major public entities,
an expansive building program has been incorporated
supported by local bonds. The construction of 77 new
schools was scheduled beginning in 1988 continuing
through to 1998.

Currently, of the district's 164 schools, 116 are
elementary schools.

The particular site for this practicum was a 30-
year-old centrally located elementary school which
operates on a nine-month schedule. It serves 769
students, Kindergarten through grade five. There are
four Kindergarten classes with a student teacher ratio
of 27:1, seven first grade classes with a ratio of
15:1, six second grade classes with a ratio of 18:1,
four third grade classes with a 27:1 ratio, three

fourth grade classes with a ratio of 23:1, and five
fifth grade classes with a 25:1 ratio. In addition to
these regular classes, there are five self-contained
special education classes, two preschool development
classes, and three ESL classes. Of the school's
enrollment, 54.8 percent are White, 12 percent are
Black, 24.8 percent are Mexican American and 8.6 are
listed as "other".

The faculty and staff of the school include a
principal, a part-time assistant principal, a special
education facilitator, a part-time counselor, an office
manager, a clerk, 17 classified employees, 33 regular
classroom teachers, one reading specialist, and five
specialists teaching art, library, music, and physical
education.

The physical facility of the school consists of
eight permanent buildings which house the majority of
the Kindergarten through fifth grade classes, as well
as the special education classes, library, art and
music rooms, a computer lab containing 15 computers and
three printers, a physical education room and a
multi-purpose room which includes a stage. In addition

there are three portables which house a special education class and an ESL class.

The total enrollment of the school is 769 students. The majority of the students live in the community proximate to the school which consists of older single-family homes, large single-family dwellings, and middle income apartment complexes. Eighty students are bussed from a similar area.

Approximately 50 percent of the parents are enrolled in the PTA. Thirty are active members that participate regularly in school events.

The author received a bachelors degree from a large university in the southwest. The author has had additional training in computer applications as well as professional development courses in bookbinding and reading.

Problem Statement

For years teachers have struggled with the problem of what steps to take in order to encourage their students to produce more and higher quality writing.

In a pamphlet "Help Your Child Learn to Write
Well", published by the Office of Educational Research
in Washington D.C. it is noted that:

> Study after study shows that students'
> writing lacks clarity, coherence, and
> organization. As many as one out of four
> have serious w.. ting difficulties. And
> students say they like writing less and less
> as they go through school.

Traditionally, teachers have taught writing by
assigning a particular topic and required length:
"Write two to three pages about what you did on summer
vacation." When the final paper was submitted the
teacher would use a red pen to mark errors and make
corrections. It is not surprising that this method did
not motivate students to write, nor did it add to their
confidence in their ability to write.

Another area that has posed a challenge for
teachers is how to best teach students problem-solving
skills and the skills of creative and critical
thinking.

In the resource book, <u>Developing Minds</u>, published
by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum
Development, Carol Booth Olson stated that "... depth
and clarity of thinking enhance the quality of writing,
while at the same time, writing is a learning tool for

heightening and refining thinking." (Olson, 1985:102)

Olson goes on to say:

> This renewed emphasis on writing as a
> reflection of thinking comes at a time when
> the reasoning skills of American school
> children appear to be on the decline. For
> example, *Reading, Thinking* and *Writing,*
> (Applebee, Brown, Cooper and others) a recent
> report of a national reading and literature
> assessment of over 100,000 nine-, thirteen-,
> and seventeen-year-olds cites as its "major
> and overriding" finding that although
> students at each age level had little
> difficulty making judgements about what they
> read, most lacked the problem solving and
> critical thinking skills to explain and
> defend their judgments in writing. (Olson,
> 1985:102)

An Attitude Survey for Teachers (Appendix A:56)
responded to by approximately two-thirds of the primary
teachers at the target school indicated that 70 percent
of the teachers believe that children are not
adequately motivated to write. This author has spoken
with the primary teachers at the target school and they
clearly supported the idea that creative writing needed
to be developed. One teacher commented: "Students who
have a goal work harder than if they are writing for a
grade." Another teacher said it would be beneficial to
have students work towards a finished product such as a
published book, but with the number of students in the
classroom and only one adult it is difficult to invest

the time that such an endeavor would take. Another teacher stated that students' motivation to write would increase if they could use their finished writing projects in meaningful ways. This could include publishing their books, reading their works to another person, and placing their published books in the school library for other students to read.

Many teachers agreed that making books for individual students is too time consuming but most indicated that they do create class big books. Many also indicated a lack of familiarity with the techniques of layout and bookbinding.

A few teachers indicated that they tried to set aside time daily for students to write. This writing usually took the form of a daily journal. Many teachers agreed that it was difficult for them to come up with interesting and varied creative writing topics.

All teachers, as well as the principal, agreed that there was a need to motivate students to do more and better writing. Seventy percent of the teachers indicated in the survey that they believed that children were not adequately motivated to write. Ninety percent of the teachers indicated they believed

the establishment of a publishing center would motivate students to write more and would improve the quality of the students' writing. One hundred percent believed that students would enjoy writing and publishing their own books. One hundred percent believed that a publishing center would enhance their writing program.

Objective Outcomes

The following objectives were identified to measure the outcomes of the implementation of a publishing center at an elementary school.

By the end of 12 weeks, 75 percent of the students in the primary grades utilizing the publishing center at the target school will demonstrate an increased quantity of writing as a result of using publishing center activities as measured by a numerical count of the number of thought-units in written products. A thought-unit is defined as a segment of meaningful expression which contains an identifiable verb and subject (Amodeo, 1987).

By the end of 12 weeks, 75 percent of the students utilizing the publishing center will demonstrate an improvement in the quality of their writing as a result

of using publishing center activities as measured by a

numerical count of the number of correct sentences

divided by the total number of thought-units. A

correct sentence is a thought-unit with initial capital

and end punctuation.

By the end of 12 weeks, 75 percent of the students

will demonstrate a more positive attitude toward

writing as a result of using the publishing center as

evidenced by a writing attitude survey.

By the end of 12 weeks, 90 percent of the primary

teachers will agree that the publishing center does

enhance their writing program as measured by a survey

of teachers.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Writing and Thinking

A primary goal of education is to help students learn to think (Hughes, 1985). Effective thinking will be imperative for success in the technological society of the next century (McTighe and Schollenberger, 1985).

The University of California Thinking/Writing Project directed by Carol Booth Olson (1985) is based on the premise that writing is a form of problem solving and can be used to develop critical thinking. In each step of the writing process writers use creative and critical thinking (French and Rhoder, 1992).

> In order to produce a composition, writers must tap their memory to establish what they know, review the information they have generated and translate it into inner speech or print, organize main ideas, re-see the whole to find a focus, construct a structural framework for communicating an intended message, transform this network of thought into a written paper, and evaluate the project. (Olson, 1985:102)

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Development of Writing in Children

When is a child ready to write? Graves and Stuart (1985) contend that all children in our schools are ready to write. This does not mean that they have perfected their writing. However, they arrive on that first day of school with a knowledge of the basics of writing. Many have experienced with writing themselves and most have had some sort of indirect experience with writing. They are, however, still beginners and they need opportunities to practice their developing skills (Gundlach, 1982).

Most all physiologically normal children learn to talk without much effort on the part of their parents. Babies practice sounds by babbling and later practice words by imitating adults and older siblings. Parents usually view these attempts as a normal progression of sequences in learning to speak. Mistakes or approximations are usually considered humorous and cute. Indeed, parents seem to have an innate understanding that children will progress naturally through the stages of speech, and most do not make active or conscious efforts to teach their children to talk.

According to writing researchers, children's development of writing and reading language would, if allowed and encouraged by parents and teachers, virtually mirror the sequence of stages of speech.

> They begin by pretending, imitating adults. If encouraged, children continue to imitate adults in a series of efforts that soon approximate actual reading and writing. Many adults who know they learned to read before ever going to school, but can't remember how, followed this natural process. (Graves and Stuart, 1985:9)

Children's first attempts at writing usually take the form of what adults would refer to as scribbling. Children will also view drawing as story writing and most, if not invalidated, will attempt to write words.

Adults tend to believe that children must learn to read before they can learn to write. But by observing and mimicking adults and older siblings children can progress through a series of approximations and through the beginning stages of composition. As an added benefit, reading will come more easily to children who write first (Graves and Stuart, 1985).

The Process Approach to Writing

In studying how writing is taught in American schools, researchers discovered that most teachers

focus on the final product of writing - the essay, the
report, the story. They do not have experience in and
do not understand the specific process of how
successful writers attain their final product.
Teachers have expected their students to produce
quality products on demand without having learned the
steps that such writing requires (Schaeffer, 1987).

Many teachers avoid having their students do
actual reading and writing and instead focus their
programs around isolated components of reading and
writing. This usually takes the form of fill in the
blank or circle the answer worksheets. This method
denies children valuable experience in reading and
writing and in effect teaches them to dislike these
activities. It "... prevents children from using
important thinking skills, such as organizing,
analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating information."
(Graves and Stuart, 1985:14)

Donald Graves directed a research project on
children's writing at a public elementary school in
Atkinson, New Jersey from 1978 to 1980. Graves and
fellow researchers Susan Sowers and Lucy Calkins with
the help of the teachers at Atkinson developed an

unconventional method of teaching writing. Instead of

following a traditional curriculum wherein skills are

taught in isolation and in a prescribed sequence

Graves' project encouraged natural interaction between

students and between students and teachers (Graves and

Stuart, 1985).

Children were encouraged to choose their own

topics and to use invented spellings, the sounding out

of words. Following certain guidelines, each child was

free to consult with other children or the teacher.

Students would read their works in progress to other

students and obtain feedback about the clarity and

interest of their stories. The decision to revise or

not was left to the author.

After a child had written several stories the

teacher would discuss the works with the child and

select the best one for publication. Publication

consisted of typing the book using standard spelling

and punctuation and then binding it in cardboard sewn

with dental floss and covered with wallpaper.

A biographical note, "About the Author", was
added, and the finished book might be read
aloud to the whole class before it was placed
in the class library. Then other children
could take it home to read and share with
their families. A library card inside the
cover provided a record of the names of
children who had borrowed the book throughout
the year. (Graves and Stuart, 1985:46)

From this and other studies researchers have been
able to analyze how children and adults compose. This
has led to the development of an effective method of
teaching writing (Collins and Sommers, 1985). This
method consists of prewriting, writing, revising,
editing, and publication. "Proponents of this method
regard writing as an ongoing, multi-stage process, with
equal emphasis given to each of the stages."
(Schaeffer, 1987:7) The U.S. Department of Education
has endorsed this method as the most effective way to
teach writing skills (Amodeo, 1987).

Prewriting and Motivation

Writing begins with motivation. It is very
difficult to produce under pressures of time,
conventions and grades. It is even more difficult to
be creative under such duress. Yet many teachers
expect students to write under these conditions.

Even before the prewriting stage parents and teachers need to expose children to various forms of literature and language by reading to them, talking with them, listening to them. They need role models to show them what successful readers and writers do. Children want to be successful in these areas too. They need to see parents and teachers reading and writing (Robinson and Hulett, 1984).

Researchers Graves (1985) and Calkins (1986) stress that a sense of authorship and pride is essential to the development of young writers. Children lose their sense of ownership and authorship when they write on assigned topics. They write best about subjects they care about. "An excited writer is not only motivated, but also receptive to new ideas and techniques." (Graves and Stuart, 1985:90) Having children write about what is meaningful to them "... serves a larger purpose than just tricking children into writing without complaining." (Gundlach, 1982:80)

Prewriting includes activities such as brainstorming, class discussion, free writing, drawing or doodling, visualizing, or just plain thinking. Its purpose is to stimulate the flow of ideas. Some

children, like adults, may find pacing back and forth, moving around, creating outlines, story webs or diagrams helpful. Amodeo (1987) suggests encouraging children to create a model using Legos, clay, paper-mache, popsicle sticks, toothpicks, marshmallows or other manipulatives to stimulate children's creativity and to give them something concrete to draw from.

Teachers must recognize that such prewriting activities are a valid and necessary stage in the process of composing and, hence, we must allow children this time before writing begins to experience their ideas. Teachers must learn to fight their impulse to tell children to stop daydreaming, stay on task, or to get busy.

Our students can also be motivated by each other. This not only means permitting them to interact. It also means that teachers should focus on the very best writers in the class. Teachers tend to spend more time with the children at the lower levels, the ones who say they cannot, or will not, or do not know what to say. Teachers should focus their efforts on the ones who can, and want to write. Their success will motivate

others and raise the ability level of the entire class
(Calkins, 1986).

Writing

The second stage of the writing process is the
writing or composing stage. This is the stage in which
the ideas generated in the prewriting stage are
transferred to words on paper. In this stage the
children should be encouraged to write without regard
to spelling or punctuation. "When students worry about
spelling and neatness while composing a draft, their
writing becomes so slow it is hard of them to maintain
logic and coherence." (Calkins, 1986:199)

The major role of the teacher during this stage is
to provide plenty of opportunities to write. To get
the practice required to become successful writers
children would benefit most from writing on a daily
basis. As with talking and walking children need to
internalize the processes involved.

> The single most important thing we can do for
> students' syntax, spelling, penmanship, and
> use of mechanics is to have them write often
> and with confidence. Furthermore, students
> must be encouraged to write without worrying
> whether they are making errors. (Calkins,
> 1986:198)

"The goal of the first draft should be fluency rather than refinement of ideas or expression." (Olson, 1985:106) At this stage it is best to tell children over their laments of not being able to spell a particular word or not knowing where to put the comma, "Sound it out." And, "We will worry about the comma later." Encourage them to get their ideas down while their creative juices are flowing. If teachers are very clear and consistent about this, the children will come to trust the teacher and themselves, and the mechanics of writing will eventually improve (Calkins, 1985:199).

Probably at this stage, the most difficult part of the teacher's job is to provide an atmosphere conducive to writing. In a classroom patterned after the model as proposed by Calkins (1986) and Graves (1985) students will be working at different stages of the writing process. There may be conferences going on between students and between students and teacher.

During all this activity the biggest problem can be how to keep the noise level down. Teachers may find it helpful to create and enforce firm guidelines for procedures students are to follow during the different

stages of the writing process. "These procedures allow students to guide themselves, in effect through much of the job of writing." (Gundlach, 1982:84) It may be best to have children who are conferencing with other students do so in a corner of the room specially set up for that purpose. Students who are in the editing stages should have a checklist of editing guidelines. Procedures such as these allow the teacher the freedom to focus on conferences with individual children.

Revising

Children learn the basic principle of revision when they choose their own topics. As children sort through their list of topics contemplating some and excluding others they are learning to revise (Graves, 1985).

Children tend to view revising as an attempt by the teacher to get them to write more or as proofreading. Some view it as punishment (Smith and Good-Zavagno, 1991).

At Middlefork School in Northfield, Illinois, children are given plenty of time to write their first drafts. Then they are taught to revise and elaborate on

their original drafts (Smith and Good-Zavagno, 1991).
At this stage the teacher's main role is to get the
child to elaborate and clarify by adding details,
explanations, and new anecdotes to their stories
(Gundlach, 1982). "In the first response to a draft,
therefore, a teacher draws out what the writer knows,
often orally, so the writer can fill in any missing
information on the page." (Graves and Stuart, 1985:92)

Children need lots of experience revising their
writing. Professional authors regularly make several
revisions, even dozens, before they consider their work
complete. Many children have been trained in some
classrooms to turn in a neatly written, erasure-free
paper. Therefore, it becomes necessary for the
effective teacher of writing to encourage students to
rewrite and revise. They should be encouraged to make
deletions by scratching out, to use carets and arrows
to add words, and to move whole sections by cutting and
taping (Fennell and Ammon, 1985).

At this stage, children will need feedback on
their writing from others. However, it is important
that writers maintain a sense of responsibility and
ownership over their writing. Rules must be

established for those students acting as listeners.
The final decision to change something or not lies with
the writer.

An added benefit to having students listen to each
other's works is that by the time the teacher reads the
piece it has already gone through some revision thus
lessening the load of the teacher and making the
teacher more accessible to students who are in later
stages of the revision process.

Editing

Professional authors edit their work before it is
published. Novice writers should edit their work too
(Mehan and Souviney, 1984:9). Some people might argue
that correcting a student's work diminishes the child's
ownership of the writing. Researcher Lucy Calkins
(1986) disagrees. "There is a time when published
writing leaves the writer's hands and becomes a public
document" (Calkins, 1986:209). As such the
conventions of spelling, punctuation, and grammar
should be observed.

At this stage the child may once again work with a
partner. The partner or the student re-reads the work

checking for capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage (North Carolina Dept. of Public Instruction, 1987).

The professional literature on writing offers many excellent ideas on guiding children through the editing process. Teachers will find it helpful to institute some sort of procedure for editing. This could be a simple checklist on the back of the child's writing folder or a checklist that students go over themselves or with a partner (Calkins, 1986) (Jackson, 1985).

As in the revising stage children who help other children edit their writing must have firm guidelines. Children love to play teacher and if left unchecked will mark all over another child's writing. "...They must understand that the writer makes the final decision. One way to emphasize this is to say that peer editors can advise but cannot write on a draft." (Calkins, 1986:207)

Teachers must also be careful that the editing system in their classrooms does not put too much stress on young children. If children are pressured to look up every misspelled word in a dictionary they will learn not to take risks in their writing. "They will

write with safe words, choosing *big* when they wanted to say *enormous*" (Calkins, 1986:207).

After a child has finished editing a piece, the teacher needs to look at it. Have the child place the work in a box so that the teacher can look at it later. This prevents the teacher from getting involved in a long conference with one child. Having finished one story the child now begins another (Calkins, 1986).

Publication

Children have an innate desire to communicate. They want to be successful as readers and writers. Our responsibility as educators is to provide them with opportunities to achieve the successes they desire (Robinson and Hulett, 1984).

Publication is often the forgotten stage of the writing process. However, it is an integral part of writing and has great motivational merit. "The idea of writing a real book creates enthusiasm." (Brady, 1987) Also, children's writing activities should be functional. Children should feel they are writing for real purposes rather than for artificial purposes such as a teacher-given assignment (Olson, 1985). Children

should expect that their writing will be read by someone other than the teacher. The someone other could be classmates, parents, other students at the school or even the community at large.

Publication could take the form of class stories, individual books, posters, school newspapers, or works published in student sections of community newspapers.

Piirto (1988) writes about a Colorado elementary school where sixth graders write books for first graders. Here the writers discover what it is like to write for a specific audience. In so doing they must consider plot development, story line, and vocabulary.

Fennell and Ammon (1985) suggest having students write their own math problems. Doing this involves the students in reading, writing, critical and creative thinking, and collection and organization of data. These word problems can be published in a class anthology, on posters, index cards, overhead transparencies, or individual collections of math problems.

> Those pupils frustrated and bored with
> textbook word problems will begin tackling
> their friends' problems with new enthusiasm
> and understanding. And with such insight,
> children will be more likely to apply these
> problem-solving skills to real life. (Fennel
> and Ammon, 1985)

Calkins (1986) suggests scheduling frequent Authors' Days. This is a time to celebrate and applaud the efforts that students have made in their' writings. It provides a natural deadline and motivates students to complete unfinished pieces. It also gives them a chance to look back over and give closure to what they have accomplished.

Using Technology With Children

With the introduction of more computers into schools and homes, educators and administrators are becoming more interested in and more familiar with the potential application of technology to the teaching and learning of the writing process.

Children are naturally attracted to computers perhaps because of their game-like format. Generally, children find it enjoyable writing on a computer using a word processing program. Smith (1985) reports that children approach writing with a more positive attitude

when working on a computer rather than with pencil and
paper.

Educators should not, however, assume that they
can simply sit a child in front of a computer and magic
will take place. Computers cannot replace good writing
instruction. "Computers are not very good at judging
the quality of writing nor do they adequately interpret
the human emotions evident in an author's work."
(Miller-Souviney and Souviney, 1987:4)

Using computers with children actually adds to
rather than diminishes the responsibility of the
teacher. In addition to teaching children the writing
process, teachers must also teach keyboarding and the
necessary word processing skills (MacArthur and Graham,
1987) (Rodrigues, 1986) (Smith, 1985).

Generally, the literature reviewed indicates that
the use of word processing during the initial
prewriting stage may actually be detrimental to good
writing (Daiute, 1985) (Rodrigues, 1986). Prewriting
is an explorative and creative stage. During this
stage ideas often come in creative and divergent
bursts. The computer lends itself to a more linear and
sequential approach. Daiute (1985) suggests that young

writers between the ages of four and eight who are just learning to make the connection between sounds and symbols will feel more comfortable with traditional tools such as paper, pencils and crayons.

Whether or not the computer is a help or a hindrance in the composing stage depends a lot on the individual writer. Some writers find it helpful because it allows them to concentrate more on their flow of ideas. They know for now they can disregard spelling, punctuation and usage and make those corrections easily at another time (Daiute, 1983).

Other writers find that the ease in which such corrections can be made distracts them from their writing. When seeing mistakes in print, these writers seem compelled to stop and correct them immediately (Bridwell et al., 1984) (Daiute, 1985) (MacArthur and Graham, 1987).

The main difficulty for children composing on the computer lies with their lack of typing skill. Children tend to be hunt and peck typists, and this interrupts the flow of ideas and composition itself.

The word processor may be helpful to young children during the revising and editing stage,

however, researchers report mixed findings. Jones,
Meis, and Bolchazy as cited by Rodrigues (1985) found
that students who have had limited experience with word
processing make more revisions with paper and pencil
than with the computer. Schwartz (1982) writes that
young children are so enchanted with the clean and
polished appearance of hard copies that they tend to
believe a piece is finished prematurely.

Hult, Kurth and Stromberg, as cited by Schaeffer
(1987), found that students make the same amount of
mechanical errors and revisions on a computer as when
using paper and pencil.

Daiute (1985) suggests, however, that the
motivational aspect of using a computer may, for some
students, outweigh the drawbacks.

> Many theorists believe that if children enjoy
> writing, their skills will eventually
> improve. Therefore, even if it takes time to
> learn to write with the computer, this may
> not be as important as the fact that children
> *feel* that the task is easier.
> (Daiute, 1985:170)

With young children, most of the benefits of using
a computer are motivational. Children are thrilled to
see their stories in print. The polished copy on clean
white paper gives them the sense of authorship and

pride that Graves (1985) and Calkins (1986) said is so important in the development of young writers.

Solution Strategy

After reviewing the literature and research findings on critical and creative thinking and the writing process, this author chose to use publication as motivation for primary children to think and write. The writing process was taught in a workshop format. Students were encouraged to choose their own topics and to use drawings to stimulate ideas during the prewriting stage. They were encouraged to use invented spellings during the composing and revising stages. Children were taught to edit according to their ability level.

After several stories had been written, the child chose to publish. Invented spellings were corrected by the student and by parent volunteers or the teacher. The story was typed on a word processor by a volunteer and published in book form. This eliminated the tedious re-copying stage of writing that children find so distasteful.

The author, with the help of the principal, set up a publishing center which contained a computer for word processing. Parent volunteers were recruited to make book covers, bind the books, and type the completed stories on a computer. The decision to have students compose on a computer or by longhand was left to individual teachers. They, in turn, may have chosen to leave this decision to the student.

CHAPTER III

Method

To motivate students to write was a key component
of this project. Therefore, this author chose to
utilize the highly motivational aspect of computers.
The child was involved with the word processing,
publishing, and collating of the book.

The author met with the principal, and together
they discussed and chose a location at the target
school for the publishing center.

They also discussed and gathered materials that
were needed for implementation of the publishing
center. This list included: a computer and printer
and tables for them; bookmaking supplies including
paper, colored pencils for students' illustrations of
books, posterboard for making bookcovers, one quarter
inch plastic spiral bindings and a spiral bookbinding
machine. There were two chairs and shelves for storing
supplies. The selection of an appropriate computer
program was accomplished by speaking to several
teachers who had experience with children's word

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processing programs. The program chosen and most recommended was "The Children's Writing and Publishing Center" published by the Learning Company.

Each teacher decided individually whether to have their students write their stories in longhand or use a word processing program for composing. Some teachers had computers in their classrooms which they may have chosen for this purpose. There were also fifteen computers available to teachers and students in a computer lab.

When a student author visited the publishing center, choices regarding publication were presented to the child. The student chose how many sentences to put on each page and the location of those sentences on the page. For example, the sentences may have been placed in the middle of the page or at the top or bottom. The student author was also presented a choice of fonts. The child chose whether to illustrate all the pages in the book using colored pencils, or whether to use the graphics offered by the software program, or a combination of both. The student, with the help of a volunteer editor, also composed a dedication and an author statement. The child was given the choice of

sitting at the computer and having the volunteer assist
with the word processing or watching as the volunteer
sat at the computer and the child told the volunteer
what choices were desired.

When the word processing was completed and the
book was ready for binding, the child was able to
watch, if desired, as this was being done by the
volunteer.

Recruiting volunteers was the most difficult part
of this project. This author had originally planned to
place an announcement for volunteers in the school's
monthly newsletter. However, the principal suggested
that the author ask each teacher for a list of
potential volunteers. This was the primary method of
recruiting volunteers. Out of 17 classrooms, eight
telephone numbers were obtained. The author called
each potential volunteer and explained the project.
Out of these eight, six volunteers were recruited. Two
volunteers dropped out the first week. The publishing
center operated with four parent volunteers. This
author also approached the P.T.A. president for a list
of volunteers, but none were obtained. The reason
given by most parents was lack of time. With so few

volunteers, an average of three students were served
each day. Many teachers expressed disappointment that
there were not enough openings to send as many students
as they would have liked. This author had to ask two
teachers not to send students for a week so that other
children would have the opportunity to get books
published. A "Student and Editor Sign-Up" schedule was
devised (Appendix C:60). Teachers were instructed to
sign students' names on the "Student and Editor Sign-
Up" schedule which was be located in the school office
across from the teachers' mailboxes.

Volunteers were trained to use the computer and
the selected word processing program, which was "The
Children's Writing and Publishing Program," published
by The Learning Company. Instead of binding the books
in book covers made with tagboard, covered with
wallpaper and sewn with dental floss as Graves (1985)
suggested, this author used posterboard covers cut to 9
inches by 11 1/2 inches. The pages were standard 8 1/2
by 11 inches. The cover was one quarter inch larger
than the pages on all sides. The book was bound on a
spiral bookbinding machine. This was a much simpler
method to teach to volunteers, and much less time

consuming for them. Since publication is not a
distinct activity in and of itself but is a part of the
writing process, the author created a manual, "The
Writing Process Handbook for Teachers" (Attachment),
about the writing process. The purpose of this manual
was to provide teachers with an easy-to-use, hands-on
guide to the writing process.

A system of operation of the publishing center was
developed and established. This included a schedule
for students to meet with volunteers (Student and
Editor Sign-Up) and procedures for volunteers to follow
when working with student authors.

To introduce and demonstrate the writing process
to students the author-teacher modeled the writing
process with this author's students. To introduce the
lesson, the students were shown samples of bound books
to motivate them and to create interest.

The story took the form of a class language
experience story. Prewriting took the form of a class
discussion with student ideas written on the board by
the teacher. Class brainstorming led to a topic and
title.

During the writing stage, the teacher wrote the children's sentences on chart paper. For some words, the teacher asked the students for invented spellings so these could be used as examples in the editing stage. The teacher also deliberately made a few errors in punctuation and capitalization. If a student commented on this, the teacher explained that those errors are to be disregarded during the writing stage and would be corrected during the editing stage. The teacher read through the story with the students several times discussing elements such as story sense, descriptions, clarity, sequence of events, etc.

Revisions were made by using arrows and carets for insertions. Deletions were made by crossing out words. Some paragraphs needed to be moved, and the teacher demonstrated this by cutting and taping.

When the students agreed that the story was finished, the teacher modeled the editing process by having students look in their student dictionaries for words that they believed were misspelled. These words were crossed out, and the standard spellings were written above the misspelled words. Errors in

punctuation and capitalization were corrected in the same manner.

When the students believed that all errors had been corrected, the teacher explained that professional editors edit the work of professional authors, and the teacher, acting as the editor, made additional corrections.

The teacher showed and discussed examples of dedication pages in trade books, and the students discussed and dedicated the class book.

A note about the authors was added at the end of the book. This included the teacher's name, grade level, and school.

The layout of the book and possible illustrations were discussed and planned. This included the number of sentences to place on each page and possible illustrations for each page. Then each student chose a page to illustrate. After the children had illustrated the pages and cover, the story was typed on the computer according to the planned layout. Then the book was bound using a white posterboard cover and spiral binding. The book was read to the class then sent to other rooms for other classes to enjoy. It was

placed in the school library for two weeks then returned and placed in the classroom library. After this class lesson, the teacher explained to the students that they were now ready to begin writing individual stories using the same process.

Guidelines were established relating to noise level, movement around the room, conferencing with other students and conferencing with the teacher.

Instructions were given to students as to the use of their writing folders and they were told to place their finished stories in a basket. These stories were checked at the teacher's convenience.

A 30 to 40 minute block of time was provided daily for the writing workshop. Children were guided through the stages of the writing process with each story they wrote. Writing was an ongoing process. That is, as soon as one story was completed by the student, another story was started. After a student had completed several stories, one was chosen for publication. The teacher set up an appointment with a parent volunteer at the publishing center. When the student met with this volunteer, they discussed and planned the layout,

illustrations, cover, dedication page, and an author statement was devised and added at the end of the book.

This author was responsible for setting up the publishing center, recruiting and training volunteers, being available to teachers who had questions about the writing process and implementation of the publishing center. The author was also responsible for devising schedules and other record-keeping devices to facilitate implementation and utilization of the publishing center by the students and teachers.

Timeline

Week one:

Administered "The Writing Attitude Scale for Students" to all primary students.

Arranged for a computer and printer to be moved to the selected location.

Reviewed word processing programs and selected one that best met the publishing center's needs. The program selected was "The Children's Writing and Publishing Center," published by The Learning Company.

Gathered bookmaking materials: paper, colored pencils, posterboard, one quarter inch plastic spiral bindings, and a spiral bookbinding machine.

Recruited volunteers to staff the publishing center.

Devised a schedule for students to meet with volunteers at the publishing center.

Week two:

Trained volunteers in the use of the selected word processing program.

Scheduled students to meet with volunteers at the publishing center.

Began implementation of publishing center activities.

Weeks three through twelve:

Students brought their written works to the publishing center and participated in the publication process.

Interacted with teachers and volunteers functioning as a consultant and facilitator.

Monitored activities of students and volunteers and adjusted schedules and procedures as necessary.

Week six:

Reviewed quality and quantity of student work.

Week twelve:

Administered "The Writing Attitude Scale for Students" to all primary students.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this project was to study the

effects that the implementation of a student publishing

center would have on the quality and quantity of

student writing and to study the effect that it would

have on student and teacher attitudes about writing.

The first objective was to have 75 percent of the

primary students demonstrate an increased quantity of

writing as a result of using publishing center

activities. This was measured by counting the number

of thought-units in each student's written products at

the beginning of implementation of the publishing

center. These were measured against the number of

thought-units produced by the students after 12 weeks

of implementation of the publishing center. The idea

of "thought-units" was discussed and defined by Amodeo

(1987).

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A thought-unit (T-unit) is defined as a
segment of meaningful expression. It
contains an identifiable verb and subject
that can stand alone. It is a complete
sentence. In scoring thought-units,
incorrect punctuation, spelling, and
capitalization are disregarded, and each unit
is counted as though it were done properly.
(Amodeo, 1987:20)

For the first objective, teachers were asked to
keep a record of each of their students' written works
before implementation of the publishing center and
again after 12 weeks of publishing center activities.
They counted the number of thought-units that each
student produced. They kept the records for one week.
The pre-program results were compared with the results
after 12 weeks of publishing center activities.
Eighty-two percent of the students demonstrated an
increase in the quantity of writing produced.

The second objective was to have 75 percent of the
students demonstrate an improvement in the quality of
writing as a result of using publishing center
activities. This was measured by the teacher rating
the overall quality of student writing as high, medium,
or low. They were instructed to consider the mechanics
of writing, and to also consider story sense, detail
and descriptions. Prior to the implementation of the

publishing center, 15.6 percent of the students'
written works were rated as high quality, 66 percent as
medium quality, and 18.3 percent as low quality. After
12 weeks of publishing center activities, 41.2 percent
of the students' written works were rated as high
quality, 51.3 percent as medium quality, and 7 percent
were rated as low quality. The actual number of
students demonstrating an improvement in the quality of
writing was 40 percent. The original goal was to have
75 percent of the students demonstrate an improvement
in the quality of writing.

Perhaps the reason for the objective not being met
was due to the fact that students who were rated "high"
on the pre-assessment could not have shown an increase
in quality because they were already at the top of the
scale.

A third objective was to have 75 percent of the
students demonstrate a more positive attitude toward
writing as a result of using publishing center
activities. This was measured by using the "Writing
Attitude Scale for Students." (Appendix B:58) This
scale is an adaptation of the Emig-King Writing
Attitude Scale for Students (1977) and was adapted by

Jones and Wahlers (1990). The Emig-King scale contains
40 items which were designed for use with high school
students. Jones and Wahlers consolidated the Emig-King
scale, rewording nine of the items so they would be
more easily understood by young children. The scale
was administered to all primary students before
implementation of the publishing center. After 12
weeks, the test was administered again to all students.
See Table 1 (p. 48) for results of the pre and post
surveys. This table lists the actual number of student
responses.

The final objective was to have 90 percent of the
primary teachers agree that publishing center
activities enhanced their writing programs. This was
measured by comparing the results of the attitude
survey for teachers before implementation of the
publishing center and the attitude survey for teachers
given after 12 weeks of publishing center activities.

The results of the post-program attitude survey
for teachers responded to by 100 percent of the primary
teachers showed that 83 percent of the teachers agreed
that children are adequately motivated to write. One
hundred percent agreed that the establishment of a

TABLE 1

Attitudes Toward Writing: Primary Students

	Pre-Program Almost Always	Post-Program Almost Always	Pre-Program Often	Post-Program Often	Pre-Program Sometimes	Post-Program Sometimes	Pre-Program Almost Never	Post-Program Almost Never	Pre-Program No Response	Post-Program No Response
I write letters...	37	52	55	42	90	106	88	84		
I write stories	49	73	63	51	94	107	54	65	2	2
I revise...	96	125	50	54	55	71	64	42	2	2
Like topics I choose...	101	156	58	44	66	58	33	30	4	6
Use writing to learn...	133	165	48	56	51	54	24	18	6	6
Like what I write...	134	159	49	59	66	61	21	16		1
Write to express feelings..	88	140	67	54	69	54	44	41		2
Rather write than read...	57	83	44	49	79	76	82	79		7
I leave notes...	69	97	46	40	66	77	79	84	2	

Pre-Program N = 262
Post-Program N = 294

publishing center motivated children to write more. Eighty-nine percent agreed that it motivated children to improve the quality of their writing. One hundred percent of the teachers agreed that children enjoy publishing center activities and 100 percent agreed that the publishing center enhanced their writing programs.

Two of the teachers commented on the survey form about the lack of time slots available to students.

One teacher wrote that "...it was a great addition to our school," and another suggested setting up several computers with more volunteers.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

This author, with the principal's permission and assistance, will continue publishing center activities at the target school in future academic years.

Next year, access to the publishing center will be expanded to include Kindergarten and grades four and five.

This author shared the information with other faculty members by creating a "Writing Process Handbook" for teachers. This manual gave a brief overview of the writing process and supportive research. The manual contained ideas for implementing the writing process and the writing workshop approach in classrooms. It contained a bibliography of applicable resources.

This information was made available to curriculum specialists who deal with writing and language arts at the elementary level.

This author provided information to other teachers in the district who inquired.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ATTITUDE SURVEY FOR TEACHERS

1. Do you believe that children are
    adequately motivated to write?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

2   Do you believe that establishing
    a publishing center would
    motivate students to write more?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

3. Do you believe that establishing
    a publishing center would
    motivate children to improve the
    quality of their writing?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

4. Do you believe that children would
    enjoy this activity?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

5. Do you believe that this publishing
    center would enhance your writing
    program?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Comments and/or suggestions:_____

_____

_____

_____

Post-Survey

1. Do you believe that children are
    adequately motivated to write?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

2. Do you believe that establishing
    a publishing center motivated
    students to write more?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

3. Do you believe that establishing
    a publishing center motivated
    children to improve the quality
    of their writing?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

4. Do you believe that children
    enjoyed this activity?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

5. Do you believe that this publishing
    center enhances your writing
    program?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Comments and/or suggestions:_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

WRITING ATTITUDE SCALE FOR STUDENTS

WRITING ATTITUDE SCALE
FOR STUDENTS

Directions: For each item, circle your response.

I write letters to my family and friends.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never

I write stories and poems.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never

I revise what I've written.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never

I like topics I choose myself.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never

I use writing to help me learn.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never

I like what I write.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never

Writing is a very important way for me to express my feelings.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never

When I have free time, I'd rather write than read.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never

I leave notes for my family and friends.	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never

APPENDIX C

PUBLISHING CENTER STUDENT
AND EDITOR SIGN-UP

PUBLISHING CENTER
STUDENT AND EDITOR SIGN-UP

DAY OF THE WEEK		DATE	
TIME	EDITOR'S NAME	STUDENT'S NAME	RM#
9:00-9:30			
9:30-10:00			
10:00-10:30			
10:30-11:00			
11:00-11:30			
11:30-12:00			
12:00-12:30			
12:30-1:00			
1:00-1:30			
1:30-2:00			
2:00-2:30			
2:30-3:00			

ATTACHMENT

THE WRITING PROCESS
HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS

WRITTEN
BY
KAREN L. WASSON

WRITING and THINKING

Writing is a form of problem-solving, and each step of the writing process employs creative and critical thinking. (Olson, 1985)

DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING IN CHILDREN

Adults tend to believe that children must learn to read before they can write, but research shows this is not the case. Babbling is the beginning stage of speech and scribbling is the beginning stage of writing. This progresses to drawing and eventually to writing real words and sentences.

THE WRITING WORKSHOP

In the writing workshop approach children get the practice they need because they write every day.

WORKSHOP COMPONENTS and TIPS TO SAVE OUR SANITY (S.O.S.)

1) Plan for a 30-60 minutes block of time for writing daily.

2) Let children choose their own topics.

3) Encourage the children to use invented spellings by sounding out words.

4) Let the children consult with each other: sharing, reading, and commenting on each other's stories.

S.O.S. TIP

Set guidelines for student conferences. The decision to revise or not is left to the author. Don't allow children to write on another child's work.

5) Create and enforce firm guidelines for procedures students are to follow during the different stages of writing process.

S.O.S. TIP

It may be best to have children who are conferencing with other students do so in the corner of the room.

THE WRITING PROCESS IS:
Pre-Writing

Writing

Revising

Editing

Publication

STEP ONE: PRE-WRITING

Allow children time to:

-- Experience their ideas

-- Think

-- Draw a picture

-- Brainstorm

-- Discuss

-- Doodle

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-- Visualize

-- Look at books to see what other authors have done.

-- Create outlines, story webs, diagrams, etc.

-- Create something concrete to draw from such as a model made with manipulatives: Legos, clay, paper-mache, popsicle sticks, toothpicks and marshmallows (Yummy!)

STEP TWO: WRITING
(also called drafting or composing)

This is the stage in which the ideas generated in the pre-writing stage are transferred to words on paper.

ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO:

-- Get their ideas down while the creative juices are flowing.

-- Use invented spelling (sounding out of words).

-- Not worry about punctuation (that comes later!).

-- Not worry about neatness (that comes later too!)

STEP THREE: REVISING

ALLOW AND ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO

-- Choose their own topics (children learn the basic principle of revision when they choose their own topics. As children sort through their list of

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topics contemplating some and excluding others they are learning to revise!) (Graves, 1979)

-- Clarify by adding details, explanations, new anecdotes, descriptions.

-- Fill in any missing information on the page.

-- Make deletions by scratching out.

-- Use carets and arrows to add words.

-- Move whole sections by cutting and taping.

-- Get feedback from others (sharing, responding, conferencing).

-- **REMEMBER:** Writers need to maintain a sense of responsibility and ownership over their writing; therefore rules must be established for those students acting as listeners.

Children need lots of experience revising their writing. Professional authors regularly make several revisions, even dozens before they consider their work complete.

S.O.S. TIP

An added benefit to having students listen to each other's work is that by the time the teacher reads the piece it has already gone through some revision. This means you can concentrate on students who are in later stages of the revision process.

STEP FOUR: EDITING

"There is a time when published writing leaves the writer's hands and becomes a public document" (Calkins, 1986:209).   As such the conventions of spelling, punctuation and grammar should be observed.

HAVE THE STUDENT

-- Work with a partner.

-- Use an editing checklist.

-- Re-read the story, checking for punctuation, capitalization, etc.

-- Look up misspelled words (but be careful that your editing system does not put too much stress on young children. If children are pressured to look up every misspelled word they will learn to use "safe" words such as <u>big</u> instead of <u>enormous</u>. (Calkins, 1986)

-- Place the work in a box so you can look at it later and **BEGIN ANOTHER STORY.**

STEP FIVE: PUBLICATION

Children like to know that their writing will be read by someone other than the teacher.

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REMIND THEM

-- That not all stories go to publication.

-- To share their stories with classmates, parents, friends, relatives and other students at the school.

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