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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a narrative study which explores how the use of journals in an urban middle school English classroom (121 students) affected students' attitudes towards writing during the 1996-97 school year. Written in journal format, the paper explores the history of writing, teaching writing, and journals, and connects Vygotsky's theory of the social construction of knowledge to writing suggesting that journals provide students with both academic and affective benefits. A review of the literature citing writing experts corroborates the author's research data (student journals, teacher observations, and student survey results) establishing that journals provide students with opportunities to write, allow personal connections with curriculum and teachers, document life experiences, and contribute towards increased fluency and improved attitudes towards writing. (Contains 69 references. Appendixes contain a journal guidelines handout; selected journal books; time line of journal entry dates and topics; an attitudes survey; and a student permission form.) (Author/PA)

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**A Research Journal:
Affecting Students' Writing Attitudes Through Journal Writing**

by

Laura A. Eastman

A Thesis Proposal Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Education

at

Carroll College
Waukesha, Wisconsin

June 1997

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ABSTRACT

A Research Journal:
Affecting Students' Writing Attitudes Through Journal Writing

by

Laura A. Eastman

Carroll College, 1997
Under the Supervision of Dr. Janice Jipson

This narrative study explores how the use of journals in an urban middle school English classroom (121 students) affected students' attitudes toward writing during the 1996-97 school year. Written in journal format, this paper explores the history of writing, teaching writing, and journals, and connects Vygotsky's theory of the social construction of knowledge to writing suggesting that journals provide students with both academic and affective benefits. A review of the literature citing writing experts corroborates the author's research data (student journals, teacher observations, and student survey results) establishing that journals provide students with opportunities to write, allow personal connections with curriculum and teachers, document life experiences, and contribute to increased fluency and improved attitudes toward writing. (Appendices and references are attached.)

Dedicated to my father Arnold H. Lange, keeper of the rock piles
and Karen L. Stoddard, teacher of English.

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Fetching the Cows

*Tall quack grass tears
as barefoot I spring through
to the next rock, cool and smooth.*

*The pasture yields
a bouquet of buttercups and hawkweed.
Blackbirds complain at my passing while
the unconcerned meadowlark continues his song.*

*Under the old pines a creek stumbles,
opens to a deep pool, stagnant and green.
A Holstein stands cool in the slime.
Others are scattered under
the limbs of tag alders, munching.
Tails twitch and muscles wrinkle at flies.*

*Slowly they lumber to the path
stringing out into a black and white parade,
marching steadily from the field.
Silently I follow, bare feet patting the dust.
The buttercups wilt.
I gently let them litter the lane.*

—L. Eastman

I was the second of four girls born to a dairy-farming father. Never fear—we did as much work, if not more, than most boys. We milked cows, filled silos, shoveled manure, and baled hay. So even though my father seemed ill-fated for not having a son to work with, we knew better. My father, having himself grown up with an injudicious man for a father, purposely and judiciously ruled with lots of love and fun and his “iron hand” thrown in for good measure. He never applied

¹ To complement the topic of journal writing, and in an effort to present the true progress of completing this research project, this thesis is written in journal format. The date of each entry indicates when the entry was originally written; however, some entries were edited as the research progressed. In addition to presenting the relevant research information, reflections of the research process itself are included herein.

the iron hand in anger and often tells that he very rarely applied it to me. (I only had to be "looked at" he says.) So, with a general sense of family comfort and guidance, I grew up chasing cows and exploring rock piles. The rock pile was a phenomenal place to be before the age of recycling. Manganese-purple glass bottles from root beer extract and medicinal tonics were treasures delivered to Mother's kitchen window sill. Ironstone and ceramic dishes (even some without chips), tin dippers, and dented enamelware pans stocked our playhouse above the machine shed. Garter snakes and spiders were screamed at as they slithered away. But I digress. . . .

The point is that this exploration was a learning experience as well as an exciting diversion from farm chores. When I grew up and became a teacher in the city, I had to leave the rock piles behind but not their wonder. I feel learning should be an exploratory process, and I have found journal writing to be one means of exploration. Through journal writing, thoughts, feelings, or opinions on any subject can be explored, and general attitudes toward writing may improve along the way. I have been using journals as a writing activity for several years in my English classroom. Journals provide opportunities for students to practice writing and exploring their thoughts without the fear of "red ink," and without overloading myself with more formal essays to grade. Currently I teach at the middle school level. For my research then I wish to explore journal writing in the middle school English curriculum.

Just how does the use of journal writing affect middle school students' attitudes toward writing? The research concerning journal writing supports the use of journals in the classroom as a tool for encouraging writing. Jumpp (1993) uses journals to provide students "with a way to reflect on, summarize, and synthesize information. At first, the students used journals for personal writing, but later, they

began to see them as tools for problem solving and reflection. Eventually students began to generate topics for their own learning and to raise questions" (p. 146). Burniske (1994) believes that "The goal in [using journals] is to encourage writing and thinking" (p. 85). Both Jumpp and Burniske found that journals provided them with opportunities to find out more about their students. Students found the comments made by the teacher to be "of great importance" (Jumpp, 1993, p. 146) and often responded to the teacher's comments "with questions of their own, questions which further the dialogue" (Burniske, 1994, p. 86). These personal responses seem to motivate students to write more.

The students also learn to see the journal and its contents as valid when the teacher demonstrates that she is not only interested in their writing ability but in their ideas as well. Knowing that ideas, thoughts, and feelings count for something would seem to lessen the fear of writing and encourage more writing. Burniske (1994) states that "Evaluation impedes experimentation. Students will not take risks if a grade hangs over them" (p. 85). Journals provide opportunities for students to express their opinions in their own voices without worrying about splatters of red ink. One of Brown's (1993) students discovered the ease of journal writing: "When writing in my journal, I write about my feelings and how I react to them. When writing an assignment, I have to think hard about what I say, how I say it. It must have right grammar, and it must be punctuated. When in a journal, you don't have to worry about how you say it" (p. 248). These documented strengths of journal writing encouraged me in my own exploration of how journals affect students' attitudes toward writing.

My study involved 121 students at Eastside Middle School. They kept journals throughout the year as part of the standard curriculum. I also kept a journal recording my own thoughts and observations. At the end of the year

students completed an attitude survey. All of this was archived, analyzed and summarized. The exploration was exciting. There were a few snakes and spiders hidden among the rocks, but there were also many treasures.

November 16, 1995—Beginning the Search for Answers

January 4, 19-- Dear Diary, Chris kissed me one time on the head and said he was going to bring me a ring. I also spilled the pins. January 6, 19-- Dear Diary, First day of catechism since vacation. Sandy came over. January 8, 19-- Dear Diary, I made my first three points in volleyball. June 5, 19-- Dear Diary, Today I picked yellow rocket with Tom all alone.

Such are the actual excerpts from my personal diary at age nine. I remember having the sense of secrecy when writing in my diary, but in retrospect, the entries are brief and trivial: my sister got the measles; because I was lonesome, I sobbed on my father's shoulder after he returned from a weekend trip; my birthday came and went; I sat by Tom on the bus; I got my hair cut—all of life's little trials and successes. This was the only diary I ever kept. Years have passed. Now I keep journals like this, and I ask questions. What's the difference? What's the point? Is it important?

With my Bic™ pen in hand, and the computer humming (yes, I scribble and type intermittently), I have made time to explore questions involving writing—journal writing. Being a teacher of writing and enjoying writing on a personal level, especially since the development of computers, this topic interests me both professionally and personally. Having encountered too often the student viewpoint of “I hate writing” and struggling with developing creative ways to teach writing, syntax, grammar, audience, evaluation, revision, and proofreading, I agree with Burniske (1994) in his view that perhaps we “can't teach all there is to know about writing but only encourage one to write” (p. 84). To that end, I have been using journals as a major writing activity in my classroom. Journals provide opportunities for students to practice writing without the fear of “red ink” and without overloading myself with more formal essays to grade. And yet when I have collected 100 or more journals to grade for the seventh time during the school year,

and schedules are getting hectic, the weather is getting warm, and the journals are looking tattered (some are even lost), I wonder if I'm doing anyone any good. Students sometimes seem more interested in VCR's and virtual reality video games and CD players. They want to watch movies in school and spend hours playing SimCity in the IMC. How can the old-fashioned, paper-and-pen journal compete with this high-tech stuff? And should it? Are journals important? I turn to the research rock pile—therein must lie the answers.

Research does suggest that journals are of value and important. Zacharias' (1990) research revealed that keeping a journal is beneficial to the writer both personally and academically. And certainly one goal of education should be to help a person develop personally *and* academically. (More on this idea later.) Another goal of today's educational system calls for more individualization of the curriculum. Fulwiler (1978) argues that journals are a means to reaching this goal. "Journals work because every time a person writes an entry he individualizes his instruction. . . " (p. 5). Greenwood (1989) makes a strong statement for journal use:

The use of journals is an instructional technique that not only addresses the personal needs of individual students but also gives them control over the educational agenda. With time, practice, and trust, some students have come to view journals as more than mere repositories of random ideas and events. They see their journals in terms of thinking, learning, and communication—what schooling should be all about. (p. 184)

For Greenwood, journals are important. In my classroom they are also important—yes, even when the weather is warm and the edges are tattered—important enough to explore their value and their influence on students' attitudes toward writing. As Greenwood did, I teach at the middle school level, and in this project I explored journal writing in the middle school English curriculum.

My guiding question for this research was *how does the use of journal writing affect middle school students' attitudes toward writing?* In considering that

question, several others came to mind: Does journal writing decrease student negativity toward writing because what they write is not "red inked"? Do students write more freely and with better voice when the pressures of publication and grades are removed? Does journal writing "lessen the fear of the blank page" when they realize how easily they can fill a page with words and thoughts? Do students make more connections between classroom discussions and their personal lives through writing journal entries, and does that encourage more writing or express the importance and necessity of writing? Does teacher response to journals create respect, foster communication, and encourage more writing? And just what is a *journal* ?

According to Webster, the word *journal* originates from Old French *jornal* meaning daily and from Latin *diurnalis* going back to *dies* meaning day. Journal writing is characterized by writing that is personal and reflective in nature, completed on a regular basis, and often serves as a source of ideas for more formal writing. Generally in the school setting, journals are collected writings that reflect on personal and class content issues. Students make connections between their readings and their lives, record their thoughts and activities, and ask questions about their learning. Journals might be used in any content area. More extensive journal definitions appear in another entry, but that is the basic idea.

A second term also worth exploration is *attitude*. What is *attitude*? How does that concept fit into this project? How was I as a researcher going to determine if attitude was affected? To define *attitude* as used in conjunction with this research question, I refer to the manner of thinking, acting or feeling on the part of the student. Originally coming from Late Latin from *aptitudo*, meaning fitness, attitude in this context may be positive or negative. However, in this research, I hoped to focus primarily on positive effects in attitude—a feeling of confidence and

satisfaction with writing. (Life is too short to be negative.)

Students may demonstrate attitude in several ways. First, in the classroom setting, there is verbal and body language to consider. Are students attentive to their writing task or distracted? What do their facial expressions reveal? What about their posture? Verbal expressions or sounds? Classroom attitude may certainly change with each assigned entry or during the course of a year's journal keeping. It may change depending on how the student's personal day is going. And certainly group dynamics may play a part. Obviously there are some factors that cannot be consistently controlled.

Attitude may also be reflected in the writing outcomes of the student. How is penmanship affected? Within the setting of the classroom, does the student write more because of the journal experience? Does he write more in the journal itself? And what is the effect on formal writing assignments? Are the specific techniques employed in the use of journals important? How does the topic choice affect the use of journals? Does the setting for the use of journals always need to be controlled? How much becomes public? How much remains private, even from the teacher? Can the journals be used as springboards for more formal writing assignments? Will students keep them as a reflection of their growth and writing development?

And what does it matter anyway? As a writing teacher, I feel qualified to instruct students in writing. They *must* do the assigned tasks in order to pass. Does it matter what their attitude is? Is it important to students or teachers or both? As a person and co-learner, I do think attitude is important. And while I firmly believe that sometimes we all must do some things we don't like (laundry is on my list here), I would rather the job of writing not be a task associated with negativity. It would seem that employing a strategy that improves students' attitudes toward writing would benefit all. Perhaps through the use of journals, there will be a

decrease in the “I hate writing” syndrome. Perhaps there will be less fear of the “blank page.” Perhaps students will begin to realize that they do have something to say and filling up the page is not the difficult task they might have originally thought. Perhaps they will see the importance of writing in general. Perhaps.

There’s a common notion that discipline is a freakish peculiarity of writers—that writers differ from other people by possessing enormous and equal portions of talent and will-power. They grit their powerful teeth and go into their little rooms. I think that’s a bad misunderstanding of what impels the writer. What impels the writer is a deep love of and respect for language, for literary forms, for books. It’s a privilege to be able to muck about in sentences all morning. It’s a challenge to bring off a powerful effect, or to tell the truth about something. You don’t do it from willpower; you do it from an abiding passion for the field —Annie Dillard (1987)²

²Quotations included in this document reflect the commonplace book facet of journal keeping. Quotations were gathered from numerous sources including John Bartlett’s *Familiar Quotations* (1941, Boston: Little, Brown and Company).

March 25, 1996—The History of Writing

May the blessings be upon the head of Cadmus or the
Phoenicians, or whoever invented books! . . . An art that carries
the voice of man to the extremities of the earth, and to the
latest generations.

—Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), *Early Letters*

In order to keep a journal, it is first required that one know how to write; one must be literate. It is difficult to imagine not being able to read and write—to read street signs, cereal boxes, newspapers, Charles Dickens' novels—to write Christmas cards, shopping lists, diary entries, a master's thesis. Being literate seems automatic. How do illiterate people cope? To me, an English teacher, it is unimaginable, almost uncivilized. And it is with *uncivilized*³ people that the story of writing begins.

Elmer Johnson said: "With written records—graphic means of communication—man had reached the point where civilization could begin (1973, p.5). As long as 15,000 years ago (perhaps longer), cavemen reached the point where they wanted to communicate and began to depict events graphically. They began painting animals on caves. These early pictographs were utilized by all major civilizations in one form or another. About 3300 BC, the Egyptians invented a system of hieroglyphics, a combination of ideographs and phonograms. Combined with the use of papyrus, from which our word "paper" comes, the idea of having records for future use was established. Simultaneously, to the northwest in the Mesopotamian valley, the Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian tribes were developing cuneiform (wedge-shaped) writing using clay tablets and styluses. Although both of these early forms of writing did progress from pictographs (symbols look like the objects they represent) to phonograms (symbols represent particular sounds), neither fully developed into a true alphabet system. These

³ meaning, for me, a people not advanced beyond a primitive way of life; lacking in mechanical, technical or literacy skills.

systems disappeared about the fourth century BC. However, the Chinese system of writing, also with its roots in pictographs, did not die out. By 1000 BC the symbols had become simplistic and far-removed from their original pictures, but the system itself is still in use today (Johnson, 1973).

Sometime between 2000 and 1000 BC, the Semitic alphabet was developed in the Eastern Mediterranean area. One branch of this evolved into the Phoenician alphabet and passing through Greece and Rome came to its present basic form about the time of Christ (Johnson, 1973). Ancient people wrote on just about everything: stone, clay tablets, bark, animal hides, metal, silk, palm leaves, and of course papyrus. Although forms of paper can be traced back as far as the second century BC, paper as we know it was developed about the thirteenth century. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the development of paper making from wood pulp occurred. Writing instruments included sticks, stones, styluses, reed and quill pens, (our word "pen" comes from the Latin for feather), graphite pencils in the sixteenth century, and finally metal pens in the nineteenth century (Smith, 1901). Man was obviously no longer limited by memory. What the cave man began, modern man developed. The symbols and instruments to produce the written word were established.

From the ancient scrolls of Egypt, the written word progressed to books (leaves of parchment or papyrus sewn together). Making books by hand continued through the Middle Ages. This became an art with elaborate illuminations and bindings. In Europe, aside from a few avid book collectors and enlightened rulers, Charlemagne (742–814) for example, the monasteries played the major role in the preservation and development of books and knowledge. Monks would sit for hours, days, and years making hand copies of important religious texts. And though their focus was on religion, secular writings were sometimes preserved. After the eleventh century,

the medieval university became the focus for learning, books, and libraries. Private book makers also came into existence during this time (Johnson, 1973).

Though earlier forms of ink impressions did exist, in AD 1450, a major revolution for the written word occurred. Johann Gutenberg of Germany invented printing from movable type—typography. William Caxton of England set up his printing press in 1477, and the standardization of the English language was underway (Johnson, 1973). These early presses foreshadowed the newspaper and increased literacy. More writing would be published and read. The technology of writing raced ahead. In 1868 the first practical typewriter was patented, and the 1970's brought personal computers to our homes.

And though the invention of the computer is certainly not the end to the development of writing, it does bring us to the present. I bought my own personal computer two years ago. And now that I have it, I wonder how I managed so many years without it. If I had to do it again, I'm sure I could complete my undergraduate work in half the time. Typing, revising, and printing are so automatic, and wonderful. Completing this thesis project without the computer is almost unimaginable (almost uncivilized?). And yet the topic of this paper is not computerized writing (perhaps my next project) but about something less technological—journals—the kind that require pen and paper (again, save the computer journal for another time), the kind employed in many English classrooms. Where's the connection with this history of writing? Perhaps it was just a side interest. (These rock piles can be extensive.) Or perhaps it emphasizes the importance of the feat of writing. We take writing for granted, forgetting the centuries of development. Each entry I write, or a student writes, demonstrates and acts as proof of this phenomenal development we call writing.

March 26, 1996—The History of Teaching Writing

You will have written exceptionally well if, by skilful
arrangement of your words, you have made an ordinary one
seem original.
—Horace (65–8 BC)

Today writing pervades every aspect of our lives. Personally we write letters, create shopping lists, record travel events, and perhaps publish books. Publicly we send memos, complete forms, and compose reports. In school life writing crosses all curriculum boundaries from language arts to wood shop. Developed writing skills ensure a greater degree of success for the student. In our modern English classrooms, we attempt to teach writing, and we hope that students will have a positive attitude toward writing. However, the teaching of writing has an ink-splattered history. Examining this history illustrates the changing nature of teaching writing and attitudes toward writing.

Aside from prehistoric cave drawings, writing has been developing for some 5,000 years. And for as long, there has to have been the teaching of writing. Writing is a form of communication—a social process—involving more than the solitary person in an Egyptian hut. For communication to occur, more than one person had to understand the written symbols. Therefore, the teaching of writing must have begun with the invention of the first writing systems.

The priests and philosophers of ancient civilizations were the first teachers. The first universities were established by Plato and Aristotle in the fourth century BC. Young men were taught writing, mathematics, astronomy, architecture and government. Students generally wrote persuasive themes which would prepare them for college speeches. Strict rhetorical guidelines were followed. This formalized type of writing instruction continued for several centuries (Kinneavy, Cope & Campbell, 1976). Men who possessed the knowledge of writing and books were highly respected. Books were collected by rulers and statesmen. They were

rare and valuable. Possessing a large library was a status symbol, and library collections often became the spoils of war. With the beginning of Christianity, education continued to thrive. However, the Dark Ages (AD 476–770) arrived, and though teaching continued in the Eastern Roman Empire, education in western Europe was suspended. It was the monks in the seclusion of their monasteries who carried on with teaching. During the reign of Charlemagne (AD 768–814) education was revived and the positive attitude resumed. During the Middle Ages, while they were still being made by hand, books were of great value. Johnson (1973) suggests that by current standards, “an average volume in the twelfth century would have sold for about \$200” (p. 60). English education during this time still consisted of “formulaic rhetoric” (Autrey, 1991, p. 75). Letters and other forms of writing were respected if composed according to the time-honored formulas.

When the New World was established, the focus was again on religion. Students were taught to read so they could understand the Bible. Beginning in 1636 with Harvard, universities began to develop, and Americans showed a positive attitude toward education. College students mastered grammar and rhetoric as part of the curricula. Alexander Bain, a nineteenth century philosopher and rhetorician, modernized the modes of discourse, and narration, exposition, description, and argumentation became the standard forms of writing taught for the next 100 years. Often students imitated literary works employing these forms (Kinneavy et al., 1976). A textbook from 1891, *Lessons in English* by Lockwood, illustrates this point. It seems to be a comprehensive text containing material on the history of the English language, etymology, figures of speech, usage errors, diction, sentences, mechanics, letter writing and composition. The first years of composition include very little original writing. The assignments focus on classical literature—paraphrasing and summarizing. This combination of teaching literature and

writing was a result of the continued influence of the universities. Prior to 1900, the few secondary school English courses being taught (Applebee, 1974) focused on teaching the major literary works required for college admission. When the National Council of Teachers of English was established in 1911, the guidelines for establishing English curriculum were modified. However, writing courses still seemed tied to the colleges for the focus of many was to prepare students for entrance exams consisting of a five-paragraph essay (Squire, 1991). An English text by Canby, Pierce, MacCracken, May, and Wright of 1922, *English Composition in Theory and Practice*, details the instruction of the "four great classes" (p. 1) of exposition, argument, narrative, and description. The book promotes unity, coherence, and emphasis within compositions. It teaches how to write when writing with specific purpose.

In 1913, James Fleming Hosis promoted the idea that writing and learning were interrelated, and writing should be central to all education. Unfortunately, World War I broke out and his ideas were lost amidst larger concerns (Zacharias, 1990). During the 1950's teachers expressed dissatisfaction with student writing skills (LaRoche, 1991) and reform was attempted with the teaching of the "tripod"—a model of English education which included language, literature, and composition. The five-paragraph theme, rules of grammar, and sentence diagraming were practiced (Squire and Applebee, 1968). However, in 1966 with the Dartmouth Seminar, more reform was called for. The curriculum needed to focus on a student's personal experiences. To develop this personal growth through English and to continue giving attention to the development of writing skills, the process approach to writing was implemented. This student-centered model recognized the importance of the process skills of reading and writing rather than simply focusing on finished products (Emig, 1971; Moffett, 1968). Douglas (as cited in LaRoche, 1993)

argued that “teachers should be much more concerned with helping students master the essential skills and general processes of writing than with teaching specific forms or products” (p. 17). The writing process approach recognizes that students have different experiences which affect their knowledge and learning (Britton, 1970; Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod & Rosen, 1975). Students need to create meaning in their own way, and the writing process approach allows for this.

The basic steps in the writing process include prewriting, writing, and rewriting. Rohman and Wlecke (1964) defined the prewriting stage as the time when a writer gets ready to write. Prewriting may include taking notes, brainstorming, researching a topic, daydreaming, or even procrastinating. The writing stage proceeds with getting down the first draft—putting pen to paper. There may be stops and starts and scribbles along the way. During the rewriting stage, the author examines the fine points of writing: the mechanics, the opening and closing, the tone and style. Editing and proofreading take place. And though each phase of the process may be discussed as a sequence, one step progressing to the next, a writer may prewrite, write and rewrite continuously while producing one composition.⁴

And though there was a back-to-the-basics movement in the mid 1970’s, at present the writing process approach has a firm hold in most contemporary schools. Writing is no longer seen only as a final product or simply a tool for evaluation (essay exams), we value it as a process (Zacharias, 1990). Students are also encouraged to do more writing in all subject areas, not just English. Hosis’s ideas of 1913 have reemerged in this Writing-Across-the-Curriculum movement (Zacharias, 1990). Moffett (1968) encourages the practice of writing and writing on subjects of interest to the student. He also discusses the importance of feedback and the idea

⁴ Antonacci & Hedley, 1994; Graves, 1983; and Murray, 1989 provide further information on the implementation of the writing process.

that writing is a social process. In order to teach real writing (as opposed to “formulaic rhetoric”) we must “concentrate our forces on fostering the highest development of inner speech” (Moffett, 1981, p. 9). Writing is what we are thinking put on paper. With practice, feedback, and revision, written thoughts will become coherent, creative, and successful. Feedback can come from the teacher, but in recognition of the social aspect of writing, feedback is sometimes better offered through peer conferencing or self-evaluation (Hatch, 1991; Kirby & Liner, 1981; Moffett & Wagner, 1983; Sebranek, Meyer, & Kemper, 1992).

This brings us to the use of journals. For it was during the implementation of the writing process approach in the late 1960’s when increased attention was given to informal writing, that the journal earned its place in the English classroom (Fulwiler, 1987). Using journals provides opportunity for a student’s inner speech⁵ to be written down. The major focus of all journal types is for the student to write down what he is thinking. They are not drills in grammar or sentence combining. They are places to practice the whole activity of writing (Moll, 1990). Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod and Rosen (1975) recognize that the writing process is a complex one. Writers concern themselves with word choice, grammar, punctuation, clarity and more all within the space of writing a sentence. Sometimes we do these things automatically without thinking. However, if we do stop to ponder—look up a word, check on usage—our fluency is interrupted. If students are encouraged to practice writing that makes fewer demands on them, such as journal writing, they may produce more interesting and creative writing because the focus has been on the idea, not the mechanics. This creativity can be displayed in any context area for the journal is versatile enough to fit any teaching style or

⁵ “Inner speech” is defined by Vygotsky as speech for oneself that has been internalized. It is meaningful to the user and more free of syntax restrictions than spoken language because he only needs to be clear to himself. “Speech for oneself” is the talking to self that helps a person understand or tell about what he is doing (Britton et al., 1975, p. 39).

subject (Autrey, 1991). In addition, the journal can be shared with the teacher, peers, or self. The writer himself, once having written the words, can re-read them and provide his own feedback (Moffett, 1968). Fulwiler (1987), Staton (1987), and others support the use of dialogue journals as places to practice recording inner speech and as a strategy to foster interaction between writer and reader. Journal use is coming to be recognized as an integral step in the writing process.

Writing, when properly managed, (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation.

—Laurence Sterne (1713–1768)

March 30, 1996—The History of Journals

It is a strange thing that in sea-voyages, where there is nothing to be seen but sky and sea, men should make diaries, but in land travel, wherein so much is to be observed, for the most part they omit it; as if chance were fitter to be registered than observation. Let diaries, therefore, be brought into use.

—Francis Bacon (1561–1626)

I started to keep a diary when I was nine. As previously mentioned, in looking back it seems silly. And yet I remember it was good to have a release of sorts—a place to write the angry and embarrassing thoughts—to get them out so I could stop thinking about them. Writing works that way for me. Last year my sister revealed that her daughter was not allowed to participate in Halloween activities, because she—my sister—thought they were pagan and evil. And though I’m sure others will agree with her, I was stunned. I had held several Halloween parties as a teenager, which *she* attended, and have long confessed it to be my favorite holiday. I’m digressing here The point is I began a written dialogue with her through the mail, very journal- and talky-like. After several *lengthy* letters, I neither came to understand how she came to be “reformed,” nor did I convince her that it would be okay for her daughter to attend school on Halloween and go trick-or-treating, but I did assuage myself that I had given it my best shot. I resigned the issue to “unsolved mysteries” and went on making black cat silhouettes for my yard. The writing process was like therapy. Besides my sister and I realizing that we could be very open and honest with one another and neither would be insulted if we agreed to disagree, the issue was finished. Writing had provided a means to closure. And, as I have the letters to re-read each October 31, I can re-realize that though we disagree on this issue, the process of writing about it actually improved our relationship.

The idea of journals being a source for expression has an expansive and impressive history. Autrey (1991) attributes the development of the journal to two

historical genres—the commonplace book and the diary. The commonplace book was a collection of quotes, observations, thoughts and bits of information that would serve as a resource for public, polished writings. The diary, a familiar genre to many, usually consists of very private writings. The “pedagogical journal” (p. 74) is a combination of the two.

Remember the Ancient Greeks? The commonplace book was a customary educational resource for these early students. The books were filled with ideas, quotations, observations, bits of learning and wisdom. The early Greek was conscious of his social situation, and the commonplace book provided him with a place to gather information to help him better understand himself in relation to his culture. A student might use these quotations and passages to compose a socially and rhetorically acceptable essay or speech. The use of the commonplace book lapsed in the Middle Ages but was popular again during the Renaissance. Erasmus (1466?–1536), a Dutch priest and scholar, and Francis Bacon (1561–1626), an English philosopher and statesman, encouraged the keeping of commonplace books. In the seventeenth century English school, two types of information were recorded in commonplace books—quotations from classical literature and personal observations and findings. John Milton (1608–1674) kept such a book. During the last part of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, an appreciation for nature and a disregard of rules and forms developed. Romanticism saw the decline of the commonplace book as a resource for formal writing. However, the current use of the journal as a reading or learning log, where the focus is to contribute to learning in the various academics, imitates the traditional commonplace book (Autrey, 1991).

Autrey (1991) dates the diary format back to the Ancient Greeks and evidence can be found of its use as early as the fifth century BC. Lowenstein (1987) tells of the Japanese pillow diaries from the tenth century. Though these diaries also made

connections between the individual and his culture, there was a focus on self-awareness and expression. Dreams, poems, confessions, and history were recorded in the diary. Contrary to the commonplace book which was part of the educational system to assist with writing, diaries were purely personal commitments (Autrey, 1991). However, with the coming diversity of religious groups in the sixteenth century, the Puritans and Quakers used the diary filled with religious dogma as a form of instruction as well as self-knowledge (Lowenstein, 1987). *The Journal of John Woolman*, published in 1774 after his death, serves as a record of his spiritual development as a Quaker, an investigation of his doubts about slavery, and a travel journal. Lowenstein traces the idea of the travel diary back to the Japanese of the tenth century. Japanese travel diaries combined journey notes with poetry. Francis Bacon also encouraged the use of a travel diary and considered it an aid to the traveler's learning experience. Originally some of these diaries were meant for publication, and today they provide valuable historical information and description.

Diaries continued to be popular throughout the centuries as evidenced by those of Samuel Pepys (1633–1703), John Evelyn (1620–1706), James Boswell (1740–1795), and Henry Fielding (1707–1754). Many are seen as important historical records documenting the life and events of the time. Leonardo da Vinci's recorded observations of birds and flight, Lewis and Clark's notes regarding the unexplored Northwest, Mary Chestnut's personal chronicle of the fate of the Confederacy during the American Civil War, and Anne Frank's recording of her experiences in hiding from the Nazis in Holland before her death in a concentration camp are further examples (Adelstein & Pival, 1980). These writers kept diaries for personal reasons, however. And though there is brief mention of the diary as a genre in some nineteenth century composition texts, the diary was not generally associated with formal schooling or writing instruction (Autrey, 1991).

Today journals and diaries are more popular than ever. Politicians, businessmen, and housewives are keeping journals. Recently women have come to be recognized for their contribution to the tradition of diary keeping. Even though history has predominately published men's journals, women have been more inclined to keep journals than men (Autrey, 1991). This recognition has encouraged more writing. Journals have also come to be used extensively in therapy—everything from psychotherapy to marriage counseling (Lowenstein, 1987).

Arlo Bates, in a lecture of 1894 (as cited in Autrey, 1991), mentions the use of a writer's notebook which anticipates the current use of journals in today's classroom. He recommends that aspiring journalists keep a notebook to record what might be necessary to the successful writer. Gradually more rhetoricians recommended keeping notebooks similar to the idea of the commonplace book. In the early twentieth century, Moore, Tompkins, and MacLean in *English Composition for College Women* (1914) claim the keeping of a diary is worthy for "facility of expression," "practice in many forms of writing," "increased power of observation," "and enrichment of life" (Autrey, 1991, p. 79). These ideas echo the reasons current English teachers recommend journal use. The focus at this point, however, was still on the daily entry—a recording of life's events. There was no intent to use these recordings for future inspiration in writing.

According to Autrey (1991), the official beginning of classroom journals can be traced to Gordon Rohmann's 1965 publication of "Prewriting: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process." The implementation of the process approach to writing had begun, and the journal could be a tool in the personalized process of writing—an invention strategy during the prewriting stage. From this point the journal has evolved to include many types—learning and reading logs, dialogue journals, math records and so forth. The journal is a combination of the

commonplace book idea filled with public issues that may provide inspiration for formal writing, and the diary containing private concerns. The blend provides a student with an opportunity for self-expression, an analysis of his connection to culture and learning, and a resource for the future documenting his ideas and life.

March 31, 1996—Vygotsky Inspires a Journal Entry

When I remarked a quarter century ago that Vygotsky's view of development was also a theory of education, I did not realize the half of it. In fact, his educational theory is a theory of cultural transmission as well as a theory of development. For 'education' implies for Vygotsky not only the development of the individual's potential, but the historical expression and growth of the human culture from which Man springs.

—Jerome Bruner (as cited in Moll, 1990, p. 1)

"Theory" is a big word for only six letters. I am forever intimidated by it. And it's not that I don't have theories or understand others' theories or teach by theories; it's just there is so much involved. Theory is usually connected to some famous dead guy like Piaget, Skinner, or Freud. (I enjoy reading about famous dead guys if they're authors—Dickens, Hawthorne, Poe—but these, hmm) Then behind each name comes a list of huge words that end in "cal" and "ic" and "ist." I think I am *logical* and *poetic* and sometimes a *fatalist*, but I hope I am not as confusing. That's how "theory" always strikes me—some confusing list of huge words, with long definitions, linked to a dead guy. Not very poetic, but perhaps necessary because it is through theory that we recognize how, why, and what is happening, and as educators we can then modify or implement teaching strategies accordingly. Do I have that right? Carolyn Hedley (1994) says it well: "Theory provides the rationalization for practice, for the reasoned behaviors that give teaching balance and direction" (p. 3). If so, then how does theory connect to journal writing? It does (and there's a dead guy involved too).

Communication, whether oral or written, is a social construction. There is a speaker or writer and an audience. The process approach to writing encourages socialization in each of its stages—from brainstorming and talking with others about topic selection, to peer conferencing, to producing a finished product with an audience in mind. Journals in the writing classroom are also social constructions. There is a writer, and the audience may be the self, the teacher, peers, or the public.

The importance of socialization and the social construction of knowledge in child development is the focus of theory promoted by L. S. Vygotsky (1987). Vygotsky theorizes that a child's development is a social process guided by adults and others who have more experience (Moll, 1990; Tudge & Winterhoff, 1992). Interaction between the child and the adult fosters learning and development. Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of cultural symbols—language and institutions—in that development. He argues that throughout history and across cultures we have created forms of behavior. People, being social, continually alter these forms of behavior and create new forms of behavior. For example, in order to understand how a child and adult interact in the school setting, we must make reference to "the meaning imparted by that historically and culturally organized context (school), to the tools of learning, and to the meaning that the interaction itself has for the participants" (Tudge & Winterhoff, 1992, p. 66). These "social and cultural institutions, technologies, and tools" (p. 66) influence the child's cognitive development. In other words, a child's development and learning ability is influenced by his past personal and cultural experiences. He then uses those experiences to make new connections, modify his behaviors, and progress. Carrying this into writing, Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod and Rosen (1975) state:

The strategies a writer uses must be the outcome of a series of interlocking choices that arise from the context within which he writes and the resources of experience, linguistic and non-linguistic, that he brings to the occasion. He is an individual with both unique and socially determined experience, attitudes and expectations . . . (p. 9)

Vygotsky emphasized that historical and cultural aspects must be taken into account as a child develops understanding, and it is through the use of everyday concepts that children are able to understand the concepts taught in school (Moll, 1990). Britton's idea here reflects that. All the child's historical and cultural experiences are involved when he writes—especially personal writing—writing that

is of interest to the student. The student has taken his everyday experiences and concepts and applied them to the material and assignments required at school. Vygotsky (as cited in McLane, 1990) argued that “writing must be ‘relevant to life’” (p. 305). Journal writing, which includes writing about ideas important to the individual, is writing relevant to life. In addition, Vygotsky suggests the whole activity of writing must be employed, not just separate, technical skills. Often writing is taught as separate skills: punctuation, grammar, capitalization, spelling, usage. These tools are necessary to writing and teachers should “demonstrate as to their usefulness in improving the quality and clarity of . . . writing” (Hatch, 1991, p. 77), but simply teaching the tools does not allow for the student to really experience writing. Graves and Stuart (1985) use the analogy of jumping rope. People do not learn how to jump rope by analyzing the parts—they simply jump, clearing the rope sometimes, tripping at other times. A few pointers later may help add finesse, but they must have the rope to practice. So it is with writing. Students must simply write—we can add a few pointers later as necessary. Journal writing is one way for students to experience the whole activity of writing that relates to their lives and social processes.

Another primary element in Vygotsky’s theory of child development is that of the “zone of proximal development.” Vygotsky recognized that the biological aspects (maturation) of the child must develop alongside a child’s psychological aspects (Moll, 1990; Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993). Psychological functions that have not yet matured, but are in the process of maturation constitute the “zone of proximal development” (Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993, p. 67). In other words, the distance between what the child is capable of independently and what the child is capable of with assistance is the zone of proximal development (Tharp & Gallimore, 1990). Collaboration or interaction with adults or other students—a situation

provided by schools—causes the functions that lie in the zone of proximal development to mature and become internalized, learned, automatic. It is only after the successful process of collaboration with peers and adults that a student can internalize the learning and apply it himself. “Interpersonal processes are transformed into intrapersonal characteristics” (Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993, p. 64). The “zone” then moves forward to a new point of maturation.

Scholars working in the Vygotskian tradition have focused much on the results of interaction between child and adult, but they have also examined the *process* of that interaction (Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993). How does the internalization of learning actually occur? This idea connects with the theory of the writing process—a theory which focuses more on the *process* of writing than on the final product. How does an interpersonal process cause writing to become an intrapersonal characteristic? How does the writing process become internalized?

The first interpersonal process that most children develop regarding language is speech. Speaking is thinking verbalized. In early development, a child uses speech as tool to organize his thoughts. As Vygotsky says, he uses “speech for oneself”—he talks to himself about what he is doing (Britton et al., 1975, p.39). Vygotsky suggests that by the age of six or seven, a child stops using speech for oneself and can eventually, because of the socialization process, organize his thinking without verbalization. Speech that once served as a thought organizer has become internalized; it has become “inner speech” (Britton, 1970, p. 203). This inner dialogue with oneself continues throughout cognitive development and our lives (Hedley, 1994). Vygotsky and many researchers regard writing, especially expressive writing, as “inner speech” or thought written down (Britton et al. ,1975; Fulwiler, 1978; Moffett, 1981; Staton, 1987; Zacharias, 1990). Since journals are comprised of expressive writing and informal language, the connection seems clear. Vygotsky

and other language scholars assert “that human beings find meaning in the world by exploring it through language—through their own talky language, not the language of textbook and teacher” (Fulwiler, 1987, p. 1). Journals provide a vehicle for that exploration. They create a bridge between the spoken language that the child has already mastered and the process of learning to write (Richards, 1995). Let the exploration for meaning begin.

A study conducted by Kreeft with a sixth-grade student in 1984 (as cited in Richards, 1995) demonstrates Vygotsky’s idea that social interaction with adults is critical to the development of a child, and when the assistance given by the adult is internalized, the child can then guide himself. Kreeft revealed that the use of dialogue journals allowed the student to change his zone of proximal development. The student moved from face-to-face communication, oral conferences with his teacher, to written communication. The student was assigned to begin writing in a journal. At first repeated assistance was required from the teacher. The teacher gave prompts, asked questions, and directed the writing activity. The student responded in writing by sharing small pieces of information. However, as the process became internalized, the student lengthened his written responses and eventually anticipated the teacher’s questions. He was writing almost independently. The student had moved from oral communication, to assisted written communication, to successful independent writing. Many researchers, including Atwell, Bromley, Shuy, Bode (as cited in Richards, 1995), and Staton (1987) argue that journals, whether they are dialogue journals, buddy journals, or reading journals, provide opportunities for students to collaborate with others to practice writing and thinking skills. Students practice internalizing this process of writing clear thoughts.

Because writing is a social process, the concept of audience in writing is

addressed again. In a chapter of *The Journal Book* edited by Fulwiler (1987), Elbow and Clark discuss the idea that immature writers are often egocentric in that they do not consider audience. As they mature and develop as writers, they become more aware of audience. While this may seem logical, Elbow and Clarke continue by pointing out that young writers often have trouble attending to cognitive activities such as writing without others around to interact with. They don't know how to begin, what to write. This concurs with the Vygotskian view that we are inherently social beings and we demonstrate development when we learn to attend to our own business and carry it out independent of others. If teachers are frustrated when students complain about having nothing to write about, they must understand what is really happening. It is not that the child has no experiences about which to write, but that he still needs assistance in developing the cognitive process of "reflective writing in the desert island mode" (p. 28). He needs practice writing for himself and by himself. Journal writing, often reflective, private writing, provides opportunity for the student to practice this process.

Elbow and Clark (1987) discuss a related fault in student writing linked to audience: maturity. Sometimes student writing lacks maturity; it is undeveloped and unclear. The Piagetian model might suggest that this is so because the child is egocentric and does not realize that the audience is not thinking what the child is thinking. The Vygotskian view, however, suggests that lack of maturity does not necessarily mean that the writer is unaware of the audience, rather it means that the writer has not developed the thoughts fully enough for herself. "That is, the writer displays a weakness in the ability to engage in that reflective discourse with herself that is so central to any mastery of the writing process. The suggested cure or treatment is not to think more about readers but more to think more for herself—more practice in exploratory writing to discover or generate her own

thoughts on the issue" (p. 28). Writing is a process of self-discovery. Writing gives shape to our thoughts; it helps us figure out who we are, what we think, and the best way to say what we really mean (Adelstein & Pival, 1984). Journal writing is an ideal strategy to use in that discovery process.

For those readers still concerned that on the surface, writing, including journal writing, appears as a private and independent activity, researchers present a final note. Discourse is always social. And "even when one purports to be writing to oneself—for pure self-expression, if there is such a thing—one cannot escape the ultimately social implications inherent in any use of language" (Moffett, 1968, p. 191). Once having written the words, by re-reading, the writer can become his own audience. "Even on the desert island, we are talking *to* voices and *through* voices which we have internalized through our social history" (Elbow & Clark, 1987, p. 29). The social element of the audience always exists, even if that audience is ourselves.

Language grows out of life, out of its needs and experiences . . .
Language and *knowledge* are indissolubly connected; they are
interdependent. Good work in language presupposes and
depends on a real knowledge of things.

—Annie Sullivan (1866–1936)

April 15, 1996—A Reading Journal Entry: Reviewing the Literature

I make discoveries in my personal writing. I ask questions and answer some of them. I dream and laugh and remember. I express honest feelings. I lose track of time, and I have fun. Personal writing is also practice time for me. I feel more comfortable with writing in general and more confident about my writing ability because of it.

—Sebranek, Meyer, & Kemper, 1995, p. 004

The authors of *Write Source 2000: A Guide to Writing, Thinking, & Learning* (Sebranek, Meyer, & Kemper, 1995) invite students to engage in personal writing with the above encouragement. This book, as well as *Writers INC* by the same authors, is a personal favorite. (Perhaps that explains my choice in beginning with an excerpt from it for this entry.) The authors' practical, humorous style is refreshing in an English text. They suggest that just as a basketball player must practice to improve, so must a writer. This makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? Journals provide an excellent court on which to practice. And just as athletes practice on a variety of courts—grass, asphalt, Astroturf, hardwood, parquet—so journals have a variety of forms. These types of journals are scattered throughout the literature. Here I will try to provide a condensed, organized overview of those types most commonly used in today's classrooms. (Which in truth, is where I belong—not on the court. I detest talking sports. However, I do occasionally employ this metaphor for my sports-minded students.)

In general, the academic or classroom journal lies somewhere between the traditional, personal diary and the class notebook. In a diary, one generally records private feelings and thoughts. In the class notebook, the student records facts and other people's opinions (Fulwiler, 1978). Academic journals can be used in any course content: English, math, reading, science, art—you get the idea. *Content journals* (Fulwiler, 1987; Manning, Manning & Long, 1987; Robinson-Armstrong, 1991), *class journals*, *reading journals* (Ames, 1991), and *learning logs* (Atwell, 1990;

Graham, 1994; Hatch, 1991; Sebranek, Meyer & Kemper, 1995) are all characterized by written entries in which the student reflects and makes connections between the specific course content and their personal experiences, realities, and lives. These researchers and practitioners suggest the student learns more when the content is connected to the student's personal experiences in a written form. In their entries, students may agree or disagree with course content. They may summarize or apply it. They may be required to respond to specific questions or make certain observations—making *high-structured* entries (Manning, Manning and Long, 1987). Whatever the case, the entries "are not folders with worksheets and homework, but children's personal narratives and reflections about what they are learning (Hatch, 1991, p. 78). Expressive writing done in a journal, according to Betchel (1985), represents "the ultimate in individualizing assignments (p. 73). Each student makes her own connections with the material.

Kingen (1995) uses reading journals in her contemporary literature course. For each selection read, students include a summary of the piece, three to four questions prompted by the reading, and a short personal response to the reading. Long selections require several entries. Ames (1991) uses a three-part content journal in her communication course: class journal—responses to class-discussion topics, reading journal—responses to the readings, and listening journal—recordings of communication experiences and listening habits whether good or bad. Graham (1994) and Fulwiler (1978) have used learning logs or journals to introduce a unit, have students make connections between past and present, monitor learning, as an activity during or after a unit of study, or as a homework assignment. The logs help students to see connections between learning and their lives. Kirby and Liner (1981) provide an additional example in the *project journal* which is used to monitor students progress and keep students on track during a group project,

novel or play, or research paper. With her elementary students, Vaughan (1990) employs the *double-entry* journal, a version of the content journal. This format involves a notebook where the page on the left is for preliminary drawings, notes, diagrams, observations or word clusters. The page on the right is for expanded writing on that topic—reactions, connections, understanding of the information.

A second set of terms prevalent in journal literature is the *dialogue journal* (Burniske, 1994; Jeffers, 1991; Hatch, 1991; and Fulwiler, 1987 provide examples) and the *teacher-response journal*. These terms simply indicate that someone other than the student, usually the teacher, reads the journal and responds to the entries. I once had a student who kept a dialogue journal with a cousin of hers. They wrote back and forth, transferring the journal with each visit. The level of dialogue is dependent upon the situation, the writer, and the reader. Hatch (1991) has students write daily with the teacher collecting and responding on a regular basis. Zacharias (1990) indicates that a teacher might respond to every entry in writing. (Whew! However, this seems to be a trend at the elementary-education level.) The main purpose behind the dialogue or teacher-response journal is to foster communication between the student and teacher. Peyton and Staton (1993) recommend dialogue journals due to their research done with Leslee Reed. The study demonstrated that dialogue journals not only allow students and teachers to communicate, but through the dialogue and questioning process, students develop thinking, language and writing skills. These journals also provide opportunities for teachers to recognize the students' writing and to respond using "mature, thoughtful" writing (Hatch, 1991, p. 78). Dialogue with students, or teacher responses, may certainly be incorporated with the content journal or learning log platforms. Most teachers, and students, expect some sort of value to be placed on the journal. Therefore, the process of collecting and reviewing entries is commonplace.

The final widely used term concerning journals types is the *personal journal*. This term suggests that some or all entries are of a personal nature. Some stories may be mixed in as well (Richards, 1995). Journals of this nature are considered *low-structure*. Students have control over their topic choices and how they write (Manning, Manning and Long, 1987). Students may employ freewriting techniques (Betchel, 1985; Fulwiler, 1978; Robinson-Armstrong, 1991) involving a stream-of-consciousness type approach where students write as quickly as they can without stopping, getting thoughts down on paper. The ideas might be jumbled or relatively focused. Practitioners often combine entry types—some restricted, some free. Topics may vary from class to class and from teacher to teacher. Enright (1992) wanted her freshmen to keep writers' journals. She told them:

I want you to collect life in this journal in the way that a writer does. Capture overheard conversations, funny bumper stickers, the way the sun feels on your skin as you walk across the quad, what the wind sounds like in the trees, what your classes are like, what the new people you're meeting are like, what ideas you're learning. (p. 292)

No matter what type of journal or type of entries a teacher chooses to assign, there are a few guidelines most researchers and practitioners agree upon. Regarding entries, journals are generally written in the first person, although third-person stories and alternate voice writings are certainly welcome and sometimes encouraged (Fulwiler, 1978, 1987). Kirby and Liner (1981) suggest that we need to encourage students to experiment, fool around, make mistakes, and explore. Informal language and rhythms of everyday speech are used in the journal—much like people talking (Fulwiler, 1987). Each entry should include a date and location, and usually has a single subject focus—whatever that subject might be—academic, personal, narrow or entire-life experience. (Generally "breakfast-to-bed" or daily schedule entries are discouraged.) Entries are completed on a frequent and regular basis. Some recommend daily entries (Graves & Stuart, 1985; Hatch, 1991; Kirby &

Liner, 1981; Murray, 1989; Richards, 1995) while others are more flexible—six pages every three weeks (Greenwood, 1989), for example.

In general, the physical shape of the journal is a notebook separate from regular class notes (Fulwiler, 1987; Graham, 1994; Sebranek, Meyer & Kemper, 1995). Early journals, those employed in the early grades, might simply be paper stapled together with a student-made cover (Hatch, 1991). Greenwood (1989) uses a 24-page composition notebook.

The process of evaluating journals has no hard and fast rules, but yet again literature provides guidelines. Though there is some debate between the *private* and *public* journal keepers, it is generally expected that at least the teacher will read student journals. Adelstein and Pival (1980) agree that in a journal the writer is usually prepared for his teacher or friend to share his thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Journals are not quite as personal as diaries. There is a sense of willingness to allow others to know more about themselves. There is also a sense of confidentiality and trust that operates here, and this will be addressed again later. That aside, journals are collected on a regular basis—whatever that might be—from daily to once each grading period. Generally, journals are graded on completeness or quantity of pages (Burniske, 1994; Fulwiler, 1978; Kingen, 1995). Often quality of thought or effort is considered. Graham (1994) grades them on their favorite entry as well. Burniske (1994), Greenwood (1989), and Kirby and Liner (1981) are examples of teachers who allow, and encourage, extra entries for extra credit. Fader (1976) employs wide guidelines in grading:

The quantitative view of writing has, as a necessary corollary, the permissive handling of journal entries by the teacher. Whether written inside or outside of class, whether legible or barely intelligible, whether a sentence, a paragraph or a page—each entry is another building block in the structure of the student's literacy. If the teacher can bring herself to regard the journal in this way, she will be equally

satisfied with prose that is original and prose that is copied from a newspaper, a magazine, or a book. (p. 72)

If teacher-response or dialogue is employed, grammar spelling and other mechanical features of writing are not corrected (Burniske, 1994; Hatch, 1991; Richards, 1995). "For better or worse, the journal is the student's own voice; the student must know this and the teacher respect it" (Fulwiler, 1978, p. 4). Teachers might comment on content, effective word choice, or insightful observations (Greenwood, 1989). These responses should be positive, sincere, and sometimes personal. Peyton and Staton (1993) discovered that supportive comments made by the teacher, not questions alone, promoted longer response entries by the students. The length of teacher responses, of course, depends upon each teacher's time constraints. However, it is recommended that some encouraging type of comment be included in the grading process. Both teacher comments and grades validate the students' efforts (Robinson-Armstrong, 1991).

With these guidelines in mind, the average person can see that much time might be spent in the process of writing and evaluating journals. Consider: some students writing on a daily basis (some entries in class, some at home), and a teacher responding to somewhere between 25 and 150 journals per collection period. Is it worth it? The literature suggests that it is. The journal is a multi-purpose writing strategy and product. Referring again to one of my favorites—Sebranek, Meyer and Kemper (1995) suggest the journal is of benefit in a number of ways:

It provides you with a valuable record of your thoughts, dreams, memories, and experiences. It offers you an easy and enjoyable way to practice writing. It helps you form new ideas, and serves as a useful resource for ideas for writing. Journal writing also supplies you with details of ready-made facts and details to use in writing assignments. All of this located under one roof—your journal notebook. (p. 131)

What more can be said? (I'm sure I can probably ramble on for a while here.)

To look at each of those benefits/goals more closely, I begin with providing students with opportunities to write. The journal easily meets this goal. Hatch (1991) suggests that intermediate grade level students are developing as writers and in order to help internalize the writing process, these students must be provided with as many opportunities to write as possible, and write about topics of interest to them (Graves & Stuart, 1985). I suggest that we are developing as writers at any age. Our lives change and develop, and this influences our writing. All ages of students need opportunities to practice writing—"to write much more than they will complete or publish. Maple syrup is the product of boiling thirty or forty gallons of sap to get one of syrup, and in writing there's a great deal more sap that needs to be boiled down . . ." (Murray, 1989, p. 7). Or remember the basketball player metaphor? Has Michael Jordan quit practicing?

And for writers, with more practice and opportunity, comes fluency. "Simply stated, the journal is the most effective tool for establishing fluency I have found," says Liner (1981, p. 45). Burniske (1994), Enright (1992), Fulwiler (1978), Greenwood (1989), Richards (1995), Robinson-Armstrong (1991), and Townsend (1994) all agree that frequent writing, as experienced in journals, increases the competence, fluency and proficiency of writers. Graham (1994) notes that in using journals, she found her middle school students "more willing to write and more willing to take writing risks. As a result, they are making discoveries about their writing selves: they are more creative; [and] they write much more often But, most importantly, writing has become an actual learning experience" (p. 7). Enright (1992) found that in using journals in her freshman composition class, the students began writing longer entries—"displaying through this process of stretching, honest, real writing that was far better than the work their [formal] papers exhibited" (p. 293). Townsend (1994) found the creativity and fluency developed in the journals carried over into

students' formal papers. And since most journals are evaluated without "red ink," (I write in green with few stickers thrown in) using the journal as a writing strategy offers opportunity to write, with probable increased fluency as a result, without increased teacher workload.

Another major benefit of journal writing is the personal connections students make. This is a two-part benefit—one concerning academic issues and one concerning private issues. When used in the content areas, Graham (1994), Fulwiler (1978) and others agree that journals provide students with opportunities to make connections between the academic material and their personal lives. Used in an interpersonal communication course, Ames (1991) found that journals helped students to make connections between the skills needed as a communicator and themselves as communicators. Jumpp (1993) uses journals to provide students with a "way to reflect on, summarize and synthesize information" (p. 146). A study completed by Manning, Manning and Long (1987) which focused on content journals in two middle school classes found that a majority of students appreciated the opportunity to make personal connections with the academic content through writing in journals. Increased understanding of the content being taught seems a powerful reason to employ journals.

In addition to content material, journals seem to "promote cognitive growth" (Fulwiler, 1978, p. 1) in general as well. Journals provide a place to express one's opinions, feelings, and emotions. Burniske (1994) states that "the aim of journal writing is to discover what one thinks and to use a natural voice which will aid in that discovery" (p. 85). Many teachers use the journal in this way—students free-write using their own voices—they are thinking on paper (Fulwiler, 1978; Kirby & Liner, 1981; Murray, 1989). As Vygotsky maintains, thinking and writing are interrelated processes. Writing is thinking on paper. In turn, the more we write

about something, the clearer the issue becomes in our heads (Murray, 1989; Zacharias, 1990). It is a cyclical process. When we ask students to write in journals we provide them with opportunities to "take control of their writing and to engage in independent inquiry" (Autrey, 1991, p 74). They are writing and they are thinking. Macrorie (1987) argues that students "learn to think, not by doing exercises in a faddish 'critical thinking' textbook, but by working their way through real questions, with real interest and real intent" (Forward). The journal is the place he recommends for these questions. Some English instructors may advise that students figure out what they want to say before they write it down. However, Sheffer (1992) points out that real writers "use writing to find out what they feel or think or know" (p. 67). Zacharias' (1990) research and Toby Fulwiler's *The Journal Book* (1987) suggest that journals allow students to practice many of the thinking processes educators regard as important. Depending on the focus of the entry, students may be provided with opportunities to practice the following thinking skills: comparing and contrasting, summarizing, observing, classifying, interpreting, criticizing, imagining, collecting and organizing, hypothesizing, applying, decision making, digressing, revising, and editing. This is quite a list of skills to develop.

In regards to private issues, several practitioners assert that journals allow students to express themselves and in some cases work through personal issues of crisis. Townsend (1994) simply believes that journals work for she sees her students' lives "unfold through their journals" (p. 5). Journals provide a means for students to explore their thoughts and feelings, to reflect and analyze their experiences and their lives. Through writing they can draw conclusions about their experiences; they can look at things from a new perspective; they realize and learn things about themselves as writers, thinkers, and people (Graves & Stuart, 1985). Writing helps

them sort out life's daily ups and downs, helps them discover who they are and what they want to be. Writing can be very therapeutic—students often think through their “dilemmas” in writing (Greenwood, 1989). Hudson implemented “no rules” journals with her freshman at-risk students in rural Michigan (1995, p. 65). She learned much about the personal lives of her students, and they learned how to express themselves in writing. She valued their writing and respected their voices. For these students, the journal writing allowed some the platform to examine their lives and perhaps take the steps required to turn their lives around. Smith (1995) successfully employed journals with emotionally disturbed eighth graders in Florida. Through the journal one student voiced questions, explored his own feelings, and struggled to “define himself” (p. 144). Through writing the student seemed to better understand his problems even if he could not fix them all.

And though we, as educators, hope that entries will be generally positive in nature, for many writers—students and others—journals provide opportunity to rant, rave, vent, complain, grumble, protest, criticize, and question without fear of reprisal. Sometimes this process makes us feel better, even if we cannot act on those feelings. Through exploration of these emotions, we can cope with life and move forward.

Several other benefits are connected to journals. Expressive writing—that found in journals—is, according to Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod and Rosen (1975), the source from which more formal writing flows. Expressive writing helps writers figure out what they want to say. It is part of the writing process and bridges the gap between idea and formal essay. Fulwiler (1978) and Greenwood (1989) agree that students who regularly engage in writing, as in journals, should have little trouble discovering topics for more formal papers. Because the range of topics in journals is extensive, some could be developed into polished pieces. Fulwiler (1978)

suggests that sharing the contents of journals with peers may foster further generation of ideas. Caswell (as cited in Robinson-Armstrong, 1991) asserts that journal writing improves a student's understanding of course content and reduces "the threat" formal writing assignments may impose. Using the journal as part of the writing process of formal essays seems a worthwhile strategy.

Another academic reason for using journals is the suggestion that journal writing increases students' editing skills. (Graham, 1994; Robinson-Armstrong, 1991). This is an important life-skill. Also, in working with learning disability students, Enright (1992) and Doney (1995) found that students' penmanship, motivation and self-esteem improved with the use of journals—more life skills.

Journals should also be recognized as a valuable life product for "journals provide teachers and parents with an organized, tangible record of individual writing progress" (Hatch, 1991, p. 78). This in itself is a benefit of journal keeping. At the end of the year the student goes away with a year's worth of thoughts, dreams, wishes, concerns, interests, and stories. The entries reflect a variety of moods, voices, and skills. Students should be proud of their accomplishment. This may be "the closest thing to a book many students will ever write" (Autrey, 1991). It is important that the journal be recognized and valued as an end product. Those who suggest that journals should not be evaluated by teachers because they are private matters, deny the student the validation of the journal's worth (Fulwiler, 1978). Many hours of work have gone into the production of these pages of writing. They are of value as a record of growth, life history, and recreated experiences to savor later.

These academic and personal skills are powerful motives for implementing journals in the classroom. However, there are still more benefits. Another affective, and perhaps one of the most important motives for using journals focuses

on the possible dialogue and connection made with the teacher. Fulwiler (1978), Richards (1995), and others suggest that when teachers respond to journal writing, we create the opportunity to develop mutual respect between teacher and student. A sense of confidentiality, trust, and cooperation exists between the people engaged in the process of dialogue journals. Academically, Jeffers (1994) suggests that responding to student journals will inspire them to write. As children realize that they are recognized and accepted for their ideas, they will begin to feel more confident and rely on and develop their ideas. Responding sincerely can encourage thinking and learning. Burniske (1994) found his students responding to teacher questions with questions of their own which then furthered the dialogue.

There is benefit for the teacher as well in the dialogue process. Kingen (1995) found through her reading journals what material needed further class discussion. She also realized through reading personal responses to the selected readings, that her anticipated student reactions were not always accurate. These discoveries helped her modify curriculum. Discovering student interests can assist teachers of any discipline to adjust curriculum to meet the students' needs and concerns. Fulwiler (1978) suggests that "reading student journals humanizes teachers" (p. 13). It helps the teacher connect with her students. We can experience, understand, and appreciate their frustrations, joys, problems, and successes. In relating to our students, we should then be better teachers.

And journals fostering a more positive attitude toward writing, the point most related to this project, is also supported (though in a limited scope) by the literature. For as Brown's (1993) student states: "When writing in my journal, I write about my feelings and how I react to them. When writing an assignment, I have to think hard about what I say, how I say it. It must have right grammar, and it must be punctuated. When in a journal, you don't have to worry about how you

say it" (p. 248). This seems to suggest that journal writing provides a positive writing experience. "Creating situations to ensure students have a successful experience when writing will foster positive attitudes for future writing assignments" (LaRoche, 1993, p. 17). Townsend (1994) recognizes that many students "cower at the thought of English" (p. 5). She blames this attitude on too much grammar and too little appreciation for the power of words and writing. Journals give students the chance to complain, question, create, and think. Students need to realize that "the power of our language is only a word away from their minds, to pen, to paper" (p. 6). Giving students the freedom to write what they want may give them a newfound appreciation for English class.

A specific study addressing attitude in connection with journals and middle school students was conducted by Manning, Manning and Long in 1987. They attempted to answer the following: "What are the attitudes of seventh and eighth-grade students who have written content journals in science and social studies?" (p. 1). They found that the eighth-grade science students who wrote high-structure journal entries had a 51.5% positive response rate on their attitude surveys. Seventh-grade social studies students who wrote low-structure journal entries had a 83.1% positive response rate on their attitude surveys. The low-structure group appeared to be more positive than the high-structure group. Both groups, however, demonstrated the value of journal keeping. The science/high-structure group valued them as a way to enhance learning while the social studies/low-structure group appreciated the opportunity to express personal opinions and feelings. Although this study did not control for teaching style, grade level, or subject area, these findings are encouraging. Journals may be a practical and valuable strategy in diminishing the "I hate English" attitude. Greenwood (1989) makes a statement worth quoting: "In an era when young people often feel that adults are unwilling to

listen, journals aid in promoting the positive student attitudes that have such an important impact upon learning" (p. 186). I hope this is so.

With all these benefits/goals in mind, teachers inclined to implement journals will find all the motivation and support they need. Journals provide students with a way to become connected to their learning, to be involved in the writing process, and to discover themselves by thinking on paper. How then can teachers motivate students and convince them that journal writing provides these opportunities? Perhaps we cannot. Perhaps that is not our job. Perhaps it is enough to provide the writing platform of journals, and the students will fulfill their needs at their individual levels. But still, teachers do want their students to be motivated. If a teacher tells his students they will be writing on a regular basis, filling notebook page after notebook page, he is sure to hear groans and moans of fear, boredom, and perhaps disbelief. And though the effective teacher will willingly explain all the goals and objectives, both academic and affective, students may still be disinterested. The literature reviewed has a few suggestions for overcoming this dilemma. Autrey (1991) suggests exploring the history of journal writing with students to establish its importance. He suggests reading excerpts from journals that show historical importance and personal development for its author. By explaining the history of diaries and commonplace books and reading samples from W. H. Auden, Thoreau, and Anne Frank, for example, students may begin to see the value of the journal as both a process and product.

Adam, who teaches seventh grade, tells of her experience in convincing students of the value and purpose of writing journal entries in her article of 1992. She used *Robyn's Book: A True Diary* (1986, New York: Scholastic) and *Beyond the Divide* (1986, New York: Morrow) to convince her students that their kids' voices were acceptable and valuable. They made the connection that people wrote in

personal voices because they needed to speak about their issues. Greenwood (1989) distributed samples of previous student journal entries to demonstrate to his students what was expected. These strategies helped “sell” the journal keeping idea. Students were off and writing.

Despite the overwhelming positive persuasion of the literature, and despite the goals and benefits presented here that may convince teachers and students of the value of journal keeping, I wish to spend a couple of paragraphs on a few lingering concerns. The first is one of time. It may seem that all this writing in journals is time consuming. Indeed the writing of entries, and the reading of them, may take more class time than is currently allowed. However, as teaching written communication is a primary concern for most English teachers, the idea that journal writing is consuming too much class time is invalid. In fact, Autrey (1991) recommends spending more class time discussing published student journals, and Fulwiler (1978), Graves and Stuart (1985), Murray (1989), and Robinson-Armstrong (1991) suggest that the teacher write with the students, modeling the process and sharing his⁶ personal writing. The time required to evaluate the journals may then be daunting. However, Burniske (1994), Fulwiler (1987), and Greenwood (1989) argue that because the writing is not “red-inked,” journals are evaluated quickly, and the amount of time spent responding to entries is more than made up for in the benefits journals provide. Teachers may wish to stagger the collection times to further reduce time constraints.

In the forward to *The Journal Book*, Macrorie (1987) reasons that some teachers don’t assign journals because of the notion that they “are dangerous. Like any other corkscrew, a journal is apt to open bottles containing habit-forming

⁶ In this paper I will interchangeably use *his* or *her*, *he* or *she*, *him* or *her*. Despite their gender, when used in a general statement, these pronouns are meant to be gender inclusive. It is not my intention to be sexist or to promote the idea that boys write better than girls or vice versa. My husband irons his own shirts and vacuums.

liquids that once swallowed will bring into being Temperance Societies that scream, 'Journals read by teachers are an invasion of personal privacy!' 'Journals encourage self worship that threatens the authority of God.'" Teachers fear complaints like these from parents and organizations. Macrorie assures us, however, that the National Council of Teachers of English has approved the use of student journals and established guidelines for their use in 1986, and that the benefits of using journals make the fight for them worthwhile.

So what happens when we take the risk of allowing students to expose their innermost thoughts and they follow through? Enright (1992) and Greenwood (1989) both admit to situations where their students revealed too much. Both situations were smoothly resolved with when the students sought counseling. These isolated situations occurred amidst years of journal use, and though cause for concern, did not outweigh the benefits of journal keeping or dissuade these teachers from continuing with their use. Out of some 200 students Townsend (1994) had only one student "cross the boundary." She agrees it is a small price to pay for the benefits it brings to most students. With any strategy or tool used in public education, there is some risk that someone will disagree or find fault. But so it is with life. Hundreds of football players are seriously injured every year and yet there's a Super Bowl every year. Children go to the office with cuts and slivers and burns from wood shop and metals and cooking, and yet all those classes are valuable and constant. Any situation has its risk. And while we do not wish to make issues controversial, journals are no more dangerous than the books we read or the formal essays we assign.

To make journals a success in the classroom, students must understand the value of the assignment. It must not be used as a mere "filler" activity. Some guidelines must also be established to give merit to the journal. For example,

decide if the journal goes home or not. Rushed entries for a grade at the last minute are not encouraged. Students should not write about incidents that the teacher is required by law to report (Zacharias, 1990). The guidelines depend upon the individual teacher and situation. Robinson-Armstrong (1991) believes that one key to success "lies in the instructor's ability to design creative assignments which meet students' individualized needs while helping them to demonstrate knowledge or acquired skills outlined in instructional objectives. A second key to the journal's success is linked to the instructor's ability to communicate an appreciation for rigorous thinking and writing to students" (p. 14). These keys to success for journal writing seem common goals for all classrooms, teachers, and institutions. Education should be about quality teaching and inspiring students to be better thinkers and writers.

Journals, according to the literature, have proven to be successful. I have often read and heard of research regarding the unsuccessful nature of teaching grammar or administering weekly spelling tests. It is not so with journal writing. The benefits seem overwhelming. Journals provide students with opportunities to simply write, to increase their fluency, to connect personally with the curriculum, to think critically, to express themselves using inner speech, to create a source book of writing ideas, to improve their writing skills and attitudes, to make connections with their teachers, and to document their life experiences.

Additionally, the journal reflects the history of writing itself in its exploratory nature. The journal is a place of discovery—discovery of language, discovery of writing, discovery of self. Journals are a practical component in the writing process, and as the history of teaching writing shows, a functional element of education in its goal to help students develop both academically and personally. The implementation of journals can occur in any classroom. As an English teacher, I am

primarily concerned how it fits into the English writing curriculum. And though I will be as objective as possible given my personal background and interests (that probably makes me more *subjective* than *objective*), I am hopeful that my research will contribute to the positive collection of journal writing research that already exists and may encourage more teachers to consider implementing journal writing in their classrooms. I hope to discover how, for my students, journal writing affects their attitudes toward writing. I don't want them to *hate* English; I don't want them to *hate* writing. I want them to see writing as a process of discovery; I want them to have less fear of the blank page; I want them to understand the necessity of clear writing; and I want them to want to write.

April 29, 1996—The End of the Beginning

A man will turn over half a library to make one book.

—Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) *Life of Johnson*

Now that I have completed a draft of the review of the literature on journal writing, I feel a sense of accomplishment, and as if I've turned over half a library. Not only have I discovered much support for my topic of research, but I've also discovered interlibrary loan, telnetting to campus computers, a crashed ERIC system, and computer-monitor induced headaches. I've rediscovered note cards, bibliographies, the stress of deadlines, and shoulder bruises from overloaded book bags. But this is only the end of the beginning. There will be the methodology, the analysis, the surveys, the summaries, and the revisions to write. There will be data to collect, entries to record, observations to document, and journals to read. Some of my questions will be answered; more will be asked. I will move forward through the process of discovery. I will skip to the next rock pile and turn over the next rock to expose the spider or green tonic bottle.

Begun July 1, 1996—The Long Process

There is a mystery about stringing words together
which cannot well be solved until one has strung a
lot of words together.

—MacKinlay Kantor

Two semesters of working with this project have already passed. As I write this in July, I am looking forward to beginning the actual research. I have a newfound respect for researchers at this point. This is a lot of work—much more than the final product might reveal. I almost regret that I haven't logged the hours spent paging through materials, browsing databases, documenting sources, or rewriting drafts. But perhaps in the end, not knowing the number of hours might be a good thing. I want to feel a sense of accomplishment, of contribution. And though the process may be overwhelming now, I won't want the length of the process to outweigh the effect of the final product.

As I revise this in April 1997, I am struck by the incongruity of the last sentence. I am forever telling my students that the *process* of writing is as important as the product. For me this is true; the process is as exciting as the product. Writing is like solving a picture puzzle with each piece in the right place; or it's that rock pile with each treasure being uncovered and brought to light. Each word must be in the right place to reveal the precise thoughts being expressed. Each piece of data must fit and have a purpose, or it gets tossed back onto the heap of gray stones. When the sense that I have procrastinated long enough overwhelms me (sometimes ten minutes, sometimes ten days), I begin to write. And I like writing. But then the real world issues of making supper, shifting the laundry to the dryer, letting the cats in, and getting some sleep so I can teach the following day always penetrate my thoughts, and I must hit *Save* on the computer and attend to other business, the real world.

And while I believe in the importance of process for myself and my students,

I also think the real world often considers the final product as more important. Success doesn't usually come from simply trying. One has to produce. A best-seller becomes a best-seller for the final product, not because the author spent many hours researching data and revising verbiage. Sure, the process is reflected in the product, but if the final product is poor, the process is irrelevant. Nobody cares. So I'm back to looking forward to the final product of this research project even though I do enjoy (but am also overwhelmed by) the process of it.

Biting my truant pen, beating
myself for spite:
'Fool' said my Muse to me, 'look in
thy heart and write.'

—Philip Sidney (1554–1586) *Astrophel and Stella*

August 23, 1996—The Purpose of the Project

The standard thesis, which I am obviously not writing, requires that I explain the methodology of my study. Therefore, despite my unconventional approach to this document, this entry will explain the purpose and rationale of my project. This is the story of my teaching experience with journals, my exploration of the question of *how the use of journal writing affects middle school students' attitudes toward writing*. For a year my students wrote in journals as part of the standard English curriculum. As the teacher in that classroom, I also kept a journal recording thoughts and observations. All of this data was collected, archived, and analyzed in an attempt to answer questions regarding students' attitudes toward writing. For example, does journal writing decrease student negativity toward writing because what they write is not "red inked"? Do students write more freely and with better voice when the pressures of publication and grades are removed? Does journal writing "lessen the fear of the blank page" when they realize how easily they can fill a page with words and thoughts? Do students make more connections between classroom discussions and their personal lives through writing journal entries, and does that encourage more writing or express the importance and necessity of writing? Does teacher response to journals create respect, foster communication, and encourage more writing? And how does this all carry over into students' general attitudes toward writing?

My hopes were that more writing practice would increase students' confidence and fluency. Having practiced filling pages in a journal would make rough drafts of "formal" essays easier. Creating a resource bank of ideas would help eliminate writer's block. And I hoped that students would have begun to appreciate the exploratory process of writing. They would have seen that through writing they discover new thoughts, knowledge, and relationships that didn't exist for them

before. They would have become better thinkers.

The rationale for this journal writing project originated with my being a teacher of writing. And since I also enjoy the writing process, this project interested me both professionally and personally. The most dreaded response I hear from students is "I hate writing." Their lack of motivation and the disdain in their voices when a writing assignment is mentioned induced me to implement journals in my English classroom years ago. And though I have not eradicated all dislike for writing (perhaps an impossible task when teaching seventh graders), journals seem to be a positive writing activity. Journals provide opportunities for students to practice writing without the fear of "red ink" and without overloading myself with additional formal essays to grade. Furthermore, after an initial review of the literature regarding journal use, I am convinced that journals should continue to be an integral part of any writing curriculum. A current goal in my district is to improve the writing skills of students. Writing is important. When I began this project, and as I complete it, it was my hope that through journal use, students' attitudes toward writing would improve and developed writing skills would become evident.

Write till your ink be dry, and with your
tears
Moist it again.
—William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

August 24, 1996—Design of the Study

The School

The project took place at Eastside Middle School. Eastside Middle School is located in an urban neighborhood of primarily blue-collar, working-class families. It is one of two middle schools serving the district but is often seen as the school serving those on the lower end of the socioeconomic status ladder. With a population of approximately 500 students, Eastside houses both seventh and eighth graders under the house concept—two houses for each grade level. (Each house consists of students who share the same five teachers for reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies.) Although primarily a white community, Eastside's population consists of 2.5% African-American, 2.1% Native-American, 4.7% Hispanic, and 1.2% Asian-American students. Additionally, a small percentage of African-American students are bussed to the school from a neighboring district.

Our building has an emphasis on technology and currently owns one computer for every 2.5 students. Consequently, students are expected to employ computers regularly during their two-year term at Eastside.

The Classroom

District curriculum mandates an integrated language arts curriculum teaching the skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking. Each student is assigned a literature textbook which contains an abundant, age-appropriate selection of the various literary genres. The text also generously provides critical thinking and writing activities as well as some grammar instruction. In addition, I have a traditional grammar and composition book for student use as well as a classroom set of *Write Source 2000* by Sebranek, Meyer and Kemper (1995, Boston: D.C. Heath) which will be used for the first time this year. I

also pull from other sources as suited to the topic of discussion. Students are expected to identify, practice reading, and comprehend the various types of literature; experience the writing process including note-taking, description, narration, exposition, persuasion, and letters; apply critical thinking skills to written and oral work; improve listening and speaking skills; and employ research tools.

In my implementation of this curriculum I work through the various literary genres, beginning with the short story. We spend a considerable amount of class time reading aloud and discussing the issues involved. Writing assignments are linked naturally to the readings or evolve out of student interest. Grammar and usage lessons are incorporated where appropriate and when students show need. Assignments given early in the year are generally simple and graded for completeness and effort. As students gradually adapt to the classroom routine, assignments become more complex and allow for independent interest and ability. In the writing process for “formal” essays, students use both peer and teacher editors to improve their work. Essays are marked thoroughly early in the year. As students continue to practice self-editing, comments become more general. With a computer lab adjoining my classroom, plenty of time is allocated for instruction in word processing when students polish their writing and enhance their work with graphics.

Generally in the school setting, journals are collected writings that reflect on personal and class content issues. Students make connections between their readings and their lives, record their thoughts and activities, and ask questions about their learning. Journals, of course, might be used in any content area, but my research will focus on journals as they are used in the English/Language Arts curriculum. In my teaching, journal writing is designed to be writing that can be personal or public in nature. Students write all their entries into a single notebook

set aside for this purpose. They may add pictures, copy poems, and embellish the pages as they see fit. Most topics have at least the teacher as audience. Some pieces may be shared with the class and some pieces become springboards for more polished writing and a larger audience. If a student writes something too personal, he has the option of writing “don’t read” across the top of the page. It is the student’s journal—he decides the audience for each topic.

The Students

The current study involved 121 seventh-grade students randomly assigned to my house and English classes. Most students had previous experience with journals from their elementary schools. The 121 students were divided into five sections of English.

Section one included 10 boys and 15 girls with 1 African-American student, 1 Native-American student, and 2 Hispanic students. The remaining students were Caucasian.⁷ Though several top students were in this section, the overall academic average of this group was the lowest of all sections. Section two include 11 boys and 11 girls with 1 African-American, 1 Native American, 1 Asian-American, and 2 Hispanic students. This was the smallest section, only 22 students, I taught this year. Their academic range was broad, from a student who I considered the top writer of the year to a few students who operated well below grade level. Section three included 10 boys and 14 girls with 3 Hispanic students. Though average in ability, this was the quietest group of the five sections. It was very difficult to draw them into class discussions. This section also had poor homework skills. Even though I believe the students were capable of the work, almost one-third failed to complete assignments consistently. I suspect the low socioeconomic standing of the

⁷ The ethnic terms used here (African-American, Hispanic, Native-American and Caucasian) are those the district employs when recording nationality. Specific tribal, geographic, or ethnic distinctions beyond these terms were unavailable and not deemed necessary for this study.

community contributed to a mismatch between students' expectations and my expectations. Section four included included 12 boys and 12 girls with 1 African-American and 1 Hispanic student. Several top students belonged to this very lively group. Section five consisted of another evenly split group with 13 boys and 13 girls. One very quiet and bright Asian-American student was included. This was the largest group and met the last hour of the day. (Need I say more?) All sections were assigned to keep journals and data was collected from every student turning in a journal.

The Teacher/Researcher

As a member of a white, middle-class family, I grew up in rural Wisconsin on my parents' dairy farm where exploring rock piles was a favorite pastime. I believe journal writing can also be an exploratory process. Through journals we can explore our thoughts, opinions, or feelings on any given subject. Even as we question where that old bottle came from, we can question our learning. As rocks have patterns, so we can discover patterns in our words. As colorful images are experienced, we can describe them on paper. And as we use the new-found treasures for other purposes, we can create starting points for polished writings.

My first journaling experience consisted of a childhood diary now hiding in a dusty cardboard box at the top of a closet shelf. In it are recorded thoughts, fears, and injustices of life at ten. When I re-read it, the recordings sound childish and silly. However, I am glad they stand as a permanent record of those years. Having written it then, allows me today to easily and clearly recollect what my childhood was like. In high school, we didn't keep journals (in retrospect I am disappointed), but I did pack away a few of my writings from various English courses. These writings are invaluable for showing personal development. I encourage my students to keep

copies of their writing. And even though it's a class assignment, journal writing is also a great opportunity to document their thoughts, opinions and writing attempts. Journal experiences will hopefully encourage them to write more, be starting points for polished writings, and if kept, be a record of their development.

As a student, I had high expectations for myself. I earned A's and became comfortable around teachers. With this influence, journals serve two purposes for my students and me. First, they provide an easy avenue to success. Since grades are based on quantity and effort, all students can achieve success in their journals. Writing style, spelling, grammar and syntax are not part of the equation. Journal writing should be comfortable for the student no matter his skill level. Each student uses his own cultural experiences and tools to record his thoughts, feelings, or observations. And if perfect spelling is not currently a tool used by a particular student, he is not penalized for it in the journal. Secondly, journals provide a means for student/teacher communication. Journals are responded to in writing. Comments are given, questions are asked, and excitement is shared. Students seem to respond favorably to this dialogue. I expect this leads to more mutual respect and understanding between teacher and student.

Having enjoyed writing in school, I went on to earn my English degree with a writing minor. I learned that to become a better writer, one must practice reading and writing. This pushes me to provide as many opportunities as possible for my students. And yet I realize I cannot possibly formally evaluate all of their writing. Journals provide a compromise—lots of practice, not so much evaluation. Journals also provide a platform for a variety of topics and interpretations. Much of my college education was based upon the idea of creating curriculum that was student-centered and allowed for freedom of expression. Journals do just that. Students often choose their own topics or tailor the topics to suit their personal perspectives.

They are also free to use their own voice, dialect, and syntax (or try someone else's voice, dialect, or syntax). So just as that rock pile could be explored many times in all types of weather, students can explore many topics from many viewpoints in their journals.

August 26, 1996—The Process of Exploration

Back in my dairy-farming days, the rock piles were easy to find, and the process of exploration was just as easy: choose a sunny day, walk across the hayfield, stumble around collecting treasures. My exploration of journals was in some ways just as simple: get a notebook and a pen. But in some ways it was a bit more complex. How did I really know if journal writing was affecting students' attitudes? Despite this concern, one sunny afternoon I set off across the field. Teacher observation journals were kept and journal writing was completed during the 1996–97 school year. Archival data was gathered and analyzed from collected student journals. A student survey was completed in early June 1997 (another sunny day), and the final writing of this project was completed in late June 1997.

Procedures

This research focused on journals as they were used in my English/Language Arts curriculum and was accomplished in four stages: the first stage included previous experience and background research; the second stage included the introduction and use of journals in the classroom; the third stage involved a survey on attitude completed by the participants; and the fourth stage comprised the analysis of the surveys and archival data and the completion of the writing.

Stage One: Entering my eighth year of full-time teaching, I have come to appreciate the importance, variety, and success the journal can provide in the English classroom. It is because of this past experience that my initial interest in this topic evolved. This interest and experience then became part of the first stage in my research. It sometimes seems that when a teacher trains to teach at levels above the elementary grades, she must accept that there will be fewer moments of shared, sincere interest and concern between teacher and student. (Students no longer want

to sit near the teacher, share their funny stories, show off their prized possessions, please the teacher just to make her smile—you get the idea.) And while this may be true in general, I have found the journal to be a source of reward along these lines. Here students enjoy telling jokes, writing amusing stories, asking questions of me—all within the appropriate confines of a pretty traditional English classroom. When their journals are returned to them, they pore through the pages looking for my comments and questions and are often surprised with their A's for effort and quantity. More often than not, students do succeed with the journal assignment.

Also part of the first stage was my investigation into the literature on the subject of journaling. And though a long and sometimes agonizing process, the research confirmed my regard for using journals in the classroom as a tool to encourage writing as well as a means of communication between teacher and student. Atwell (1990), Britton (1970), Emig (1971), Fulwiler (1987), Murray (1989), and others support the use of journals. And while there is much to recommend journal use, little has been written about how journals actually affect students' attitude toward writing in general. So I began my study.

In preparation for the actual study I collected books on journaling including *The Journal Book* by T. Fulwiler (1987, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann) and *Journaling: Engagements in Reading, Writing, and Thinking* by K. Bromley (1993, New York: Scholastic). These gave me additional ideas for implementing journals in my classroom. As part of the introductory unit presented to students, I gathered books written in the journal format. (See Appendix B.) Excerpts from these were read to demonstrate the variety of journals and voices. In addition, I received approval from Carroll College and my immediate on-site supervisor to carry out the study. I prepared introductory handouts, journal entry topics, and an attitude survey to be used in the classroom.

Stage Two: The second stage of the research was the actual implementation of journals in my classroom during the 1996–97 school year. During this time the following activities took place:

1) An introductory unit on journals and journaling was taught during the first few days of school. This unit included a handout with journal objectives and guidelines (Appendix A), the labeling of journal notebooks, a discussion of the history of writing and journal keeping, the reading of teacher and previous student journal entries, the establishment and recording of personal goals for journal keeping, and the reading of published fictional and biographical journals (Appendix B).

The labeling of journals (placing a sticker with the student's name and class hour marking this notebook as his journal), the discussions of objectives for keeping a journal and the history of journals, and the recording of goals in the front covers of the journals were successful activities. Students were able to contribute, understand, and personalize the reasons for keeping a journal. Almost all students recorded realistic goals. Only a couple of students demanded they be allowed to write "I will keep a journal because the teacher made me." At this point a positive tone was established regarding the journal project.

And though my materials were prepared and students were positively responding to the project, this introductory unit was disturbed by several events. School picture day interrupted several classes, and these students received less information about the history of journals and less time to write their first journal entry in class. The oral reading of *The Amazing and Death-Defying Diary of Eugene Dingman* seemed difficult. I received little response from the students. I felt like I wasn't expressing the true humor of the character's situation. There was so much description and vocabulary that seemed to be going over their heads. Eventually I

moved on to other journal readings.

2) Students completed journal entries approximately once per week. (Students were encouraged to write more. Each entry was required to have a title and heading. The heading consisted of the date, time and location of the writer when the entry was written.) The topics ranged from those which connected to readings to those which encouraged creative writing to those which simply provided a space to express feelings—negative or positive—about how the day was going. Sometimes I required that all students write and reflect on the same issue. For example, after reading Ray Bradbury’s “All Summer in a Day,” students were asked to reflect on a time when they felt they were treated unfairly by a group or could not participate in a desired activity. After reading several stories connecting the theme of time, students were asked to predict what their life would be like in twenty years. As Schubert (1993) believes, journals are “one way in which . . . students find meaning in course content by connecting subject matter with their own particular concerns and interests” (p. 83). To develop creative writing I requested that all students describe their favorite place using as much sensory imagery as possible. At Christmas students wrote about their holiday traditions. Gossip columns and *National Enquirer* stories were always big hits. Often I listed three possibilities on the board and the students chose one. The third choice was often a freewrite where they wrote using a stream-of-consciousness type approach. They wrote whatever popped into their minds. If they got stuck, they rewrote the last line until their thoughts changed. (See Appendix C.)

Many writings were completed in class, but some were assigned for homework. My rules required silence and steady writing for at least fifteen minutes. I wrote with the students to model writing and stress the importance of no interruptions during the writing process. The entries completed early in the year

were written efficiently and quietly. Students grasped the idea that their goal was to keep writing. Only a few students had to be reminded to attend to their task. As the year progressed we moved through a period when class and individual personalities began to emerge. During this time my first section of students had the most problems as a group writing quietly and steadily for the full fifteen minutes. Other groups met with more consistent success, but in each class there were one or two students who were often off-task and required constant attention in order to meet their page requirement. Then toward the second half of the year, the students changed again, and more often did all classes meet with success during the writing time. There were fewer interruptions and fewer students off-task. And even though some students started with the line, "I don't know what to write," they did continue with valid ideas. Did the practice encourage them to become more involved in their own writing? Were they maturing as writers? Or were they maturing as people?

On occasion we were able to complete traveling journal entries. We were able to go outside one day, travel to a vacant stairwell another day, and tour the tunnels beneath the school a third day. I would like to have completed more of these entries.

3) Post-writing discussions took place after writing. Students had the opportunity to share their entries with the class or discuss questions and problems with their writing. I also shared some of my entries with the students. After the first journal entry, at least one student from each section volunteered and read their entry. As the class and individual personalities developed, the readings were more scattered. I could always count on one or two entertaining students to share their writing, and sometimes a more reserved person would feel a sense of accomplishment and share his work. Students were politely attentive to their peers.

4) Journals were collected and evaluated on a regular basis. Evaluation of journals was based on quantity and effort. It took between 60 and 80 minutes to read a class set of journals (approximately 20). Generally one to three students turned their journals in late. I was not concerned about spelling or grammar errors. Students were encouraged to write in their “speaking” voices, and many demonstrated this. They weren’t worried about topic sentences or whether paragraphs were cohesive. They were talking on paper. Angela ended several of her entries with “Well, I’m going to split,” and Alex thought a lot of things were “Arch Deluxe”—“What I think of journal writing so far is it is pretty Arch Deluxe meaning good because you can actually express your feelings and write about what you did the past day, week, month or year.” When discussing computers, Alex wrote, “That’s another Arch Deluxe thing.”

If when collected, the journal contained the required number of entries and each entry seemed to show adequate effort, the student earned an *A* or *B* grade. Missing entries resulted in a lower grade. Students were encouraged to develop entries over several pages and/or write extra entries. I commented on effort, gave personal reactions to topics I related to, and praised creativity and voice.

For purposes of this research, I attempted to code entries for later archival retrieval, for example: *A* = attitude, *S* = skill development, *I* = insightful thought, *?* = question for the teacher, and *+J* = positive comment on journal writing. When I collected the journals during the first month, I allowed the coding system to develop naturally without much of a fixed system preplanned. From October through December, I modified the coding system to fit within practical perimeters. However, I found that topics were so varied that very few codes were actually implemented. This worried me. I had this fear of having collected all this wonderful data with no manageable plan for analysis. Nevertheless, I continued

with the research plan and lightly applied the modified coding system in the final months. During analysis I found that even though it was used sparingly, the coding system did provide a starting point. And after looking at the data a second time and spreading it across my office floor, the connections did become clear.

5) During the year I also kept narrative-style journal entries recording observations and reactions to the process of journal-keeping and how it affected students' attitudes toward writing. Class atmosphere, successes, failures, reactions, and questions were recorded. Most of my observations have been tied into the analysis section, but a few observations regarding the journal process are worth mention here.

In late September I wondered if I were forcing *my* attitude toward writing on them, or if they were indeed feeling comfortable enough to write what they really thought. I was also frustrated with the issues of reading aloud from *Eugene Dingman* and not having enough writing time in class. Other district English curriculum issues—reading literature, grammar, formal essays, and computer literacy—were constantly pressing for attention.

By late October, class personalities were developing and my first class often put me in a bad mood regarding journal writing. My entries reflected the distractions taking place in the classroom. Too many students were demanding constant attention. They were not focusing on writing and other students were distracted from their writing as a result. I realized I needed to accept that journal writing would generate varying degrees of success. I was operating in a real classroom situation with real students. My observations indicated that the remaining sections of students were not as distracted as my first section. And though it was easy to comment on negative behaviors, the majority of students were indeed writing productively.

In December my observations focused on the strengths of journal writing that began to emerge. Teacher/student communication was increasing, and more random, unsolicited positive comments regarding journal writing became evident. Creativity was flowing and students encouraged me in their responses to the entry "If I Were a Teacher." Many students indicated their appreciation for teachers regarding the issues of hard work and maintaining discipline in the classroom. They were aware how difficult it must be to keep all students on task and how frustrating it must be when some students aren't interested in learning. Even the "disruptive" students felt it would be tough to handle all the students. A few students had parents who taught and related their first-hand experience of the long hours spent planning and grading. Students' lists of classroom rules were extremely sensible and similar to the rules currently in force. This surprised me as I thought more students would have very loose rules thinking that would win students over. One girl wrote five pages of practical ideas that she hoped to apply to her future teaching career!

Also in December, I began to feel students were being honest in their responses and I was not unduly influencing them. Many students were completing extra entries and wrote while in study hall, suspension, or at home sick. One student even wrote an entry at Chi-Chi's Mexican Restaurante.

In January my observations noted the shift to more dedicated writers. Students continued to be creative and successful. Grades remained high. By March a few journal notebooks had been irretrievably lost. However, students continued writing. April's observations included that I was amazingly disturbed by spring break and numerous school outings and interruptions. I also felt again the pressure of completing the required curriculum. Journal writing remained creative if not consistent. By May students were feeling the pressures of grades. Much extra credit

was being written, and students often commented on the number of extra pages and asked repeatedly if journals would be collected again before the year ended. The students were also looking forward to having completed this project and keeping it as a record of seventh grade. In-class writing was going very well, and I reminded myself that I did like journal writing.

6) Three reflective journal entries were assigned throughout the year.

a. First Week—What do you know about journals so far? Have you ever kept a journal before? What did you think of it? What are your expectations, impressions, gripes for this year's journal?

b. Mid-year—Look back through your journal. How is it going? What grades have you received? Write about your favorite entry. Has your journal influenced your life in any way personally or academically? How have your thoughts and opinions changed since the beginning of school? Are you accomplishing any of your goals recorded in the front of your journal? Will you make it to the end? Will you need a new notebook?

c. Final Week—Look back through your journal. Reflect on the process of journal writing this year. How did you like it? Did you accomplish your goals? Do you think your attitude toward writing improved because of journal writing? Which was your favorite entry and which was your worst? Did journals affect your English grade? Did journals influence your life? How do you feel about accomplishing this much writing?

(The results of the three reflective writings appear in the data analysis section.)

7) "Formal" essays were assigned throughout the year. At least two of these came from topics previously explored in the student journals. For example, students wrote informally in their journals about hobbies or interests. A formal

paper was later assigned with this theme. In March we again turned to the journals to practice proofreading and editing. Students were asked to choose two entries and develop them into polished essays of at least 150 words each. This assignment provided a variety of topics and students were able to write about a subject of interest to them. Students realized that their thoughts on some subjects had changed from the time the entry was originally written. I replied that that was a sign of development and they could revise or add accordingly. Overall, students were successful with both of these assignments.

Stage Three: The third stage of the research procedure was the implementation of an attitude survey. (See Appendix D.) The survey was administered during the last week of school and after students had completed their final reflective entry. Students had about fifteen minutes in which to complete the survey, and no one appeared rushed. Everyone present participated and most seemed honest in their responses. I was a little concerned that completing this activity at the end of the year would distort the results as the majority of students had "shut down" for the year. However, they seemed to be able to reflect candidly and complete the task. (The results of the survey appear in the data analysis section.) I also secured permission from students to use quotations from their journals in the writing of my research. (See Appendix E.)

Stage Four: The data (student journals, teacher journals, and surveys) was analyzed and summarized. I began writing the analysis as soon as enough data was available. And though revision was inevitable, I was satisfied with this approach. As Wolcott (1990) wrote in *Writing Up Qualitative Research*, "You cannot begin writing early enough" (p. 20).

In analyzing the data, I used a coding system to identify patterns, similarities, and exceptions in journal writing and how journal writing had affected the

students' attitudes toward writing. (I also made a huge mess out of my office with various papers stacked in intricate piles and Post-it™ notes sticking out everywhere.) The three reflective journal entries were especially revealing as specific information regarding the journal process had been solicited. My own observations and the collected student journals complemented this data by filling in any gaps and validating the comments written in the reflective pieces. Finally the survey results were tallied and categorized. This information provided triangulation of the data and further confirmed the conclusions of this project.

September 4, 1996—Beginning the Process of Analysis

The use of journals as a writing tool and the collection of student journals had been routine in my classroom for several years. I had believed students were practicing the necessary life-skill of writing and had been able to explore a variety of topics—some successfully, some not. Now I was anticipating using student journals as the focus for this thesis project. Now I would not simply be assigning topics and collecting journals in an accepted, routine manner. I would have to concentrate on what was happening. I would need to focus my observations. I would need to document events and progress. I would need to analyze, summarize, and conclude. I would need to ask questions. (Those questions have become guideposts throughout the analysis section of this paper.)

Now I would be discovering if the assertions of the writing experts and my own beliefs about journals were truly being upheld in my classroom. Were journals effective tools for increasing writing practice and improving writing skills? Did journals foster a sense of communication or trust between students and the teacher? And how did journals affect students' attitudes toward writing in general? It was time to examine the treasures from the rock pile. Was the sun shining?

October 14, 1996--Examining Early Data⁸

The next thing most like living one's life over again seems to be a recollection of that life, and to make that recollection as durable as possible by putting it down in writing.

—Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

It was research time. The first day of school was upon us. The building (remodeled last in 1951 and having no air conditioning) would be humid and suffocating. My room didn't even have windows. And despite being "dressed to impress," I knew I would feel as if I were melting. However, none of that was under my control, and being enthusiastic about the new students and my research project, I began.

In implementing my study on how the use of journals affects students' attitude toward writing, a major process in the research was to have students actually keep journals. One of my initial concerns was whether or not students had previous journal-keeping experience. I wondered whether having kept a journal in the past would influence the keeping of their seventh-grade journal. How familiar were they with the journal idea? I knew that the seventh-grade journal I assigned would be different from previous journals, but did students have preconceived notions, either good or bad?

Did students have preconceived notions about journals?

To answer that question, on the second day of classes held at Eastside Middle School, students were asked to complete a personal literacy history. The general objective was for students to reflect on their history with reading and writing. One of the questions was "Have you ever kept a journal, and if so, did you like it?" A follow up question asked, "What did you write in your journal?" Of the 114 papers

⁸ Actual student names have been replaced with pseudonyms. All quotations from student journals and surveys are verbatim. No editing changes were made in grammar, capitalization, punctuation, or spelling. Bracketed information was added for clarity.

distributed, 112 students responded to these questions. Most students, 85%, responded that they had kept a journal in the past. Over half of these, 64%, said journal-keeping was "fun." Two students responded with "sometimes," and the remaining students said it was not fun.

Since the number of students enjoying journals did not seem to me to be an overwhelming majority, I focused then on the content of those early journals. All of the 30 students who responded that journals were not fun, reported that they had kept lists or descriptions of daily events. I felt some consolation at this for our journal would not simply be a diary of daily events. I was sure our entries would be more enlightening and enjoyable. Students who responded favorably to keeping journals also mentioned they had kept diary-type entries, but they enjoyed writing entries about books, personal issues, stories, bad times, and assorted topics as well. This would be more like the journals they would keep in seventh grade--all of these subjects could be explored.

As a result of this initial survey on journal-keeping, I was very specific when discussing the journal guidelines with my students. I told them that they would be writing about a variety of issues. Our journals would go beyond simply recording daily events. I also reminded them that no matter what type of journal they had kept, or whether they had enjoyed it, this year's journal would be different for they were different people. They were now one year or several years older. They were in a new school with many more activities and life-experiences. They were at a time in their lives when they would begin to seriously test their limitations, beliefs, and goals. This journal would be unique. During class discussion, students contributed to these ideas and seemed to agree that this year's journal would indeed be different.

How were students responding at the beginning of the project?

After a comprehensive introduction of the journal assignment, including a brief history of writing and journal-keeping, the reading of sample journal entries, and the establishment of goals for journal writing, students were asked to write their first “official” entry—the topic: “What do you know about journals so far? What are your impressions and/or gripes? What are your expectations for this year’s journal?” As a teacher implementing what I hoped to be a successful study of using journals, I was pleased with the results. At this point the majority of students had a very positive attitude. I felt this was an important step since I was researching how journal writing affected students’ attitudes toward writing. How could their overall writing attitude be positively influenced if they had a negative attitude toward journals? Perhaps I would find that journal writing negatively affected students’ attitudes toward writing. That would be fair research, but I didn’t feel it would go that way. Several students had already approached me outside of class eager to have me read what they had written in their journals. After completing a short story in class and about to assign homework, several students suggested we write in our journals for homework. I was now predisposed to think positively about the project. However, as I began reading the assigned reflective entries, I tried to keep an open mind, but the results at this point corresponded to my bias. Every entry written on this topic, save one, contained some positive comments. (The negative journal writer thought that “any other thing in the world is better than journals except [his] brothers.” However, his entry had honest voice and effort. He received an A- for his first journal grade.)

Students shared both negative and positive remarks about writing in a journal, and many common themes and concerns emerged. These themes included format, grades, privacy, academic goals, affective values, and the issue of boredom.

What about format?

For this project the *format* of the journal included the types of entries that were written (assigned topics and freewrites) as well as page length requirements, the use of a title and heading, and the fact that all entries would be kept in a special notebook. Regarding the types of entries, several students wondered how keeping a journal would be different from keeping a diary: "I don't understand why people call these 'journals,' I mean, they should call these diaries." They felt that "a journal is basically like a diary." Many students had kept diaries, and they were familiar with their personal format: "Personally, I like diaries better. The reason I like diaries better is because I can write very personal things." Another girl wrote, "I have kept a lot of journals or as I call them, diaries. I used to write about boys I liked, my friends, my plans, what I had to do that day, what I wanted to do that day, where I went, how school was, how my homework was graded, and many other things."

The students who raised this issue were not negative about keeping a journal for English. In fact, having diary experience seemed to give these students a positive outlook on journal-keeping. Kari said, "I'm happy we are keeping a journal because I won't use the one at home, [a diary with a broken lock that my brother would read if he found it] . . . but here this will be in my locker or somewhere that only I could find it and read it." Karen wrote, "I am going to like this journal because it will be my own personal, private diary." Whether they called it a journal or a diary and whether they could differentiate between the two seemed irrelevant at this point. They were writing.

All students appeared to understand the guidelines of page length I had set for them. Some were not initially pleased with the one-page minimum for full credit: "I don't like this journal because we have to write a hole page and what if

you don't have that much to say?" or "I hate having to writeing a hole page." (However, this last student continued with "I think this journal is going to be fun.") On the other hand, several students were positive about the page length and pleased that this assignment had been given and would be graded: "I think English is a good way to make kids start writing in journals because writing in journals in English is an assignment and you have to do it and then kids will start thinking journals are fun to do."

What about grading?

I had explained that the evaluation of journals was based on quantity and effort. Students would turn in their journals every four to five weeks for a grade. And though some writing experts feel the grading of journals reduces the incentive to write, Daniel, one of my students, was delighted about receiving a grade: "This year journal writing sounds like it will actually be fun, and not only that but we get graded on it. So basically, all I have to do is write good topics about myself and I get an A for it." Elizabeth, a straight-A student, wrote, "This journal actually makes you work. 6th grade you didn't even get a grade so it was like doing it for no reason." Some were more resigned in their attitudes and wrote comments like "It won't be that bad I guess as long as I get a good grade." Since almost 90% of students who turned in a journal for the first grading period received a C or better (73% receiving A's), I am inclined to think that some students are simply writing because they will be graded. However, I think most school assignments are completed because of grades. Despite school reforms that advocate a no-grade policy, my students are still motivated, to some degree, by grades. This fact does not particularly bother me; I am pleased they are writing whatever the motivation.

How important was privacy?

A few students brought up the issue of privacy during this early entry. I re-question myself on this issue every year. What does privacy mean? What issues should they be able to discuss in their journals? Since I am going to read their entries, do students need to limit what they write? In the end, I encourage students to write personal entries on any topic with the assurance that I won't "tell their secrets" (unless required to by law or human decency), and I always present the "Don't Read" option. (Students can write "don't read" across the top of the page. They still get credit for writing, but I don't read the entry.) I expect they will sometimes write about their interest in the opposite sex, how horrible they think their parents are, or how much they detest a certain teacher (including me). These are all normal, seventh-grade issues. The students are more overwhelmed by their issues than I am. To them it's all new; to me it's commonplace. I have learned that gradually students do begin to trust me and their journals and write without fear of criticism or discovery.

However, some students need to deal with this issue in their heads before they commit themselves in writing. Amy, who had kept a journal in fifth and sixth grades, enjoyed writing journal entries but did not like sharing her entries as required by her previous teachers. She was also concerned about someone stealing and reading her journal. Another student commented that even though she liked journals in general, she did not like the class journal "because Mrs. Eastman reads it." In the end though, these concerns were very few. Most had little worry about privacy. As heard earlier, Kari felt this journal would be "safer" than the one at home since if her "brother found it no doubt about it, he would read it." Two more students were relieved of privacy concerns by the "don't read" option I had given. Judy thought she "might like keeping this journal because if we write don't read you

won't." Haley found that comforting as well: "If I don't want Ms. Eastman to read it, all I have to do is write it on the top of the page and she doesn't so I'm the only one who actually can read everything in my journal."

What about academic goals?

All students (well, perhaps not the one with brothers), recognized how the journal could help them in some way--academically (anything related to improved scholarship and/or cultural intelligence) and affectively (anything related to improved emotional and/or psychological well being). We had discussed these possibilities as a large group, so the ideas were fresh in their minds, but I was pleased students could apply the benefits to themselves. Several students mentioned penmanship as a goal for journal-keeping: "This is a great way to improve my handwriting because I have really bad handwriting." And "I'm glad that we have to do this for english class because I need to work on my penmanship so when I write a report or something It will look like a good paper." Improving writing skills and coming up with better topics or stories were two more benefits recognized by the students. Richard, who at this point "loves journals," thought they would provide a place to "practice writing, spelling, and punctuation." (Oh, I do hope so!)

What about affective benefits?

Affective benefits of keeping a journal were also mentioned by a majority of writers. Repeatedly students wrote about expressing their thoughts and feelings: "Journals are also a good way to keep private stuff in like if you got embarrassed in front of someone or like you like someone." Tara felt being able to write what she felt was "one of the main reasons" why she would like journal writing: "You can write all of your thoughts down without being criticized or picked on. Journals are

neat cause you can share your feelings. Also if you have any deep dark secrets that you'd like to tell someone you can write it in your journal." Journals were seen as a great place "to get stuff off [off] your mind or back. . . . For instance if you hate your science teacher. (I'm not saying I do.)" And students saw the journal as a safe place or a way to resolve issues without actual conflict: "I can express my feelings on paper and not get in trouble for what it is." Or "We can use our journal to take out our anger on." Journals were also appreciated because "it can't talk back to me and it can't laugh at me" and "it can't tell anybody." As Arthur wrote, "My journal is my own little world where anything can be said or happen."

Another major affective benefit repeatedly mentioned was the fact that the journal would be a record of their lives. "Journals are kind of like scrapbooks," said Tara. Anita agreed and wrote "I think that journals are important because you can remember about thing[s] that happened in the past." Being the first year of middle school, students were aware of the many changes and interests that would develop in their lives. Jake wrote "My impression of this year's journal is good because this is middle school now and lots of things could happen like boy meets girl." Looking back on the events of the past year was important to many students. Some knew they would look back at the end of the year. Abigail would look at hers when she was "like 16 or 17." Rachel kept a journal so when she married and had kids, she could "show it to them and laugh back at it." Chad hopes to share his with his grandchildren.

This idea of sharing past writings was already a reality for a few students. Millie and her mom "found her old diary and read it." Now she wants to be able to do that with her kids. Cathy felt journals are "interesting to look back on" and while reading her grandfather's journal was moved by an entry that began, "Today I drove past Memorial Cemetery. That is where I hope to be buried if I go before

Helen." I feel confident that students with these experiences will keep writing and save their journals for posterity. Hopefully, as Carol suggests, "people everywhere [will] keep journals forever and ever"

Would boredom set in?

The final major issue addressed in this reflective entry was boredom. The first direction in which this topic wandered was to be expected. The second, however, was a surprise. Of the students whose journal entries were examined on this topic, less than 10% mentioned the journal would be boring or perhaps a waste of time. In other words, the idea of writing regularly in a journal would not be interesting to them personally. However, all of these students qualified their statements with assurance that they would write entries if assigned. They were all able to understand the benefits of journal writing, but had reservations as well. They did not feel they would necessarily like the activity.

The second and surprising position regarding boredom was also expressed by roughly 10% of the writers. These students noted that writing in their journals was a way to *relieve* boredom. Here the journal would be an interesting diversion. Maria and Mark agreed that "Sometimes if your board and you have nothing to do you can write a page in your journal." Or "when you have no one to talk to you can wright in your journal." (We completed a necessary review unit on homonyms after the first journal collection--I hope it helped.) Jerry liked to make up stories if he has "left over time." He stated: "My favorit places to write are in a very quite place like my bedroom, outside, in my basement or in my treehouse. . . . I think writing is cool because it gives kids something to do over summer vacation." For Patrick, the journal provided him with an activity when bored in class: "If you want time to go fast for any class you hate write in your journal it really goes by fast."

Kelvin (and probably his parents as well) was pleased that the journal will give him "something else to do besides watching T.V." I hoped the journal would influence these students' lives as they had predicted. If so, then the experience will have been valuable, the learning will have been internalized and applied to their lives.

Overall, I was pleased with our beginning. A few students, like Phillip and Elise, were changing their views of journal writing even as they wrote. Phillip commented, "I use to think that it [journal writing] was for girls I don't like wrighting because I'm so slow at [it, but] it feels ok. It's realy not that bad as I thought it was. I was making a big fuss out of nothing." Elise wrote, "I thought I would not like writing in a journal at first but I guess I was wrong. It's fun!" (For the second collection of journals, Elise wrote 38 entries, only five of which were assigned.) Kelvin was already planning to keep a journal next year and Elizabeth thought this year's journal "is going to be cool. It actually makes English exciting to look forward too."

To end this section I must quote from Nathan's journal. His entry seemed so reflective of the majority of students' impressions of journal writing at the beginning of this research project. His comments sounded sincere, and I genuinely hope he reaped the benefits he anticipated.

During grade school I have kept journals (against my will). My previous journals were required by my teachers. I didn't like them much although in those journals I kept track of what I did that day, it was boring. This journal though seem different because it lets me write about my opinions and such. My previous journals were like "What did you read today" and "My 1,000,000 favorite thing about school. I think another reason I already like this journal [is] because I have to write a page, before I could get by with a paragraph. I guess being required to write a full page helps me or rather forces me to write and I'm begining to like it. Writing in this journal will help me to spell (oops) better, write neater (sorry), and better writing skills in general. I think this journal will be fun.

January 20, 1997—Analysis at Mid-year

After writing in their journals for over four months, I asked students to reflect on their journal experience: “Look back through your journal. How is it going? What grades have you received? Write about your favorite entry so far. Has your journal influenced your life in any way personally or academically? Have any of your thoughts or opinions changed since you first began writing in your journal? Journals will be assigned for the remainder of the year. Will you make it? Are you accomplishing any of your goals from the cover page?”

This seemed an exhaustive list of questions, but I was hoping for some real answers to my question of how does journal writing affect students’ attitudes toward writing. For the majority, the response to keeping journals was again positive. They felt their journals were “going pretty well.” Stuart wrote, “I like writing in my journal a lot!” (The dark exclamation point was his.) Alex still felt it was “Arch Deluxe,” and Krystal thought “journals are one of the fun parts of middle school English.” For several students the journal writing experience improved with time. Their attitudes toward the journal were more positive. Jolene, for example, “didn’t like a journal at first,” but now she “loves” writing in it. The students’ detailed responses to this mid-year topic continued to develop the themes from the first reflective entry. The issues of length, grades, academic improvements, affective benefits, and privacy appeared again. Personal goals were being accomplished and other influences were recognized.

Are you writing a full page?

As expected, a few students still did not like the required page length and used this opportunity to bring that to my attention. Alvin wanted to only write a paragraph because his hand “gets very tired.” Gerald felt this journal wasn’t “going

too well” because he could “never seem to get a full page.” And while a few students were still struggling to meet the one-page minimum, many more students were excelling in the length of their entries. At first Polly did not think she could “write a hole page just on one topic, but since [she] got used to it, it was not so hard.” “At the beginning of the year,” Brett wrote, “I only wrote maybe a little more then a half of a page. From then on I have been getting the hang of it and starting to write full pages.” Kay agreed, and all of Myra’s journal entries, by her account, were “at least a page long.”

Students indicated that the process was getting “easier” as the practice of journal writing continued. Nathan increased his length from 1 page to 1 1/2 pages, and Jake and Joanna stated they usually wrote two pages each time an entry was assigned. In fact, most students were meeting the minimum page requirements. It was taking me much longer to grade the journals with each collection due to the length of students’ entries. Though the evaluation process was time consuming, I felt the writing practice was beneficial. If during writing time someone would say he “was done,” I would remind him to keep writing, to think of something else, to add more details. I felt then that I was “forcing” them to write, but they were getting more practice, and this practice seemed to carry over into their other writing projects. Rough drafts of essays were more clearly developed with ideas and details. When I assigned a minimum word length for two projects, many students asked if it was all right to have more words. Absolutely! Hatch (1991), Graves and Stuart (1985), and Murray (1989) all argue that students need as many opportunities to write as possible. That is exactly what I was trying to provide. And though the connection was circumstantial at best, to me, this journal experience suggested that students had an easier time with formal writing projects because of the writing practice completed in the journals.

In response to the question of continuing to write in their journals for the full year, most replied that they would. And though two students indicated they thought writing in a journal was sometimes boring, they would continue to do it. Some questioned whether or not they would fill a notebook, but several were already using a second notebook. A few students mentioned that they were looking forward to having accomplished so much writing. As Elizabeth wrote, "It would be really cool if it [the journal notebook] were totally filled."

Those students filling notebooks were doing much writing on their own time outside of school. However, a great deal of the writing was assigned in class. Though the concentration level during in-class writing remarkably improved as the year progressed, a few students were still struggling with the problem of staying on task when writing in the classroom setting. Roger wrote, "My journal is fun to write in when I am by myself, but when there's a lot of people around it starts to bother me and I can't stay on track." Roger clearly demonstrates his need to practice "reflective writing in the desert island mode" of Elbow and Clarke (1987, p. 28). He needed more practice writing for himself by himself. Naturally a student with a wayward attention, Roger was only partly successful when writing in the classroom. Most students, however, were mastering the ability to focus on their writing within the classroom situation. And it was here that I could physically see the writing process occurring. When entries were begun in class, they were more often than not completed by the student. If an entry was assigned from start to finish as homework, those entries were less often finished. Nevertheless, the overall quantity of writing done was enormous and increasing. But were they simply writing more because it improved their grade?

Were they writing just for grades?

Grades continued to be an important motivator to some students. As unfortunate as this may seem theoretically, it was still a reality for students in my class. And not because *I* overemphasized grades, but because our entire school system still focuses on grades. On a daily basis students were interested in receiving credit for their participation, effort, and completion of assignments. The journal assignment wasn't any different in that respect. Though I feel journals have a value beyond grades, many students were simply proud of the grades they had received. Theo wrote, "I benefitted a lot from doing these journal entries . . . because this helps out my grade because I'm doing pretty good in this." For some students, journals provided the best grades they had earned in any subject in school. Through journal writing students with poor academic records demonstrated sincere, concentrated effort. This was their best work.

The option of extra credit was a benefit to students' grades as well. The opportunity to write extra credit journal entries was available the entire year, and more and more students began taking advantage of it. Their extra entries primarily consisted of freewrites, but they were reflective, honest examples of effort in writing, and students had a sense of control over their academic grade.

But there were reasons for writing beyond the need for a good grade. Simon wrote pages and pages of entries about *professional* wrestling. *I* question the professionalism of this wild, overly-colorful, media-hyped sport, but Simon loves it! And so he writes in his "journal not only that Mrs. Eastman makes us [but] because it's like telling someone a story or districption [description]." Many other students described their experience in writing in journals as "fun." And though this seemed a trite word, for a seventh grader, it was a positive comment. (I did get the infamous "I think journals suck" response from one student, and a handful of her classmates

probably agree; however, the vast majority were positive about keeping a journal. And even this student earned an *A* on her journal. Perhaps she was simply having a bad day?) For most students, this “fun” assignment was giving them many opportunities to practice writing.

Did the “fun” also produce quality?

Yet beyond the quantity, the quality of writing was affected. Several students indicated that they felt their writing skills were improving through journal use. Better words were being chosen, and ideas were being presented more clearly. Students like Sharon “learned to write for a long period of time without stopping.” I believe these skills were being applied to other English writing assignments. The writing expert Tom Liner (1981) found “the journal to be the most effective tool for establishing fluency” (p. 45). I believe him. It was happening here in my classroom. The journal process was working! Students were writing longer, better papers. And they were having fun in the process.

What about topics?

I believe some of the “fun” of keeping a journal stemmed from the variety of topics assigned. When responding to which entry was their favorite, over 20 different topics were suggested. Freewriting was especially popular. Students enjoyed writing about their personal lives, their own topics, their moments of crisis or joy. Nonetheless, many of the assigned topics were also well liked. Writing about their lives in the future, recording the words to their favorite song, telling about Christmas in their household, foretelling their life as a teacher, discussing their present or past pets, or listing 100 things they hoped to accomplish in their lifetimes were prevalent among the favorites. Though I have asked myself why I

don't simply save time by allowing all freewrites (I wouldn't have to come up with new topics and write them on the board), I must say I enjoy the mix my current system provides. I also feel it is necessary to present students with some divergent thinking activities. Academically students need to be able to express themselves on a variety of issues. In general they were successful with the mix of assigned and freewrite options.

More affective benefits?

Now remember the student "having a bad day"? She is an example of how the freewriting option provided an *affective* rather than an academic benefit to students. In fact, many students realized the emotional advantage of having the journal as an outlet for expressing their feelings. Expressing personal feelings had been a popular goal for keeping a journal. They were using the journal to complain, to release frustration, to share secrets, and to proclaim pride in their daily accomplishments. Sally thought the journal was a good idea because "people can say what they want (almost) and not get in trouble, or for me, not get teased about dragons." (Sally is a dragon fanatic, and her classmates tend to tease. She is a good sport about it, however.) Abby wrote that if she needed to talk to someone, but no one was available, she would write in her journal. Tracy felt relief when she could express her anger. Veronica liked to tell her journal her personal problems. Krystal wrote that she used to keep her "emotions and feelings inside, but it has changed." She thought her journal "helps a lot." It has made her "more comfortable to write more personal things." Anita was happy to have her journal because without one she'd be "blabbing all of [her] interpersonal thoughts to the world. That would be bad." Lydia wrote, "My journal has let me tell someone my feelings a couple of times and I could also go back and review my problems that I had hopefully gotten

rid of.” Theo expressed his feelings by “showing excitement and sorrow” when he wrote an entry. These students were learning to express themselves in writing and by writing. And they were fully aware that this was happening and beneficial. They appreciated having this format for expression available.

What about the privacy issue?

And despite personal issues, no student expressed concern at this point about lack of privacy with the teacher reading the entries. A few students were exercising their right of “Don’t Read” entries, but they did not neglect writing entries for fear of discovery. Trudy phrased it well: “I think [journal writing] is fun because nobody else is reading it but the teacher. Some people think that a teacher reading your journal is worse than a kid but it’s not. Kids are immature. Teachers are mature and they won’t tell anyone.” I was reassured that I was not invading their right to privacy. The balance between encouraging personal, reflective writing while reading and evaluating the journals seemed to be achieved.

Any other goals—creativity, penmanship, a record?

Many students felt they were accomplishing their goal of being creative. Sally, the dragon buff, was still working on a story she had begun first quarter. Anthony filled his journal with the ongoing commentaries of Anthony and Cecil, two imaginary critics who voiced their opinions on a variety of silly topics. Excellent sports stories, lines of thoughtful poetry, and wanderings of wild imaginations all appeared in the journals.⁹ A few students used these “starts” for

⁹ Of special note was the entry on “What would you do if you discovered a potion to make you invisible for 24 hours?” Students came up with many ingenious notions. A few thought they might try theft and the harassment of their friends and family by mysteriously throwing objects across rooms, but one student wanted to go to a professional game and help the team win. Alex wanted to visit a closed courtroom hearing, and several thought boarding an airplane for a desired destination would be a clever trick. One student even gave a *practical* thought to sneaking into school and changing her grades.

polished works. One student even entered a writing contest with a journal piece and was awarded an honorable mention. I was certain the poetry ideas would reappear during our class poetry unit. And Elizabeth thought she “probably will use some of these ideas in the future.”

The goal of improving penmanship was brought up several times but with less positive results. Veronica and Kay thought their handwriting was improving. Kay wrote, “I think more and watch what I am doing.” A few students, however, felt their penmanship had deteriorated. Nathan noticed his current handwriting “was much sloppier than in [his] other entries.” But he went on to explain that he believed that to be so because he was in a hurry to get all of his ideas down on the page. Since that is the primary purpose in writing, to get the ideas down, I excused the sloppy handwriting. Marty also felt his handwriting was less neat, but he was using cursive more often than before. Elizabeth was impressed with the success of her journal because she began “actually writing in pen for an assignment.” This may seem very trivial in the grand scheme of education, but to Elizabeth it was an important success and validated the use of the journal for her. In the course of reviewing the journals, the penmanship was indeed varied. When students were writing quickly just to finish, their work was sloppy. When they were discussing a topic they truly cared for, their work was neat. Often the penmanship was an indication of the student's mood at the time of writing.

Another issue mentioned by several students was the goal of keeping a record. They felt they were successfully accomplishing this goal as well. They were keeping a record of life in seventh grade and were enjoying the possibility of looking back on this journal in the years to come. Even at this point, only a few months after the beginning, Janet wrote, “I looked back into my journal and it is going well. I think I have wrote a lot of cool entries. Some of them I enjoyed reading.” Lydia

wrote that the journal influenced her life because she "can remember stuff" that she did in the past. Elizabeth planned to look at her journal this summer and "laugh and say how much I have improved on writing and by how fun seventh grade was." And Dolores still had plans to show it to her children. I found it encouraging that they were able to apply this activity to their lives beyond the classroom. The journals seemed to be a valuable tool in creating life-long learners.

Any other influences?

In addition to looking back on entries, students' lives were influenced by the journal in other ways. For example, several students mentioned they enjoyed writing about their personal lives so much that they were or would be keeping additional journals or diaries at home. Myra may keep a journal as an adult "just for the fun of it." (I hope she does.) She also transferred the journal format to her interest in art: "Another kind of journal I would like to keep would be like a picture journal where I would keep all my drawings. That would be really fun." Dolores wished journals would be used "in more classes besides this one. At my old school," she wrote, "we use to write in journals and I still have my journals."

Derek felt his life was influenced by his favorite journal entry. He wrote, "My favorite journal entry so far would probably have to be 'In the Future' because now that I have written my expectations for myself in life, I can live up to them and become what I have written. My journal has influenced me by giving me something to live up to." From what I knew of Derek and his family, I believed Derek was sincere in this writing despite the fact that most seventh graders do not appear to be so clearly aware of the future, nor do they so clearly express themselves regarding it. It was ironic that Derek had begun this reflective entry by commenting that he thought journals were "dumb" and "a waste of time." However, having

been “forced” to write, he realized some things that certainly were not dumb or a waste of time.

What were the connections with thinking and the teacher?

The theories that writing is thinking and we discover what we think by writing were demonstrated here with Derek’s entry. Several other students verified this process as well. Abigail wrote, “When I’m writing in my journal I guess I get some good ideas about how to organize my life.” Stuart also felt that his journal entries helped him express his thoughts and what he was “thinking about at that time.” Even though Alex did not feel the journal had influenced his life (in retrospect, I think *influence* is too vague a concept for seventh grade), he thought journal writing “is writing your thoughts.” Lydia felt she had “expanded her mind” and could “remember more stuff” due to writing in her journal. Sally wrote, “Since we first started a journal, I didn’t really think of much to say, but now I can think of a lot to say.” Writing was indeed being demonstrated as a process of self discovery. Adelstein and Pival (1980) suggested this would happen. For these students, writing gave shape to their thoughts, helped them figure out who they were, and what they thought. As Vygotsky and writing scholars maintain, writing is thinking on paper. The more students wrote, the clearer issues became in their heads.

For many, written expression became clearer. Marilyn, however, also felt journals helped her with verbal expression: “I do express myself more whether it is in words on paper or straight out of my mouth.” She felt the writing process went beyond simply improving her written communication. She was now a more confident speaker. Indeed, many students allowed the journal process to go beyond their own world of written communication for self. There was interaction with me, the teacher. Though not a direct question posed for this reflective entry, several

students commented on or demonstrated the affective benefit of increased student/teacher communication. Millie wrote that she "likes to see the comments written in it [the journal]." Yes, those comments take a long time, but I was glad to see they were worth it. One student, who regularly wrote questions for me to answer, recently signed her name at the side of the page and drew a dashed line around it with instructions for me to cut it out and save it until she became famous. She wanted me to have her signature, which would be worth lots of money then, of course. I did cut it out and tacked it to the bulletin board behind my desk. With another student, I had an ongoing conversation regarding what we would be planting in our respective gardens in the spring. I sympathized with students when their pets died. I congratulated on accomplishments or the arrival of new siblings. I encouraged them to be patient and understanding.

Responding took many hours. And as the discussions continued, I felt obligated to read all the entries because I would have hated to miss some comment or question tucked in between lines of baseball plays or tidbits of seventh-grade gossip. I did not pretend or intend to be an advice column writer, nor did the students expect this. Generally they were writing to express themselves. I simply responded in a human fashion and they looked forward to that response. Sometimes I learned more about their lives than I cared to, but I think perhaps that kept me in touch with their personalities, their interests and how seventh graders think. This in turn made me a better teacher.

It was clear to me that even by this time in the year, the journals were affecting the students thinking and writing processes. They were realizing the academic benefits of being able to write longer papers, becoming more skilled writers, and expressing themselves on a variety of topics. They were realizing the affective benefits of disclosing their feelings, being creative, creating a record for the

future, and communicating with the teacher. They were writing because it was "fun."

Was journal writing affecting students' attitudes toward writing?

And addressing my main question, I did believe journal writing was affecting their attitudes toward writing. Krystal was more comfortable writing personal ideas. Brett's attitude toward journal writing had improved over time. He wrote, "At first I didn't really understand and didn't really like them [journal entries], but now since I have been doing them so often I kinda got use to them." Perhaps Abby said it best with "I think having this journal helped me to express my feelings better and to like writing more. I used to hate writing but now it's not so bad."

At this point the journal was having a positive effect on students' attitudes toward writing. More and more students were approaching me with rough drafts or final copies to say "This is the best writing I've ever done!" "I really like this piece." "This is a cool assignment you've given." "Look how far I am!" "Look how long this is." "I'm going to revise this again so it's perfect, but what do you think?" "Read this for me." Could all this be attributed to journal writing? That was hard to say. I believed that much of it could be attributed to journal writing, however. The repeated practice, the chance for simple and varied expression, and the reward of good grades all allowed for success in writing. Used in this way, for my students, journals were improving students' attitudes toward writing.

June 3, 1997—Final Data Collection

The end of the year was here. The class journal project and this thesis project was coming to an end. Today would be the final attempt to gather information from the students. With a sense of uncertainty that I had not accomplished as much with this project as I would have liked, and with a sense of relief that I could soon be finished with this project, I explained the day's activity. Students were asked to complete a final reflective writing in their journals. The instructions were as follows: "Look back through your journal. Reflect on the process of journal writing this year. How did you like it? Did you accomplish your goals? Do you think your attitude toward writing improved because of journal writing? Which was your favorite entry and which was your worst entry? Did journals affect your English grade? Did journals influence your life? How do you feel about accomplishing this much writing?" I gave students extra time for reflection, and we completed the entry in class.

The vast majority of students still responded favorably to journal writing. They had "fun" and enjoyed the chance to express their feelings and be creative. There were yet a few who felt that journal writing was boring and a waste of time, but even these students could point out goals they had accomplished. They had kept a record of seventh grade. They had expressed their feelings. They now wrote longer entries and had improved their grades. They also had a few entries to call their favorites.

Was the writing practice beneficial?

Throughout this final reflective entry, both academic benefits and affective benefits continued to be recognized. The required length of one page only bothered a few students at this point. And it wasn't that they couldn't write one page; it was

that they had difficulty when they felt they had nothing to say on an assigned topic. They were able to meet the page requirement when freewriting.

More students, however, indicated that journal writing had given them the practice necessary to be comfortable writing longer works. The journal entries themselves were getting longer, and, as Joanna indicated, this was carrying over into other writing assignments: "I find it easier to write a full page on anything now than I did before. Now it's not like, 'Oh, my gosh, a whole page!' Now it's like, 'Oh, one page? That's it?' So my attitude has changed." Kay used to think 300 words was a lot, but "it's not as bad now." Emmett wrote, "But I think I'm having improvement since the beginning of the year. In the beginning of the year I couldn't write our 350 words on a report, but now it is getting easier." Many others agreed, and Nathan thinks he's even writing more on his free time. In fact, several students indicated they would be keeping journals over the summer. When I asked one student if she needed her journal notebook returned before school ended, she told me she had already purchased another one for her summer writing! They were quite proud of the amount of writing they had accomplished and motivated to write even more on their own time. One student even indicated that she wished I had been "more strict" about journal entries being completed because she felt she "missed out on some cool entries."

These students were demonstrating what the writing experts claimed would happen. The frequent writing practice increased students' competence, fluency, and proficiency. Phillip thought journals might have helped him with his writing speed: "I am wrighting a little faster now then I was before I started to wright in this journal." And Trent could now "just breeze through a page of writing like that." He continued with, "My attitude toward writing is very positive and I thought that I could never do a page of writing as fast as I do now, I just go line to line by the

second. I think this is a fun activity.” By this time in the year, only a small number of students could not yet fill a page in fifteen minutes. And though not everything on that completed page was quality, simply having a full page gave some students the sense of accomplishment necessary to finish other writing assignments successfully. The journal was proving to be an “effective tool for establishing fluency” (Liner, 1981, p. 45). And because of practice and the quantity of writing completed, several students also mentioned their penmanship had improved. Elizabeth indicated again her success in using an ink pen.

Were grades still a motivating factor?

The quantity of writing also influenced journal grades and students’ overall English course grades. Several students honestly indicated that they did complete the journal assignment because their grade was somewhat dependent upon it. This still remains a controversial issue; however, students completing the journal assignments were getting more writing practice and were genuinely better writers than those who failed to complete the assignment. Those struggling with journals were invariably struggling with formal writing assignments as well. Even students who completed extra credit entries simply because they needed points were more successful writers. Many students indicated they appreciated the opportunity to write extra entries. Not only did these entries count for grades, but they were interesting.

What about quality and creativity?

In addition to quantity, improved quality of writing was again recognized. Many students felt their overall writing had improved. Lydia “learned how to put things in order and learned to have examples and details more often.” Veronica

thought her journal had improved her "writing skills and techniques." Ernie felt he accomplished his goal of improving his writing "by using more sophisticated words and better sentence structure." Nick "got better at writing and spelling." For many of these students, I could see their writing had improved. And perhaps more importantly, *they* felt their writing had improved. That seemed crucial. For if students *think* they are writing better, will not they indeed write better, and more, and more often?

And though Abigail doubted that her journal would help her to spell words correctly, she did feel she had had the opportunity to be creative in her journal. Many students agreed. Anthony continued to be creative with his alternating Anthony and Cecil voices continuously giving their bizarre opinions on any given subject. Robby felt he could write better stories and poems now. Stuart had improved his "true sport stories" and plans to "keep them in mind for like high school or college." And Myra "learned to like to write poetry more." Some of this creativity stemmed from the assigned writings: "Suppose you invent a potion to make you invisible," "Imagine yourself in 20 years," "Reflect on the field trip," "Modernize a traditional fairy tale," "Imagine yourself as the tour guide at the museum." And while these topics were mentioned as the favorites for some students, another set of students mentioned these as their worst topics. The theory that instruction should be individualized is apparent here. Not everyone liked the same thing. Journals allowed for plenty of variety. Eventually, and usually quite quickly, students found choices they could be successful with. They also quickly learned to alter the topic if it was not precisely assigned as they would have wished. They realized I was more interested in their writing effort than being precise with topic details. This allowed for even more creativity.

Were students still deriving affective benefits?

The mix of assigned and freewrites gave most students the opportunity to practice creativity and expression on assigned topics while still allowing for plenty of personal reflection time. They enjoyed complaining, song copying, and discussing boys and sports. The affective benefit of being able to express one's feeling without repercussion was mentioned by the majority of students in their reflective entry. Even students who held a negative view of journals recognized this as a benefit. "The good thing about it is that you get to talk about your problems. You can express your feelings about something that you do not like." Angela wrote: "I liked it because I really expressed my angry feelings in it and it was like talking to someone about it. I especially liked that it didn't talk back." Jane felt her journal sometimes helped her sort out her feelings. And Abby appreciated having a place to write things down that she couldn't tell anyone about. Stephen supported this with, "Journal writing made me write a lot of things I would not even talk with my family members, and tell story's of my life as a child." Ned wrote: "I like this journal writing. It gives me a chance to say what I wanna say about life and school." Clearly the students recognized the benefits of being able to express themselves.

Other influences?

Did journal writing influence their lives? I used that big word again—*influence*, but I tried to explain it a little more this time. More students seemed to grasp the idea and indicated that their journals had influenced their lives somehow. Colleen liked writing in her journal when she had no one to talk to, and she felt journals helped her to be more open about her feelings. She would write about a topic in her journal and then discuss it with her family or friends. Ned felt his "outlook on life seemed better" because if he had a bad day, he could "blow off

some steam by writing” in his journal. Jolene too felt journals had influenced her life: “when ever I’m really pissed off I write in my journal. And it make me feel better. It’s like I’m talking to someone about my problems.” And though students did their fair share of complaining, there were many positive events and feelings recorded: great parties, new romances, success in sports, plans for the summer, favorite pets, and beloved family members. Jake, for example, was able to “brag about something” he had received or his recent “excellent weekend.”

Many students also felt the journal was an influence because it would serve as a record of their lives. Janet would keep hers to show her children. Millie agreed and reflected again how much she enjoyed her mother’s diary from when she was sixteen. Theo thought it would be “cool” to look back and see what he wrote about. Myra wrote, “I kind of feel good about all this writing because when I’m an adult, (and I’ll forget most things) I could just go and read my journal. It’ll give me a sense of what my childhood is like.” Joanna was more specific and was excited about having a record about “guys.” Numerous students recognized having this record as a benefit of journal writing. And those students who indicated that they would be keeping journals over the summer because of this year’s experience had also been influenced. They would continue creating a record of their lives. I would not be there to assign entries; they were doing this on their own. Karen clearly stated: “My journal has influenced me to write when I have the chance or makes me want to write in a diary or something.”

Are thinking and teachers still connected?

Keeping journals also continued to influence students’ thinking. The idea that writing is thinking on paper was again being demonstrated. Krystal felt she had met her goal of improved thinking through writing in her journal. Millie wrote,

"Journals have also helped the way I think. I know that sounds weird, but ever since we started to do journals my mind sort of expands because it makes me remember things." Obviously Millie has not read Vygotsky (1987) or Liner (1981) or Fulwiler (1987) because her experience was not *weird* at all. Many students had experienced the same thing. Myra felt she was thinking harder because of journal writing, and Cathy felt journals helped her think things through. The experts maintain that writing and thinking are interrelated processes. My students were experiencing this process.

And beyond their own thinking, the benefit of teacher/student benefit was again recognized. Janet appreciated me answering her questions and was amused when I drew happy faces. Sasha also appreciated communicating in writing with me. The fill-in-the-blanks continued as did the gardening dialogue. I became the editor of a developing fantasy story and a good listener for a shy girl's early interest in boys.

Were students' attitudes toward writing affected?

Answering the question of whether their attitude toward writing improved because of journal writing, there was a broad range of responses. A few students felt their attitude had gotten worse. These students had been more positive at the mid-year point. And though the journal experience is not guaranteed to work for every student, just as I felt the strain of the ending year, perhaps the students felt it as well. Were these few students simply tired of this project? In reviewing their written material, I believed their writing skills had improved and they had accomplished many of their goals. They seemed to have difficulty recognizing this for the reflective entry, however. Several students felt their attitude had remained the same, either they hadn't liked writing from the beginning of the year and this hadn't

helped, or they simply had enjoyed writing all along.

The majority of students, however, indicated their attitude had improved because of journal writing. They enjoyed the journal writing experience more now than at the beginning of the year. They were able to write faster and more. They felt they were better writers overall. "I also used to hate to write and wasn't good about putting sentences together. I think that improved a little," wrote Colleen. Theo thought his attitude had "changed drastically for writing" since the beginning of the year. Martha thought her attitude had improved and she was now more "relaxed" about writing. Warren wrote, "I have learned sometimes writing can be a little fun and interesting as long as I get to pick what I want to write about. I think my attitude towards writing has improved." (Yes, yes, yes!) Richard also felt this way: "My attitude toward writing has changed a lot. I like writing a lot more than I did in the beginning of the year."

Many students were so impressed with their new attitudes and writing accomplishments that they offered advice and expressed hopes for next year. Many hoped they would have journals in eighth grade. Martha and Richard want to "keep writing them all through high school and all through college." Several recommended that I continue to assign journals to upcoming seventh graders. Maria thought I should assign entries to write every day. Stephen wrote, "that you (Mrs. Eastman) should keep on doing the good work with these journals. You don't know, somebody might be a writer in the future."

At the other end of the notebook, so to speak, a couple of students felt the journal project needed restructuring. Annette commented that if I had graded on "perfection" in the journals, her writing skills might have improved even more. Ned recommended removing journal guidelines: "I don't think it should have guidelines. If you have nothing to write about, why should you strain yourself to

try and write something you don't even care about." I thanked these students for their comments and assured them I would consider their ideas.

However, in the meantime, I was pleased with the way the project had progressed. And so was Elizabeth: "Anyway journal writing has been a good experience and I am very glad that I got a chance to do it." For Martha, journals were her "favorite." And Stuart ended with: "The final comment that I have is to thank you for having us keep journals because I'm sure that everyone really improved their spelling, punctuation, and even their writing skills."

June 4, 1997—Survey Analysis

There is nothing to write about, you say. Well, then, write and let me know just this,—that there *is* nothing to write about; or tell me in the good old style if you are well. That's right. I am quite well.

—Pliny the Younger (61-105)

On Tuesday during the last full week of school, I administered the attitude survey. (See Appendix E.) I was anxious for the results and finally feeling that this thesis project would soon be completed. After collecting this data, I would now be able complete the writing. I would no longer have an excuse to procrastinate. So, putting on my “nice teacher” attitude, I passed the papers to the students. After a brief explanation, students began filling out the surveys.

Due to absences (extreme cases of spring fever, no doubt), only 109 students completed the survey. Though students were eager for the last day of school to arrive (with a few verbally objecting to any form of work), I feel most answered the questions thoughtfully and honestly. Students were not required to put their names on the surveys. This may or may not have contributed to the validity of the responses. I did feel, however, that the behavior and approach to this task was typical of this particular group of seventh graders.

Did the data agree?

In general, the survey results corroborated the evidence gathered from student journals and my own observations. By a simple tallying of the agree/disagree statements the survey indicated the majority of students agreed with the following statements: It is fun to write in a journal, I learn more about writing by practicing writing, I am now able to write longer entries in my journal, Writing in a journal has improved my writing skills, I enjoy expressing my ideas in writing, I have come up with some good writing ideas this year, Writing in my journal has

had a positive influence on my attitude toward writing in general, I am proud of the writing I have accomplished in my journal, and I am proud of most of the writing assignments I have completed this year. Almost half of the students were glad I had asked them to write in a journal this year, and because of journal writing, they felt more confident in their writing ability. All of these ideas had been expressed in the reflective entries.

The open-ended questions provided additional information about students' attitudes and confirmed the results of the agree/disagree statements. I categorized the surveys into three groups: overall positive attitude, overall negative attitude, and ambivalent attitude (those containing a mix of negative and positive responses). The majority, 75%, of the surveys fell into the positive or ambivalent categories. This corresponded with the other data. Most students were positive about journal writing and recognized the benefits of this activity. The best thing about keeping a journal for these students was being able to express feelings and writing whatever they wanted. The popularity of freewriting was evident here. Typical responses included "You can get a lot of stuff off your mind," "You can express your feelings openly without criticism," "The journal is a friend you could tell all your feelings to," and "I get to tell everything that happened and not keep it in." Other best things about journal writing included creating a record and that it was an easy assignment: "It's way better than a worksheet—it's easy."

The worst thing about journal writing for some was the difficulty in writing about some assigned topics: "You have to write a whole page. Sometimes I like to keep my thoughts short," or "I can't think of things to write down." Other objections included writer's cramp, the fear of losing the journal and having someone else read it, and the distractions that occurred when people whispered or fidgeted during in-class writing time. A few students also mentioned that it was

boring and that it took a long time. These comments usually coincided with not enjoying the assigned topics. On the positive side, one student felt the worst thing about journal writing was having only fifteen minutes of class time in which to write, and another wanted more paper in his journal.

The positive student opinions about writing in a journal ran from "It's O.K." to "It's fun if you have something to write about" to "It improves my penmanship and takes no effort. I enjoy it very much" and "They are a good thing to have. I hope the seventh graders have them next year." The majority of students valued the journal project. There was also evidence that students' general attitude toward writing had been positively affected through journal writing. One student wrote, "I don't like writing, but I like it more now and it's easier than before I had a journal." Another student liked writing because "it is fun to see how creative you can be." Of course, several students stated directly that they did not like writing or thought it was boring. Some had resigned themselves to completing the task, but that did not mean they would enjoy it. A few indicated they did not mind writing, but did not like the fact that it was assigned. Anything remotely related to homework did not appeal to them. More students, however, appreciated being able to express their feelings and enjoyed writing when they could choose their own topics.

Many students made discoveries about themselves through journal writing. Several indicated that they "complained a lot." (Most seventh graders do, don't they?) Others felt they had been creative and were good writers: "I'm a good writer. I can express my feelings, and I have improved from the beginning of the year." And still others realized that they could complete writing assignments if they "put their mind to it." And some students even realized that seventh-grade "problems are not as bad as they seem." The affective benefits of being able to express oneself and increased confidence with writing assignments were dominant themes.

Journal writing had been an influence by allowing some students to work through problems on paper rather than directly confronting others. "It made me feel better," and "Writing is better than blaming it on someone." Colleen felt her journal helped her solve problems by putting them "down on paper and getting suggestions from you [the teacher]." A few were encouraged to write more, faster, and better: "More ideas come to my head quicker and easier than when I didn't have a journal." And several recognized the benefit of being able to write extra credit entries that improved their English grades. One student even was influenced by "not wasting time on the T.V. or on the phone." She had spent more time actively writing.

Students indicated they had accomplished several goals set for themselves in the journal. Again a dominant idea was the opportunity to express feelings. Keeping a life record was important as well as improving writing skills and penmanship. Several students also felt they had accomplished the goal of being creative and were able to use their imaginations more.

What about the negative responses?

Of the 25% who predominantly responded negatively to writing and journal-keeping, over 80% were students who earned English course grades of D or F. They did not like writing in general, nor did they excel at school in general. Despite these factors, however, these students were able to understand the point of journal writing and the benefits a student might derive from writing in a journal. They acknowledged they had at times "expressed their feelings" and "gathered their thoughts" in their journals, and for some, their writing had improved. They were able to write for longer periods and produce more writing. Journal writing was perceived to be easier than worksheets. And though it might be boring, a few felt

they could accomplish the task if they tried. Most had favorite entries, some freewrites, some assigned topics.

So, despite spring fever and the heat of a classroom with no windows, the survey was accomplished successfully and disclosed valid information. Obviously the journal project was not working for some students. And though I still feel the journal is a tool that has the potential of reaching all levels of students from any background, these few students were not inspired by it. To a certain extent this information, to me, proved that the entire group of students participating in this study was representative of a greater population of seventh graders. In a public school setting, there are often a few unmotivated students who decline to be educated no matter what strategies are used. I believe these same students were the ones most dissatisfied with the journal project.

Nevertheless, the journal activity was effective for many more students. They enjoyed freewriting, created a life record, worked through emotional dilemmas, advanced their writing skills, and improved their attitude toward writing.

June 13, 1997—Discussion

Then, rising with Aurora's light,
The muse invoked, sit down to write.
—Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

So here I must write, record, discuss what all the combined data means to me. Like Burniske (1994) I have not taught all there is to know about writing to this group of seventh-grade students, but I do feel that some have been encouraged to write more than they did before their experience with our journal project. And though I still experienced pressure when collecting over 100 journals for grading, the results of this study have confirmed that I will assign journals again next year.

As indicated, many themes and issues emerged from the analysis of the data: topic choice, format, fluency, creativity, quality of writing, penmanship, grades, expression of feelings, thinking skills, creation of a record, and student/teacher communication. All of these themes had some impact on how journals affect students' attitudes toward writing. For clarity, the results of this study can be compiled into three broader categories: academic (issues related to improved scholarship, cultural intelligence, or school achievement), personal (issues related to the individual including affective benefits), and social (issues that influenced interactions with others). These categories, of course, overlap and blend. That is part of the effectiveness of journal writing. However, my hope was to create some sense of my project findings.

Academic

As a teacher, I hoped part of the outcome of this project would be the realization of academic benefits. Current education objectives to improve student scholarship call for more individualization of curriculum. As Fulwiler (1978) and Greenwood (1989) argued, journals proved to be a method of individualizing

instruction. Students often had options from which to choose for their journal entries. And though freewriting was often the most popular choice, many other topics made it to the "favorites" list. Also within each assigned topic there was room for personalization of the content. Topics such as "If I were the teacher" or "Imagine you have invented a potion to make you invisible," allowed students to be creative in any way they wished. And over time, many students did come to view the journal as something other than homework. It was a place to express themselves, to think, to learn on their own.

The freewrite entries and the journal itself also provided opportunities for connected knowing across content areas. Students were integrating the curriculum. Science animals became part of the entry on choosing fable characters. Countries explored in social studies class became destinations for trips and fantasy vacations. Sporting events became the topics of elaborate stories and suspenseful narratives. Clearly students were applying knowledge from other areas to the journal assignment. They were again making connections about learning for themselves.

Nathan was only one example of many students making connections between this journal project and their previous experience. Nathan had kept a journal in elementary school, but thought it boring because he had primarily recorded daily events. He had been hopeful that this year's project would be more expansive and he would seriously improve his writing skills. In his final reflection, Nathan had found the journal to be a success:

In the past I absolutely hated journals. Now I kind of like them because I can write what I want to write or just plain nonsense. Journal writing was fun this year . . . This journal has helped me with my writing skills and I think sub-consciously I have learned to write more on my freetime. . . . I have a semi-totally new look at journals now!

As Nathan demonstrated and as Graham (1994) and Fulwiler (1978) suggested, journals provided students with opportunities to make connections between the

academic material and their personal lives. The format itself also encouraged a few to regard journals as a valid form of knowledge. For personal enjoyment, Millie was reading *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* because it was written in journal format. Several students also had diaries at home, in which they were now encouraged to write more often. A few students had parents or grandparents who had kept diaries/journals and a clear connection as to how intriguing and important a journal could be was clear for them. Many vowed they would be writing in journals over the summer long after English class had ended. These students were indeed connecting their personal lives to their school journal project.

Beyond these academic benefits, the journal also improved students' writing skills. This occurred because the journal provided students with many opportunities to practice writing. Hatch (1991) and Graves and Stuart (1985) suggested that students need as many opportunities to write as possible. And though my students completed several formal essays throughout the year, the journal consisted of pages and pages of writing on topics of interest to the students. They were practicing writing. Having been required to write a minimum of one page for each journal entry, many students attested to the fact that they could now write faster and longer papers. Their fluency had increased. They were writing with more details, better words, improved organization and clearer sentences.

Creativity had also been exhibited. Several students had listed creativity as a goal for journal keeping. At the end of the year they stated they had accomplished that goal. They felt they had many clever ideas in their journals and would use some of these ideas for future works. Journal writing had, for some, created a source from which more formal writing would flow. Enright (1992) and Townsend (1994) had found these same results in their studies on journal writing.

Fulwiler (1978), Greenwood (1989) and other writing experts assert that the

skills of fluency and creativity developed through journal writing should carry over into other writing assignments. Students directly commented that they found this to be true. For some a 300-word report would no longer be seen as a hardship. Others were more encouraged to write poetry on their own time. And still others had topics for stories yet to be developed. They had more ideas and better ideas. Some students had improved their penmanship. And many were less fearful of the blank page. They possessed more confidence in themselves as writers. Using the journal, then, as a strategy in the writing process was worthwhile. Students had come to view the journal writing process as positive, and, as a result, more students had improved attitudes toward writing in general. (More on this in the conclusion.)

Finally in the academic category, was the issue of grading student journals. This process indeed took many hours. Entries were read, comments were written and grades were assigned. A few students felt that having the journals graded was a negative element of the project. However, more students were very pleased with their journal grades and acknowledged the role it played in their overall English grades. And many, many students took advantage of the extra credit option. (This was not the only extra credit option ever offered, but it proved to be a popular one.) As Fulwiler (1978) and Autrey (1991) realized, the journal needed to be recognized as a valuable product in itself. By grading the journals, students were recognized for their efforts. They were proud of their journals. The grades gave them additional pride. At the middle school level, I feel very few students would attempt journal writing if it did not count as a grade. If grades were a primary motivator, so be it. In the end, students had practiced writing more, had experienced the “fun” of freewriting and being creative, and had created a record of their year. Many students would move beyond the need for grades and continue writing in diaries or journals. Would they have been so personally motivated without the initial push for good

grades from the teacher?

Personal

As a person, I was also hopeful our journal project would affect my students personally. I believe a sound education should influence a student both academically and personally, and Zacharias' (1990) research revealed that keeping a journal is beneficial to the writer both academically and personally. On the personal level then, journals proved to "promote cognitive growth" as Fulwiler (1978, p.1) said they would. And though cognitive growth is certainly an academic issue as well as a personal issue, student responses primarily focused on the personal aspect of cognitive growth. Journals were a place to express one's feelings, fears, complaints and emotions. Students like Amy "loved to complain." And as documented earlier, many felt the journal allowed them a place to express themselves without criticism. At times students even felt writing allowed them to avoid direct confrontation. Problems were solved on paper. They recognized the affective benefits of being able to "let off steam" and "get things off their chest." This confirms Greenwood's (1989) idea that writing can be therapeutic. It also confirms Autrey's (1991) definition of the "pedagogical journal"—a combination of the commonplace book and a diary. Students had been assigned topics, but they also were writing about personal issues. A school assignment was proving to be personally beneficial.

Additionally, the experience of my students confirmed Vygotsky's (1987) theory of social construction of knowledge. The journal writing project was guided by me, the teacher. Students integrated the material and activities I presented with their past experiences of journal writing and their own personal concerns. Students began to write about matters that were relevant to their lives. Through repeated

guidance, practice, discussion, and reflection, they then moved forward in their development by discovering the benefits of writing. They realized that through practicing the writing process, they could deal with their own life issues in different ways. They realized they could dislike a teacher and yet survive the class. They realized they had skills yet to be developed. They realized they could gripe about their siblings and yet maintain the peace at home. Their zone of proximal development was shifting. The interpersonal process of journal writing under my direction was becoming an intrapersonal characteristic. The learning was becoming internalized.

This shift in their development was not only apparent in their repeated ability to express their feelings in their journals, but it was demonstrated by their behavior in the classroom. Initially I needed to give more guidance to students during in-class writing time. However, by mid-year students had internalized the process of journal writing and could continue for fifteen minutes with more ease to create longer entries. The actual process of writing had become internalized. There was a slight relapse of dedicated in-class writing in April, but many disruptions could account for that. The quantity of writing itself did not decrease. Students were writing more on their own time.

Fulwiler (1978), Kirby and Liner (1981), Murray (1989), and Vygotsky (1987) also maintain that writing and thinking are interrelated processes. Wolcott (1990) said "writing is a great way to discover what we are thinking, as well as to discover gaps in our thinking" (p. 21). Many students in my classes demonstrated they were thinking on paper. The more students wrote, the clearer issues became for them. For some students, this meant solving personal problems. For others it meant organizing details, planning life accomplishments, or simply realizing that if you are invisible, certain situations can be complicated. Elizabeth, for example, was

finishing her entry of being invisible when the bell rang signaling the end of class. She was packing up her books and discussing her entry with another student: "I found that out when I was writing," she said. "'Wait a second, how are they going to see that?' I thought." She had not realized the problem with her logic until she actually began writing it down.

In addition, students were using their own voices to record these thinking experiences and creative narratives. Some entries had a very "chatty" sound to them. They used their special seventh-grade slang in some cases and treated their journals as if they were talking to friends. The commentary voices of Anthony and Cecil filled Anthony's notebook and Alex's best ideas were "Arch Deluxe." When they were angry, the voice on the page sounded angry. When they were sad, disappointed, or excited, that voice also could be heard.

Overall, I felt the voices were honest. Students were comfortable enough with their journals to write truthfully about themselves. When writing about their successes and failures as a person or evaluating a speech they had given, students recorded their short-comings, their weaknesses, and their strengths. One girl called herself a "slacker" because she didn't always follow through on her homework. Another realized she only had herself to blame for dropping from A's to D's. Her social life had overwhelmed her. Other students realized they were poor test takers, or had poor eye-contact, or did not speak loudly enough. Many recorded their strengths in sports or the achievement of good grades. I had wondered at the beginning of this project if my seventh-grade students would be honest. Their entries satisfied me.

Through these personal entries, not only did students display honesty and improve their thinking skills, but they discovered themselves more fully. Elise felt she complained a lot. It was recorded in her journal for her to see. Audrey wrote

that she realized she had experienced much sadness in her life. She felt that's why she was often "silly" in class—she was making up for the sad experiences. Students realized their thoughts and opinions could change over the course of the year. They could make new friends, experience new activities, suffer failure and enjoy success. They had expressed themselves on paper. The words could be re-read and re-examined. Indeed many students were looking forward to re-reading the material in the future or sharing it with their children. Hatch (1991) recommended that journals be recognized as valuable life products. Students should be proud of their accomplishments. These ideas were confirmed by my experience. Having a permanent record of life in seventh grade satisfied numerous students. They were proud of their accomplishments.

Social

Sharing the journal in the future with others would then make it a social tool. The journal would become public for future generations and form a source for discussions. For this project the social category also includes how the journal allowed students to deal with their personal problems (as discussed under the *personal* heading), which in turn influenced their interactions with peers, adults, and family members. In some cases, the journal allowed students to work through their dilemmas in writing so they then could deal with real people in a controlled, rational manner.

However, and perhaps more importantly to me, the classroom teacher, the social realm also includes how the journal provided a source of student/teacher communication. Not only were students developing thinking, language, and writing skills, but they were communicating with the teacher. I replied to entries in a sincere, human way and students responded similarly. Questions asked of me

were polite and appropriate. There were no cases of topics that required legal or guidance department intervention. They wrote what they wanted and felt safe that their secrets would not be shared without permission. A few students were uncertain about their peers who might take their journals as a joke, but they were not concerned about the teacher's trust. This confirmed Richards (1995), Burniske (1994), and Jumpp's (1993) belief that journals create the opportunity to develop mutual respect between teacher and student. A sense of confidentiality, trust and cooperation did exist between the students and myself.

And because I do not have my own child in seventh grade, the journal experience provided an opportunity for me to stay in tune with their fears, emotions, likes and dislikes. A colleague of mine recently said she was afraid that soon she would not understand middle-school students because her own son would be attending high school. At first I felt dismay. She was an excellent teacher. Making connections with students was one of her best skills. And though I know her excellence will not diminish once her son moves into high school, I hadn't realized how important it was to her to be living with a child of similar age to the ones she was teaching. She felt it helped her understand her students. How could I, someone without children, ever develop her communication skills? The journal assignment was my answer. In the journal students not only expressed their feelings, but they recorded their favorite songs, foods, fashions, sports teams and sayings. Here was a constant update on life in seventh grade. These tidbits were being woven into my curriculum on a regular basis. Being aware of their interests assisted me in planning lessons, presenting material and connecting with students. This was my benefit of students keeping journals. This was my reward for the hours spent reading, commenting and evaluating. And yet this returns to the students in that I am able to help them succeed even better, faster, and more

creatively.

In combination then, does this data (student journals, survey results and teacher observations) give evidence that students' attitudes toward writing were influenced? Academic, personal and social benefits were realized. Did students now feel more positive about writing in general? I direct you to my conclusion

June 14, 1997—Conclusion

Every man ought to be inquisitive through every hour of his great adventure down to the day when he shall no longer cast a shadow in the sun. For if he dies without a question in his heart, what excuse is there for his continuance?

—Frank Moore Colby (1865-1925)

With the research being complete, the journals collected, the surveys tallied, the data analyzed and the discussion of results appearing on paper, I have come back to my central question: How does journal writing affect students' attitudes toward writing?

The literature reviewed for this project suggested that journal writing should positively influence students' attitudes toward writing. My students demonstrated that they enjoyed the journal writing process. They had derived academic, personal and social benefits. But did this carry over to writing in general? LaRoche (1993) and Townsend (1994) agree that giving students positive experiences with writing should enable them to further appreciate writing. In our journals, spelling, punctuation and grammar were not stressed. Students could write in their natural voices without the pressure of proper mechanics. (However, many students did feel their writing skills, including mechanics, had improved.) The journal project was designed to offer students positive experiences in writing. I believe it did that. My students were able to choose their favorite topics, express themselves without criticism, and receive great grades for effort. Many students came to appreciate the benefits of journal writing even more as the year progressed. For some, journal writing was the best part of English class.

The middle school study conducted by Manning, Manning and Long (1987) concluded that students who were given the option of "low-structured" entries, similar to freewriting, had a more positive attitude toward journal writing than students required to write "high-structured" entries. My students also confirmed

that freewriting was more popular than assigned topics. (I believe the assigned topics, however, did provide opportunities for creativity and many were selected as favorite entries despite the freewriting options. Some students even felt their freewrites were their worst entries.) But did the positive attitude toward journals carry over to writing in general? A positive attitude, as related to this study, would mean an increased feeling of confidence and satisfaction with writing. With the exception of a few, my students suggested in their reflective entries that they did have a feeling of increased confidence. They were able to write longer papers more quickly and neatly. They were proud of their writing assignments in general. They were less nervous and more confident about expressing themselves in writing. They had many ideas from which to choose. They had learned writing could be fun and liked it more.

The survey results corroborated this idea. The majority of students had agreed to statements that writing in a journal had improved their writing skills (hence increased confidence), they enjoyed expressing their ideas in writing, they had come up with some good writing ideas this year, they were proud of the writing completed (a feeling of satisfaction), and writing in their journal had had a positive influence on their attitude toward writing in general.

Other indicators contributed to my belief that journals did affect the majority of students' attitudes toward writing. Verbal and body language were factors. From the outset, students were verbally expressive about the writing completed in their journals and pleased with it. Volunteers were happy to share their entries with the class. And there seemed to be a definite increase in positive remarks made about the writing of formal essays and stories. They could write 150 words with no trouble. They were editing. They were pleased with the outcome of their efforts.

Body language played a role during in-class writing. As previously

mentioned, students gradually were able to focus on their writing projects with little fidgeting. This was affected, of course, by class personality and school disruptions, but students did learn to concentrate on writing.

Improved attitude may also be reflected by the number of students who professed they would continue writing long after English class was over. Summer journals and diaries were already being planned. Many hoped they would keep journals in the eighth grade, and others recommended that I continue journal writing with next year's students. All these factors combined have convinced me that students' attitudes toward writing were positively affected through journal writing.

Limitations

Yes, there were some students who were bored and did not have a positive experience. What would be the best strategy to reach them and inspire them to write? How could they be brought to realize the benefits journal writing provided? No student who actually completed all the assigned writings found the journal to be useless. All of these students were able to recognize benefits because they had been led through the process. The problem arose with students who did not complete the journal assignment for various reasons: lost notebook, did not write at home, refused to write in class, poor organization skills. Would these students be more successful with a journal that never left the classroom and contained only entries written during class time? The failure of all students to complete the journal assignment was a limitation of this study.

This study was also limited in other ways. And as I hope they do not diminish the importance and relevance of my findings, these limitations should be understood. Students may have been inadvertently grouped by ability due to

advanced math sections being taught the same hour each day. This grouping by ability may have affected class personality which in turn affected the concentration levels during in-class writing. For example, the students in my first section were not taking advanced math. This group had the lowest overall academic average and the most difficulty with quiet concentration during writing time. Occasionally I was frustrated by this group. These factors may have influenced their attitudes toward journals and writing.

This study also does not account for students' previous journal experience in their elementary classes or personal lives. Although this concern was addressed during the introduction to journals and most certainly affected those students who directly commented upon it, previous journal experience was not accounted for when determining an individual student's success or failure with this journal project.

The question of the honesty of students' responses always exists—is it what they really think or what they think I want to hear? Though this is not a factor that can be totally controlled (I was dealing with human beings, after all), my impressions were that students were as honest as they could be. Students were not aware they had been taking part in a research project. They were simply completing assignments designed to improve their writing. But the question remains.

Implications and questions

With these findings and limitations, what then are the implications? Having completed this research within my classroom setting raises the question of population—was this an accurate representation of the general population in its diversity? Could another teacher in another classroom expect the same results? As most of my findings are supported by other researchers, I am confident in the

assessment of my study. What this means for others is uncertain. My students lived in an urban neighborhood with parents who primarily worked in factories to support non-traditional families. I believe their academic progress differs from students who live in affluent, suburban neighborhoods.

However, any teacher, of any subject area, inclined to implement journals can be assured that journals do provide students with a way to become connected to their learning, to be involved in the writing process, and to discover themselves by thinking on paper. The journal is a place of discovery—discovery of language, discovery of writing, discovery of self. And there are as many ways to engage in journal writing as there are teachers who wish to employ journals in their classrooms.

Nevertheless, there are many questions yet to be answered. Is there a direct relationship between a student's academic progress and his appreciation for writing? What is the best way to implement journals when attempting to motivate low-achieving students? Do students who are required to keep a journal every year of school become better writers and have more confidence in their writing? Would results differ if this study were implemented with eleventh or twelfth graders? How much does the teacher's attitude toward writing affect the students' attitude? When using the journal, is there a perfect mix of freewrites and assigned topics that would please all students? What would be the effect if journal entries were kept on a computer? How long does the journal experience remain an influence for those who feel they truly benefited from their seventh-grade journal—through the summer, into high school, into their adult lives?

Many students had a positive experience writing in journals and improved their attitudes toward writing during this study. Students realized they did have something to say and filling up the page with words was not such a difficult task.

Through honest writing they discovered more about themselves and made connections in learning. They enjoyed being creative, producing a record for the future and communicating with the teacher. They increased their writing fluency and self-confidence and developed their writing skills. Some even had “fun,” and a few more no longer “hated” writing. It seemed more students now understood the importance of writing. They had explored the rock pile and had found it worthwhile.

June 19, 1997—The End

Would the quote "Let the thick curtain fall; / I better know than all / How little I have gained, / How vast the unattained" from "My Triumph" by John Greenleaf Whittier be appropriate here? Have I accomplished what I set out to do? Have I justified using journals in my classroom? Have I contributed to the body of literature regarding journal writing that already exists ?

Or perhaps Robert Herrick's "Attempt the end, and never stand to doubt; / Nothing's so hard but search will find it out" from "Seek and Find" would be more appropriate. I have searched and re-searched. I have found that journals do affect students' attitudes toward writing. My students and I have found the exploration of journal writing to be beneficial. I have found my "truth" about journal writing. I have found that the process of writing this thesis has been *very* long and sometimes difficult. I have found I have a headache. (But that will pass.)

I will end here then with thoughts of where I began. I grew up on Adam's Lane, somewhere near the rock piles.

Adam's Lane

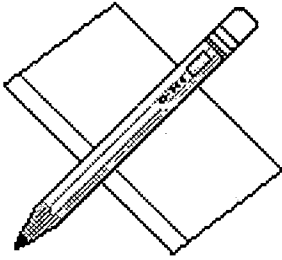
*Timothy and others grew
waving with the wind.
Daisies
twinkled with sulphur moths.
Strawberries crept.
Fields stretched far away
splashed yellow with lions and mustard.*

*Farther down a creek crossed and
stumbled
over stones and around
pussy willows,
cattails with whirling red-wing blackbirds,
tiger lilies, irises,
killdeers screaming.*

*Away the lane wandered
past milkweed and monarchs,
raspberries,
snakes in the grass, woolly bears,
grasshoppers bright green,
a single apple tree
and into a dark wood.*

—L. Eastman

Appendix A: Journal Guidelines Handout



The Journal

Objectives:

1. practice writing—keeping your pencil moving across the page.
2. practice expressing your thoughts on many topics in writing.
3. create a source for topics for “formal” essays.

Guidelines:

1. Use a separate single-subject notebook as your journal. You will receive a label marking this as your journal notebook.
2. Your journal should only contain entries for credit in this class (no notes, loose papers, etc.). Entries will be written in class and outside of class (homework assignments and extra entries).
3. Each entry needs a heading in the upper right corner (date, time, and location) and a title.
4. Extra credit is always available through your journal. Extra entries may include personal topics, copied poems with author, song lyrics with writer, etc.
5. For full credit, each entry must be one page in length (some entries will be longer) and show reasonable effort.
6. During in-class writing, we will write silently for 15 minutes. You must reserve your questions/comments for before or after the writing time. If you are stumped, write your questions in your journal as part of your entry. If you don't know what to write, recopy the last line over and over until you think of something new. Do not stop writing until time is called. You cannot finish early.
7. Spelling does not count, but neatness and effort do.
8. This is an easy “A.” Use it to your advantage.

Appendix B: Selected Journal Books

- Bakeless, John (Ed.). (1964). *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*. New York: New American Library.
- Bromley, Karen. (1993). *Journaling: Engagements in Reading, Writing, and Thinking*. New York: Scholastic.
- Leopold, Aldo. (1966). *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Mallon, Thomas. (1984). *A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries*. New York: Ticknor & Fields.
- Perry, Bliss (Ed.). (1995). *The Heart of Emerson's Journals*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Robertson, Keith. (1966). *Henry Reed's Baby-sitting Service*. New York: Puffin Books.
- Rothwell, Robert L. (1991). *Henry David Thoreau, An American Landscape: Selected Writings from His Journals*. New York: Marlowe & Company.
- Sebranek, Patrick, Meyer, Verne, & Kemper, Dave. (1995). *Write Source: A Guide to Writing, Thinking, & Learning*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath.
- Stoker, Bram. (1965). *Dracula*. New York: New American Library.
- Woodward, Patricia. (1996). *Journal Jumpstarts: Quick Topics and Tips for Journal Writing*. Fort Collins, CO: Cottonwood Press.
- Zindel, Paul. (1989). *Amazing and Death Defying Diary of Eugene Dingman*. New York: Harper.

Appendix C: Time line of Journal Entry dates and Topics

Number	Date	Options
1	9/5/96	a. Freewrite. b. Write about your first impressions of school, teachers, lunch, new friends, etc. c. Who are you? Introduce yourself.
2	9/6/96	What do you know about journals at this point? Have you ever kept a journal before? What did you think of it? What are your expectations, impressions, gripes about this year's journal?
3	9/13/96	(After reading "Rikki-tikki-tavi") a. Create a list of movies, books, stories with animals in them. b. Tell about your experiences with animals (pets, hunting, frightening incidents). c. Freewrite.
4	9/20/96	(Traveling journal) Freewrite. (Make observations of your surroundings as a starting point.)
First Grading		
1	9/24/96	(The day before using the computer lab for the first time) Write about your computer experience. How much do you have? How do you feel about using computers?
2	10/9/96	(After reading "All Summer in a Day") a. Write about a time when you were treated unfairly or could not participate in a desired activity. Who was involved? What happened? How did it all turn out? b. How are you similar to your peers? How are you different? Are those similarities/differences helpful or harmful? If you could, what would you change? c. Freewrite.
3	10/14/96	(After visiting Old World Wisconsin) Reflect on the field trip.

- 4 10/18/96 (Traveling journal to the principal's office, the boiler room and the tunnels below the school)
Describe your tour.
- 5 10/21/96 a. If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be? Who would be with you? Why?
b. Write a fictional biography of someone in class.
c. Write out the words to your favorite song. Why is it important to you?
d. Freewrite.

Second Grading

- 1 10/31/96 (After presenting a speech about themselves using five props brought in a paper bag)
Reflect on the paper bag speech. What comments did you receive? Where did you do well; where did you do poorly? If you figured out your four numerical grades (from evaluation sheets), what do you have? How does this compare to the actual grade you received? Were you graded fairly? Why? What would you change? How could you improve? How did the whole experience feel?
- 2 11/11/96 a. If you were an animal, what would you be and why? What would a day in your life be like?
b. Freewrite.
- 3 11/13/96 [After reading a new teacher's journal: Gentili, Robert. (1996, September). "The day from hell," *WEAC News and Views*, 12]
What do you think it's like being a teacher? If you were a teacher, which subject would you teach? What would your classroom rules be? What special projects or field trips would you be involved in? What do you think are the pros and cons of teaching?
- 4 11/18/96 Look ahead to the future. Make a list of 100 things you would like to accomplish in your lifetime. Use complete sentences.
- 5 11/22/96 (During the reading of "Rip Van Winkle")
In 20 years the date will be November 22, 2016. What will your life be like then? What will you have accomplished? Be realistic.

Third Grading

- 1 12/13/96 a. Write about the Christmas traditions in your family: dinner, gifts, decorations, celebrations. Why do you do these things? How did they start? Which ones do you like? Which would you change?
b. Freewrite.
- 2 1/6/97 a. Write about your vacation. (Make a list of gifts, activities, what you did, what happened.)
b. What are your New Year's resolutions? Why did you choose those? What will be required to carry them out?
c. Freewrite.
- 3 1/8/97 (After reading "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street")
a. Continue the scene from "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street." What is happening the following morning? What have the aliens done with the bodies? Has anyone survived? How is the next street conquered?
b. Imagine aliens have contacted you and wish to learn about life on earth. What is important to tell them about life here--seasons, countries, fashion, history, etc.?
c. Freewrite.
- 4 1/13/97 Mid-year reflection. How is your journal going so far? Look back over your entries and describe your favorite entry. How have your opinions changed since the beginning of school? Are you accomplishing any goals recorded in the front of your journal? Will you make it to the end? Will you need a new notebook?

Fourth Grading

- 1 1/29/97 a. Describe an interest or hobby you have. What is involved in participating in this hobby? How much does it cost? How did you get involved?
b. Describe the worst or best day in your life. What happened? Use details.
c. Freewrite.
- 2 2/12/97 a. Describe a time when you learned something new or overcame some fear. How did you feel? What were the circumstances?
b. Describe a favorite place. What does it look like? What is there? When do you go there? (Ideas: room, restaurant, someone's house, backyard.)
c. Freewrite.

- 3 2/24/97 Write about your successes and/or failures as a person or a student.
- 4 3/5/97 a. Imagine you have discovered a potion that will make you invisible for 24 hours. You can only use it once. What will you do while you are invisible?
b. Imagine you have a super-human power. What power will you have? How will you use it? Will you have some flaw or weakness like Superman?
c. Write a gossip column.
- 5 3/6/97 (After visiting the public museum)
Imagine you are a tour guide leading a group of people through the museum. What would you show and tell them? Cover all the spots you toured during your visit there.
- 6 3/11/97 (After reading a nonfiction article and viewing video on yeti and Big Foot)
a. Do you believe the yeti or Big Foot exists? Why? What facts and information support your belief? What other mysteries like the yeti are scientists still trying to solve? What makes these mysteries difficult to solve?
b. Write a story for the *National Enquirer* regarding a mysterious sighting.

Fifth Grading

- 1 4/8/97 (After reading several Aesop's fables)
Imagine that you are planning to write a fable in which pairs of animal characters will represent the following pairs of qualities: courage and cowardice, wisdom and foolishness, loyalty and faithlessness. Decide on an animal for each quality and briefly explain your choice.
- 2 4/14/97 Make a list of places you have visited that have unique or beautiful landscape features (Wisconsin Dells, Grand Canyon, Lake Michigan, various parks). Choose three from the list to describe in detail. (If you haven't been anywhere, what have you heard about places; what do you imagine them to be like?)

- | | | |
|---|---------|--|
| 3 | 4/24/97 | a. Retell a nursery rhymes that you remember from childhood.
b. Freewrite. |
| 4 | 5/1/97 | a. It's May Day! Write about spring. What are the signs of spring at your house?
b. Write a modern version of an old fairy tale.
c. Freewrite. |

Sixth Grading

- | | | |
|---|---------|--|
| 1 | 5/13/97 | a. Make lists of interesting nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.
b. Freewrite |
| 2 | 6/2/97 | Write about your feelings about tests and taking tests. Do you study? Do you think they are fair? Which types of tests are easiest/hardest for you? |
| 3 | 6/3/97 | Look back through your journal. Reflect on the process of journal writing this year. How did you like it? Did you accomplish your goals? Do you think your attitude toward writing improved because of journal writing? Which was your favorite entry? Why? Which was your worst entry? Why? Did journals affect your English grade? Did journals influence your life? Any other comments? |

Seventh Grading

Appendix D—Attitude Survey*

Below are a series of statements about writing and journaling. There are no right or wrong answers, but please be as honest as possible. Check the answer to the statement as it best applies to you.

Agree/Disagree Statements:

- | | | |
|-----------|----------|--|
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 1. I learn more about myself when I write in a journal. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 2. There is nothing to be gained from writing in a journal. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 3. It is fun to write in a journal. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 4. I learn more about writing by practicing writing. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 5. I am glad my teacher asked me to write in a journal. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 6. Writing in a journal is boring. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 7. Writing in a journal is a good use of my time. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 8. Because of journal writing, I have more confidence in my writing ability. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 9. I am now able to write longer entries in my journal. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 10. Writing in a journal has improved my writing skills. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 11. I enjoy expressing my ideas in writing. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 12. I am better able to write "formal" essays because of journal writing. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 13. I like discussing my writing with others. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 14. I would enjoy seeing my writing published. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 15. I enjoy writing outside of school. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 16. It takes me a long time to finish a writing assignment. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 17. I enjoy getting feedback on my writing. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 18. I put a lot of time and effort into a writing assignment. |
| Yes _____ | No _____ | 19. I have trouble filling the page when given a writing assignment. |

- Yes _____ No _____ 20. I wish I were a better writer.
- Yes _____ No _____ 21. Writing in a journal made me feel less nervous about writing.
- Yes _____ No _____ 22. I have come up with some good writing ideas this year.
- Yes _____ No _____ 23. Writing in my journal has had a positive influence on my attitude toward writing in general.
- Yes _____ No _____ 24. I am proud of the writing I have accomplished in my journal.
- Yes _____ No _____ 25. I am proud of most of the writing assignments I have completed this year.

Please answer the following open-ended statements as clearly as possible. Give an example if you can.

Open-ended statements:

1. The best thing about journal writing is
2. The worst thing about journal writing is
3. My opinion about writing in a journal is
4. My attitude toward writing in general is
5. I have learned the following about myself from my journal entries. . . .
6. Journal writing helped me solve problems or with school work by
7. Writing in my journal influenced me by
8. I have accomplished the following journal goals this year:
9. My last English grade was
10. My favorite writing assignment this year was

*Adapted from Manning, G., Manning, M., & Long, R. (1987, November). *Attitudes of Middle School Students toward Low-Structure and High-Structure Content Journals*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Mobile, AL. and LaRoche, K. M. (1993). *A Focus on Using Prewriting and Knowledge Level Strategies and Skills to Improve the Attitudes and Writing Skills of Middle School Students*. Master's thesis, Nova University, FL.

Appendix E: Student Permission Form

Student Permission Form

Directions: Please read the following letter and sign below if you agree to allow me to use quotations from your journal.

Dear Student,

Over the course of this school year you have been writing in your journal on a variety of topics. You have received grades according to your effort and the quantity of entries. This summer I plan to continue working on my master's thesis which concerns journal writing, and I may wish to paraphrase or directly quote your journal entries. You will not be identified by name nor will I use any personal material that could identify you in any way. (I also will not read or use any material from your "Don't Read" pages.) You will simply be helping me write a better paper by allowing me to use some of your words.

I will be happy to share my paper with you at any time. You also may pick up your journals from me next fall when school begins. (If you move over the summer, I will mail your journal to you if you contact me.) If I may use material from your journals please sign below. Thank you.

Yes, L. Eastman may paraphrase or directly quote from my journal for purposes of completing her research for a master's thesis through Carroll College.

Date _____ Student Signature _____

Student Name (print) _____

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<p>Date:</p> <p><i>9/9/98</i></p>	