

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 444 166

CS 217 216

AUTHOR Biffignani, Susan Marie
TITLE "I'm Bored, I Don't Have Anything To Write About!" A Study of the Writing Process in One Sixth Grade Classroom.
PUB DATE 1995-00-00
NOTE 17p.
AVAILABLE FROM For full text:
<http://info.csd.org/WWW/resources/arc/report/0013.html>.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Action Research; Grade 6; Intermediate Grades; *Process Approach (Writing); Student Responsibility; *Writing Evaluation; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes; Writing Research; *Writing Skills; Writing Workshops
IDENTIFIERS Writing Habits

ABSTRACT

A study examined the effect of a structured writing process on student comprehension during a year-long classroom writing workshop. Subjects included 10 sixth-grade students of average reading and writing comprehension who completed an initial writing survey as well as quarterly writing behavior self assessments and writing evaluation conference sheets. Results indicated that students: (1) showed growth in writing during the year; (2) learned many resources available to them as writers and learners; (3) learned a variety of writing genres; (4) showed better quality writing across the curriculum; and (5) learned how to use resources to find necessary information. Findings suggest that the use of daily repetition is effective in helping students distinguish common writing errors and that students are capable of taking responsibility for their learning. Appendixes contain the writing survey, the writing behavior self assessment, and writing evaluation conference forms. (EF)

"I'm Bored, I Don't Have Anything to Write About!": A
Study of the Writing Process in One Sixth Grade
Classroom.

by Susan Marie Biffignani

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Biffignani

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

"I'm Bored, I Don't Have Anything to Write About!"

A Study of the Writing Process in One Sixth Grade Classroom.

by

Susan Marie Biffignani

This Action Research paper offers one teachers experience in observing the effect of a structured writing process on student comprehension on writing workshop over a one year period. Writing workshop is the time when students can write creatively and use the steps of writing process, prewriting, drafting, revision etc. to enhance their writing abilities.

The paper details quarter by quarter the students progress and feelings, as well as the teachers feelings, as the use of the writing process was being monitored.

The discoveries made contained expected and unexpected results. The teacher shares the successes and failures she observed during the year. The paper also includes suggestions she will use in upcoming years for adjusting the program.

This paper will be useful for anyone wondering about the writing process or anyone wanting to implement the writing process into a classroom. This paper will show that with some structure all students are capable of finding success during writing workshop. It also offers some samples of the students writing and the teachers' reflective journal.

Question: What is the effect of the writing process on student comprehension over a school year during Writing Workshop?

Purpose/Rationale: In choosing to observe my students during writing workshop, I hoped to gain a better understanding of how students learn. Do they learn best when given a choice and having some freedom? Or, do they learn best when a topic is dictated to them? Writing workshop is the time when students are given a chance to write creatively. The students are taught the steps of the writing process, which include all of the elements of writing. These include prewriting, drafting, and revising. (These will be explained later in the research.)

I also wanted to see if my students writing showed signs of growth. By growth I mean, did they learn what resources to use to find correct spellings or to find a better word? Did my students writing show maturity? Were they able to write better stories at the end of the year, based on knowledge gained throughout the year? Were there fewer mechanical/grammatical errors and did the story make sense?

This topic is also a favorite with parents. Many parents ask throughout the year: "Why do you use writing process/writing workshop and not teach English?"

"How come you don't teach spelling?"

"Do you correct their spelling and grammar for them?"

"Will my child be ready for seventh grade?"

(SMB-Journal, 9/94-5/95)

I have always responded to parents that I felt children learned best when given choices and that writing workshop gave them a chance to express their ideas, as well as learn the correct usage of grammar, mechanics, and spelling.

I tell parents that their child will not take spelling tests in seventh grade and that I am preparing them for real life by teaching them alternatives. I introduce them to guides of frequently misspelled words, spell checkers, thesauruses, and dictionaries. [I realize that sixth grade students should know how to use a dictionary, but many do not.]

Therefore, this topic gave me a chance to put what I believe to the test. Does this process really work? Will the students show growth in comprehension?

Setting: Shady Valley is a small community southwest of the city of St. Louis. The Shady Valley School District is located in a low to middle income area, with part of the district in a flood plain. The once thriving resort town ceased growing for several years. The town saw a decrease in population and loss of businesses, while surrounding areas saw great growth and expansion.

In the past two years a housing boom in the area has rejuvenated the area with approximately seven hundred homes being built by the beginning of 1996.

The Shady Valley School District is very unique for a suburban district in that it houses grades pre-kindergarten through twelfth on one campus. The district is primarily supported by tax dollars.

The students of Shady Valley number approximately eight hundred, but the student population is growing. The majority of the students are Caucasian, with roughly 25% African -American. Most of the African-American students participate in the Voluntary Transfer Program available to St. Louis City residents. Shady Valley has a small percentage of African -Americans living in the community as well as a small percentage from other racial backgrounds.

The community is mostly blue collar workers (60%) with an unemployment rate in excess of the seven percent found in St. Louis County.

Five hundred and thirty students, in grades PreK-6, attend Shady Valley Elementary. The elementary school experiences a mobility factor in excess of thirty percent. Elementary class size averages twenty two, with at least three classrooms per grade level. The Shady Valley School District offers PreSchool and Extended Day Kindergarten for a nominal fee.

The district is seeing a renewed interest in the P.T.O. (Parent Teacher Organization) and newly formed Booster Club. School spirit and change are the cause for this renewed interest.

Parents play an important role in the district. Many parents serve on committees to help with the planning of curriculum, school improvement, and long term strategic planning.

My research took place in a sixth grade self contained classroom. There are three sixth grade classrooms each consisting of twenty two students. The students, who were the focus of the research, were in a class of eleven boys and eleven girls. (Due to the mobility factor, I had two boys and one girl move during the year, while gaining 3 girls.)

Of the students in the class, most had been in the district since Pre-K or Kindergarten, but due to the housing boom, four students were new to the district. The year ended with seven students new to the

district. (This is important because Shady Valley Elementary School is run under the Whole Language Philosophy or Approach. This means students are read to daily, read independently whole pieces of literature, write daily, and work in cooperative settings or groups. The students are given many choices and are encouraged to become responsible, independent thinkers and researchers. The math, social studies, and science curricula also provide hands on opportunities and opportunities for writing. Many school districts do not operate under a Whole Language Philosophy or Approach and the students are not used to writing daily or across the curriculum.)

The students are from various academic levels and backgrounds. Some are served by the Special School District, some are part of Shady Valley's talented and gifted program (SPAN). Of the twenty two students in the class, five were served by Special School District and six were part of the Span program. The ten students who are left will make up the research "core" group. The core group abilities range from low to high, with some students functioning a grade level or more behind in reading and /or writing comprehension. (These students were tested and found to be not severe enough to participate in the program offered by the Special School District.)

Methodology: In order to monitor the effectiveness of the writing process during writing workshop time, I chose to look at the growth of the ten students (five girls and five boys) who did not participate in the Span program or were not serviced by the Special School District. The ten students who were chosen to be the core group did not know they were selected.

To get an idea of how the students felt about writing and their writing abilities, I gave them a writing survey the first week of school. (Appendix A) This survey allowed me to learn more about the students' self concept and their overall feelings toward writing. (This survey was especially helpful with the students who were new to the district.)

I also gave a Writing Behavior Self Assessment (Appendix B) and a Writing Evaluation Conference Sheet (Appendix C) at the end of each quarter. These two forms served as one assessment tool I used to monitor progress.

I also used audio tapes and video tapes to record student actions, as well as anecdotal notes taken from one on one conferences held with the students.

Description of Action: Since writing workshop is only one area where the writing process takes place, I will briefly describe the steps of the writing process and how it is used across the curriculum.

First, prewriting. Where do you get your ideas? How do you record those ideas? (Brainstorming, Webbing, Venn Diagram, Listing)

Second, first rough draft. The main objective is to get ideas down on paper. I demonstrate how to skip every other line to make editing easier. I show students why it is important to only write on one side of the paper.

Third, editing conference. This step includes self editing, peer editing, and teacher editing.

Self editing is looking over your paper, rereading to make sure everything is in order and makes sense. This is also the time when you look for spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical errors.

Peer editing is when you share your work with one or two others in the classroom. The peers read your paper. They ask questions (clarification), offer suggestions, help with grammatical and mechanical mistakes/errors, and help you get an audience for your paper. (Students learn not to always edit with a

friend.)

Teacher editing is the last step. This is the time when the teacher reads your paper and offers help on grammar, mechanics, content, etc.... The teacher does not change the students' writing, but offers ways to clarify the story or make the story more understandable.

The fourth step is revision. This is the time when the writer looks at the story/paper, uses suggestions made during editing to enhance the story, makes grammatical and mechanical changes, and writes the second rough draft.

The fifth step is the final draft. It is the time to make sure the story/paper is perfect. No errors, logical sequence of content etc.... This will be what the grade is based on, the finished product.

There is an optional next step-publication. You can publish your story-add illustrations and create your own book.

Also, everyday the last ten to fifteen minutes are set aside for Author Sharing Time. It is during this time when a student can read an excerpt, or if short enough, the whole story that is in progress. The class asks questions and offers suggestions, much the same as peer editing, but the whole class is involved, not just one or two people.

[Not every step is used every time. It depends on the genre of the piece of writing-poetry, play, narrative, etc....]

The writing process is used across the curriculum in science, math and social studies. Some examples of how it is used during math include- writing the steps you went through to complete a problem, writing how the problem made you feel and why, or writing how math relates to everyday living.

In science, writing process is used to tell about experiments-how and why they worked or did not work, writing from the perspective of an endangered ocean animal, or writing the steps of the scientific process.

In social studies there is constant writing taking place. This writing takes the form of notes, reports, speeches, cartoons, commercials, news programs, advertisements, magazines, etc....

It will become apparent as I discuss the student progress throughout the year that there is overlapping in the writing which takes place during writing workshop and writing that takes place in other areas of the curriculum.

A Look at the Writing Workshop: First Quarter, Fall 1994

To begin the year, I like to see what my students feel about writing and about themselves as writers. In order to do this I provide them with a writing survey (Appendix A). This survey gives me insight as to where my students are as writers and nonwriters.

I was surprised to see that all the students felt they were writers. I was also surprised to see that the students all felt good and/ or proud of what they wrote.

"I fell (feel) good when I write because it is fun."

"I feel that if I work hard enough it will be very good."

"I feel really good about what I write!"

(Excerpts from student survey responses, 9/8/94)

"I feel really good about what I write!"

(Excerpts from student survey responses, 9/8/94)

I was also curious to see how they felt about why people write.

"To express their feelings to other people instead of holding it in." "To show there (their) feelings or to tell what happened in the past or in the presnt (present) or predict what happens in the future." "Because it's fun."

"They want to tell someone something."

"So they can write a letter and not pay a big phone bill."

(Excerpts from student survey responses, 9/8/94)

The students' responses left me feeling pretty good. They all seemed excited to write so that should be a good start.

The students were eager to write, but I soon found out that many of the boys did not want to write alone, but always chose a partner. (They have an opportunity to choose a partner once a quarter, but the boys chose a new partner daily.)

The boys also wanted to draw more than write. (The students can draw once a week to help them get an idea to write about. If they're publishing a book, they may draw illustrations daily until their book is completed.)

The students also wanted to work on the same types of stories and books.

Jack was writing a disgusting book of ABC's, so his friend Mike decided to make an ABC book of gross things. (SMB- Anecdotal notes, 9/94)

How was I going to handle this type of situation? This would be my first challenge. How do I get these students to write with more depth? How could I get them settled so they feel comfortable writing on their own? (SMB-Journal, 9/10/94)

The core group was split down the middle with half being interested in writing and half more interested in drawing or talking to a friend.

In my mini lessons, I reviewed the parts of a story, what words to use to make a story more appealing and introduced the resources available in the classroom to make their writing task easier.

Daily, I put two sentences on the board filled with misspelled words, grammatical and mechanical errors. The students would correct them in their notebooks while I corrected them on the board and explained the reasons for the errors. It was my hope that they would see a common error from their writing and correct it when editing.

As the quarter went on, it was very apparent that even though they all felt they were writers I had a lot of work to do. These students were not motivated and lacked imaginations. Perhaps, I asked myself, were they just lazy?

I asked during my individual conferences what was the problem. Why are you not writing?

"I don't have nothing to write about."

"It's boring."

"Last year they told us what to write about." (Conference notes, 9/94 to 10/94)

Therefore, I had to get these students excited and motivated. I began reading excerpts from numerous picture books and young adult novels to show examples of good writing.

I brainstormed on the board various genres of writing and even made a list of topics I'd be interested in writing. This seemed to spark them for a while, but they were still a very unimaginative, talkative group.

A few of the students did get interested in horror stories with Halloween nearing, so they were able to use the computer lab and its resources. This was the break I needed. Once the others saw some of the neat computer programs for illustrating and writing books, they wanted to use the computer too. In order to use the computer, they first had to complete a rough draft. So, overall, all the students were writing and some of my boys were writing wonderful stories.

"Up in the space above earth an asteroid pummeled towards earth at tremendous speed. When the asteroid hit, there was a huge explosion. BLAM!"

"Phazzer was just about to enter the mountain, when suddenly, he herd (heard) a rustling in the woods behind him. Phazzer got his rocket launcher ready because he knew there was a velociraptor behind him. (He has the best scenses (senses) in the world according to the Guinness Book of World Records.) The velociraptor jumped at him and Phazzer shot, and the raptor was dead." (Excerpts from student writing, 10/94)

It was during this high point that the assistant principal, Mrs. Smith, came to observe me and the class. I was curious to see what she would observe. What did she notice that I didn't? Where could I make some improvements to better my teaching? (SMB-Journal, 10/24/94)

In her observation she noted the objective of the lesson and scripted the whole lesson and interactions which followed. (By scripting, I mean she wrote everything that was said. She noted discipline, encouragement, etc....)

It was interesting to read her comments after the lesson, when we both had time to reflect. Some of the things noted on the evaluation were:

"Involved all students in mini lesson-even reluctant ones. Offered words of encouragement."

"Student-teacher rapport very positive."

"Relaxed, informal atmosphere, which allows room for exploration and creativity."

"Class seem to be in the habit of working in groups, utilizing resources, including the computer

lab."

(LK-teacher observation/evaluation, 10/24/94)

One question the assistant principal had following the evaluation was "What about an environment of constant conversation?" "I wonder whether any of the students are learners who require more quiet/structure during creative periods?"

(10/24/94)

[She noted that the class was "appropriate for self motivated learners who had no problems with distractions."]

In answer to Mrs. Smith's question I told her students were to talk in a quiet voice or they lose the privilege of talking. Furthermore, I explained that students were free to sit in the hallway to write or visit one of the two libraries on campus if they wanted a more quiet space.

[To my knowledge, most of the core group was not affected by talking and in fact seemed to work better with background noise. I did let them listen to the radio frequently and was surprised to note that they worked more quietly and seemed to be more on task when they did listen.]

Second Quarter:

Before beginning the second quarter I conferenced with each student to see what they had accomplished during the previous quarter. Each student in the core group had begun numerous pieces, but none of them had taken any of their work to the publication stage. Many in the group decided that a goal for second quarter would be to get something published.

As I looked back on the quarter, my goal for next quarter was to try and get more individual conferences completed. I also wanted to find samples of good writing, from various genres, to share with the class, in an effort to enhance their writing. (SMB-Journal, 11/94)

During the second quarter, the students were beginning to experiment with various types of writing. Some were writing a sequel to Jurassic Park, two were creating a comic book, and a few of the girls were working collaboratively on a magazine idea.

I was very pleased to see most of the group working hard and staying on task, but I had a group of three students who were beginning to show signs of slacking off. Their main concern was not writing process or writing workshop; it was bands. They wanted to start their own band and the subject was foremost in their minds.

To get them back on track with writing I decided to let them write a few songs to use in their band. The boys were very excited at the prospect. One of the boys commented,

"We didn't get to do this last year! We had to write on the topic the teacher gave us! This is cool!" (Anecdotal notes, 11/94)

The song writing lasted for a week or so, but was then replaced with drawing. The boys decided to design a band logo. (I felt this was okay for a day or two, but when it went to four days, it was time for some real writing to take place.)

I suggested that the boys might want to work independently and use part of their writing workshop time to complete work on a theme on the oceans.

Each student had four animals to research and a project to complete. Most of the students took advantage of this extra time, but Victor decided "he didn't like to write and was not going to write." (Anecdotal notes, 11/94)

Victor began the year very positive and seemingly ready to succeed, but at the end of the first quarter he was beginning to slack off. By the middle of the second quarter he was spending more time out of my class than in because of behavioral problems. It was a shame, because of the members of the core group, Victor was one of the strongest, most talented writers I had.

In reviewing the second quarter goals, I noted that four out of ten students did meet their goal, with three more close to getting something published. Unfortunately, I still had three students who did not want to write; only draw.

What am I going to do? How am I going to spark the interest of these three students?
(SMB-Journal, 12/94)

I decided that the holiday spirit was interfering so we began discussing holiday customs, sharing stories of favorite traditions, ornaments, foods, etc. I shared my personal stories and invited the students to share if they felt comfortable.

This diversion from daily writing process seemed to be what the students needed.

Perhaps I need to spend more time at the beginning of the year sharing personal experience stories. This seems to get the students thinking about their own lives and they decide maybe they have something worthwhile to write about after all. (SMB-Journal, 12/94)

Each of my students were paired with a first grade partner to share stories, read to, etc.... My students loved helping the younger students. We discussed letter writing and my class decided to help the first grade write letters to Santa Claus.

It was very rewarding for me to see all of my students actively involved, especially Victor. I had purposefully put Victor with a very creative little boy, Patrick. Patrick was not only a gifted writer, but he knew how to handle Victor and his attitude. This was one of the few times during the second quarter that Victor actually wrote during writing workshop.

This group of students is not coming together as a true community of learners. For the first time in five years, I can't seem to get this group to care about one another and take responsibility for their own actions. (SMB-Journal, 10/94)

I was becoming very frustrated as the end of the second quarter drew closer. I was eight months pregnant and I felt I had not prepared the students the way I felt I should. I was teaching the same type of lessons as I had in the past, but for some reason, yet unknown to me, this group was resisting. Many of the students were becoming more and more lazy, while some were just beginning to shine.

In an attempt to improve the situation, I chose not to allow the students to work together. They were able to sit together, but they had to work independently. I also made numerous seating changes.

I have made many seating changes this year, because I have so many students who have

conflicting personalities. This is part of the problem in the class. I hope this situation does not interfere with the substitute during the third quarter. (SMB-Journal, 1/95)

The seating changes did make a difference because many of the friends were separated. The idea of working independently upset many of the students, particularly the boys.

The boys have good ideas, especially Eric, Buck, and Maurice. My main concern is their lack of independence. They do not want to work independently, even though they are capable of producing fine work. They also want to spend more time drawing than writing.

We have discussed the importance of art in publishing. We discussed how it conveys a message to either tell the story or enhance the story, but the boys want to draw random pictures and try to fill in text later. How can I get them to understand the importance of the prewriting step? They need to get their ideas down and organized. Once that is accomplished and they have an idea of where they're headed, I'll be happy to let them draw illustrations to accompany their text. (SMB-Journal, 1/95)

The girls were progressing pretty well, except Rhonda. Rhonda was wanting to work at the computer daily, trying to compose without any prewriting or drafts.

Rhonda is new to the district and has very limited writing skills. I have had to explain to her about plagiarism, because she was copying a text from a book she was reading for literature. She is, hopefully, going to be tested to see if she qualifies for Special School District services. (SMB-Journal, 12/94)

Jamie and Miranda are working on creating their own magazines. They're using current teen magazines as a format for their magazines.

"Model tips, Seven Steps to Success. Use these tips to become the hottest new model in the world.

1. Take only one shower a week, it's better for your skin.
2. Washing your hair with toothpaste gives your hair lots of body.
3. Onion rings around your wrist makes a nifty bracelet.
4. Crayola markers are a cheaper way of wearing make-up
5. Burning your hair makes a great fragrance.
6. Vinegar makes your mouth smell nice and fresh.
7. Flossing with a shoelace is softer on your teeth. (Needs to be an old shoelace.)

(Excerpt from student writing, 1/95)

By the end of the second quarter, the students knew I was very disappointed in some of their work. Six of the ten students in the core group did not meet their goals, with four of the six not completing a single project during writing workshop. They had begun numerous projects and could not see any through to the final draft or publication stages. Eric and Buck were close to completing their comic book, but

unfortunately they changed their format so often that it was still incomplete.

The girls are progressing at a steadier pace than the boys. The girls seem to be able to take my comments from conferences and apply it to what they're working on. (SMB-Journal, 1/95)

I was very curious to read their second quarter evaluations. Would they admit they had fooled around? Would they recognize where they were having problems?

In responding to the statement, "I use writing time wisely," four students answered most of the time, four answered sometimes, and one answered rarely. This was very accurate, except for Rhonda and Victor who stated most of the time; when in actuality they rarely wrote.

When asked what grade they felt they deserved, most students said a B or a C. A few of them commented:

"C, because I don't have a lot to show for this quarter."

"I'd give myself a B because my art work is great."

"B-, I didn't youse (use) my time wisely." (Student self evaluations, 1/10/95)

Third Quarter:

In preparing for third quarter, I stressed to the students the importance of working toward their goals. I explained that I needed to give the substitute an idea of what they were going to work on. I also explained that the substitute would be in charge and that writing workshop might change, depending on their behaviors and the substitutes preferences.

I'm glad Jody, my substitute, has subbed for me before. She knows how I run the room and is familiar with all of the students. My only apprehension is that she is a more traditional teacher and I don't know if she will allow the students to work collaboratively. (SMB, Journal, 2/95)

I left on maternity leave two weeks into the third quarter. I was very curious to see how the students would progress while I was gone. I hoped that my absence would give the students who were having difficulties an opportunity to turn things around and have a new start.

(Jody called numerous times to ask my opinion in handling behavioral situations, but did not elaborate on academics.)

Fourth Quarter:

I returned from maternity leave two weeks into the fourth quarter. The students were excited to have me back, but I was still a bit unsure of what to expect.

Jody left a manila folder for me which contained the students' writing work. I was excited to see that some of the students met their third quarter goals. I was also surprised to see the lack of creativity in many of my more talented writers.

Kathie is normally a very imaginative writer. Her story is very dry, not much excitement. She has a sheet attached to her story with spelling/grammatical errors marked on it. There is also a list of due dates for each step of the writing process. I do not assign due dates for stories, but I was not the teacher.

Kathie tells me she's glad I'm back, because she has not been able to write any other stories. She had to work on her chosen story and follow all of the writing process steps.

I'm glad Kathie is a strong writer or this may have turned her off to writing. (SMB-Journal, 4/95.)

My class attitude/tone has definately changed. The students are all sitting in their assigned seats; no one was moving to other spaces to write. When I asked why no one is moving, they tell me it's because Mrs. Greene, Jody, did not allow them to sit where they wanted. (SMB-Journal, 4/95.)

Victor had not taken advantage of my absence to turn things around, but instead ended up being sent out frequently during my absence. He was refusing to do any work, especially write. His excuse was, "I'm bored, I have nothing to write about!" Victor was going backwards, not progressing forward.

I don't know how to reach Victor. He does not want to write or for that matter do anything! How am I going to help this student reach his potential? What am I going to do? Victor failed every subject in third quarter and fourth quarter does not look any better! (SMB- Journal, 5/95.)

After a week and a half, most of the students had returned to writing creative, imaginative stories. I was pleased to find out that Rhonda had been accepted into the Special School District program and was enjoying the extra attention she was receiving, and craved.

I did see some positive changes in my boys' writing behaviors, but they still were dependent writers, not independent original thinkers.

Eric and Buck completed their comic book, but want to continue working dependently, even though they have been told no. I told them I needed to see some individual work in order to assess their fourth quarter work. (SMB- Journal, 5/95.)

Many of the girls were ending the year working on poetry. I had shared some poems which really seemed to spark their interest. The girls were using all of my poetry books and teaching resources to guide them. They were using all of the various types of poetry from nonsense to haiku and cinquain.

This was great to see! I had gotten this group enthusiastic about a particular genre of writing. They began to see the fun of poetry. Perhaps, they will be lifelong lovers of poetry. More importantly, they found that poetry is not boring or something to dread.

The fourth quarter went quickly due to state mandated testing, which took one week and end of the year activities (award days, field trips, field day, etc....)

I saw definite improvements in writing during the fourth quarter. I was spending much less time dealing with grammatical and mechanical errors. Spelling was still an issue with many students, but they learned ways to compensate. They learned how to use the dictionary, computer dictionary, spell checkers, etc.. . They learned lifelong skills.

When making their final self evaluations, it was interesting that most of the students still felt that they were writers, but many had changed their ideas of what made a good writer. The students responded with:

"He uses his imagination, but adds details so he makes the reader see his story."

"He makes you feel like you're part of the story."

(Student Self Evaluations-5/95)

This has been a long year. I guess being gone for nine weeks made it seem longer. The students have made progress since the first day of school. (SMB- Journal, 5/95.)

When reviewing their writing portfolios it was interesting to listen to their comments.

"I wrote this? This is awful!"

"I forgot I did this!"

"Wow, look how short this is!" (Anecdotal records- 6/95.)

Conclusions:

As I began this project I did not know what to expect. I felt that writing process taught during writing workshop was very worthwhile. After observing my core group for four quarters, I did learn many things:

- Students are capable of taking responsibility for their learning.
- The use of daily repetition, writing two sentences containing errors on the board, is very effective in helping students recognize common grammatical and mechanical errors. (Many students used the knowledge gained from daily sentences in their own writing.)

The students did show growth during the year in writing workshop, as well as other areas of the curriculum. (This was very apparent as they reviewed their year long portfolios.)

I feel that I answered my initial question of "What is the effect of writing process on student comprehension over a year in writing workshop?"

The students learned many resources available to help them as writers, and as life long learners. The students' learned a variety of genres for writing, but many found a particular area which interested them.

The most visible way that I saw writing process affecting student comprehension was cross curricular areas. The reports, plays, speeches, advertisements, etc. that the students wrote were, for the most part, much better organized and contained less grammatical, mechanical, and spelling errors than students from previous years.

The students also knew how to use various resources to find necessary information. [To me, this is true growth and success when the learning pours from one area into another.]

What will I do differently next year? This is a challenging question. Next year I will be in a middle school setting where I have forty-five minutes for writing workshop. I will need to pay careful attention to students who are off task and try to get them engaged quickly!

I also think that I may need to set up a specific goal for each semester for the whole class. For example, to get one piece of writing to the publication stage. I also would like to have my mini lessons better organized

at the beginning of the year.

I am rethinking the idea of partner writing. Perhaps this will only be allowed beginning in the second quarter, after I have modeled good writing behaviors and students have had time to practice and internalize them.

Lastly, I do know that I will continue writing process during writing workshop, because it engages most students and allows for all ability levels to find success. I will also provide the necessary structure to provide all students the chance to find that success.

Appendix A

WRITING SURVEY

YOUR NAME _____ DATE _____

1. Are you a writer? _____

(If your answer is YES, answer question 2a. If your answer is NO, answer 2b.)

2a. How did you learn to write? _____

2b. How do people learn to write? _____

3. Why do people write? _____

4. What do you think a good writer needs to do in order to write well?

5. From your experience, how do teachers decide which pieces of writing are the good ones? _____

6. In general, how do you feel about what you write? _____

Appendix B

WRITING BEHAVIOR SELF ASSESSMENT

STUDENT _____ QUARTER 1 2 3 4

Circle what best applies to you most of time. You may jot a little note nearby if you feel I should know something.

I USE THE WRITING WORKSHOP TIME WISELY.

most of the time sometimes rarely

I KNOW HOW TO TRIGGER IDEAS BY WEBBING, CLUSTERING, USING BOOKS, LISTING, DRAWING, CONFERENCING.

most of the time sometimes rarely

I HELP MY CLASSMATES WITH THEIR DRAFTS BY LISTENING & QUESTIONING.

most of the time sometimes rarely

I USE THE MEANINGFUL SUGGESTIONS OTHERS OFFER ME.

most of the time sometimes rarely

WHEN I LISTEN AND RESPOND DURING SHARE TIME I AM POLITE AND FOLLOW THE SHARE PROCEDURES.

most of the time sometimes rarely

I USE THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS IN THE CLASSROOM. (charts, spell check/word guides, peers, dictionaries, thesaurus, books, maps, etc.)

most of the time sometimes rarely

WHEN I EDIT, I AM ABLE TO FIND MOST OF MY MISTAKES FOR CORRECTION.

most of the time sometimes rarely

I REVISE (rewrite) THE CONTENT TO MAKE THE PIECE MORE UNDERSTANDABLE AND CLEARER TO THE READER.

most of the time sometimes rarely

Appendix C

WRITING EVALUATION CONFERENCE

Name _____ Quarter 1 2 3 4

Date _____ Grade _____

WHAT'S YOUR BEST PIECE OF WRITING OF THIS QUARTER?

WHAT MAKES IT BEST?

WHAT GRADE WOULD YOU GIVE YOURSELF AND WHY...HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOUR OWN WRITING GROWTH?

HOW HAS READING HELPED YOUR WRITING ... CONNECT THE TWO.

WHAT NEW DISCOVERIES DID YOU LEARN THIS QUARTER IN YOUR WRITING OR ABOUT YOURSELF, AS A WRITER?

WHAT DID YOU DO TO WORK ON YOUR GOALS? HOW DO YOU THINK YOU DID?

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THE NEXT QUARTER? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO WORK ON AND TRY AS A WRITER?



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
(OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



Reproduction Release
 (Specific Document)

CS 217 216

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: "I'm Bored, I Don't Have Anything to Write About!" A Study of the Writing Process in one Sixth Grade Classroom	
Author(s): Susan Biffignani	
Corporate Source:	Publication Date: 1995

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, Resources in Education (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign in the indicated space following.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
Level 1	Level 2A	Level 2B
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g. electronic) and paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only
Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.		

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche, or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: <u>Susan Biffignani</u>	Printed Name/Position/Title: <u>Susan Biffignani 6th grade educator</u>		
Organization/Address: <u>Valley Park Middle School</u>	Telephone: <u>636-225-2308</u>	Fax:	
<u>356 Meramec Station Rd</u>	E-mail Address: <u>smbiff@vp.k12.mo.us</u>	Date: <u>8/30/00</u>	
<u>Valley Park MO 63088</u>			

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC/REC Clearinghouse
 2805 E 10th St Suite 140
 Bloomington, IN 47408-2698
 Telephone: 812-855-5847
 Toll Free: 800-759-4723
 FAX: 812-856-5512
 e-mail: ericcs@indiana.edu
 WWW: http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/

EFF-088 (Rev. 9/97)