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The Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing on the Writing Apprehension Level of Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities

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The Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing
on the
Writing Apprehension Level
of
Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities

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This thesis has been approved by:

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Date of Approval: August 8, 1995

Running Head: DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Abstract

This study examined what effects writing in dialogue journals has on the writing apprehension level of middle school students identified as having a learning disability related to writing. Twenty eight students participated in the study, eleven of which served as a control group and eleven as an experimental group (other subjects were eliminated randomly). Each subject completed the Writing Apprehension Measure before and after the treatment. During the six - week study, the control group wrote in journals three times each week. The experimental group wrote in journals three times each week and received a response from the teacher (researcher) that met or exceeded the length of the student's entry, for each journal entry. A t-test for independent samples was used to determine whether the effects of the treatment were statistically significant. The resulting t-value of .336 was found not to be significant at any acceptable level of significance.

Acknowledgements

I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to my parents for inspiring me, pushing me, supporting me, congratulating me and giving me the highest goals for which to reach. They are the two most outstanding people I know.

I would also like to thank the teachers and students in Lunenburg County, without whom this study would not have been possible, as well as the staff of Elk Hill Farm School for Boys, which is where the seed was planted.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Whitfield, Dr. Keith and Dr. Gibbons for their help and patience - especially patience. Thanks also to the rest of the faculty and staff in the Department of Education, Special Education and Social Work, as well as the Department of English, at Longwood College.

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The Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing
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INTRODUCTION

A primary difficulty associated with students identified as learning disabled is limited writing ability. According to Gaustad (1991), "Students with language-based learning disabilities find writing tasks exasperating if not impossible" (p. 28). This common limitation could be attributed to a number of deficiencies. Considering the ambiguity surrounding the term "learning disability," a specific cause of poor writing skills has long evaded researchers.

Among the available research, there is believed to be a high degree of positive correlation between writing ability and writing apprehension (Daly & Wilson, 1983; Rinehammer, 1992; Minot & Gamble, 1991). Writing apprehension, a term coined by Daly and Miller in 1975, refers to a general tendency of some students to avoid situations that involve writing, particularly writing that includes some degree of evaluation or measurement (Buley-Meissner, 1989). This apprehension

can often be traced to a lack of skills training or negative responses by teachers to early writing (Daly & Wilson, 1983).

A tool that would decrease this apprehension among students who are learning disabled would be a valuable resource to special educators. Journal writing, personal and expressive narratives, and allowing students to choose their own writing topics have long been useful methods in English classrooms to help students write more freely (Graham & Harris, 1988). Journals in which teachers respond at length to students' writing are called dialogue journals. As is traditional with journal writing, mechanics are not a primary concern, thus eliminating the evaluation step that accompanies apprehension in students. Because dialogue journals emphasize a communication similar to conversation or letter writing, they tend to ease the reluctance that some students feel (Grant, Lazarus, & Peyton, 1992).

Educators who have experienced the frustration of trying to teach poor writers to write, and who have seen the effects of poor writing on performance in nearly every school subject, would certainly see the benefits of a vehicle to help students write in greater quantity and, eventually, with greater

skill.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study was designed to determine whether or not the sample group of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students will experience a decrease in writing apprehension as a result of an intervention of regular writing in dialogue journals during class time in an on-going communication with a teacher.

RELATED LITERATURE

Over the past years, special educators have undoubtedly tried hundreds, thousands, of methods to improve the writing of their students with learning disabilities. Not only is writing quality a problem, but writing quantity. There are an infinite number of writing exercises that could be highly successful with learning disabled students if those students would produce a higher quantity of written work. Because many learning disabled students suffer from a fear of receiving a negative response to their writing, these students often find it extremely difficult and frustrating to write more than the very minimum.

It has long been known that students with learning

disabilities often suffer from low self-esteem. Minot and Gamble (1991) associate writing apprehension with low self-esteem, mentioning that basic writers, or inexperienced and low level writers, generally suffer from both. A number of researchers agree that the best way to reduce writing apprehension in troubled writers is to involve them in activities that mimic meaningful and authentic communication (Rhodes, Dudley-Marling & Mowder, 1986; Rueda, 1992; Johnson & Hoover, 1989). The dialogue journal is precisely this form of written expression. Because an ongoing correspondence with their teacher has meaning to the students, and because they are writing to a specific audience for a specific purpose, the use of the dialogue journal, "...mitigates some of the instructional problems associated with more traditional methods of teaching writing" (Johnson & Hoover, 1989, p. 78). Furthermore, the students generally enjoy the written exchanges and, in a study conducted by Grant, Lazarus and Peyton (1992), the students looked forward to reading the comments and responses from their dialogue partners.

Dialogue journals, in many ways, can be compared to the "pen pal" situations in which children often go to great lengths to become involved. Numerous

studies suggest that the dialogue partner, the teacher, becomes a confidante; indeed a "secret pal" to whom the student can discuss thoughts, problems, and feelings confidently and with the knowledge that the teacher will understand, sympathize, and offer honest reactions and comments (Rhodes, Dudley - Marling & Mowder, 1986 and Reynolds, 1987). Traditionally, students respect and look up to their teachers. To know that the person one admires, especially an adult, takes the time to read his thoughts and respond in a caring manner makes students, especially those with low self-esteem, feel more confident and worthwhile. This new confidence that resulted from a writing activity in turn lends itself to the continuation of that activity.

One of the most important aspects of the dialogue journal process is that the teacher does not correct mechanical errors. Red marks serve only to remind apprehensive students that they do not write well and they do not enjoy writing (Grant, Lazarus & Peyton, 1992). The teacher's job, according to Halpern (1988), is:

To be the kind of respondent who takes the voices of students seriously and enables

them to explore freely their own concerns, to experiment with language, and to break with convention. (p. 1)

Unlike many writing activities which require students to put pen to paper unaccompanied by writing instruction, dialogue journals are not time wasted practicing incorrect writing strategies. The teacher's responses serve as models of correct writing structure and grammar, in addition to expanding upon what the student has already written (Gaustad, 1991). In the study conducted by Grant, Lazarus, and Peyton (1992), researchers observed that the subjects tended to pattern their responses after the teacher's comments. In a study conducted by Goodman and Hart (1988), the students voluntarily inquired about errors and ways to improve their writing. Furthermore, Graham and Harris (1988) report that, "The most common means by which students learn about writing comes from exposure to examples, either through reading or teacher presentation of models that embody a specific pattern" (p. 510). Students, therefore, learn appropriate writing structures without enduring the apprehension building "trial and error" phase that often precludes success in traditional writing activities.

A second valuable aspect of dialogue journals is the freedom they, by design, give students to write about topics in which they are interested. For these students who often lose thoughts while trying to commit them to paper, writing about a topic of their own choice with which they are familiar provides a rare freedom (Rhodes, Dudley - Marling & Mowder, 1986). Numerous studies have shown that learning disabled students respond well to being given choices in their learning. According to McGrath (1992), students become, "...masters of their own tasks" (p. 5). Through viewing and examining their writing, students are able to view and examine what they think; even disagree with their teacher's contributions, making the journal an "empowering" and, therefore, worthwhile experience (McGrath, 1992).

The final distinguishing feature of dialogue journal writing is that it draws upon the natural conversational skills that students, special education as well as regular education, have already developed (Rueda, 1992). McGrath (1992) as well, concluded that:

... (1) the dialogue journal does help

stimulate conversation at a deeper level than generally produced in a classroom; and (2) this tool reflects authentic verbal communication and contains many of the same processes that are utilized in real - world situations. (p. 3)

This conversational tone of dialogue journals serves to further reduce writing apprehension in students because the writer need concentrate only on expressing himself and give only secondary consideration to sentence and paragraph structure, punctuation, and spelling. When students converse with friends, they need be concerned with nothing other than the point they want to convey. Indeed, conversations are rarely a source of apprehension among students. The journals can also, ironically, be compared with the notes students traditionally pass in class. Correspondence and conversation come naturally to most students. It only follows to incorporate those aspects of communication into the writing program.

There is a moderately extensive body of research on the use of dialogue journals to teach writing. Among the articles included in this body of research,

a vast majority report some level of increased writing comfort and fluency in the subjects as a result of using the dialogue journal, hence an apparent decrease in writing apprehension. Furthermore, as Goodman and Hart (1988) found, students participating in dialogue journal writing became more comfortable with many different forms of writing, including test taking, essay composition, and general expression. Older students in some studies noticed the increased ease with which they wrote and described this change in their journals (Hennings, 1992).

Statement of the Hypothesis

The literature strongly suggests that the use of dialogue journals increases writing ease and enjoyment in students and that students identified as learning disabled often feel apprehensive about writing. It is, therefore, hypothesized that the use of dialogue journals on a regular basis, including consistent response feedback by the teachers, will result in a statistically significant decrease in the writing apprehension that learning disabled middle school students feel when given a writing assignment in other contexts and subject areas.

"Regular basis" refers to the frequency and

regularity of journal writing by the students. In this study, the subjects wrote in their journals three days each week for periods of fifteen minutes each. Consistently writing on a regular schedule was an essential element of the study. The students knew to expect to have certain times devoted to journal writing. Regularity helped them to become comfortable with the process and develop a personal rapport with the teacher.

"Other contexts" describes the writing opportunities students faced independent of the journal writing. The research was intended to increase comfort with writing in all subject areas regardless of the nature of the writing assignment.

Instrument

The instrument used for this study was the Writing Attainment Measure (WAM) developed in 1979 by Linda A. Daly and Michael D. Miller. This test was designed to measure general ability about writing, not to measure specific writing skills. The test consisted of 25 self-report items that were designed to measure

METHOD

Subjects

The sample for this study was chosen from a population of students identified as having a learning disability from Lunenburg, Virginia. The sample was chosen randomly using a table of random numbers. All participants were either in a self-contained special education classroom or received special education resource for language arts. The students ranged in age from 12 - 14 years old and represented the ethnic and cultural range of the population.

The anonymity of the students was insured through the use of identifying numbers in the results. No subject's name has been revealed and only the subjects, parents, researcher and subjects' teachers (who must assign the journal writing) were aware of the identity of the participants.

Instrument

The instrument used for this study was the Writing Apprehension Measure (WAM) developed in 1975 By John A. Daly and Michael D. Miller. This test was developed to, "...measure general anxiety about encoding written communication" (Daly & Miller, 1975). The test consisted of 26 self-report items for which the subject

indicated his degree of agreement or disagreement about his feelings about writing and while writing, as well as his tendency to write. Respondents were assured that there are no right or wrong answers.

The wording of the questions was somewhat difficult and some students became confused trying to decide among the range of answers from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Accommodations were made for students who had difficulty choosing responses. The explanation for each abbreviation (for example: SA = Strongly Agree) was written clearly at the top of each test. All test questions were read aloud to the students and some students who were particularly confused took the test in a one-on-one atmosphere with the researcher. One study pointed out that the validity of the test is threatened by the "uncertain" response choice (Reed, Burton & Vandett, 1988), but this response did not seem to present a problem because most students used response number three very infrequently.

In spite of these drawbacks, the WAM was judged to be the best instrument available for use in the study. It has, in previous research, been judged reliable and valid (Daly & Wilson, 1983) It is the most commonly used instrument for measuring writing

apprehension (Minot & Gamble, 1991; Reed, Button & Vandett, 1988). Furthermore, Buley-Meissner (1989) suggested having college students complete the WAM at both the beginning and end of the term to help identify problems and evaluate strengths and weaknesses.

Each of the five possible answers, strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree, is given a point value, 1-5, respectively. A score above 90 indicates a high level of apprehensiveness and a score below 54 indicates a low level of apprehensiveness (Buley-Meissner, 1989). The test is accompanied by a detailed scoring key which describes particular differences in scoring patterns depending on the question.

Experimental Design

A pretest-posttest control group design was used for this study. This design was chosen because the study aimed to determine whether the strategy effectively decreases writing apprehension in middle-school-age learning disabled subjects. The control group served to increase validity and to control for factors such as external history and within-group history, as well as testing and

instrumentation. The pretest controlled for mortality and allowed the researcher to determine whether the control and experimental groups were at the same basic apprehension level at the beginning of the experiment.

Because the experiment took place over the course of six weeks, the novelty effect did not present a problem. The Hawthorne effect was counteracted by the teachers' treating the dialogue journals as they would any other new writing exercise. The subjects were not told that their writing apprehension was being evaluated (the word "evaluate" is one of the primary causes of writing apprehension). Full emphasis was placed on the new practice of regularly writing in dialogue journals.

The most difficult variable to control was the honesty of students' responses. It is possible that students tried to answer the way they thought they were supposed to. Honesty was strongly encouraged and much emphasis was placed on the actual journal entries and student attitudes to support scores on the Writing Apprehension Measure.

Procedure

Eleven students with learning disabilities were

given the opportunity to participate in a study designed to decrease their writing apprehension through the consistent use of dialogue journals. A black and white lab-quality notebook was provided for each student's use. The word "diary" was not used because boys often think of a diary as something feminine.

Another eleven students served as the control group. They did not participate in the dialogue journal writing, but simply wrote in traditional journals without receiving responses. The control group served primarily as a means of comparison and a way of increasing the validity of the study.

Before the study began, each student was given a permission slip to take home and have signed by their parent. Because it was desired that the students not know the exact nature of the study (to encourage accurate responses on the WAM), permission slips were sent home in a sealed envelope and parents were asked to reseal the slip in the enclosed envelope when returning it. Although not all of the subjects heeded the request not to open the envelopes, and some parents did not seal replies, many did cooperate.

The students were extremely sluggish in getting the forms to their parents as well as getting them back to the school. Their teachers agreed that some

form of positive reinforcement was in order. Each student in both the experimental and control groups was promised a soda if permission slips were returned by a set date. All students returned the forms promptly.

Each group was given the Writing Apprehension Measure at the beginning of the study to determine the sample's current level of apprehension. All subjects were divided among three different classes. Upon review of the WAM with all three teachers and a careful examination of the phrasing of the questions, it was determined that the most effective method of administering the test would be orally. Some of the questions were lengthy and contained some advanced sentence structures. Although some of the subjects could read the entire test with comprehension, others did not have the skills to read the questions with full understanding in order to give an accurate response.

When the test was read to the first group of students, it was also discovered that the students were having a great deal of difficulty tracking which responses corresponded to which questions. They tended to skip lines and lose track of the number on which they were. Subsequent tests were altered

with lines running between each question. This simple alteration to the appearance of the test made it much easier for the students.

Each teacher was asked to have her students write for fifteen minutes each Monday, Wednesday and Friday in language arts or English class. After each day's writing, the researcher spent a few minutes responding personally and correctly in each journal attempting to provide a model of correct grammar and structure as well as concluding with a potential topic on which the student could expand if he so chose. Researcher responses were also comparable in length to the students' entries.

All subjects were told that they were free to write on any topic they chose, although the teacher would provide some possible starting points on the board for those having trouble deciding about what to write (see Appendix C). They were also assured that, under no circumstances would the teacher make grammatical corrections to the journal entries unless the student specifically asked a question. Finally, students were informed that they could use inappropriate language in their journals or write about private matters without being reprimanded. Their journals were between them and the researcher, and no one

else would see them.

After a period of six weeks of regular journal writing, each group took the WAM a second time.

The subjects ranged in age from twelve to fourteen years-old. Eighteen of the subjects were male and four were female. This ratio of male to female represented the ratio in the classes. The subjects were randomly assigned to either a dialogic or a non-dialogic group. The dialogic group was assigned to write in their journals and the non-dialogic group was assigned to write in their journals but not to discuss their journals with their peers.

In order to control against mortality, twelve students were placed in the experimental group, which, according to the design of the study, required ten. Sixteen subjects were in the control group. At the end of the study, eleven subjects remained in the experimental group and fifteen in the control group. The source of the extra four subjects in the control group were eliminated from the final analysis because of a failure to respond to the WAM.

Each response to the WAM was numbered. In order to score the test, responses were added up and a mean was calculated for each group. A mean was also calculated for each group. The mean for the experimental and control groups was calculated.

RESULTS

The three classes from which the subjects were drawn produced a total of twenty eight students. The subjects ranged in age from twelve to fourteen years old. Eighteen of the subjects were male and four were female. This ratio of male to female represented the ratio in the classes. The students were each numbered and a table of random numbers was used to determine which students would be in the control group and which would be in the experimental group.

In order to control against mortality, twelve students were placed in the experimental group, which, according to the design of the study, required ten. Sixteen subjects were in the control group. At the end of the study, eleven subjects remained in the experimental group and fifteen in the control group. The scores of the extra four subjects in the control group were eliminated from the final equations using a table of random numbers.

Each response on the WAM was numbered. In order to score the test, responses were added up and a mean was calculated to hundredths place. A mean was then calculated for each group: pre-test control and experimental and post-test control and experimental.

The mean for the pretests were calculated at 3.05 for experimental and 2.86 for control. The means for the posttests were calculated at 2.96 for experimental and 3.00 for control.

To analyze the data, a t-test for independent samples was used to compare the means of the two posttests. The results of the study do not support the original hypothesis. The calculated t of .336 is not statistically significant at any acceptable level of significance. Therefore, one may initially conclude that writing in dialogue journals does not significantly decrease writing apprehension in middle school - aged learning disabled students.

DISCUSSION

Although the final results of this study did not support the hypothesis, there seem to be a number of possible explanations, none of which lead one to believe that dialogue journal writing is an ineffective tool to use with learning disabled students.

When the WAM was administered initially (the pretest), it was obvious that the students had a good deal of trouble understanding the questions. A question such as number 9, "I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication," means very little to a 6th grade boy who reads poorly, hates to write, and has never considered publication. The questions were all explained if there seemed to be confusion or if a question was asked. Often, however, when asked specifically whether they understood, many students would answer "no," yet they would not have volunteered this information had they not been asked directly. Furthermore, some questions were mirror images of others and students would respond differently to two questions which were essentially the same.

Results, it appears, may have been more valid had the subjects been older and, therefore, having a larger vocabulary and more mature thought processes.

Perhaps a sample consisting of writing apprehensive upper high school students or college freshman would have been better suited to this particular instrument.

Direct observation of student reactions to dialogue journal writing indicate that the treatment did indeed have a highly positive effect on the subjects. In one class, the students had been writing in journals all year. One student who was a member of the experimental group who had been receiving "F"'s on his journal writing (the students were graded simply on writing, not on quality of writing) began making "A"'s because he would write eagerly in order to get a response.

In the hallways and on school grounds, students would verbally inquire about reactions to a particular journal entry. Knowing that an adult was eager to read what they had written - eager enough to write back - excited the students and gave them a degree of self-confidence that was obvious to their teachers and obvious in their writing. Subjects who began the study writing only five or six lines each day, began to write more and more as they realized the longer their entry, the longer response they could expect.

A new level of writing confidence was also evident

in the topics about which many students chose to write. Initially, the subjects generally felt most comfortable writing about traditionally non-emotional subjects: school, hobbies, weekend activities. It seemed as though they did not believe that they truly could write about anything they desired and would not get into trouble. As the study continued, however, many seemed to become comfortable writing about romantic relationships, their feelings about their teachers, family interactions, and personal information. Once they discovered that the response given in return was one of understanding, empathy, and true interest, they relaxed a great deal. Several began to ask personal questions in their writing about a variety of subjects as well as (appropriate) questions about the researcher's personal life and past. A few wrote about how great they thought it was to be able to communicate with an adult, especially a teacher, in that manner. One subject discussed his mother's death and how that made him feel.

The three teachers from whose classes the students were chosen commented repeatedly that their students enjoyed the journal writing a great deal and would even remind the teacher when it was journal time. Many students asked their teachers to read the responses

they found in their journals. Some began to request help with grammar, structure, and spelling.

Although this study did not produce a statistically significant reduction in writing apprehension, the afore-mentioned observations are, alone, enough testament to the value of dialogue journal writing. Perhaps a re-wording of the test questions is in order for younger sample groups or a longer period of intervention. It is possible that the sample group was too small to yield statistical results that would accurately reflect the observed effects of the intervention. Regardless, if dialogue journal writing produces positive reactions from learning disabled middle school students who have traditionally complained about writing assignments, its ultimate value is obvious on a personal level, if not a statistical one.

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3001 West Creek St.
Richmond, VA 23221
November 1, 1994

Dr. James Ixona
Longwood County School Board
P.O. Box 2
Victoria, VA 23074

Dear Dr. Ixona:

I am currently pursuing my Master's Degree in Special Education at Longwood College, and am preparing to begin working on my thesis. I am writing to request your permission to conduct a study using some of the students in LD classes at the middle school.

APPENDIX A

Permission Forms

The title of my thesis is "The Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing on the Academic Achievement of Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities." The study will involve using dialogue journals three times a week (at the end of each class period) with the students in their journals. I hope that this interaction will make them feel more comfortable writing.

I would sincerely appreciate a response to my request in writing or let me know if you would like to arrange a time, at your convenience, for me to meet. Thank you.

Very sincerely,

Dr. Jennifer Dowley

3001 West Grace St.
Richmond, VA 23221
November 1, 1994

Dr. James Irons
Lunenburg County School Board
P.O. Box X
Victoria, VA 23974

Dear Dr. Irons:

I am currently pursuing my Master's Degree in Special Education at Longwood College, and am preparing to begin working on my thesis. I am writing to request your permission to conduct a study using some of the students in LD classes at the middle school.

The title of my thesis is, "The Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing on the Writing Apprehension Level of Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities." The study will involve the students writing in ordinary journals three times a week (as many of them do already). I will then respond personally to the students in their journals. I hope that this interaction will make them feel more comfortable writing.

I would sincerely appreciate a response to my request in writing or let me know if you would like to arrange a time, at your convenience, for us to meet. Thank you.

Very sincerely,

Ms. Jennifer Dooley

Longwood College, Human Services, Revised Curriculum
Dr. James Irons
Mrs. Shirley Lee
Mr. Wayne Staples
Mr. Barry Coffey

Please send this posting back by your child in the attached envelope. Please seal the return envelope. The study will be more effective if your child

Dear Parents:

I am currently doing work on my thesis for my degree in Special Education at Longwood College. The title of my study is: "The Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing on the Writing Apprehension Level of Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities." This study involves your child's teacher giving the students time in class to write in journals. I will then respond to your child's writing encouraging him or her to, in turn, respond to me, creating a dialogue between the two of us. I hope that my study will show that this sort of writing helps students who are normally apprehensive, or afraid of writing, to feel more comfortable and, therefore, have a chance to become better writers.

At the beginning of the study I will ask each participant to fill out a questionnaire called the "Writing Apprehension Measure" which is a respected and valid measure of a person's writing apprehension level. Each student will answer this questionnaire again at the end of the study so I can measure any differences.

It would be very helpful to me and, I anticipate, to your child if you would consent to his or her involvement in this project. You will, of course, be informed of the results.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Dooley
Special Education

Teacher
Lunenburg Middle

School

cc. Longwood College Human Subjects Review Committee
Dr. James Irons
Mrs. Shirley Lee
Mr. Wayne Staples
Mr. Barry Carnes

Please send this portion back by your child in the attached envelope. Please seal the return envelope, as the study will be more effective if your child

APPENDIX B

NAME _____

- 1 - Strongly Agree
- 2 - Agree
- 3 - Undecided
- 4 - Disagree
- 5 - Strongly Disagree

Be as honest as you can!

	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. I avoid writing.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I look forward to how my ideas will be evaluated.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Taking a composition course is a very frightening experience.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Reading in a composition notebook makes me feel good.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a composition.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I like to write my ideas down.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I like to have my friends read what I have written.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I'm nervous about writing.	1	2	3	4	5
13. People seem to enjoy what I write.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I enjoy writing.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I never seem to be able to clearly write down my ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Writing is a lot of fun.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

Writing Apprehension Measure

MS. DOOLEY'S WRITING QUESTIONS

NAME _____

- 1 = Strongly Agree
 2 = Agree
 3 = Undecided
 4 = Disagree
 5 = Strongly Disagree

Be as honest as you can!

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
1. I avoid writing.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I look forward to writing down my ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Taking a composition course is a very frightening experience.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Handing in a composition makes me feel good.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a composition.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I like to write my ideas down.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I like to have my friends read what I have written.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I'm nervous about writing.	1	2	3	4	5
14. People seem to enjoy what I write.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I enjoy writing.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I never seem to be able to clearly write down my ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Writing is a lot of fun.	1	2	3	4	5

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18. I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper. | | | | | |
| 20. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. When I hand in a composition I know I'm going to do poorly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. It's easy for me to write good compositions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I don't think I write as well as most other people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. I don't like my compositions to be evaluated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. I'm no good at writing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Quick Write

A quick write is a free-writing period of 10 to 15 minutes. You write about a particular topic. The purpose of the quick write is to develop writing fluency and a free flow of ideas. Suggested topics are listed below to help you to get started.

What I would change one thing about the classroom...	A job I never want is ...
On weekends I like to...	When I am sad...
My best achievement this year...	If I could change the color of my hair ...
The place I would really like to visit...	My teacher...
What I like best about myself...	Too many kids are ...
I get angry when...	Winter is fun because ...
If I were sixteen...	It is awful when my best friend ...
My biggest worry is...	One thing I would like to learn more about ...
Sometimes I wish...	Life would be different if ...
I think that homework...	The best summer vacation would be ...
When I am alone...	If I were a mom or dad I would not ...
The best thing that ever happened to me...	Sometimes I forget to ...
Once in a while I like to...	If I had \$100...
If I were a cartoon character I would...	One thing that makes me cry ...
Summer is fun because...	What frightens me most...
When I watch television...	The thing I like least about myself ...
I wish it when my parents...	Some days I feel like ...

APPENDIX C
Topic Choices

Quick Write

A quick write is a free-writing period of five to ten minutes during which the students write about a pre-selected topic. The purpose of the quick write is to develop writing fluency and a free flow of ideas. Some suggested topics are listed below to help you to get started.

If I could change one thing about this classroom...	A job I never want is ...
On weekends I like to...	When I am sad...
My best achievement this year...	If I could change the color of my hair ...
One place I would really like to visit...	My teacher...
What I like best about myself...	Too many kids are ...
I get angry when...	Winter is fun because ...
If I were sixteen...	It is awful when my best friend ...
My biggest worry is...	One thing I would like to learn more about ...
Sometimes I wish...	Life would be different if ...
I think that homework...	The best summer vacation would be ...
When I am alone...	If I were a mom or dad I would not ...
The funniest thing that ever happened to me...	Sometimes I forget to ...
Once in a while I like to...	If I had \$100*...
If I were a cartoon character I would...	One thing that makes me cry ...
Summer is fun because...	What frightens me most ...
When I watch television...	The thing I like least about myself ...
I hate it when my parents...	Some days I feel like ...

Subject W-1, Week 1:

I have a gilestfired butt her sand want to he
what me I bow not want to brak up what her I bow
not how want to bout abut it Do you have a bastes.
I love the one I ared go what now. I ame not gonong
to bronk up what her.

Response:

Why do you think you would have to break up
with your girlfriend? How long have you been going
with her? What is she like?

Well, if you two do break up, you will be O.K.,
I'll bet. There are so many girls out there and
you are so young!

Let me know what happens!

Subject W-1, Week 4:

My mom did (died)in a car rick (wreck) and did
and my I mass her My brat was side my mom I was
a litter side I cry at the farer (funeral) No I
was sleep the time my dad made me wake up.

Subject W-9, Week 1:

I like this sertain girl she's older than me. Her
name is takisha she's 16 years old. She's mediom
Hight an smart Pritty an sexy. I like every thing

about her. There's no one I would rather be with
in the world.

Response:

Wow, it sounds like this certain girl is pretty
special! How did you meet her? How much older is
she? Oops! I just re-read what you wrote and you
did say she was 16. That's not too old, I guess.

Does Takisha know you like her? If not maybe
you should let her know. If there's no one you would
rather be with, she must be a really great girl.
I can't wait to find out what happens!

Subject W-9, Week 4:

In miss _____'s class we have a new girl her name
is Valery. She's pretty nice all around. Now about my
brother he loves two girls Sharlise _____ and Milisa
_____. Both of them look pretty and both of them
are smart and a little sexy. A lot of boys like
them so if they want a boyfriend they have a lot
of choices. I like Sharlise she's smart and pretty
and my neighbor does Sharlise's hair. Malisa is nice
to she's my cousin to like Rosa. Sharlise and Malisa
are both light skin.

Subject W-6, Week 6:

I love write in my journal because I can tell you my feel and problems most of the time. but you all fun to talk to and tell feel because you unstand how I feel about things in life. Well it time for me to say bye in a very nice way.

P.S. I will miss writing in you Journal but see you around.

Your friend,

TABLE 1

Means of Student Responses

Mean WAT Responses

EX. Pre. = Experimental Pretest

CON. Pre. = Control Pretest

EX. Post. = Experimental Posttest

CON. Post. = Control Posttest

<u>EX. Pre.</u>	<u>CON. Pre.</u>	<u>EX. Post.</u>	<u>CON. Post.</u>
3.00	3.73	4.01	3.46
4.5	1.3	1.84	3.09
4.4			2.37
3.74	4.03	4.37	3.17
3.44	3.81	2.51	3.17
2.37	2.78	3.03	3.00
2.46	7.18	3.45	2.63
4.04	4.08	4.73	3.19
2.65	2.74	3.44	2.91
2.09	3.91	4.73	2.18
1.4	1.31	2.08	3.00
1.45	2.91	4.19	3.00
1.84	2.91	4.37	3.09
2.55	1.14	3.55	2.91
2.4	2.38	3.91	2.37
2.74	2.84	3.84	3.55

TABLE 1

Means of Student Responses

Mean WAM Responses

EX. Pre. = Experimental Pretest

CON. Pre. = Control Pretest

EX. Post. = Experimental Posttest

CON. Post = Control Posttest

	<u>EX. Pre.</u>	<u>CON. Pre.</u>	<u>EX. Post</u>	<u>CON. Post</u>
1.	3.00	3.73	4.00	3.46
2.	2.55	1.37	1.64	2.09
3.	1.64	1.91	3.00	2.37
4.	3.73	4.09	3.37	3.37
5.	3.28	3.91	2.91	3.37
6.	2.37	2.28	3.00	2.00
7.	3.46	3.19	3.46	2.82
8.	4.19	4.09	3.73	3.19
9.	2.82	2.19	2.64	2.91
10.	2.09	1.91	2.73	2.28
11.	2.19	1.91	2.09	3.00
12.	3.46	3.91	3.19	3.09
13.	3.64	3.91	4.37	3.09
14.	2.55	2.19	1.55	2.91
15.	2.46	2.28	1.91	2.37
16.	3.73	2.64	3.64	3.55

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17.	2.82	2.55	2.37	2.37
18.	3.82	3.73	3.46	3.64
19.	1.73	2.37	2.46	2.37
20.	3.09	2.28	2.46	3.19
21.	3.73	2.64	3.19	2.91
22.	3.82	3.91	3.64	3.64
23.	2.55	2.46	2.19	2.55
24.	3.55	3.00	3.00	2.91
25.	3.64	3.73	3.82	3.82
26.	4.19	3.82	2.91	4.19