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ANALYSIS OF THE PEER CONFERENCES OF UPPER ELEMENTARY WRITERS

A Dissertation Presented

By

JACQUELINE L. FINN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

February, 1985

School of Education

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OF UPPER ELEMENTARY WRITERS

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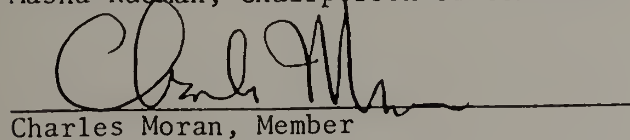
JACQUELINE L. FINN

Approved as to style and content by:

Masha Rudman, Chairperson of Committee



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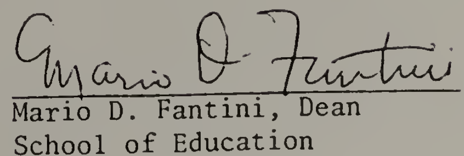

Mario D. Fantini, Dean
School of Education

Dedicated to

My husband, Phil,

whose kindness and patience

have long been a model for the seven other Finns.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to the following individuals who contributed each in their own way over many years, links to a long chain of interest in language, only the most recent of which has been the writing process:

- My parents and teachers at Presentation Academy and Rivier College who taught me the richness of the French language and literature.
- My husband, Phil, whose work took us to Europe for six years and who with me explored Germany, Italy, their people and languages.
- My bright little son, Peter, whose difficulties in reading made me ask probing questions about how children learn the language arts.
- Dr. Barbara Pilon of Worcester State College who modeled the creative teaching of literature and language.
- My Advisory Committee: Dr. Masha Rudman, Dr. Judith Gourley and Dr. Charles Moran, whose accessibility and productive conferences helped to bring this work to fruition.
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-Phil and our six children who tolerated and encouraged a mother preoccupied with study rather than cooking.

-Eugene Applebaum of the Worcester Public Schools who allowed me the flexibility I needed occasionally in order to travel to Amherst.

-To Delta Kappa Gamma, an organization of women educators which encourages women of all ages to grow as learners and which partially funded my studies.

ABSTRACT

Analysis of the Peer Conferences
of Upper Elementary Writers

February, 1985

Jacqueline L. Finn, B.A., Rivier College

M.Ed., Worcester State College

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Ed.D., University of Massachusetts

Directed by: Professor Masha Rudman

This study of the peer conferences of upper elementary writers emanated from the work of Donald H. Graves. The 28 subjects were identified as gifted 4th, 5th and 6th graders who worked one day each week in a half year course entitled "The Writing Process."

Teachers modeled responses to student writing and students were free to hold conferences as needed. Three recording stations were created in each classroom. Data consisted of the transcriptions of 83 conferences and student writing folders. The students read their texts, explored topics, questioned meaning, and expressed their feelings. Some discussed word choice, action, point of view and the organization of information. Clusters were identified, analyzed, coded and interpreted in order to describe behavioral categories and functions in peer conferences. The behaviors of writers were differentiated from those of the peer/readers.

The findings include the following:

1. Just as the energy to write comes from the child, the energy to confer about writing also comes from the child.
2. The modeling of teacher responses to student writing is easily learned by elementary students and enables them to provide an instructional scaffold for each other.
3. Students engaged in peer conferences discuss aspects of the writing process which are significant to the growth of effective writers.
4. The interaction between peers in conferences provides meaningful affective support to the students.
5. Student writers who confer engage actively in all of the language arts.

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CHAPTER I

> It is educationally more informative to know what a child can do "with some slight assistance" than to know what he succeeds at unaided.
>
> Vygotsky

Young children benefit from the intuitive help of family members who provide an extended hand or a clearly articulated phrase in response to each attempt the little one makes to walk or to talk. In this social context, learning to locomote adeptly and learning to speak are nearly universally successful. Societal support is critical and for young children it is the family which plays a major role in the systematic develpment of oral language as well as motor skills.

In the classroom, the "family" of teachers and classmates provides an expanded social context for continued language development. This is particularly true when the classroom environment is specifically structured to give maximum support for teacher-student and peer interaction. Children need responses to their attempts to make meaning, whether oral or written. The peer conference during writing is one aspect of this context. Since close scrutiny of peer conferences adds to the description of the entire writing process, I have seen research in the area as clearly worthy of research.

I undertook this study to gain some insights into the way in which the classroom "family," specifically the peers, talk about writing and assist each other as writers. I wanted also to describe the writing processes of elementary children by studying their conferences so that

I might learn if and how they give each other some of that "slight assistance" which helps in their growth as writers.

Need For The Study

Researchers in writing have in recent years appealed for readable research with detailed description of the contexts in which students write. Cahir and Shuy (1981) concluded that the lack of descriptive research on how learning to write happens, makes it rather difficult to create teaching strategies to facilitate the learning process. Marie Clay (1982) stressed the need for writing researchers to observe what children actually do when they write so that researchers can develop sensitivity to levels of development in writing, and Donald H. Graves added: "A child's changing concepts of the writing process are particularly difficult to gather from interviews and ultimately depend on data from child functioning within the writing process itself, as well as from extensive analysis of the writing product." (Graves, 1981b)

Only recently have contextual studies been conducted of elementary children engaged in the writing process. (Bissex, 1980; Clay, 1975; Graves, Calkins & Sowers, 1978-80; Calkins, 1980; Calkins, 1982; Dyson, 1983; Gourley, Benedict, Gundersheim, & McClellan, 1983) Where these researchers, following the earlier direction given to writing research by Janet Emig (1971) and Donald Graves (1973), used largely a case study approach, this study responds to the need to look more closely at the interaction between student writers in elementary

classrooms. No researcher to date has focused exclusively on peer conferences and described the behaviors of children as collaborators in the writing process nor undertaken to document the extent, the nature and functions of these conferences. Donald Graves summarizes this need in his thoughtful article "Writing Research for the Eighties: What is Needed."

> Teachers who enable children to help each other provide not only an important service in immediate child help, but a unique chance to learn more about writing by helping another person. Children in this situation are able to use language to talk about writing more specifically. Children who confer with the teacher in these types of rooms come to the conference already primed to take more responsibility for their own writing content. The procedures that teachers use to help children gradually take on more responsibility for self help need systematic study. (Graves, 1981b)

Statement of the Problem

This study was undertaken in order to describe the interactions taking place between peers during their writing conferences, to clarify the patterns which emerge and to draw conclusions which might have value to teachers and researchers who seek to understand the implications of peers writing and talking with each other.

The aspects of the writing process under study were:

1) the content of the conferences and the interactions between the children as they conferred.

2) the affective aspects of the conferences; expressions of feelings toward the writing process discussed with peers.

3) the relationship between statements of intent to revise and actual revisions.

In this study of peer conferences the subjects were nine, ten and eleven as opposed to the six through nine year olds whom Donald Graves observed in the first study of writing funded by the National Institute of Education at Atkinson Academy in Atkinson, N.H. These subjects also differed from those of King and Rentel, (1979) Dyson (1983) and Gourley, Benedict, Gundersheim & McClellan (1983) who selected kindergartners, and of Giacobbe (1983) who observed first graders.

Graves indicates in the final report of the Atkinson Academy study that in teacher-student conferences eight and nine year olds make many more statements about feelings than younger children and that nine year olds make statements that are more dense with writing concepts. My intention was to study both the writing concepts discussed by slightly older children engaged in peer conferences and the feelings they express toward their writing and toward the conferences themselves. I also proposed to compare statements made by these students during the conferences indicating their awareness of options to revise with the actual changes they made in their texts.

Access and Informed Consent

Dr. E. Howard Donahue, Supervisor of Elementary Schools, and Mr. Thomas Friend, Associate Superintendent of Schools in Worcester, Mass., granted permission to conduct the study. A letter to parents and school principals was prepared in order to protect the rights of the subjects. This letter received the approval of Dr. Earl Seidman,

Chairman of the Human Subjects Committee, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Signed permissions were received from the parents of all students.

Description of the Study

This study focused on children conferring as they wrote. I hoped that scrutiny of this one aspect of writing in elementary classrooms would be a rich area for research and would contribute to the description of the writing processes of upper elementary students.

In Chapter II I have focused on research relevant to this study. Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer in 1963 gave direction to this type of research. (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones & Schoer, 1963) I have traced the landmark case studies of Janet Emig, Donald Graves, Glenda Bissex and Lucy Calkins which followed, and noted the importance of the work of Sharon Pianko, Nancy Sommers and Sondra Perl who clarified various aspects of the writing process. I have emphasized research considering the relationship between oral and written language and the recent focus of Courtney Cazden and Ellice Forman on the cognitive value of peer interaction. Further research and substantiation is found in the discussion of the findings in Chapter IV.

In Chapter III I have stated the methodology, described data collection procedures and the full context for the study. I have defined and given examples of all of the writer and peer behaviors which I observed in the transcriptions of the conferences. Finally I have described the teacher modeling which was used and have drawn

similarities and differences between the concepts described by Donald Graves in the Atkinson Academy study and those I found in peer conferences.

In Chapter IV I have presented my findings, describing peer conferences from a categorical as well as a functional perspective. Each section explaining one aspect of the findings is followed by a discussion in which I have made further specific associations with research.

Chapter V contains a summary of the study, the conclusions I have drawn and my recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

History of the Problem

In 1929, Rollo Lyman held that the writing process was so complex as to defy analysis. He felt that research could measure products and only by inference, the process. (In Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer, 1963) The latter, in Research in Composition (1963), indicated that the most fundamental questions regarding writing remained untouched by research. They called for investigation of the learner rather than the product and the use of "direct observation" and case study procedures (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, & Schoer, 1963). Henry Meckel (1963, cited in Cooper and Odell, 1978) suggested that the case study method might prove useful in educational research and shed light on the dynamics of personality and writing. Jean Hagstrum (1964) in reviewing the Braddock book, cautioned researchers against more of the same kind of product oriented research.

Until recently, however, research on composing at the elementary level continued to receive minimal attention from serious researchers. More than half of all research on children's writing in the last twenty-five years was conducted in the last ten. (Graves, 1981b) Early research consisted largely of attempts to use quantitative methodologies to describe and predict human behavior. Recently, however, the emphasis turned from preoccupation with teaching methods and student products to the writing process itself, through

observational studies and broadened contexts which describe the writing process as it is going on. (Graves, 1981)

Recent Trends in Writing Research

Janet Emig, in her study of the composing processes of twelfth graders (1971) contributed a significant new kind of research by combining case study, observation, interviewing and the analysis of compositions. She found that in the secondary school setting the classroom structure seldom allowed for thinking, solitude and revision. Teachers focused on errors and students did not recognize their lexical, syntactical or rhetorical options. (Emig, 1971) Coinciding with the later findings of James Britton (Britton et al, 1975) in his study of eleven to eighteen year olds and with those of Glenda Bissex (1980) in a case study of her young son, Paul, Emig found that the audience for self-sponsored writing included teachers, parents, peers and self, whereas school sponsored writing was generally directed at one audience -- the teacher. Relevant to the classroom context which was consciously structured for this study are Janet Emig's findings that experienced writers need to pause, read, contemplate and revise. (Emig, 1971)

M.W. Sawkins (1970), continued this writer-oriented trend by interviewing fifth graders. She found that children seek little help other than for mechanics; proofreading and rewriting are related to mechanics, and able writers tend to be concerned with content and less able writers with mechanics.

Unlike Emig and many followers: Mischel, 1974; Stallard, 1974; Pianko, 1977; Sommers, 1978; Perl, 1979; Flower-Hayes, 1981, who structured controlled tasks in controlled environments, Donald H. Graves observed seven-year-old children over a four month period in the organic context of their classrooms. He watched children in a naturalistic environment not specifically structured for research. He concluded that in informal classrooms children given choices, wrote more often and longer compositions than did children in formal settings where writing was assigned. Boys wrote more than girls when allowed to choose. They also ventured into more extended territory. In terms of classroom settings, Graves identified two types of writers: reactive and reflective. The former were physically active when writing, lacked a sense of audience and seldom contemplated. The latter rehearsed, reread and were conscious of audience. Children, Graves said, needed no external motivation to write and, in fact, classroom tasks often inhibited the range, content and amount of writing. (Graves, 1973) His study demonstrated that the case study was a promising means for determining the variables which bear upon writing.

The research designs of Pianko (1977) and Sommers (1978) consisted of case study techniques combined with observation, interviews or video taping, comparing the writing processes of less able or less experienced writers with those of good or more experienced writers. These studies further clarified the need for contexts in which students are allowed to plan, draft and revise. Pianko found, for

example, that poor writers usually wrote only one draft and spent little time in planning. Sommers, focusing on revision, added not surprisingly, that the experienced writers revised more and reworked larger units than inexperienced writers.

Sondra Perl's (1979) meticulous analysis of the composing aloud of five unskilled writers contributed strong research evidence of the recursive nature of the writing process. Rejecting the notion that writing is a linear process with a plan-write-rewrite sequence, she identified some recursive elements evident during writing: among these are the backward movement of the writer who sometimes rereads parts, sometimes the whole of the written discourse; the return of the writer to the notion of topic — getting "stuck" and going back to the notion of topic in order to move forward again. A third element -- and a very intriguing one — is what Perl describes as "felt sense", the bodily recall of images and feelings anchored in the writer's body as a result of the original experience. Perl's research has implications in terms of peer conferences as children read and re-read their work, question each other as to the notion of topic and return frequently to draw out words which tap the "felt sense" of the writer. It is also relevant to the reading behaviors revealed in conferences as writers become readers of the words of other writers as well as their own.

> Writers need to draw on their capacity to move away from their own words, to decenter from the page and to project themselves into the role of the reader...They cannot call up a felt sense of a reader unless they themselves have experienced what

> it means to be lost in a piece of writing or to be excited by it. When writers do not have such experiences, it is easy for them to accept that readers merely require correctness. (Perl, 1980).

Atkinson Academy Study

Donald H. Graves, Lucy McCormick Calkins and Susan Sowers conducted a landmark longitudinal study at Atkinson Academy, a public school in Atkinson, N.H. (Graves, 1982c) They focused on the writing experiences of young children in the ethnographic context of school and family life. They identified sub-processes such as topic selection, rehearsing, reading, organizing, editing and revising. They also observed sequences in the development of writers. Writing, at first an external task accompanied by drawing and talking, later becomes internal. Egocentric concerns manifested in play-like behavior, change to sociocentric ones as children become aware of discrepancies between their intent and what is understood by others from their text. Finally, explicit messages, the presentation of a text with all details filled in orally, move toward implicit, or written discourse.

In another major contribution to the field, Lucy Calkins identified four behaviors exhibited by third graders during the revision process. "Random Drafters" did not reread or weigh options and added new information only at the end of their pieces. "Refiners" make minor changes in mechanics. "Children in Transition" appeared restless and sometimes added information in the body of the text. They seemed to be on their way to becoming "Interacters" who

reorganized and saw their drafts as moving toward meaning. (Calkins, 1980b)

Case Study Methodology

Whereas prior research had been conducted in controlled situations or in classrooms, Glenda Bissex (1980) broke new ground with a five year case study of the development of her son, in spelling, reading and writing done in the context of the home. She described the forms of writing which were persistent as well as those which were discontinued or appeared later in the study period, noting that the range of forms with which Paul experimented at home was considerably greater than that offered in school. Piagetian in perspective, Bissex noted that Paul's writings proceeded from global to increasingly differentiated functions and awareness. She also concluded that as young children experience a changing view of themselves and the world they "decentrate," (Piaget's term for the increasingly outward movement from the young child's early egocentric view of the world). From no distinction between the information shared by writer and audience in his early writings, by eight years of age Paul could stand apart from his writing and give explanations to a reader.

Role of Oral Language in the Writing Process

Many writers and researchers have focused on the relation of speech to writing, pointing out the ways in which children talk while they write and the importance of investigating their talk in the

context of writing. Talking is integral to early writing, providing rehearsal time, an opportunity to define content and verify choice of elements.

Martha L. King and Vector M. Rentel (1981) in a longitudinal study of seventy two young children, observed how children made the shift from creating spoken texts to written ones. Their findings ranged from how children developed cohesion, story structure and point of view to how they learned writing conventions. They also concluded that in the development of cohesion teachers played a significant role when they focused on meaning rather than on form in their responses to writing. They found experience in listening to stories insufficient for development of a sense of cohesion. Children also needed purposeful experience with and ample opportunities to write in many genres.

The research of Ann Haas Dyson has helped to identify the functions of the oral language which accompanies the writing of kindergarten children. She found that thematic content frequently evolves in the talk preceding writing, and that talk is also used to elaborate on the meaning of the product. Furthermore, it serves as a tool in the search for assistance and ultimately in making evaluative statements regarding the completed work. (Dyson, 1981)

The work of several theorists has complemented the work of empirical researchers. Moffett expressed an hierarchical view. Writing requires much prior speaking which in turn requires much prior experience: experience, verbalization, literacy. Britton stressed

the need for verbal response to content both by teachers and peers. Cooper and Odell, (1978) Britton, (1970) and Moffett (1968b) also consistently noted the importance of speech in relation to writing.

The Social Context for Writing

The social aspects of writing were explored by Frank Smith (1981) and Shirley Haley-James (1981). Form follows function and both follow meaning, according to Haley-James. Students therefore, need the opportunity to interact verbally, to ask each other questions about content and where they are going with a piece of writing *during* the drafting and revision stages. Reading aloud and verbalizing can affect the meaning of the written piece. Smith says that writing *requires* other people to stimulate discussion, to provide spellings, to listen to choice phrases and even just for companionship in an activity that can be so personal and unpredictable that it creates considerable stress.

Of special relevance to this study are the works of Cazden, Forman and Vygotsky. Cazden and Forman observed that classrooms despite their social character, rarely are organized to encourage group work. (Cazden and Forman, 1983) Vygotsky referred to the social origins of cognition, saying that the very means of interaction, especially speech, are internalized by the child and that the child's mental life takes place in the process of social intercourse. (Vygotsky, 1962)

According to Cazden, there has been no clear rationale in support of peer interaction for cognitive development, with most research

focusing rather on social and personal growth resulting from the classroom context. Where research has examined peer interactions in learning situations, studies of peers as tutors where one knows more than the other have predominated. Empirical and descriptive studies of peers as collaborators where, "knowledge is not intentionally unequal," are at a beginning state. (Cazden, 1983)

Summary of Theoretical Sources

My study has also been most closely influenced by Piaget's growth model of child development where learning is a self-initiated process of assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium, where language in interpersonal contexts is used to communicate and to know oneself. Bissex, (1980); Donaldson, (1978); Calkins (1982); Graves (1982); Sowers (1982).

Other sources in the literature include the writings of Donald Murray, (Murray, 1968) from whom I have learned to reflect continually on my own writing process and that of others. I share the interests of Jerome Harste, (1982) and Frank Smith, (1982a; 1982b) who work to explain the relationships and similarities between the reading and writing processes and of Janet Emig who views writing as a mode of learning. (Emig, 1977)

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Throughout this study I have referred to the new research that has emanated from the impetus begun by Graves' 1973 dissertation. More and more researchers are watching children closely in the context of writing at school and at home necessitating a close monitoring of the literature in order to keep pace with new findings. My study is rooted especially in the findings of Graves (1982a), Bissex (1980), Calkins (1982), Sommers (1979), Perl (1982), Dyson (1983), Cazden and Forman, (1983) which contributed the theoretical underpinnings to the classroom context which I created and where I sought to answer the research questions which I posed.

Graves' research helped to generate the problem for this study. His conclusions affirmed the conference process as the heart of the longitudinal Atkinson Academy Study: "Our data on conferences, concept changes, and improvements in writing document the importance of such an approach. It is the best answer to date on dealing with writer variability and idiosyncrasies." (Graves, 1982c) Graves focused primarily on teacher-student conferences, I have probed only the conferences between students in order to understand what they say and what their conferences mean to them as developing young writers.

Data Collection

Calkins, in the methodology chapter of her dissertation, Lessons

From A Child, describes the tension she felt as a researcher, between quantifying and describing her data, between following clearly separated steps in linear fashion and using an integrated methodology. She wanted to be rigorous, to do "scientific" qualitative research complete with numerical indices. On the other hand she was drawn to "artistic" qualitative research, and wanted to describe "the experiences of individuals and attach meaning to those experiences." (Calkins, 1982) I too, felt, this tug, knowing that my first responsibility was as a teacher and that my data collection had to be unobtrusive and easily carried out within the parameters of a normal school day. I wanted to tape the maximum number of conferences in order to obtain the fullest view of student interaction. Therefore, I established three taping stations in each classroom. To constrain the conferences to stations, however, would have curbed the spontaneous need of writers to interact with other writers and the number of students conferring at one time. I felt also that reducing the opportunities for peer conferences would have increased the demand for teacher-student conferences. While both are needed and important to the writing context, children have a unique opportunity which I wanted to encourage, to define and solve their own problems in peer conferences. I therefore, permitted the students to tape as many conferences as possible but also to confer freely in any corner of the room if no station were available.

The data obtained within the context of two classrooms ultimately consisted of the transcriptions of 83 peer conferences, student

writing folders and folders of mini-lessons used for instructional purposes.

Context of the Study

The study considered the content of the writing conferences of two groups of children ages 9-11. The 28 subjects were identified as academically gifted children in the public schools of Worcester, Massachusetts, a city of 160,000. Formerly a manufacturing city, Worcester now has ten colleges and universities and is becoming an intellectural, commercial and cultural center.

The philosophy of the Worcester Public Schools has consistently been that giftedness, or the potential for sustained superior performance in any field of human endeavor, exists in all racial, ethnic and socio-economic elements of the population. Over 500 students in grades 4-6 participate, therefore, in the PEAK Program, an acronym for Providing Enrichment for Able Kids.

Students are identified, using objective and subjective measures: percentiles reached on achievement tests, the score on the School Ability Index, a teacher rating scale of characteristic behaviors of gifted and talented students, and teacher nominations. While the school committee recognizes broad areas of giftedness including leadership, athletic abilities, vocational - technical excellence and the underachieving gifted, due to limited resources, students are identified for indications of actual academic excellence and evidence of creative thinking. The identification process reflects the

philosophy of an urban school system sensitive to its varied population and to the research which shows I.Q. tests to be culturally biased and unreliable measures for use in constituting a gifted program. (Hagen, 1980) Therefore no city-wide I.Q. criterion is used. Students are drawn from each of the forty neighborhood schools, and classes for the bilingual or physically handicapped.

The curriculum offers enrichment classes in math and science, the humanities and the fine arts. Students attend their regular classes four days each week and participate in the PEAK program on the fifth day. They select two half year courses or modules. Many classes are interdisciplinary and take place in cultural institutions where students interact with practicing professionals such as museum curators, scientists and master crafts persons. Other classes take place in schools. Most PEAK students travel to a nearby school or to a cultural institution in order to participate in the program. The students in this study elected to work in a half-year module called "The Writing Process". None had had prior exposure to process-oriented writing instruction. They were generally accustomed to teacher assigned topics, story starters and literary models used to stimulate written response. Students mentioned that they often had limited time for writing, were expected to complete a composition in a brief period and that changes in text were frequently considered to be errors.

Of the 28 students who elected the writing modules fourteen fourth, fifth and sixth graders met one full day each week at May

Street School, on the west side of the city. Selected from five schools, they came from middle class and blue collar neighborhoods. The second group of fourteen students was composed of academically able children from three large schools, two in middle and upper socioeconomic areas and one inner city community school. They met at Flagg Street School. One student was black and two were Asian American. May Street School and Flagg Street School were selected as the sites for this study because they provided access to a population of student writers available for one half of the school year. Both schools had a fine library, making literature, filmstrips and taped interviews with interesting authors readily available.

The day generally began with a short free writing exercise. Most often the free writing was totally undirected. Occasionally however, free writing was given some structure with ideas, some taken from Elbow, (1981), given as an option: starting each line with "Once..." or "I remember..." in order to provoke memories, or the name of a person repeated at the beginning of each line to generate informal written dialogue. Students were encouraged to share at their own discretion interesting elements which emerged in their free writing.

I was assisted throughout the study by Maureen Reddy, a mature and talented student who was completing a teaching requirement for a master's degree in language arts. We developed together an inventory of mini-lessons. These lessons were presented when we observed that many of the children were wrestling with similar problems or that they seemed ready to grasp a new concept. Mini-lessons were designed to

help students to understand some important considerations for the writer: the function of a strong lead, the need for coherence and unity, the effect of strong verbs and of appropriately selected titles. (See Appendix for examples.)

Many mini-lessons — often the best - were spontaneous, with the attention of the entire class drawn briefly to the apt discovery of one student-a new way to solve the problems of space when adding information, or the lacy draft of one girl who deleted words with scissors. These lessons added to the "class pot", a term coined by Lucy Calkins, referring to information about writing presented to and discussed by the whole class.

Most of the day was spent in "Writing Workshop" time. Students kept lists of things they knew and cared about and from these they selected their topics. They wrote, conferred with teachers and peers, illustrated and published books. In each location a large room provided quiet corners for writing, stations for conferring with teachers and peers, and large areas suitable for "share meetings".

The "share meetings" were whole group assemblies during which students read their writing on a voluntary basis. Pieces could be shared at any stage of the writing process -- an idea for a topic, a draft or a finished piece. Teachers responded to each writer, probing specific memories of the experience from which the writer was drawing the text or questioning the child's own process or problems. The other students were invited to add their questions or compliments after the reading of a final draft. Tape recorders and cassettes

labeled with date and school were placed in the three stations in order to record the conferences. Share meetings were held briefly after the free writing in the morning and always at the end of the day. Since the classes were a week apart, these meetings served to help the students remember where they were in their writing, to focus once again on the process in which they were involved, to reread a draft or to define the next problem. Small group conferences, in which a teacher worked on one writing problem with a few children, provided instruction on one aspect of the process such as writing leads or editing and stimulated a flow of oral language which reinforced the nomenclature. The share meetings, small group conferences, teacher-student and peer conferences allowed the children ample opportunity to talk about their topics, motives and experiences, their current writing problems and their feelings as writers.

Afternoon share meetings which often focused on finished pieces were intended as a calm period for savoring the images and sounds of the writers. Sometimes during this period, the teachers also read selected works published by children, or read passages such as an exciting part of Katherine Paterson's Julie of the Wolves (Paterson, 1977) or Sperry's Call It Courage (Sperry, 1940). These books were then made available to children who wanted to read them.

I have, since the time of gathering data for this study, carried out the same procedures with several classes. Some were identified as gifted and talented, meeting on a weekly schedule and some were regular classes including a group of "slow readers". It is my

observation that the willingness to confer with peers during the writing process differs little with the various groups. I note however, that the gifted students often grasp the concepts associated with effective writing more rapidly and apply the strategies learned in mini-lessons or conferences more readily than do other students. Fluency of thought, eager response to challenge and the ability to make associations which frequently characterize gifted children are quite naturally often apparent in their writing. In addition they take delight in finding creative titles, effective leads or strong verbs and their journals reflect the discoveries they make:

> I make changes in my pieces by rereading them and thinking them over. Do I want this? Is this what I want to say? Is this the way it really happened—and things like that.
>
> When reading, I have a better understanding of the author's message.

All of the children with whom I have worked, however, not only the gifted, have welcomed and used the opportunity to confer with peers about their writing.

Modeling

Teacher modeling continually served to heighten awareness of all aspects of the writing process through mini-lessons and demonstration before the group of ways of responding to a writer's text and process. It was through careful teacher modeling in receiving the writer's meaning and asking questions related to the topic or to the writer's

imminent problem that the children learned nomenclature and how to teach each other. Teachers demonstrated their full attention to each writer through body language - eye contact, leaning forward, sitting at the same level as the child. They followed each writer, letting the writer lead, trying to discover where the writer was in the process at that moment and most of all encouraging the child to talk.

As teachers we believed that the children could learn how to help each other from our constant modeling. We also believed that our questions on the content of each piece and on the process of each writer would be more helpful than questions focusing on form. The students listened actively, probed for meaning and asked about the writer's process. They responded with spontaneous questions concerning the content. One way to insure that the students were learning how to respond to each other was by frequently asking a child who had shared with the whole group, "Which questions were most helpful?" Typical answers, depending on the particular problem presented, were: "The ones that made me talk a lot," or "The questions about which was the best part."

The students were encouraged very early in the module to engage in peer conferences. Taping these conferences was an option. Conferences and taping were popular, but the momentum of individual writers and spaces available affected conferencing behaviors. Taping stations were often fully occupied thus many conferences went unrecorded. Some across-the-desk chit chat was so spontaneous and casual that, a child having conferred with a peer about a title or a

lead and having received a quick and satisfactory response, would continue to work quietly until the next problem arose.

Just as teachers invited students to discuss their topics, to talk about the most important or exciting aspect, or share problems they might be having with selecting information, focusing, or writing leads, students were encouraged to share all stages of the writing process with peers. One hundred and seventy-seven conferences were taped in the two classrooms. Of these, sixty-three were teacher-student conferences, 83 of the remaining 114 peer conferences were transcribed and used for the study. Of the 31 conferences which were not transcribed some were incomplete because of the interruptions of school bells or were of poor technical quality.

Three types of student folders were kept. One held lists of possible topics, editing checklists, work in progress and a conference record sheet. (See Appendix) The second held finished pieces of writing with all drafts stapled beneath the final copy. The third folder held handouts-pieces of writing selected by the teacher for sharing with the children. These included published writing by children, selected work by adult writers, brief works written by the teachers, and relevant cartoons. The student writing chosen to be "published" was typed and distributed as handouts. At times the children wished to provide a handout for the class and were permitted to do so. The writing folders were retained with student and parent permission for analysis.

Data Analysis

In order to sense the "lay of the land," I listened to each tape and constructed a form on which I could summarize initial impressions of all the conferences as to content and possible functions. I also added a column where I could begin to record my reactions, hunches, and ideas for further analysis. This process of summarizing briefly the interactions which I was hearing on the tapes began to indicate to me some of the major behaviors and concerns of the children in their conferences and to raise questions which I might consider.

Figure 1 which follows, shows how I listened and recorded in brief form the content of the conferences, the functions as I was sensing them, and my own initial reactions.

FIGURE 1

INITIAL OVERVIEW OF CONFERENCES

Flagg Street
3-30-82

Side I

Content	Functions	Comments
000-Joshua reads dramatically; announces number of draft.	Peer is "trial audience"	Pleasure in reading; aware of stage in writing process.
Matt-questions for further details.		Questions reflect teacher modeling.
J-What do you think?	Seeks peer response, evaluation	

Content	Functions	Comments
M-"I am not the writer."		M - shows respect for ownership.
028-Limor-asks Eileen's intentions		Peer seeks to grasp writer's process.
E-expresses feelings re horse	Talk about experience and feelings	
L-suggests including information	Raises options	
E-rejects options; fears audience will not understand	Defends decisions	They seem to want to explore range of possibilities in topic
L-asks if writer is satisifed Both agree it's o.k.	Shows feelings, shows support	Writer shows ownership
175-Laurine reads "Exciting" to Nicole. They try section with and without a word, try revisions together; consider titles.	Students experiment with choices	Do conferences encourage experimentation?

After completing an initial overview with notations, the tapes were then transcribed. The data analysis has taken over a year with periods of intensive reading and rereading of the transcriptions, alternating with time for studying new developments in research. At first, I read the transcriptions and began to categorize the behaviors

of writers and peers in the margins in order to sense further what was happening during conferences. These categories of behaviors or concept definitions changed repeatedly as I read and reread. I trod a fine line, not wanting to describe what I was seeing in narrow categories that might suit my own need for order, nor painting a picture of behaviors so idiosyncratic that common threads were difficult to find. Much of the original wording which I put in the margins remains, because my first impressions were intuitive, descriptive and jargon free. An early reaction, for example was --"They're exploring the whole territory of the topic." After many readings, it still seemed to me that it was an exploratory process and that in choosing a topic, a child does stake out a territory which needs further exploration before that topic is finally defined, thus the concepts Writer Explores Territory (WET) and Peer Explores Territory (PET) remain in the study.

The density of the children's statements presented a problem. Very often their words were laden with nuances. Children who discuss meaning are often implying a consideration of their audience and they may infuse the comment with affective overtones as well. I limited myself to three concept codes per statement. Three concepts seemed sufficient for most utterances. In combination with the behaviors identified as affective, they permitted me to see emerging patterns. Trying to identify the relationship of one concept to another, such as writer and peer references to audience, seemed more significant than splitting hairs to try to find every shade of meaning in every line.

Concept Descriptions

Graves defines the writing process as a series of operations leading to the solution of a problem. (Graves, 1982c) The process begins when the writer consciously or unconsciously starts a topic and is finished when the piece is published. I have chosen to analyze the operations appearing in peer conferences in terms of behaviors most often stated in verb form rather than nouns because the conferences are action - filled and verbs best express that action. The recorded words are those of children discussing their writing, and revealing at the same time the interaction occurring between writers and texts. Children lead off, explore, define, clarify, judge, confirm and play with their writing.

As the conferences are sprinkled with "um" and "like", I have simplified the transcriptions by eliminating many of these extra words which are natural and charming in speech, but obstruct the flow of written language.

Following is a description of the concepts, or behaviors, which have emerged from this study. The first concepts are those I found to be characteristic of the writer. Some examples, are best illustrated by the dialogue between two students. Multiple codes indicate density and each will be clarified in the description of a subsequent concept. Descriptions of the concepts characterizing the peer follow those of the writer.

Concept Descriptions

Behavior of Writers During Peer Conferences

Codes Conference Behaviors

WCL Writer's Conference Lead

Statement used to draw peer in; causes peer to attend; occurs most often at the beginning but may also be used during conference to re-focus attention of peer; writer may use a lead to state purpose of conference.

Examples:

1. WCL --Joe! I really have something to say here. I'm gonna make this the comic, believe me. Well, anyway, ya wanna listen to what I have to say on Rube Goldberg?

---

2. WCL, WSP --These are just leads and I want you to pick one.

---

3. WCL, WSP --I need to find a topic and right now I may not be thinking right.

WSP Writer Shares Process

Writer shares specific problem, current struggle or mere awareness of problem; may be unable to fully verbalize problem; writer may discuss options or how he/she is going about the process of writing.

Examples:

1. WSP, I, WFC --This is going to be one of my last drafts. So-that's why it's good to have a conference.

---

2. WSP, I --I'm going to write this over with all the changes. Then I'm going to edit it and then I'm gonna probably write it over.

SPJ <u>Seeks Peer Judgment</u>

Writer asks peer for opinion as to text, meaning or options being considered.

Examples:

1. SPJ, WCL --How's this sound?

---

2. SPJ, WSP --Ya think I should scratch it out?

---

3. SPJ --Do you think every word is clear so far? Every word? Every single word?

WET <u>Writer Explores Territory</u>

A search of the experience behind the text, but not a reference to the text itself; may result in consideration of options or discovery of future topics; serves to help writer find voice and "turf".

Examples:

1. PET --Did you have any experience with horses?

   WET --Yes.

   PET --Well, what kind of experiences?

   WET --Last summer I went out to Lake George, NY, for our vacation and there was this place and they had ponies and you could ride the ponies and everything...

---

2. PET --I thought this doggy was yours. How do you know all this about this doggy?

   WET --Because I'm there almost every day and I babysit and I hear him. I live two houses away. You can hear him howl...

WEM Writer Explores Meaning

Writer explains, affirms or justifies meaning of text; usually in response to peer probe for clarity; may help writer realize ambiguities or gaps in text.

Examples:

1. PEM --"The wolf grabbed him and he woke up." Do you think it's really clear and what do you mean by it?

   WEM --I told you what I mean. He woke up. It was a dream.

---

2. PEM --When the marble rolls, how would it knock down the net?

   WEM --It doesn't. See, ya have a bucket here and a bucket here. That water pours into this bucket and it's a scale. So that end hits a lever. The lever pushes up and that opens a hatch and the net comes down. I'm explaining it. It even says that here. "I'll hit a lever which causes the net to fall."

   PEM --But how?

   WEM --It explains how. It hits the lever knocking the net. It's obvious how. The lever's like this. The net's up here. It goes up. It's obvious. That's like saying I put a peanut to my head to smash it. Well, I put it in my hand, force it towards my head and push against my head, which crushed the peanut. You don't have to write that!

WEO Writer Explores Organization

Writer explores structure of piece, sequence of events or ideas.

Example:

1. WEO, WSP --Well, I think that I have 1-2-3-4-5 paragraphs. I wanna take the second and third and I wanna rearrange them.

WPV Writer Explores Point of View

Writer discusses point of view taken in piece of writing.

Example:

1. PPV --Okay. By commentary, do you mean you watching the game?

   WPV --Ya. I'm commenting it - like the announcer.

WEL Writer Explores Language

Writer discusses repetition, sound, options or choice of words.

Examples:

1. WEL --I used "damaged" here also. I don't wanna use it twice.

2. WEL --I was going to put "scuffled" and then I was going to put "kicked".

   PEL --Kicked?

   WEL --Yeah, you know, kick the sand. But that didn't sound right. I think I'm going to keep trudged. "I trudged up the soft sand and up the stairs and then I went home."

WEA Writer Explores Action

Writer discusses or explains action, pace or recurrence of action.

Example:

1. WEA, WET --This story is supposed to be a fast story. Everything is going on at once. You know what I mean? Because basketball is kinda confusing if everything is going on at once. And that's kinda what I wanted to do. So I had to make it - fast like.

WEI Writer Explores Information

Writer considers inclusion or exclusion of information; may discuss details, relevance of information to topic or audience; options, not decisions.

Example:

1. WEI --Oh, ya - maybe I should say "John Thompson is the coach of the Hoyas", or something like that.

D Writer Defines Topic or Focus

Writer stakes out boundaries for topic, states focus, genre, or explains title.

Examples:

1. D --I'm telling a mystery.

2. QF --What's the main idea of your story?

D --How the attic looks, and what you hear up there, and how you always get interrupted in your thoughts.

R Writer Reads Text

Writer reads own piece, sometimes very dramatically; may even sing parts.

Example:

1. R, CL --Okay. This is my story: As I sit on my undersized desk, my oversized pants droop over my worn out sneakers. She has some nerve...(continues to read)

I Writer States Intent

Writer states intention, next step; revision may take place immediately, during conference.

Examples:

1. I --I guess I'll just work on making it clearer.

---

2. I --I'll look it up in the Thesaurus.

WM Writer Discusses Mechanics

Writer refers to spelling, punctuation or neatness.

Examples:

1. RM --Anything else that you think you should change?

WM --No. - Yeah - Change my handwriting.

---

2. WM --How do you spell that?

A Writer Refers to Audience

Writer expresses perception of audience needs related to topic, content or mechanics; overt reference.

Examples:

1. A --I didn't want to mention any proper names so I wouldn't offend anybody.

---

2. A --I want them (the audience) to find out what it is.

---

3. PSP --Would ya like to write that?

A --I don't know 'cuz maybe some people wouldn't understand.

WE Writer Evaluates

Writer makes judgmental statement regarding particular aspect of piece; may support with criterion, or may state opinion without standard.

Examples:

1. PF --How come you like it?

   WE --Because it describes a lot of things.

---

2. PSP, PF --Okay. Do you like this piece? Do you - were you happy with it?

   E --It's not my best piece, but -

   PF --Why isn't it your best piece?

   E --I know I can write better.

WP1 Writer Engages in Playfulness

Writer banters playfully either with peer or alone.

Example:

1. WP1 --I'm gonna play "Wet Diaper Attack" (giggles; reads). Listen to this. This is ridiculous - I can't stand it.

M Writer Explains Motivation

Writer states reasons for decisions as to topic, content or process; may be criteria, opinion or feelings.

Examples:

1. M --I like it a lot, so I just wanted to put it in.

---

2. M --I don't want to be gross in the story.

CA Writer Conferences Alone

Writer reads piece aloud for self, often with gusto; may be a performance of obvious delight.

Example:

1. CA --Joshua tapes a dramatic reading of "Myroomia" — a spoof on his messy room.

Feelings of the Writer

O Writer States Ownership

Writer defends topic, content or process decisions; resists suggestions or statements of peer, often "just because I want to".

Examples:

1. PSP, PEI --In your first draft you were talking about putting boots on. I didn't know if you wanted to have boots in there or not.

   WEI, O --I did. It's at the end.

---

2. O --Nah - I like that better. I don't care what you say, Joe. I like that better.

---

3. PET --It sounds kinda far out and it really...

   WET, O --Rube Goldberg's things are far out. Don't you know that?

EPS Writer Expresses Personal State

Writer shares feelings of delight, satisfaction, frustration or dissonance toward text or process; can also be an expression of feelings toward reading the piece aloud.

Examples:

1. PSP --Is there anything you wanna change?

2. EPS, WSP --Not that I know of. I mean, I'm dissatisifed. It needs lotsa change in it. I know I can write better.

---

3. WE, WEL, EPS --I liked when I said, "Wave after wave banged against the rocks. I could hear the gulls calling." I like that and I also like how the

waves collapsed against the glimmering sea. I like "glimmering" as a word.

V Writer Expresses Voice

Writer expresses authority on topic; demonstrates energy, strong desire to tell about topic.

Examples:

1. PET --What kind of operation was it? How serious was it?

WET, V --It was a very serious one and he couldn't get a second opinion. If he didn't get it this year, then he woulda died, 'cause the artery was pumping slower and slower.

---

2. V --People say I look like my mother and I don't want to look like my mother. I want to look like me.

WFC Writer Expresses Feelings Toward Conference

Writer states appreciation or need for peer assistance; may express annoyance with conference perceived as unproductive.

Examples:

1. PSP --Are you happy with the jumps that you make, or ...

WSP, WFC --Well, kinda. That's why I kinda am, but I need ya - somebody to help me with my writing - like these classes.

2. WSP, WFC --Okay. I'm about to copy this whole thing. This is going to be one of my last drafts, so — that's why it's good to have a conference.

---

3. WSP --But - what'll I put in the other draft?

PSP --I dunno.

WFC --Then why did you conference with me, you beep, beep, beep.

Behaviors of Peers During Writing Conferences

PCL Peer Conference Lead

Peer occasionally initiates conference; indicates willingness to attend to writer.

Example:

1. PCL --All right. Now read your story to me.

RP Peer Receives the Piece

Peer restates content of piece; tells writer what meaning has been conveyed.

Examples:

1. R --(Writer reads piece.)

   RP --All right. He likes to wander and explore. Sometimes you think he's like Columbus the Second. Is that it?

---

2. RP, PET, PEM --Okay. You said you felt sad. In what ways did you feel sad?

PSP Peer Shares Process

Peer discusses process of writer; explores how the writer is going about the task of writing; may raise options or question process; often affirms decision or process: "I do that too"; may also be ambivalent.

Examples:

1. PSP, QI, QM --Do you expect to change this? If you're not satisfied, why are you just leaving it that way?

---

2. R, WM --Writer reads leads to "Monster". I made a mistake. I didn't finish a sentence.

   PSP --In a draft that doesn't matter. We're looking for ideas now.

PET <u>Peer Explores the Territory</u>

Peer expresses curiosity about topic; asks about experience, not text; may suggest spin-off, or future topic; helps writer to discover what he/she knows; encourages word flow; may help writer to discover options as to text or process.

Examples:

1. PET --How do you feel about your Dad?

---

2. PET --When you go roller skating do you go in the middle? And does it get everybody dizzy?

PEM <u>Peer Explores Meaning</u>

Peer probes for clarity; questions meaning of text; may point out dissonance between text and writer's retelling of the experience; text-specific as opposed to WET-PET codes which may digress considerably; means: Can you clarify what is right here? - rather than - What else do you know? (PET)

Examples:

1. PEM --You're saying here in the last line there's ponies and there's horses. Well-what are you talking about, ponies or horses?

---

2. PEM --I'm not sure if I get this part right here - "He called the police as the howling filled his mind." As if it haunted him. What do you exactly mean by that?

PEO <u>Peer Explores Organization</u>

Peer discusses structure of piece or sequence of events; may indicate lack of clarity caused by problem in organization of information.

Examples:

1. PEO --Are you going to keep all these parts?

---

2. PEO --I don't know how these two fit together in the same paragraph.

---

3. PEO --What happened to the first quarter?

PPV Peer Explores Point of View

Peer discusses writer's point of view; questions perspective from which text is written.

Examples:

1. PPV --Okay. By commentary, do you mean you watching the game?

---

2. PR, PPV --It says, "As I looked across the room, I saw it standing on the shelf all by itself. I wondered what it was all about. I drew closer." You're talking about yourself, in other words.

PEL Peer Explores Language

Peer discusses choice of words, repetition, word options.

Examples:

1. PEL --What makes you choose the word "grouch"?

---

2. PEL --Can you write something else beside "stinking" or is that what it's called?

PEA Peer Explores Action

Peer explores the pace of events, action in text.

Example:

1. PEA --You jump, you jump a lot. You jump from -- One minute -once he has the ball, then suddenly the other team has the lead.

PEI <u>Peer Explores Information</u>

Peer discusses inclusion or exclusion of information based on text, not experience behind the text; may question relation of information in piece to title or writer's stated focus; may raise options.

Examples:

1. PEI, QM --Why should you include the score?

---

2. PEI --In, I think, your first draft, you were talking about putting boots on. I didn't know if you wanted to have boots in there or not.

QF <u>Peer Questions Focus of Writer</u>

Peer asks writer to state or clarify focus, explain title or genre.

Examples:

1. QF --What do you think-what are you telling in the story?

---

2. QF --Okay, what are you talking about? What's your main idea?

PM <u>Peer Questions Motivation of Writer</u>

Peer questions reasons for writer's decisions as to topic, content or process.

Examples:

1. QM --If you're not satisfied, why are you leaving it that way?

---

2. QM --So, why write about just this one game? Why not write about another game that UNC played in?

PE <u>Peer Evaluates</u>

Peer judges, may be opinion or may support statement with criterion; often in response to writer's query.

Examples:

1. PE, RA --I like your title and your lead.

---

2. PE, RA --I like the part where you say you always get back together again after you quarrel because that's honesty. You're an honest writer!

QI <u>Peer Questions Intent</u>

Peer questions writer's intent; "What next?"

Examples:

1. QI --Will it (the carnival) come into the story?

---

2. QI, PSP So-do you want to change any parts of it or do you want to keep on writing?

RM <u>Peer Refers to Mechanics</u>

Peer refers to spelling, punctuation, neatness.

Examples:

1. RM --Do you think it's clear to put it all in one sentence, like a compound sentence? One, comma, he grabbed him, comma, then he woke up?

---

2. RM --All right. Remember-two p's in popped.

SAu <u>Peer Suggests Audience</u>

Peer suggests consideration of audience. Overt statements.

Examples:

1. SAu --Can you make it realer to the people?

2. SAu --Okay. Your reader has to know that.

PP1 <u>Peer Engages in Playfulness</u>

Peer brings humor into conference; plays on words.

Example:

1. PP1 --I think I'm going to write this way. (I'll never make it till I'm twelve!)

RA <u>Peer Responds Affectively</u>

Peer responds overtly to process, topic, language, organization; says what he feels about the piece; may not give reason; may be ambivalent. Praises.

Examples:

1. RA, PPI, QI --Mm-You put a lot of specifics in. I got the <u>exact</u> idea 'cause you said he's a whatever kind of dog to be exact, and you said his name is whatever, and you said he looks like whatever-and do you want to make any changes?

---

2. RA, PP1 --I really enjoyed this-and that's that!

PF <u>Peer Probes Feelings of Writer</u>

Peer probes writer's own response to topic or text.

Examples:

1. PF --Do you like this piece? Were you happy with it?

---

2. PF --Oh-You're not satisifed with it then.

TO <u>Peer Takes Ownership</u>

Peer tells writer what to do; says "You should...;" gives

unrequested directives.

Example:

1. TO --I think it would sound better if you put "chocolately", or something like that.

RO Peer Respects Ownership

Peer overtly acknowledges writer's control over process and piece.

Examples:

1. RO --It ain't up to me--it's up to you, Michelle, It's your piece.

2. RO, PSP --It's what you want. Maybe you could use "she questioned." But don't write it down. It's my idea--"she questioned" Do you like that or do you-or you can think of one that you want. You can look up 'asked' maybe in the Thesaurus.

Comparison With Graves' Definitions of Concepts

Graves analyzed child utterances from video-audio recordings, observations of teacher-student conferences and discussions with children. His definitions of concepts, or categories of writing behavior, came from a very large quantity of data. Extensive work with inter-rater reliability was done at several points in the assessment of these concepts. (Graves, 1982c)

Graves' procedures for describing concepts influenced my approach, but I deliberately borrowed only the methodology, not the categorization of concepts. I wanted to describe the utterances of children involved in peer conferences with my own fresh perceptions as

to precisely what they were discussing and how the conferences might be serving them as writers.

The logitudinal nature of Graves' study and number of research assistants enabled him to record and analyze a wide variety of utterances: those of teachers and children in conferences, classroom procedures and group discussions. It also permitted him to observe changes in the talk surrounding writing as first graders moved into second grade and third graders into fourth grade and to compare the concepts uttered by six year olds with those of nine year olds.

I have focused on one kind of utterance only - those made by children as they conferred with each other about their writing during a sixteen week period. Where Graves coded and studied all utterances over a two year period from the perspective of content, I distinguished the concepts of the writer from those of the peer because I wanted to better understand their respective roles in the conferences. I also categorized the feelings expressed by both writers and peers.

Similarities

By comparing the Graves concepts and my own, some appeared to be constant across the discussions of teachers, student writers and peers. Teachers and students discussed topics, standards of effective writing, the process or steps to be taken, information to be considered and the needs of the audience. Other such concepts included references to experience, the motivation of the writer,

action, neatness or mechanics, and organization. Thus, concepts related to these elements which might be found in any classroom discussion of the writing process occurred in both Graves' study and my own.

Differences

The concepts which I have defined from the analysis of peer conferences differ from those observed by Graves and his associates, in emphasis and in the point of view of the researcher, as I studied the words of writers and peers separately.

The emphasis in my study was the peer conference process. Hence, in defining concepts I noted that many children attracted the attention of the listener with a conference lead (WCL, PCL), and that certain behaviors predominated — reading (R), exploring the territory of the topic (WET, PET) and the meaning (WEM-PEM). Whereas Graves defined information (I) in detail, using several codes, I was more interested in the processes of questioning and clarifying meaning than in whether the students added or deleted. Thus I used two related concepts, one for the discussion of meaning (WEM, PEM) and the other for the discussion of a specific piece of information (I).

Secondly, I focused on the interaction of the two students in their roles as writers and peers. I noted that the conferences were largely a collaborative effort. The children shared their processes (WSP, PSP). They explored language (WEL, PEL), action (WEA, PEA), topics (WET, PET) and meaning (WEM-PEM). They came together to seek

help and to be of help. Peers questioned the focus (QF) and motivation (QM) and writers clarified their thinking (WEM, D).

I also placed special emphasis on the affective relationship between the two students, the playfulness (WPl, Pl), the way in which the peer received the piece (RP) and the confirmation of meaning given by the writer (C). I noted also the exchanges in which they sought to know about each other's feelings (PF), expressed their feelings (EPS), or stated their reactions to the conference itself (WFC, CP).

Finally, I was interested in the decision-making process as it was revealed in the transcripts. The concepts of ownership (O, RO, TO), voice (V) and intent (I) helped me to understand, despite the collaborative nature of the conferences, precisely where control of the process lay.

Figure 2 which follows lists for the purpose of further comparison, the concepts which Graves defined from all of the utterances of children and those which I have drawn from peer conferences only.

FIGURE 2

COMPARISON OF CONCEPTS - GRAVES, D. AND FINN, J.

Concepts Identified in All Utterances of Graves' Subjects		Concepts of Writers and Peers Identified in Peer Conferences - Finn			
Concepts		Writer Behaviors		Peer Behaviors	
SD	Standard	WCL	Conference Lead	PCL	Conference Lead
P	Process	WSP	Writer Shares Process	PSP	Peer Shares Process of Writer

Concepts		Writer Behaviors		Peer Behaviors	
I	Information	SPJ	Writer Seeks Peer Judgment	RP	Peer Receives the Piece
Is	Information - selection	WET	Writer Explores the Territory	PET	Peer Explores the Territory
Ia	Information - addition	WEM	Writer Explores Meaning	PEM	Peer Explores Meaning
Id	Information - deletion	WEO	Writer Explores Organization	PEO	Peer Explores Organization
EX	Experience	WPV	Writer Explores Point of View	PPV	Peer Explores Point of View
EXv	Experience - verification	WEL	Writer Explores Language	PEL	Peer Explores Language
AU	Audience	WEA	Writer Explores Action	PEA	Peer Explores Action
MO	Motivation	WEI	Writer Explores Information	PEI	Peer Explores Information
AC*	Action	D	Writer Defines	QF	Peer Questions Writer's Focus
ACa	Action - sequence of	R	Writer Reads	QM	Peer Questions Writer's Motivation
ACf	Action - frequency of	I	Writer States Intent	PE	Peer Evaluates
O	Organization	C	Writer Confirms Peer Response	QI	Peer Questions Intent
AUi*	Audience - interest self	WM	Writer Discusses Mechanics	RM	Peer Refers to Mechanics
AUo	Audience - interest (others)	A	Writer Refers to Audience	SAu	Peer Suggests Consideration of Audience

Concepts		Writer Behaviors		Peer Behaviors	
AUc	Audience - clarify	E	Writer Evaluates	Pl	Playfulness
		WPl	Writer Engages in Playfulness	RA	Peer Responds Affectively
AUco	Audience - clarify (others)	M	Writer Explains Motivation	PF	Peer Probes Feelings of Writer
AUn*	Audience - no need to consider	CA	Writer Confers Alone	TO	Peer Takes Ownership
N	Neatness	O	Writer States Ownership	RO	Peer Respects Ownership
M	Mechanics Drawing	EPS	Writer Expresses Personal State	CP	Peer Refers to Conference Process
F	Feelings	V	Writer Expresses Voice		
T	Topic	WFC	Writer Expresses Feelings Toward Conference		
L	Language				
LGs*	Length - needs to be shorter				
LGm*	Length - needs to be longer				

Additional Data Analysis

Numerical and statistical analyses were completed in order to identify the number of writer and peer codes in each conference, to compare conference participation by sex and grade level. These tables may be found in the Appendix.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Clusters of Writer and Peer Behaviors

After listening to the transcriptions, identifying, defining, categorizing and computing the utterances of the students in their conferences, I studied the data in order to isolate those clusters of writer-peer behaviors which seemed to be significant. Some behavioral clusters or peer interactions concerning a particular aspect of writing were chosen for analysis because of the frequency with which they occurred. Thus, the exploration of experience (WET-PET) which accounted for 33% of the total codes and the search for meaning (WEM-PEM) which accounted for 24%, seemed to warrant special scrutiny.

Other peer-writer behaviors were isolated because of my interest as a researcher. Student perceptions of audience, ownership, feelings and revision were such choices. Realizing also from observation in the classroom and from considerable interaction with the transcripts that all of the conference discussions originated from the student's text, with the exception of those in which a writer sought help in choosing a topic, it seemed particularly important to look closely at the reading that occurs in conferences.

Table I which follows summarizes the frequency with which the coded behaviors occurred. By combining careful analysis of the data, my knowledge of the classroom structure and observation through many readings of the transcripts of the interactions appearing between

students, I drew conclusions as to some of the most significant clusters of behaviors in the peer conferences. In addition to the summary contained in Table I, the remainder of the chapter includes sections which clarify and discuss these behaviors.

TABLE I

FREQUENCY OF CODED BEHAVIORS

Writer Behaviors	# of Times Behavior Occurs in Total Conferences	% of Total Writer Codes
Writer Conference Lead (WCL)	33	4
Writer Shares Process (WSP)	131	14
Seeks Peer Judgment (SPJ)	51	6
Writer Explores Territory (WET)	173	19
Writer Explores Meaning (WEM)	93	10
Writer Explores Organization (WEO)	13	1
Writer Point of View	1	.1
Writer Explores Language (WEL)	21	2
Writer Explores Action (WEA)	2	.2
Writer Explores Information (WEI)	13	1
Writer Defines (D)	31	3
Writer Reads (R)	106	12
Writer States Intent (I)	47	5
Writer Confirms Peer Statement (C)	28	3
Writer Refers to Mechanics (WM)	6	.1
Writer Refers to Audience	8	.9
Writer Evaluates	11	1
Writer Engages in Playfulness	14	2
Writer Explains Motivation	8	.9
Writer Confers Alone (CA)	1	.1

FREQUENCY OF CODED BEHAVIORS (CONTINUED)

Writer Behaviors	# of Times Behavior Occurs in Total Conferences	% of Total Writer Codes
Writer States Ownership (O)	46	5
Writer Expresses Personal State (EPS)	37	4
Writer Expresses Voice (V)	39	4
Writer Expresses Feelings Toward Conference (NFC)	7	.8
n=920		

Peer Behaviors		
Peer Conference Lead (PCL)	3	.3
Peer Reads (PR)	26	3
Peer Receives the Piece (RP)	39	4
Peer Shares Process (PSP)	163	17
Peer Explores the Territory (PET)	142	14
Peer Explores Meaning (PEM)	128	14
Peer Explores Organization (PEO)	12	1
Peer Explores Point of View (PPV)	5	.2
Peer Explores Language (PEL)	30	3
Peer Explores Action (PEA)	3	.3
Peer Explores Information (PEI)	27	3
Peer Questions Writer's Focus (QF)	34	4
Peer Questions Motivation (QM)	20	2
Peer Evaluates (PE)	28	3
Peer Questions Intent (QI)	25	2
Peer Refers to Mechanics (RM)	10	1
Peer Suggests Consideration of Audience (SAu)	20	2
Peer Engages in Playfulness (PPl)	41	4
Peer Probes Feelings of Writer (PF)	30	3

FREQUENCY OF CODED BEHAVIORS (CONTINUED)

Peer Behaviors	# of Times Behavior Occurs in Total Conferences	% of Total Writer Codes
Peer Takes Ownership (TO)	47	5
Peer Respects Ownership (RO)	35	4
Peer Responds Affectively (RA)	64	7
Peer Refers to Conference Process (CP)	4	.4

n=936

Taken together the following clusters appear to amplify specific but less prominent aspects of the writing process which students probed in these particular conferences.

Writer-Peer Explore the Process	(WSP-PSP)
Writer-Peer Conference Leads	(WCL-PCL)
Writer-Peer Explore Organization	(WEO-PEO)
Writer-Peer Explore Information	(WEI-PEI)
Writer-Peer Explore Action	(WEA-PEA)
Writer-Peer Explore Point of View	(PPV-PPV)
Writer Seeks Peer Judgment - Peer Evaluates	(SPJ-PE)

Of these behaviors only Writers and Peers Sharing the Process was coded with considerable frequency - 31%. I chose not to analyze this behavior as closely as others despite its frequency because I had defined it narrowly as how the writer is going about the task, statements indicating a stage in the process. In a larger sense all of the conferences could be identified as Sharing the Process. The remaining behaviors were coded less frequently and were clearly

related to the nomenclature used in the classroom and the mini-lessons presented.

The sections which follow therefore describe peer conferences by explaining those clusters of behavior which seemed the most significant using the criteria stated at the beginning of this chapter.

Writers and Peers Explore the Territory

Following Reading, Exploring the Territory was the writer behavior coded next most often (19%) and the second most frequently coded for the peer (14%).

Three kinds of explorations appear in the conferences. Most often children discuss people, events, things which are close to them-their families, favorite sports, their pets and observations. Rhonda illustrates this well in two conferences. "My record collection, has been with me for quite a while," she says. Rhonda explains her interest in rock, country and music from other lands and discusses her favorite record, "Jessie's Girl" as her peer, Sheila, gives close attention.

In another conference, Rhonda comes with a specific request and Debbie responds.

Rhonda: I need to find a topic.

Debbie: What *I* do is free write in my head, you know.

Rhonda: I worked on my list, but I was wondering if you could ask me a few questions, like right now I'm thinking about my best friend, Tiffany. She moved to Warren. I

think it was the Tuesday before my birthday and she gave me a Rick Springfield record and she called me Sunday night long distance.

Debbie: Well?

Rhonda: All right. She asked me to say "Hi" to you kids and all that, and when she was here she was never jealous of my grades like some of the kids in the class 'cause we both got the same grades anyway. She never laughed about my braces like the boys do and, well, because she never made fun of me and that's why she's my best friend.

Debbie: Before, I wrote a story on what me and my friends do and how we act with each other and everything and it was a present-like story. It was really happening and then all of a sudden - Bing! Recess is over and it seemed like it just started.

Debbie's mention of recess shifts Rhonda's exploration to a new direction.

Rhonda: Well, we really didn't do nothing at recess. We both hated recess in winter so all we did was walk around and when the teachers weren't looking we'd throw a small snowball.

The conference continues with Rhonda's recollection of working in the library with Tiffany, trying out possible titles, exploring the question of including something about Tiffany's "bratty" brother, and apparently satisfied, she concludes abruptly with a "Thank you" to write a piece about why Tiffany was her best friend.

The second area explored by peers during their conferences is that of feelings.

Eileen in her conference on "Who Should Own Her" communicates her emotional involvement with Strawberry Field, a horse she frequently rides at a nearby stable: "When I ride her, she seems all pepped up and after I ride her she seems O.K. But when they put her in the

stall, she seems restless. It's like sometimes she's not being treated the right way...and she's just hanging around in her stall. I sort of feel responsible. I know I'm not, but I just get sort of this responsible feeling inside." Laurine listens, follows the writer, and then returns to the text: "Would ya like to write that?" Eileen expresses shyness at baring her feelings to an unknown audience. I don't know if some people would understand it." Laurine again presents the option: "Well, would ya wanna write it anyhow?" "I don't think so." Eileen says, "'cuz I mean, it's not the point of the story."

In addition to exploring their experiences and feelings, peers who explore the territory surrounding a piece of writing, may uncover possible future topics. Though the emphasis in this writing module was on personal narrative, some students did attempt fiction and poetry and their conferences led them to play with new ideas and forms. Matthew, wrote fiction and discussed a possible future piece with Rebecca.

> Rebecca--Are you happy with it?
>
> Matthew--It's not my best piece.
>
> Rebecca--Why isn't it your best piece?
>
> Matthew--I know I can write better.
>
> Rebecca--So-why don't you write better?
>
> Matthew--Ah-it's because what's in my head I can't really get down on paper.

Rebecca, probing, asks precisely the question which allows Matthew to play with his ideas.

> Rebecca--Well, what's in your head?
>
> Matthew--Well, I'm thinking about - I have to get the right set of characters.
>
> Rebecca--So, why don't you get the right set of characters?
>
> Matthew--It's because, this cast of characters goes with this story...but the cast of characters I'm looking for does not go with the story.
>
> Rebecca--Why not? (Rebecca encourages Matthew to explore further.)
>
> Matthew--Well-one kid-the kid I'm gonna write about-it's in the future and it's-this is what I wanna write about. It's in the future and everything's all mechanical and they started putting some plastic foods, like half banana-half plastic and there's flavoring in it. And so, finally you just eat so much plastic that it starts turning plastic and you can switch things on his face.

At this point, Matthew expresses the frustration he feels with both the development of an energetic plot and the characterization needed for his futuristic story.

> Matthew--Ya-that's the-see-that's what I want to do, but I can get as far as where you switch around his face, but I can't get any further. I just can't think a thought for this kid.

Matthew goes on to explore possible plot lines as Rebecca listens. She has encouraged Matthew to play freely with his ideas, though unrelated to the text at hand, and together they share the process of creating a character whose thoughts the writer can think.

Discussion

The students in the utterances coded as Exploring the Territory (WET and PET), explored the experiences from which their topics were emerging, their feelings, and possible future topics. This exploratory aspect of the conferences served three functions: experimentation, resolution and affirmation.

Experimentation

Students gathered ideas and experimented freely with material for their writing. While Rhonda came to the conference with only a vague notion that she might write about Tiffany, with Debbie's help she explored jealousy between friends, play at recess, work in the library and Tiffany's brother. All became options drawn from her own experience but not in focus until she conferred with Debbie.

Resolution

Writers began to solve some of their problems during the portion of the conference in which they discussed the territory of the writer's topic. In the conference between Eileen and Laurine, peer and writer explored a sensitive area together and Laurine's questions led Eileen to consider revealing her feelings but then to resolve the problem by further defining her topic instead. She would write about reasons, not feelings.

Some students also began to resolve problems of language and tone by using the conference as a rehearsal. Note the similarities in

Debbie's conference with Rhonda in which she discusses reactions to her new curly perm, as compared to the final draft of her piece entitled, Yuk! Gross! It's My Hair!

	Conference	Excerpt from Debbie's Final Draft
Rhonda:	How do you know they're going to make fun of you?	
Debbie:	Well, today in the morning when I was lining up for school before I came to PEAK I could hear people murmuring and some people just laughed and started staring at me. You know. Some people said it looked good, but sometimes I really don't believe that's their real feelings.	In a way, it's embarrassing because in line this morning, people laughed, giggled, stared and told jokes about me and my hair. I HATE MY HAIR!!!

Affirmation

The exploration of experience with a peer also provided the writer with the opportunity to range widely in conversation with an attuned listener. Since the students knew that the conferences were expected to contribute to their writing, interest such as Sheila showed with regard to Rhonda's record collection or Rebecca's curiosity as to what was in Matthew's head served to affirm to both that the simple facets of their lives were worthy of reflection, sharing and ultimately writing.

Thus, as peers explored the territory of their experiences, they sorted out meaningful aspects for talking and writing. They rehearsed, expressed feelings, ventured to "try out" topics and imaginary characters, and resolved some of the problems of topic

selection, focus and language.

Glenda Bissex (1980) and other researchers (Calkins, 1982; Kroll, 1981; Cazden & Forman, 1983) who adhere to a growth model in the language arts, see the natural tendancy of organisms to move from a state of relative globality and undifferentiatedness toward states of increasing differentiation and hierarchic integration. This growth model is helpful in understanding speech and writing as two components of an evolving language system which begins with speech and writing as essentially separate processes. Writing and speaking move toward consolidation with writing at first depending heavily on spoken language for its full meaning.

Kantor and Rubin stress the important function of oral language in the growth of young writers: "while the patterns of oral language eventually need to be differentiated from those of written discourse, they serve initially as an important means for developing writers to make contact with audiences beyond themselves. (Kantor, and Rubin, 1981)

Other researchers and language arts specialists concur:

> Student talk also plays a crucial role in shaping the language students use in their writing. (Burton, Donelson, Fillion & Haley in Kroll, 1981)
>
> The most essential factor in helping students make decisions about the content of writing is to let, exploratory talk precede writing. (Marcus, 1977, in Kroll, 1981)

Increasingly, writer variability also becomes more evident as does the rate at which the consolidation of speech and writing occur. In

this group of 28 students, some often filled the role of the peer yet recorded fewer conferences as writers while others constantly availed themselves of the opportunity to confer.

Writers and Peers Explore Meaning

Nancy Sommers, in discussing the responses of teachers to student writing says that comments should register questions, befuddlement and note places where the reader is puzzled about the meaning of the text as well as point to breaks in logic, disruptions in meaning or missing information. (Sommers, 1980)

The collaboration between peers who search for meaning shows interactions similar to those Sommers observed. At the same time, however, the leadership role can move easily and harmoniously between the two. In some conferences, it is the peer who leads. Laurine leads and registers the befuddlement Sommers refers to, when she asks Mary about the dog Mary calls "a ladies man."

Laurie--I don't get it. "He's a ladies' man." Can you explain it?

Mary-- Ya-He likes the girl dogs.

Laurie--Well, could you make it clearer?

Mary-- I could explain it in different words. I have to think about it.

Mary thus sees Laurine's problem and is willing to consider revision of her text in order to make her meaning more accessible to her reader.

Matthew's question, on the other hand, leads Jeff to clarify the structure of a basketball game and to revise immediately.

> Jeff--(reading)"midway through the second period, UNC takes the lead. With under three minutes left..."
>
> Matt--For what? The game or the quarter?
>
> Jeff--Oh. There's no quarters in college basketball.
>
> Matt--Oh well.
>
> Jeff--There's only two halfs. All right. I'll say, "in the game..."

Writers also take command and actively seek to know if the information in their piece is clear and complete. Joshua questions Matthew after he reads his piece, "If I were a WWI Flying Ace". "Should I tell them what happens after I get rid of the pilot?"

Matthew verifies that the successful conclusion of the piece requires this information, and he raises the question of a break in logic which Joshua had not foreseen. "Another thing," he says "I really don't understand how the grenade got there." The two discuss the falling out, the parachutes, the Camel and the Faulker. Joshua concludes. "If you're going to have the grenade you need to have the people closer to make it more possible."

When children attempt to write directions, the conference becomes a test of their logic. In a conference on Chris' Pac-Man piece, Joe quizzes, "When you say that you get a fresh one and another muncher--what do you mean by that?" Chris attempts to explain, but Joe is unconvinced, "Do you think it's really clear in what it says,

or do you think...? A lot of people know about Pac-Man, but if none did, how would they know that you get an extra muncher if your guy is eaten?"

Joe has begun to make his point.

Chris--Oh! You don't get an extra one if your guy is eaten.

Joe-- No-No- If, when you clear the board you get an extra one, I mean you get a new one.

Chris--Ya. That's what I said.

Joe-- I mean another one. But-it seems like, right here, just reading it, that you get two munchers on the same board at the same time.

Chris--Oh, yeah. It does sorta, doesn't it?

Further into the conference, Joe raises another point which he perceives in need of clarification. "Can you tell us something about the box in the middle?" This time, however, Chris agrees that information about the box might be desirable but he shows his ownership of the decision making process: "That's called a vitamin -- but I don't wanna explain everything."

The door remains open, however, to Joe's final question. "Do you think you're gonna add anything to it? Chris replies, "Oh, yes. Oh, yes. This is only my first draft." The students have explored Chris' meanings together, but Chris retains the ultimate choice of revising the text or not.

Writers take the initiative less frequently than do the peers in the search for meaning. Nevertheless they do invite their peers to

become the audience who affirms or challenges the clarity of the text. Limor's conference lead indicates that she, as writer, wants verification that her message is intelligible:

> Do you want to hear it all so you can get the idea?

She follows with:

> I crossed that out and I just wanted to make sure. Does it make sense to you and does it have enough information?

Discussion

Nancy Sommers says that:

> Experienced writers imagine a reader...whose existence and whose expectations influence their revision process. They have abstracted the standards of a reader and this reader seems to be partially a reflection of themselves and functions as a critical and produtive collaborator. The anticipation of a reader's judgment causes a feeling of dissonance when the writer recognizes incongruities between intention and execution, and requires these writers to make revisions on all levels. Such a reader gives them...new eyes to "review" their work. (Sommers, 1980)

Thus, in exploring the meaning of a text, peers follow, listen and reflect, but also question and affirm. Writers share the process of making meaning and seek affirmation, but also recognize the incongruities between experience, intention and text and begin to "re-view" the piece. The collaboration engages both students in the process of clarifying their purposes and their texts. It is the beginning of growth toward the internalization of the abstracted standards of a reader which characterize the mature writer.

James Collins, like Nancy Sommers, suggests that students should be asked to recognize and develop meaning in their writing by questioning information and patterns of logic. He too describes the developmental connection referred to earlier, between speaking and writing:

> There is an identifiable stage in the development of writing abilities where writing becomes increasingly differentiated from speaking. During this stage writers learn to make meaning more fully elaborated -- more explicit and autonomous -- in writing than in speaking. As writers learn to represent meaning sufficiently within written texts, their writing moves away from context-dependence toward context - independence. (Collins, 1981)

The peers in this study provided readily available and valuable reactions to writers while they were in the process of constructing meaning. "I don't get it." "Could you make it clearer?" "How would the people know?" The questions and quizzical responses they spontaneously launched to each other gave them as writers the frequent opportunity to wrestle with the problems of creating context-independent texts.

Writers and Peers and the Sense of Audience

Differentiating among modes of discourse, registers of speech, kinds of audiences is essentially a matter of decentering, of seeing alternatives, of standing in others' shoes, of knowing that one has a private or local point of view and knowledge structure. (Moffett, 1968)

Analysis of the conference transcriptions shows that the references to an intended audience may be categorized as overt or implied. It also reveals writers beginning to develop style, beginning to use language in a controlled manner for a particular effect on the audience.

Peers make simple, overt statements showing that they understand clearly that the piece of writing is meant for a reader.

--Can you make it realer to the people?

--Oh-Do you think that would help the people understand whose doggy it was? 'Cause if we read it we'll think it was yours.

--Your readers are going to want to know.

In another example, Matthew recognizes Jeffrey's expertise in basketball and senses the difficulty the audience might have in reading Jeff's piece.

Matt--You understand it and I, but other people who don't know a thing about basketball. How do you think ? - You know-

Jeff grasps quickly.

Jeff--Right. Maybe I should use more phrases that you would in basketball-like-Georgetown pushes it down. Pushes it down. That's like dribbling it down, but they call it pushing it down.

Matt--Ya-

Jeff--Maybe I should say...Floyd dribbles it down the court. Everybody could read it.

In few words, Matthew helps Jeff to consider the needs of the audience, to experiment with language and to revise his text so that

the audience will grasp quickly and precisely just how Floyd came down the court.

Student writers also imply their awareness of the audience as they deal with questions of language.

Deirdre and Laurine, try to find a precise word for Deirdre's piece, "Collapsing!"

> Dierdre--I was going to put scuffled and then I was going to put kicked.
>
> Laurine--Kicked?
>
> Dierdre--Yeah. You know-kick the sand. But that didn't sound right. I think I'm gonna keep it - trudged. "I trudged through the soft sand and up the stairs and then I went home."

Deirdre's concern for the sound of her words reveals sensitivity to an implied reader.

In another conference, in which Chris does not mention the audience, it is equally clear that his understanding of audience sensitivities is implied in his decision-making.

> Joe-- Could you be more specific in "killed". How did he kill him?
>
> Chris--I don't want to be gross in the story. I mean it's not going to be gory.

Deirdre and Laurine, Joe and Chris work together to define and resolve problems they face as writers who know that they will have an audience.

Probably because the writing program in this study was brief and the students met only one day per week, only in a few instances did

they begin to discuss growing control of language used to bring about a planned reaction in the reader. They *did* begin, however, to devise techniques for reaching their audience, to develop style. Pammi created several titles for one of her pieces. She drew boxes and surveyed members of the group for their vote as to the most effective title. The decision was hers, however: she concluded that "Janice, Baby, Look At Me!" would work as a title, and her interest in prosodics shows a child able to tap her own resources as a writer in order to design and create an effect.

In a conference with Michelle, Mary also senses the partnership between writer and reader. In deciding to create a mystery she wants her audience to cooperate with her, to work at understanding the new form she is attempting: "I want *them* to find out what it is," she says.

Limor and Sheila consider the impact of using exaggeration. Sheila confirms its relevance and makes the connection to the audience:

> Limor-- So-would "all the money in the world" be good?
>
> Sheila--If that's what you want to say.
>
> Limor-- Yeah. I thought of that but maybe that would be a little exaggerated and I'm - like - lying in that.
>
> Sheila--It's a hyperbole. In a way it's exaggerating, but it's to make people understand.

Discussion

The consideration of audience needs is so pervasive in the conferences of the children that a majority of writer and peer

behaviors may in some way imply a concern for the reader. Focus, clarity, specific information, word choice, organization, point of view become problems to be solved only because the child has a growing awareness of the audience need for an explicit text. The second grader who writes a bed-to-bed story about the family camping trip, from loading to station wagon to eating at McDonalds, swimming, having the peanut butter stolen by a racoon and returning a week later to the driveway, has only budding awareness of what parts will interest the readers. As writers react to each other's writing and learn which factors make their words work well, their sense of audience grows. Whether their discussions focus on leads, meaning, or editing, the thread which underlies their conferences and their decisions is most frequently their concern for the audience.

Transcripts show that the conferences provide the mechanism for students to work through problems of clarity and cohesion together and to assure that audience needs are considered. In addition, however, together peers begin to develop the skills to use language in order to create specific effects and forms. As they collaborate in talking and writing they begin to gain the control, techniques and discipline that underlie all successful creative work.

Roger W. Shuy indicates that using language to get things done is a higher order skill or competence than simple mastery of isolated decontextualized language forms.

In discussing a holistic view of language, he states:

> Good language learners begin with a function, a need to get something done with language and move gradually toward acquiring the forms which reveal that function. They learn holistically, not by isolated skills. Such learners worry more about getting things done with language than the surface correctness of it.
>
> (Shuy, 1981)

The persuasiveness of audience-related comments in the conferences of children and the eagerness with which they engage in resolving their writing problems together, reveal the high degree of energy generated in writers when their purpose is real. With an immediate audience available at all stages of writing, students have a way of checking that they are "getting something done". They are free, in what Martha M. King calls the "hospitable framework", (King, 1976) to send up trial balloons of words, phrases and ideas. They can also experiment and hypothesize about a further removed, unknown audience. The peer audience energizes, responds, and rewards with the confidence to begin writing anew for audiences more diverse and more removed.

Reading in Peer Conferences

Reading as a conference behavior was coded in this study only when the text was read aloud. Without more sophisticated recording devices subtle reading behaviors which must be photographed rather than simply heard could not be included.

The transcripts show that reading of entire texts in the conferences of the two groups of students is nearly always done by

writers at the beginning of the conference. When writers do not use a conference lead such as "Hey, listen to this", they often state the title and proceed to read with vigor or they preface the reading with statements telling the partner just where they perceive themselves to be in the writing process: "I'm gonna read you a really good story. It's my final (copy) too."

Only one student, Laurine, often reads the writing of others. She offers the following explanation:

> Wait. Wait. I think I should read it because even though it is your story, I just don't think too good when I hear it.

Hence, reading is an easily recognizable component in 82 of the 83 conferences. In 75 conferences the children read aloud clearly. In seven of the remaining eight conferences, one can conclude that since the students discuss the piece referring constantly to the content, that they had read it prior to turning on the tape recorder and recall it or that they scan as they talk without making overt references to the act of reading. In only one conference, No. 28, is there no reading at all as Rhonda is seeking Debbie's help in finding a topic. Thus, in all instances except one, the students refer constantly to a text - questioning, expanding and discussing the meaning. Reading, therefore, is the single most prominent recurring feature in the peer conferences of the two groups of students. All other behaviors are possible only because the children have read their writing. In the only case where there is no reading no text yet exists.

Reading and Writing as Composing

Tierney and Pearson (1983) focused their recent study on reading and writing connections, in particular, on similarities when they are seen as processes of composing. Although I did not intend to consider peer conferences from this perspective at the outset of this study, constant reexamination of the transcripts began to reveal students participating in cycles of reading and writing which serve to generate a rhythm of composing for both the writer and the peer. It became increasingly clear that students are composing as both readers and writers. I therefore pursued this line of inquiry.

Following are the essential characteristics of composing and their definitions adapted from Tierney and Pearson. I have taken excerpts from the transcripts of the conferences showing how students engage in these five characteristic behaviors as both readers and writers. The writer of the text acts as a reader in sharing her text, and the listener responds as a reader on the basis of listening to the text. Tierney and Pearson see acts of composing as "involving continuous, recurring, and recursive transactions among readers and writers." Although they give the impression of sequential stages the authors believe as I do, however, that these transactions are embedded one with the other and often simultaneous.

Characteristics of Composing

Planning: involves goal setting and knowledge mobilization, e.g., setting purposes, evaluating one's knowledge of a topic, focusing a topic or goal, questioning oneself. Flower

and Hayes (1981b) add that goals for both readers and writers may be procedural, substantive or intentional.

Examples: In the following excerpt the reader, Sheila, tries to get a sense of what her partner has to say and Limor states her intentions for the piece of writing.

1. Sheila: What are you telling in the story?

Limor: I'm telling a mystery. It's going to come out all right - like I caught the crooks or something.

In discussing her father's illness, Rhonda and Michelle also express substantive and procedural goals together.

2. Michelle: So -- do you think you want to explain your feelings just a little more?

Rhonda: I could try that. I'll try it first. If I don't like it I'll cross it out.

Drafting: the refinement of meaning which occurs as readers and writers deal directly with the print on the page and begin to "draft their understanding of a text." Based on hypothesis testing models (Goodman, 1967), (Smith, 1971) of reading, drafting is the holding of a current hypothesis about what a text means, "creating strong expectations about what succeeding text ought to address." (Tierney R., and Pearson, P. 1983)

Examples: Deirdre and Laurine in the following excerpts test their hypotheses and in questioning give the writers the opportunity to refine their meaning.

1. Deirdre: When you say how the tree's bare arms are dressed in spring green, what do you mean?

Michelle: The branches of the trees are like arms and the leaves are turning a light green and light green is the spring color, right? Do you think I didn't make it clear enough?

2. Laurine: You said -- It started to pour. All of a sudden the tree fell. Bang!

Deirdre: The tree fell. Bang! It hit our wall.

Laurine: All right now. Did you get the tree moved finally?

Deirdre: Yeah - we threw it across the street in the woods.

Laurine: Could you tell me what you did with the tree? I mean, now we think it's still there for the rest of your life.

Deirdre: This is only my first draft. I'm not really finished with it. I'm gonna add: "My father finally picked it up about a day later and brought it over to the woods, threw it and it's been there ever since!

Aligning: stances a reader or writer assumes in collaboration with author or audience—intimate, challenging, neutral, sympathetic, critical or passive; or roles within which reader or writer immerses self as they proceed - witness, participant, character.

Examples: Dierdre in conference No. 45, is a sympathetic audience for Michelle.

1. Deirdre: Michelle, I liked that very much how you said that there was a sharp contrast from the bright meadow. I felt the darkness of the old barn. That really gives you a good description. And I also liked how the snow felt against the barn - like a warm winter's blanket, 'cause that's how it usually does feel.

Michelle: What kind of improvements do you think I could make?

Deirdre: I don't think you need any improvements because I love it.

Peer readers may also assume a challenging posture.

2. Joe: It seems like - right here - just reading it - that you get two munchers on the board at the same time.

Chris: Oh yeah - it does sorta, doesn't it?

Revising: For the writer -- rereading, reexamining, deleting, shaping, correcting, considering how the text can represent accurately and artistically ideas to be shared.

For the reader -- examining developing interpretations and viewing the models they build as draft-like in quality and subject to revision.

Examples: Eileen and Laurine exemplify the revision process which often takes place during conferences. They read and compose together about Strawberry Field.

1. Laurine: Do you want to change anything?

Eileen: Yeah. I'm going to bring "The barn is old and I think Strawberry Field should get a private owner" - I'm gonna bring this down under "This is another reason I think Strawberry should get a private owner." I'm gonna say, "The barn is old and it is usually damp inside and horses could catch a cold and they could die."

Laurine: So -- you mean you'd go like this; Who really should own her ... (Repeats Eileen's words)

Eileen: (reconsidering) No. I'm going to say it like this. "This is another reason I think Strawberry should have a private owner. The barn is old and it is damp inside. Strawberry could catch a cold and she could die because of having a chill and not eating."

Pammi as a reader also revises meaning during her conference with Matthew. She reads The Surprise Math Quiz and is uncertain as to whether it is fiction or personal narrative. She quizzes Matthew twice and his answer helps her to revise the meaning she held from the initial reading.

2. Pammi: Did this really ever happen?

Matt: No.

Pammi: O.K. The day you wrote it -- Are you really sure you're not like this in school?

Matt: No. No. I wrote this from the point of view of I was kinda the kid that wasn't strung over math and kind of a prankster type of kid.

Pammi: O.K. I get it!

Monitoring: executive function, under tacit or conscious control; the "other self" (Murray, 1982) who reacts to what is written or read; the writer's self as counsel, judge, prompter

Examples: Mary's "other self" evaluates and controls the process in the following statement.

1. Jackie: Which draft do you like better?

Mary: Eight. But I wanna change the first paragraph because I think it has too many details.

Laurine also exercises her executive function as a reader in the following segment from her conference with Deirdre. Laurine repeats the words Deirdre is reading and senses that the meaning is incomplete.

2. Laurine: (repeating) "I leaned against the cold, wooden beam to stop my heart beating so hard." You leaned against a beam to stop your heart beating?

Deirdre: To catch my breath.

Laurine: To catch your breath from what?

Deirdre: The scare.

Laurine: Then you could write that.

Hence, the children in this study give further evidence that reading and writing are interrelated processes concerned with

structuring meaning. Kenneth and Yetta Goodman also support this view:

> As writing proficiency improves through functional communicative use, there will certainly be a pay-off to reading since all of the schemata for predicting texts in reading are essentially the same as those used in constructing texts during writing.
>
> (Goodman, K. and Goodman, Y., 1983)

Reading - Looking Backward to Move Forward

Sondra Perl (1980) has described rereading parts of discourse as the most visible feature in writing behavior. Writers move backwards consistently to re-see what they have said. They also return to the topic. Children exhibit these same behaviors when they collaborate as writers and readers. Questions such as, "What's your main idea?", "What do you mean?" and "Exactly what happened?" constantly cause writers to look back to compare experience and text.

Perl describes another kind of backward movement, less apparent than the previous two. It is a move toward feeling the "non-verbalized perceptions that surround the words or to what the words already present evoke in the writer". Called "felt sense" by Eugene Gendlin, it is described as "the soft underbelly of thought...a kind of bodily awareness that...encompasses everything you feel and know about a given subject at a given time. It is felt in the body, yet it has meanings. It is body _and_ mind before they split apart." "Felt sense" can be observed when writers pause, listen and react to what is inside them. (Perl, 1980)

With the move backward, the push forward becomes possible again, according to Perl. "Felt sense" gives rise to new words, new constructions which simultaneously afford discovery. Writers know, more fully what they mean only after having written it. (Perl, 1980) Children who compose together during peer conferences facilitate for each other this return to sensory experiences. They resurrect images of dusty attics, twirling mirrors in roller skating arenas, and the pit feelings of having to entrust a well loved horse to the care of others. Exploring territory and meaning impel writers beyond the skeletal text, to see and feel again the total experience.

Hence, children who read aloud during a conference become their own audience and give their "other self" the opportunity to respond. The sound of words, the flow of ideas must please. Dissonance and dissatisfaction become chances for revision. Debbie reading her piece on shells stops for an on-the-spot change. "Maybe I can take out the WOW. I don't really need it."

Writers as Critical Readers

The reading which goes on while students work with an unfinished text is "sophisticated reading that monitors writing before it is made, as it is made and after it is made." (Murray, 1982) Children composing together, "trace their trails" as Murray says, from "meaning identified to meaning clarified." They check the alignment of formulated words with their intentions and the "felt sense" of the

original experience. (Perl, 1980) It is the reading which propels the composing, the backward and the forward movement.

Writing conferences provide a forum in which writers and peers work with language in a plastic form. They delete, add on, reorder, modify and sometimes abandon. Crafting results from decision-making; reading and re-reading, and reconsidering. "Re-seeing" clarifies options and options imply evaluation. Writers in conferences weigh their choices, make judgments, and learn to read critically. Thomas Newkirk expands:

> It seems plausible that a writing program that constantly asks students to make judgments as to clarity, completeness, order, interest and consistency will have a beneficial effect on all reading. Such a program not only pushes students to define and apply evaluative criteria, it teaches them about the status of written language. The writer has an insider's view of written language. As an insider, as a maker of language, the writer is less likely to be intimidated by written language.
>
> (Newkirk, 1982)

Ownership

Statements of personal control or ownership of the writing process are manifested in various ways and are usually powerful and clear in the transcriptions of conferences. Kim's quick retort to Lori shows her firm intent to control her word choice.

Lori-- I didn't know if you wanted to have "boots" in there or not.

Kim-- I did. It's at the end.

Some writers show ambivalence about their next step as they discuss their choices but they leave no doubt that they alone will control the process.

> Limor-- Well, it's good, but maybe I have to kinda go back and make it kinda more interesting, I'll go on - or just maybe stop here.

The writer however, need not state a reason for decisions taken. Liking it is good enough as in this exchange between Laurine and Deirdre.

> Laurine--Can you write something else besides "stinking" or is this what it's called?
>
> Deirdre--I don't know. I'll look it up in the Thesaurus. How about the "miserable smelling wet wood?"
>
> Laurine--I don't know.
>
> Deirdre--I just like the "smell of wet wood". Really, that's all I like.

Writers may also show ownership by establishing limits or by verbalizing options. In a conference on Chris' Pac-Man piece, Joe says, "Can you tell us something about the box in the middle?" Chris is willing to tell Joe about the box, but he is also exercising control by determining the scope of the topic and precisely what information will or will not be given: "That's called a vitamin, but I don't want to explain everything, you know."

Wherever the peer gives a directive such as "You should" the behavior is coded as Takes Ownership (TO). It is frustrating as a teacher - writer who cares about respect for the child's ownership of writing to note from the transcripts that, indeed, peers do

occasionally take ownership from the writer despite the efforts of teachers to model questions and comments which would build respect for writer control.

Two reactions to this kind of statement occur. Sometimes the writer simply asserts strong control and resists the peer as when Joe and Chris discuss Hydrox cookies.

PEL Joe --I think it would sound better if you put one
To adjective in there. Instead of "Hydrox are chocolate cookies", - chocolately - or something like that.

Chris nixes that suggestion in a hurry.

O Chris--Nah - I like that better. I don't care what you say, Joe. I like that.

It is quite significant to note that in 21 of the 47 cases where the peer takes ownership is coded, it is immediately followed by a return of ownership to the writer. The transcripts indicate that in these instances, the peer is immediately aware, catches the problem and shifts from a bold directive to a gentle suggestion.

Jeff begins,

PSP Jeff: "Let me see. Where were we?

TO You should write - like - answer
RO, PSP these questions - You could answer these questions.

PET Did you ever wonder how you should treat your body?

Michelle also follows this pattern in conferring with Rhonda and resolves her problem by posing a tactful question:

TO MM-Well--I think maybe you should - Do you PSP think you'd want to explain your feelings just a little?

There are some instances where the peer makes a statement which must be coded as Takes Ownership (TO), but the trust between the two is such that the writer may accept the comment, though somewhat controlling, as a valid suggestion. Elaine and Melissa, friends from the same school, conferred frequently together. Both wrote pieces about roller skating at a neighborhood arena.

PSP	Elaine--You're really talking about two subjects, you know.
O	Melissa--So-
PSP	Elaine-- See, you're talking about in the middle of the rink, but you're also talking about how much you like it and you're explaining what the middle of the rink is.
O	Melissa--So-
TO	Elaine-- I think you should pick one subject.
O	Melissa--Okay.
QM PSP	Elaine-- So-What are you gonna change?
I	Melissa--I'm gonna tell what the middle of the rink is like.

Melissa was able to take Elaine's less than tactful suggestion in good spirits and to focus her piece on the spinning lights and the feeling of dizziness she gets from skating in the middle of the rink.

Some peers show considerable depth in their sensitivity to the writer's ownership of a piece. In talking with Lori about Atari, Limor says, "First, let's go over this thing." She notes the repetition of the word "asked", and suggests, "questioned" instead. Very cautious not to make Lori's decisions, she quickly adds, "Don't

write it down. It's my idea. Do you like that? You can think of one you want or you can look up 'asked' in the Thesaurus."

Respect of Ownership (RO) often also dovetails with Responds Affectively (RA) in the coding, as the peer defers to the writer and at the same time lends support. Laurine, for example, gives Mary a generous and supportive response when she says, "Boy, you made a big difference from your other draft, didn't you, Mary?" Her warm comment clearly lets her friend know that she, as the writer, is responsible for the noted improvement.

Discussion

Children express deep personal investment in all aspects of the writing process: the topics they choose, the process they follow and the products they develop. This investment, or ownership, is an expression of control, of having the sole right, unless freely shared, to the decision-making inherent in the creation of a piece of writing.

Though this study focuses only on the transcribed words of children who are writing together, the number of coded utterances related to ownership do not adequately demonstrate the power of ownership inherent in the conferences. By the very act of engaging in a conference children not only willingly invite the discussion of their process and decisions -- and thereby their ownership -- but also show the same interest and respect for the ownership of others. Margaret Donaldson argues that the recognition of the importance of being able to control one's own thinking is closely related to the

child's more general awareness of his own thought processes. -- Quoting Vygotsky who says that "control of a function is the counterpart of one's consciousness of it," Donaldson adds, "If a child is going to control and direct his own thinking...he must be conscious of it." (Donaldson, 1978)

What is it then that makes children aware of thought processes? Citing Piaget, Donaldson says:

> Awareness typically develops when something gives us pause and when consequently, instead of just acting, we stop to consider the possibilities of acting which are before us. The claim is that we heighten our awareness of what is actual by considering what is possible. We are conscious of what we do to the extent that we are conscious also of what we do <u>not</u> do -- of what we might have done. The notion of choice is thus central.

Without assuming to answer the complex questions inherent in the relationships between print and thought, written and oral language, it would appear that when children pause to think about their reading and writing <u>during</u> the process, they do consider possibilities, according to Donaldson, in at least one important act of thought: the apprehension of meaning. (Donaldson, 1978)

It is no wonder then that ownership runs so strong in peer conferences.

Feelings Shared in Peer Conferences

In writing conferences, children give affective support to each other simply by indicating their willingness to listen and to help at any stage in the writing process. Peers give their help in four ways.

They give honest praise and invite the writer to share successes. They also make supportive and understanding statements which show that they share in the struggles inherent in the writing process. On occasion they can also provide a refuge for writers experiencing frustration.

When Limor writes, for example, about climbing trees during an electrical storm, Rebecca receives the words and image. "You think it's too dangerous and I can picture you sort of quarreling over that. It really gets the picture into my mind and that's really good."

Kim listens attentively to Lori and then praises her friend: "The piece makes sense. I know what you're saying and the words are clear," and "It's nice and short and really gets to the point."

Other peers issue generous invitations, making themselves available to share spontaneously in the success of the writer.

Laurine asks Mary, "What part do you like?" When Mary replies, "the description", Laurine in a complimentary manner, is willing to share her friend's sense of pleasure. "Read it to me", she says and Mary has a receptive audience for what she considers to be the very best part of her piece, the description of a black and white dog with a curly tail.

Young writers know what it is to search for a topic or an elusive lead, to struggle in making their writing clear and focused. They know that the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the writer is as much a part of the process as finding a very precise word. Transferring these insights to the conferences they hold, writers who know their

own feelings toward choosing topics and struggle to make their writing clear, can communicate to each other very effectively that feelings toward the writing process do indeed matter and that they know the value of productive conferences.

Laurine is genuinely sympathetic to Melissa's efforts when she says, "It says draft #9 on it. Wow! You've been workin' pretty hard then, I see."

Limor wants to be helpful to Jeff, not just as an audience but as a co-worker. She asks Jeff directly: Do you feel like you're getting help now?

Jeff: Ya

Limor: You say you need more information in your piece. How are you going to get more information?

Jeff: Well - not more information, but, like help about better phrasing 'cause I know I understand this (game of basketball.)

For the writer, in addition to the affirmation received and the feeling of support from peers who want to help in problem solving, conferring becomes a satisfying way to verify one step before proceeding to another: "This is going to be one of my last drafts so that's why it's good to have a conference."

If for some reason the conference falls short of the writers' expectations, they may share their frustrations as Sharon did when he went to Sheila after conferring with another student: "He didn't come up with that much interesting ideas. So - I'm gonna read it over myself."

Discussion

Judging from the overwhelmingly positive inclination of the 28 students toward conferences, the large number of times they met with peers to discuss their writing and the range of supportive behaviors they exhibited toward each other, it seems clear that the conference format has genuine appeal to children. Their pleasure in conferring would indicate that interaction with peers for the serious business of advancing a piece of writing can be psychologically safe and rewarding.

Summary - Categorical Analysis of Peer Conferences

Peers respond to the opportunity to hold conferences predominantly by exploring together the territory of their experiences, clarifying and validating meaning as it emerges, discussing outright or alluding to their concerns about audience, and expressing control or ownership of their creative decisions. Composing meaning by listening and reading pervade the conferences. Children also share their feelings about experiences, topics and the writing process itself.

The remaining categories were not analyzed in detail as it seemed evident that discussion of the process or nomenclature, leads, organization, information, action, point of view and evaluation are highly related to the instructional emphasis placed on these aspects of writing by the teacher. In this case they dovetail with the language we used, the mini-lessons we presented and the modeling given during share meetings and teacher-student conferences. I chose

instead to study closely those aspects of conferences which I judged likely to be the most constant across all peer conferences.

Functions in Peer Conferences

Susan Sowers (1982) describes three functions evident in student-teacher conferences. They are: reflecting, expanding and selecting. As the teacher summarizes, paraphrases or restates the words of the writer, she provides an opportunity for that writer to gain distance from the draft, to reflect on what has been said. The teacher shares the experience, tuning in to what it was really like, holding up a lens through which the writer can see both the experience and the text. Reflection precedes expansion, according to Sowers. The writer begins to experience anew, a chain of words and images is created, the memory sharpened. Questions prompt the child to remember events, details, feelings which unfold in a tumble of words.

Teachers finally help students to select information, to control their topic by answering questions such as: What did you like best? What is most important? Does this information fit?

The transcripts of peer conferences show that children provide the same kinds of assistance to each other. They come together to reflect on the writer's experience. Peers give full attention. They encourage writers to talk. They may restate some of that talk and ask for more details, allowing writers to make the backward move needed in order to recapture fully the happenings, mood or feelings of the original experience. Finally, they too help each other to control a

large topic, to focus and select those elements most meaningful to the writer.

While students may fulfill only one of these functions in a conference, occasionally all three appear as when Laurine and Melissa discuss roller skating. Laurine, a fourth grader, participated in more taped conferences than any other student. This conference is exceptional for her as she is the only student who consistently insists that she needs to read the piece of writing for herself. She begins by complimenting her partner.

Melissa: reads her text

Laurine: Is this gonna be drafting?

Laurine: It says draft #9 on it. Wow! You've been workin' pretty hard then I see. What's the part you like best?

Melissa: When I get dizzy.

Laurine: Where is it?

With a series of rapid fire questions, Laurine helps Melissa to reflect on what it is like to skate at a nearby arena and to expand those recollections.

Laurine:	What's your main idea?	Melissa:	Going in the middle of the rink.
Laurine:	What about going in the middle of the rink?	Melissa:	It's fun.
Laurine:	What's so fun about it?	Melissa:	You get dizzy.
Laurine:	Dizzy from what?	Melissa:	The lights.

Laurine:	What lights?	Melissa:	The lights that are flashing on the floor.
Laurine:	What do you do in the middle?	Melissa:	Skate.
Laurine:	What kind of skating?	Melissa:	I stop and see if <u>I'm</u> moving or if the floor is.
Laurine:	How do you skate in the middle.	Melissa:	I hold my friend's hand and I turn around.
Laurine:	Do you ever skate backwards?	Melissa:	I can't.
Laurine:	Do you every try?	Melissa:	I wouldn't wanna.
Laurine:	Did you ever try?	Melissa:	Yeah, but I can't.
Laurine:	What did you do when you tried? Did you fall on your back? Did you fall on your stomach or what?	Melissa:	I bumped.
Laurine:	Into what?	Melissa:	People
Laurine:	You could tell us what you do in the middle besides just skate.	Melissa:	Yeah. I could tell about what I do in the middle and I'll put it in a different place.
Laurine:	Right. In your story you'd write about what you're gonna do in the middle. What do you do in the middle?	Melissa:	I hold hands, with my friend and we skate in a circle.
Laurine:	Then your story is mainly about what you do in the middle of the rink.	Melissa:	Yeah. It's about roller skating with my friend and getting dizzy in the middle.

Laurine: All right. Anything else you think you should change?

Melissa: No. Yeah - my handwriting.

Thus, students in peer conferences can help each other to go backward to their "felt sense" and prepare to move forward again to track new discoveries. They can assist each other to confront the questions of remembering important details or of focusing on the part of a large topic which holds the greatest meaning and of learning to resolve the many dilemmas which they face as writers.

Peer Conferences and Instructional Scaffolding

I undertook this research in order to describe student interactions during peer conferences. It was not my intention to adapt existing models to the behaviors I might describe nor to study the conferences in the light of any particular model. Many readings, however, led me to see the relationship between peers reading and writing together to a model of composing which I have described. The data also suggest to me that it is appropriate to consider peer conferences as "instructional scaffolds".

Bruner (1978), Cazden (1980) and Applebee and Langer (1983) have focused on language tasks carried out with the support of "instructional scaffolding". Applebee and Langer say that. "In this model, the novice reader or writer learns new skills in contexts where more skilled language users provide the support necessary to carry through unfamiliar tasks." School learning may be seen as a series of

problems to be solved in a context where new strategies and skills are learned through interaction with others. Scaffolding occurs in two ways - in direct teacher-student interaction or in group oriented instruction.

Taken from recent research on how young children learn complex language patterns, Applebee and Langer note four aspects of the interactions between skilled and unskilled language users, which are relevant to understanding the scaffolds appearing in writing conferences:

1. Questions are embedded in the child's attempt to complete a task which he has undertaken, but cannot complete successfully alone.

2. The questions are structured around an implicit model of appropriate structure for a narrative, eliciting information which will make the child's narrative more complete and better formed.

3. Questions are modeled, recasting or expanding the child's efforts without criticism.

4. The models are eventually internalized by the child and used without external scaffolding in new concepts.

In addition, Applebee and Langer have derived a set of criteria emphasizing five aspects of natural language learning, for judging the appropriateness of the instructional scaffolding provided for a particular situation:

Intentionality:	Task has a clear overall purpose driving any separate activity contributing to the whole. Evaluation of success is related to student intent.
Appropriateness:	Most appropriate tasks involve abilities in the process of maturation.

Structure:	Modeling and questioning activities structured around model of appropriate approaches to task; lead to natural sequence of thought and language.
Collaboration:	Teacher's response recasts, expands student effort without rejecting student work.
Internalization:	External scaffolding is gradually withdrawn as patterns are internalized by student.

(Applebee, and Langer, 1983)

On March 30, 1982, Deirdre asked Laurine to confer with her. To date, she had completed and shared three short pieces and was beginning to enjoy being an author. In this conference she was seeking feedback on her current work, "Before and After." The conference started with Deirdre reading her draft.

	Scaffold
Laurine--What do you mean by the title, "Before and After"?	The driving overall purpose is to advance Deirdre's writing. In agreeing to confer they share a common interest. Laurine's question is "What do you mean?" A question frequently modeled by her teachers.
Deirdre--Well, before lightning started, everything was fine n'everything, and after the rain had stopped, the tree was laying there.	
Laurine--All right. You said, "My sister and I were playing in the backyard." What were you playing?	Laurine's question is text specific and appropriate.

Deirdre--Kickball, I think. I'm not sure because it took place a little while ago. I can't remember it clearly, but I can remember what happened.	
Laurine--Well, when we was over there with Mrs. Reddy, you said you was playing kickball.	Laurine helps Deirdre to reflect.
Deirdre--Yeah. I'm pretty sure we were, but it wouldn't really sound right - "My sister and I were playing kickball in our backyard."- Oh, yes it would. I think I'll put in "kickball".	She <u>expands</u> Deirdre's options. Deirdre selects.
Laurine--And then you said "It started to pour. All of a sudden the tree fell, bang."	Laurine continues to provide natural responses to the content of Deirdre's piece.
Deirdre--(emphatically) "The tree fell. BANG!" It hit our wall. (giggles)	
Laurine--Did you finally get the tree moved?	Her questions continue to stir Deirdre's reflections on the experience.
Deirdre--Yeah. We threw it across the street in the woods.	
Laurine--Could you tell what you did with the tree? I mean, now we think it's still there for the rest of your life.	She probes in a candid manner for further information.
Deirdre--No-o. This is only the first draft. I'm not really finished with it. I'm gonna add "My father finally picked it up and	Deirdre's own talk <u>recasts and expands</u> her text.

brought it over to the
woods, threw it, and it's
been there ever since."

Laurine--Wanna write it right now? Laurine poses the option of immediate application.

Deirdre pauses to write.

Laurine--Now read it.

Deirdre reads piece, including revisions.

As a collaborator, Laurine used structures modeled by her teachers to raise questions appropriate to Deirdre's learning situation. By internalizing the structures learned in teacher-student and group conferences, she serves as an arm for her teachers, providing an instructional scaffold for Deirdre's growth as a writer.

Discussion

Cazden and Forman exploring the cognitive value of peer interaction, note two important points about Vygotsky's ideas on the social origins of cognition.

On his use of the notion of internalization:

> He is saying that the very means (especially speech) used in social interaction are taken over by the individual child and internalized. Thus, Vygotsky is making a strong statement...about the internalization and the social foundations of cognition.
> (Wertsch, 1981 quoted in Cazden and Forman, in press)

On the importance of instruction:

> If all the development of a child's mental life takes place in the process of social intercourse, this implies that this intercourse and its most

> systematized form, the teaching process, forms the development of the child, creates new mental formations, and develops higher processes of mental life....This deeply significant proposition defines an essentially new approach to the most important theoretical problem of psychology, the challenge of actively developing the mind.
> (Leontiev and Luria, 1968, quoted in Cazden, and Forman, in press).

With regard to group presence, Cazden and Forman focus their inquiry on the contribution peers can make to each other rather than on the teacher's direct involvement with students.

Peer collaboration is defined as "a mutual task in which partners work together to produce something that neither could have produced alone." Drawing from other researchers Perret-Clarmont, (1980), Lomor (1978), Kal'tsova (1978), Inagaki and Hatano, (1968,77,81 in Cazden and Forman, 1983) they add that in peer interaction individuals must acknowledge and integrate many perspectives on problems and that this process in turn produces superior intellectual results because it forces the individual to recognize and resolve conflicting perspectives on problems.

Cazden and Forman say also that all children can learn what to do and say as questioners from consistent teacher modeling of helpful questions focused on the content of writing, not the form. Such questions must be modeled in such a manner as to be easily understood and learned. Thus children can take turns performing the teacher's role for each other, to their benefit as authors who can have so many more experiences with a visible, responsive audience.

The importance of peer interaction, according to Cazden and Forman, is derived from the influence it can exert on equilibration or self-regulation by introducing cognitive conflict. Such conflict "brings about the disequilibriums which make cognitive elaboration necessary, and in this way, cognitive conflict confers a special role on the social factor as one among other factors leading to mental growth." (Perret-Clermont, 1980, in Cazden C. and Forman, E., in press).

In the classroom this does not imply the perfect resolution of each writing problem which arises. It does imply, however, that with peer interaction the opportunity for cognitive conflict is greatly increased, thus enhancing the possibility of growth. Cazden and Forman conclude that support from an observing partner seems to enable peers to solve problems together before they are capable of internalyzing and solving the same problems alone. They also conclude, and these data demonstrate, that peer writing conferences, in particular, provide some of the same kinds of assistance that have been called "instructional scaffolding".

Conferences and Revision

The conferences and pieces written by Jeffrey and Matthew, as discussed below, illustrate the revision functions appearing in peer conferences.

Jeffrey

An attractive black-haired fourth grader of Chinese American origin, Jeffrey entered kindergarten early and was the youngest child in the study. Highly verbal and versatile, his achievements in math, science and music as well as language were exceptional. He participated in nine of the recorded conferences and wrote about sports, TV games, and outdoor experiences. Intense in his approach to work, he cared about his writing and worked at it. Jeffrey taped two conferences while writing his piece on the University of North Carolina vs. Georgetown championship game. Neither of his conference partners, Matthew and Limor, shared his knowledge or keen interest in basketball, but both were very serious in their role as writers helping writers.

In the two conferences, Jeffrey reads with excitement, inserting yays in support of Georgetown and boos for the opponent. He makes nine statements indicating that he recognizes a need to revise and that he is considering or intends to make a change.

Matthew and Limor question the clarity of his piece: Which coach belongs to which team? What is a jump ball? Matthew also questions an abrupt transition - "The way I heard it is... the jump ball - and then suddenly one team is leading." Eight of the nine times that Jeff expresses a need to modify his text come right after a peer has questioned meaning or asked for more specific information. The other instance in which Jeff says that he needs to change his text results

from hearing himself read aloud. He revises as he reads. "The coach is Gene Smith. It should be the coach of North Carolina."

Jeffrey's final copy of his piece on UNC vs. Georgetown was cohesive, the sequence of basketball action carefully developed. He inverted the order of sentences, reworked sections and included greater detail. There were fifty-two operations, identifiable as deletions and additions.

Jeffrey may well have had other peer conferences in addition to the two recorded. He had an editing conference with his teacher and he worked long periods by himself. Thus, it is impossible to attribute more than a few changes in his text directly to the peer conferences. The success of the editing conference which focused on removing clutter is evident in the final product. He also discussed revision with his teacher:

> Teacher-- Jeffrey, I noticed that when you revise in one draft after the other you do not have a lot crossed out and yet your drafts change. How do you do your revising?
>
> Jeff-- Well, I kinda do it in my head and when I'm writing it over I see what I can change when I'm writing it over again for the next draft. I see what I can change and I just want to save time. I don't want to write it on the other copy so I just change it in my head and write in on the other paper.
>
> Teacher-- That works well for you. Was there a very big difference between your first draft and your last draft in this one?
>
> Jeff-- Not very big. It's still the same idea but I tried to make it a lot clearer like for people who don't know about basketball.

Matthew

Matthew was one of the most respected writers in the two groups. His wit, imaginative and unconventional topics attracted the children to his work. His mature comments and caring approach to each writer during share meetings also drew the students to him as a conference partner. He taped only five conferences but actually held many more with both boys and girls. A widely read sixth grader, he especially liked to read and write fantasy.

Matthew recorded two conferences with peers and one with a teacher while writing "The Surprise Math Quiz". Like Jeffrey, Matthew discussed changes in this text as peers asked him: "What do you mean?" "Would people know that?" "I don't understand." The conference became a forum for clarifying meaning. To Limor's questions, for example, about hands feeling greasy, Matthew explained - "When you get nervous you wipe your hands on your sweatshirt or your shirt 'cause they don't feel too good." Matthew's final copy showed that he made the language in his piece more precise, adding a transitional section in order to describe more fully the time lapse between the math quiz and the moment the teacher calls on the student. He also made other content and editing changes which are not explained by the conferences.

During the first conference with Limor, Matthew was unable to resolve the question she raised but the final draft showed that he did reach a solution by giving the passage greater emphasis!

	Extract from conference after Draft #1	Final Draft
Matthew:	I made up the part about the two times five is ten, seven times seven is fifty. It's just saying he's not a perfect student.	Two times five is ten, seven times seven is forty nine - no, fifty. Yeah - that's right.
Limor:	Would people really know that, or would they just pass through it or what?	
Matthew:		I can't really figure out any way to make it stand out.

Discussion

The revision process appears to be as idiosyncratic as the writing process as a whole. While conferences do not guarantee changes in student texts, they do provide a format for "re-seeing" the writer's work, for heightening and reinforcing the process and for considering options.

When children choose to confer, peers become a visible, reacting audience. Their comments and reactions give writers experience with an audience and thus a reason to revise. Peer conferences may or may not result in a better piece of writing, but when children pause to reread their writing with a friend, they do consider issues of major concern to good writers: meaning, coherence, organization. When writers read aloud and peers question meaning and sequence, the possibility that "cognitive conflict" will occur increases, presenting at the very least the opportunity for revision.

Lucy Calkins indicates in the conclusions of her case study, Lessons From a Child, (1982) that dialoguing with her teacher, researcher, and friends, was a significant factor in Suzie's growth in revision. These conversations helped Suzie to internalize the process and eventually to interact with her texts. The second contributing factor mentioned by Calkins is the process conference through which Suzie became aware of useful strategies.

In addition, when Robert Suger studied the problem solving strategies of five year olds (in Donaldson, 1978), he concluded that children learn when they attend to those features which are relevant to the solution.

One thread which occurs in Calkins' research, in Suger's focus on problem solving, and in this study is the significance of giving attention to and highlighting the process for solving problems. Oral language appears to be a major tool for this kind of learning.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

I undertook this study of the peer conferences of elementary students because I believed that much could be learned by observing what children say and how they discuss writing while they are actually engaged in the process. The purpose of the study was to describe the conferences, as no researcher had completed a study of peer conferences exclusively. I hoped to identify the range of matters discussed, to clarify the kinds of interactions between writers and peers, to note and describe patterns in these interactions. Finally, I planned to see if students who recognized and indicated needed revisions actually made such revisions.

Summary

This study of the peer conferences of two groups of elementary students took place in two public schools in Worcester, Massachusetts. Fourteen of the subjects met in one school and fourteen in another. They were identified as gifted students and participated in a pull-out program one full day each week for one half year. All chose to work in a module called "The Writing Process".

Teachers modeled the ways in which writers could be helpful to each other in conferences and students were free to hold conferences at any time. Three recording stations were created in each classroom.

Data consisted of the transcriptions of eighty three conferences

and student writing folders. The utterances of the students were analyzed and coded in order to describe and categorize the student behaviors, differentiating writers from peers. Clusters became apparent. Students read. They explored the territory of their topics, they discussed meaning and expressed feelings. These clusters were identified and analyzed across the conferences and interpreted by observing the patterns which became evident and by studying the data in the light of recent research findings. It is my hope that this detailed description of the peer conferences of elementary children will help researchers and teachers to understand more clearly the functions which students can serve in helping each other to become writers.

Limitations of the Study

The subjects in this study were identified within the context of their neighborhood schools as demonstrating or having the potential for superior academic and creative performance. I draw no conclusions, however, regarding giftedness and the writing process. These students were simply those available for the study. The reader is invited to draw personal conclusions based on the data presented.

The conclusions could be considered to be limited by the time frame and class size. With activities varying from journal writing to whole group lessons, conference and share meetings, the focus of the entire day was on writing -- not the context in which most elementary teachers work with writers. The small classes and two teachers

permitted a greater quantity of student-teacher conferences and thus, perhaps increased modeling, given the amount of time.

Having a teacher researcher in a program for gifted students limited the kinds of data collected. Nevertheless, the limitations can also be seen as advantages. Perhaps because of the small classes the children had greater access to the taping equipment and perhaps also because of their keen verbal abilities they generated over two hundred pages of conference data.

The responses of these students to the conference situation are probably similar to those of other children. These limitations, therefore, should not compromise the descriptive purpose of this study.

Conclusions

The energy to confer during writing comes from the child. It is clear from this study that, given the opportunity to hold conferences with peers, elementary children freely do so and furthermore, they discuss their writing with seriousness and purpose. When children control their conferences, the timing, the choice of a partner and the flow of the discussion because they recognize a need to pause and reflect on what has happened thus far in their writing, they need no external motivation to confer. Calkins concluded that "when children have ownership of their piece, they supply the motivation, the energy." Her conclusions may be extended to the conference process as well.

<u>The modeling of teacher responses to student writing is easily learned by elementary students and enables them to provide an instructional scaffold for each other</u>. Peer responses to writing are clearly of the same nature as those of teachers. Peers note breaks in logic and question meaning. They help writers to solve problems which very often the writer does not recognize and could not solve alone. They help to cast and recast possible solutions and to work with the writer to reflect on experience, to expand and select information.

Students, therefore, who respond to each other, extend the teaching functions in the classroom. Student interaction throughout the writing process gives the writers visible audiences whose questions may serve to create the disequilibriums which among other factors contribute to cognitive growth.

<u>Students engaged in peer conferences discuss aspects of the writing process which are significant to the growth of effective writers</u>. The research of Perl (1980), Pianko (1979), and Sommers (1980) shows that poor writers are concerned with lexical rather than conceptual matters, do not see incongruities and are uncomfortable with revision. Nor do they have strategies for handling lines of reasoning, questions of purpose or audience.

The fourth through sixth graders in this study show that given effective teacher modeling, in their peer conferences they talk about defining the territory of a writing topic and discovering meaning. They consider the perspectives of their peers and work together to

clarify their thinking. Writers question their own theses and show concern for sequence and design. Most often they deal separately with meaning and mechanics, discuss revision strategies ranging from word changes to additions and reordering and see their peers as an audience - "new eyes to review their work." (Sommers, 1980). They may be seen, hence, as engaging in the kinds of behaviors which Perl, Pianko and Sommers describe as characteristic of good writers.

The interaction between peers in conferences provides meaningful affective support to the students. In a context where the emphasis is on cooperative rather than competitive learning, student writers solve problems together and the constant role reversal - from writer to audience to writer again - permits students to both give and receive help.

In conferences, students become aware of each other as writers. They respond to each other's needs. The eagerness to confer, the volume and effectiveness of their conferences and the overt remarks made about their feelings and attitudes toward the conferences indicate that children value peer conferences as a mode of learning and appreciate sharing common struggles as writers with their peers.

Student writers who regularly hold peer conferences engage actively in all of the language arts. Apart from talking purposefully, reading to make and clarify meaning is the most prominent feature in the conferences. Not only do the students read,

but, they read critically. Peers also listen actively to understand the experiences and problems of their partners. Listening, talking and reading generate new cycles of writing, then listening, speaking, reading and writing again. Conferences may or may not result in revision or a better piece of writing, but they provide rich and varied conditions for the purposeful exercise of all the language arts to meet the self selected needs of the learners.

Implications

If interactions during the writing process can help children to stir the "cognitive conflict" needed for learning to take place, then it is reasonable to allow student ownership of the conference process. Graves, in the conclusions to the Atkinson Academy study, urged that children be allowed to select a high percentage of their topics. So, too, writers need to control the time, the purpose and the choice of a partner for their writing conferences. Teachers need to recognize the importance of talk to the devlopment of writers and to recognize the quality of the listening and reading which accompany the talking and writing. In addition, just as the writing process itself is idiosyncratic, so the idiosyncracies of individual children in their approach to conferences must be respected. While most children adhere to similar patterns in their conferences, some show considerable individuality. Laurine needed to read the text herself because it suited her particular learning style. While Graves often advises teachers not to wrest control from the child by removing the paper

from the child's hands, some children seem to be able to defer to individual needs without offense to each other. Hence, the spontaneity and sincerity of students like Laurine makes it acceptable at times for peers to read the writer's text without taking ownership.

Another implication emerging from this study is the importance that teachers model effective responses to student writing in order to enable children to learn how to respond to each other. Teachers need to possess the nomenclature and to understand the writing process so that they can articulate it competently and naturally with children. Responses which will significantly enhance the growth of writers originate with teachers. In addition, if the careful, guided use of peer interaction can assist students to greater cognitive development, then evaluation and possible changes in teacher education might well be considered.

A third implication is that definitions of reading and writing need to be broadened to include the composing of meaning while children talk, listen to, read and write all texts: their own, the texts of peers, of teachers and of professional writers. Hansen (1983) and Blackburn (1984) have shown recently that an expanded sense of authorship grows as the barriers to child control of the processes are reduced and arbitrary distinctions between reading and writing are blurred. This study shows in addition that the transactions between reader and writer originate, are shaped, or amplified by the talking, listening and reading which accompany the writing. The composing of

meaning, and thereby learning, is dependent on the honing of all of the language arts in the classroom.

Suggestions For Further Research

Further insights into how children grow as writers might be gained by a case study approach to the conferences and writing of one child. Perhaps close study of the teacher-student conferences and peer conferences as well as the drafts and final copies of one child over a period of time would reveal the dynamics of teacher and peer interaction with one student and a piece of writing. It might also show how conferences of one child change over time.

Researchers might also learn much about how children verbalize the writing process and how what they say about writing changes by gathering data from teacher-student conferences, peer conferences and student process journals.

The children in this study recorded no editing conferences. The decision was theirs as they were free to record any and all conferences. Researchers might, therefore, record and analyze the conferences of students as they engage in editing and to observe the changes which occur in their editing over a period of time. Several other interesting questions which might be clarified by longer studies include:

> How would the concepts of writing change? How would a closer examination of the concepts described in this study compare to those of Donald Graves or those described in new

studies? What common threads would emerge? How would the concepts need to be refined or restructured? What new directions might be indicated?

How would perceptions of audience change? What relationship might there be between the concept of audience and revision in one child over time?

How would conferences change with the form of writing?

What would conferences reveal about changing student strategies in dealing with meaning relationships (semantics), language use (pragmatics) and text structure?

How would peer conferences in other curriculum areas such as social studies, the arts, math, and reading compare to writing conferences?

Considering the implications of the effect of writing on reading summarized in Thomas Newkirk's statement: "The writer has an insider's view of language," (Newkirk, 1982), how would further studies document the changes and growth of writers as critical readers?

How would the behaviors of good readers correlate with those of good writers?

How would peer/readers compare with writers according to their behavior, developmental levels, social interaction and personality types?

How would the conference patterns of mature writers compare with those of burgeoning writers?

What remains the role of the teacher/reader after the peer/readers have become proficient?

It might also be productive to study one concept such as meaning or audience from an hierarchical point of view or to explore further how peers can help each other to advance cognitively.

I hope that the words of the children from May Street and Flagg Street Schools have demonstrated the strength that lies within learners who are given decision-making roles, the richness of peer interactions in writing classrooms, and the power inherent in the ability of children to help each other to do what they might not achieve alone.

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APPENDIX

TABLE II

NUMBER OF CONCEPTS CODED PER CONFERENCE

Conference Number	Writer	Peer	Total
1.	20	25	45
2.	68	35	103
3.	14	19	33
4.	4	8	12
5.	8	8	16
6.	10	11	21
7.	8	6	14
8.	12	15	27
9.	13	13	26
10.	5	7	12
11.	57	69	126
12.	16	7	23
13.	10	7	17
14.	6	5	11
15.	12	12	24
16.	16	21	37
17.	7	11	18
18.	20	26	46
19.	1	5	6
20.	6	4	10
21.	8	10	18
22.	11	19	30
23.	27	24	51
24.	18	47	65
25.	2	5	7
26.	13	14	27
27.	15	14	29
28.	15	6	21

TABLE II (Continued)

Conference Number	Writer	Peer	Total
29.	10	16	26
30.	8	9	17
31.	10	15	25
32.	7	6	13
33.	21	6	27
34.	9	8	17
35.	1	3	4
36.	4	1	5
37.	4	2	6
38.	3	8	11
39.	4	6	10
40.	2	0	2
41.	1	1	2
42.	19	10	29
43.	5	5	10
44.	4	5	9
45.	31	31	62
46.	5	9	14
47.	19	15	34
48.	1	0	1
49.	11	11	22
50.	37	27	64
51.	7	7	14
52.	4	3	7
53.	1	3	4
54.	7	8	15
55.	8	8	16
56.	1	0	1

TABLE II (Continued)

Conference Number	Writer	Peer	Total
57.	6	5	11
58.	3	3	6
59.	7	4	11
60.	9	4	13
61.	10	10	20
62.	5	9	14
63.	9	12	21
64.	5	9	14
65.	5	3	8
66.	1	3	4
67.	7	7	14
68.	3	6	9
69.	8	2	10
70.	3	0	3
71.	3	11	14
72.	6	3	9
73.	9	11	20
74.	15	1	16
75.	7	11	18
76.	12	20	32
77.	14	21	35
78.	13	14	27
79.	33	36	69
80.	25	16	41
81.	16	15	31
82.	11	10	21
83.	9	14	23
	920	936	1,856

TABLE III

CLASS COMPOSITION BY SEX

Number of Boys	Percent of Classes
6	21
Number of Girls	
22	79

n=28

TABLE IV

ANALYSIS OF CONFERENCES BY SEX OF PARTICIPANTS

	Number	Percent of Total Conferences
Boy-Boy	22	17
Boy-Girl	15	12
Girl-Girl	86	68
Conference Alone	4	3
Total	127	100

n=127

TABLE V

ANALYSIS OF CONFERENCES BY GRADE LEVEL

Grade	Number of Students	Percent of N	Number of Times Conference Participant	Percent of Total Conferences
4	17	61%	126	54%
5	7	25	70	30
6	4	14	36	16
Total	28	100%	232	100%

n=28

TABLE VI

CONFERENCES AND REVISION
EXCERPTS FROM STUDENT DRAFTS AND CONFERENCES
FINAL DRAFT: UNC VS. GEORGETOWN

Student: Jeffrey
Number of Drafts: 3

Key: _______ Additions clearly related to conferences

_______ Additions unrelated to conferences

Draft No. 1	Conference Statements	Draft No. 2	Final Copy
			The place: The Superdome in New Orleans, Louisiana. The date: March 29, 1982. The time: 8:00 p.m. the reason: the NCAA Championship. Now the starting lineups. At forward for the Georgetown Hoyas 6'7" Mike Hancock and Eric Smith. At center 7' freshman Pat Ewing. At the guard positions All-American senior Eric "Sleepy" Floyd and Fred Brown.

Note: Jeffrey made no comments concerning deletions or reorganization during conferences although he did use these strategies.

Draft No. 1	Conference Statements	Draft No. 2	Final Copy
John Thompson is the coach.	Maybe I should say "John Thompson is the coach of the Hoyas or something like that.	John Thompson is the coach of Georgetown.	At forward for the Tar Heels of N.C. 6'9" junior James and Matt Doherty. At center 6'9" Sam Perkins. At guard, Jimmy Black and Mike Gordon.
...The coach is Gene Smith.	It should be, "The coach of North Carolina is Gene Smith.	The coach of UNC is Gene Smith.	
Now for the jump ball and Georgetown wins it. The game is very close, but Georgetown is still winning by one.	I should explain the first quarter. I should say something like—midway—The game is progressing—or something like that—and George-town is still ahead. It's a very close game but Georgetown is still ahead by one. Maybe I can write "Now for the jumpball, when the two centers jump—try to tap it to one of their teammates.	Now for the jump ball. Georgetown wins it. Time passes and the game is very close, but George-town is still winning by one.	Now for the jump ball, which is when the two centers jump to tap the ball to a teammate. It is won by Georgetown.

Draft No. 1	Conference Statements	Draft No. 2	Final Copy
Now it is half time and George-town is winning by a couple.	I should say exactly, shouldn't I? All right.		Midway through the first half the game is very close. It is half time and Georgetown is winning 32-31. Now its the beginning of the 2nd half and U.N.C. gets the ball. Midway through the 2nd period, U.N.C. takes the lead. With less than 3:00 left, Georgetown makes a comeback with less than 1:00 left Georgetown takes the lead.
At the beginning of the second period UNC takes the lead. With under three minutes left,	All right. I'll say: in the game (Revises on the spot.)		
...The coach Gene Smith.	It should be the coach of North Carolina is Gene Smith.	The coach of U.N.C. is Gene Smith.	

Draft No. 1	Conference Statements	Draft No. 2	Final Copy
	Maybe...I should use phrases that you...would in basketball like "George-town pushes it down, pushes it down the court." Maybe I should say, Now Floyd dribbles it down the court."		Someone on U.N.C. puts up the shot. It's in. Boo! Floyd dribbles it down the court. He takes the shot. It's in! Yay! Black dribbles it down the court. He passes it to Worthy. Yay! Worthy takes a shot. It's in! Boo! U.N.C. takes the lead 61-62. Brown throws it in-bound. He throws it to the wrong man! It's Worthy again! He's fouled immediately by Eric Smith! It is called an intentional foul. That means two foul shots. Worthy misses them both. 3-2-1 BUZZZ. U.N.C. is the new NCAA Champion.

FIGURE 3

Final Report
N.I.E. Grant No. G-78-0174
Project No. 8-34/9-0963
Donald H. Graves, Director
Rebecca Rule, Researcher

CONCEPT DESCRIPTIONS

CODE FOR CONCEPT COLLECTION

SD Standard

The speaker judges or asks for a judgment of a piece of writing.

Examples: "I like the way you set this up."

"Which do you think is the best draft?"

SD is often found with other concepts when those other concepts are being used as standards. The statement "I like the way you set this up" would be coded SD O, meaning that the concept of organization is being used as a judgement standard.

P Process

The speaker discusses the steps taken to produce a draft. These may be specific:

Examples: "This is my fifth draft."

"Did you copy this out of the encyclopedia or make it up yourself?"

or general:

Examples: "What will you do next?"

"Was it hard to write this draft?"

P is probably the most prevalent symbol in the system and is often found in combination with other concepts. Use of the future tense in a teacher or researcher question is often a cue that process is being discussed as in the statements "What will you do next?" and "How will you change the organization in the next draft?"

I Information

Many of the concepts in this system include what most of us consider the concept of information. For example, our concept O for organization means organizing information. We've decided to allow the O to stand for organizing information so that the I symbol can stand for something more specific. That is, although we know that a statement like "I'm going to put all the stuff about dogs in Chapter I" includes an understanding both of information and organization, we will use the O alone to symbolize that understanding. The same applies for the symbols MO, FE, AC, T, EX and AU.

The "something more specific" that we want I to stand for is defined as follows:

The speaker discusses or cites content, refers specifically to a piece of writing.

Example: "I'm going to write how the man got down here. The shark is going to touch the sailboat..."

The above example would be coded both I and P because the writer cites specific information while describing her planned writing process.

Is Selection of Information

The speaker refers to selection of information, distinguishes suitable from unsuitable information but does not speak specifically of adding or deleting information. (See next two categories).

Example: "What kind of information do you need?"

Ia Addition of Information

The speaker suggests adding to a draft.

Examples: "Revised means adding some tips."

"I think you should put in more about the car ride."

Id Deletion of Information

The speaker refers to deleting information.

Examples: "I didn't think it was that important and it was just a waste of time having it there."

"Do you think you really need that part?"

Some other categories which include (implicitly) the concept of information follow.

EX <u>Experience</u>

The writer describes his experience, or the reader discusses the writer's (off the page) experience.

Examples: "The chickens were hard to catch."

"Was there a roller-coaster there?"

Discussions of <u>experience</u> as defined here may be stimulated by what appeared on the page but are not <u>about</u> the writing or what's on the page. Often, the writer seems to talk about the experience (or the reader expresses curiosity) with no indication that the speaker thinks the writing should be changed as a result of the discussion.

EXv <u>Experience verfication</u>

Speaker compares information on the page with the writer's experience.

Examples: "Is that really true?"

"That's exactly what happened."

"I can't remember whether the doctor put the needle in my left or my right arm so I don't know what to write."

AU <u>Audience</u>

Speaker refers to <u>reader response</u> to writing or to a conference.

Example: "What do you think Billy would say about this story?"

AUi <u>Audience general response</u>

Speaker notes that writing is (is not) interesting, exciting, appealing, or entertaining.

Example: "I like it because it is the exciting part."

AUio <u>Audience response with regard to others</u>

Speaker notes that writing is (is not) interesting, exciting, appealing, or entertaining to others.

Example: "Well, I like it but the other kids would say it's boring."

AUc <u>Audience feels writing needs clarity</u>

Speaker suggests that the writing be clarified.

Examples: "What did you mean by...?"

"I'm having trouble with this page. It doesn't make sense to me."

AUco <u>Audience requests clarity with regard to others</u>

Speaker suggests writing be clarified for other readers to better understand it.

Examples: "It is important so they know she was wasting food by dumping it on the floor."

"It sounded like he didn't care about your sister."

AUn <u>Audience not considered important to writer</u>

Speaker explicitly expresses no concern with reader response.

Examples: "Your Woodsy Owl book doesn't make any sense."

"That's all right. I can write whatever I want."

F <u>Feelings</u>

Speaker refers to emotion in the writing or the experience behind the writing.

Examples: "Now what I have to figure out is how with that same feeling I could bring my father to the sofa."

"Were you unhappy when you didn't find your luggage?"

MO <u>Motivation</u>

Speaker discusses <u>writer's or writer's characters' motives in</u> the <u>experience</u> behind the text or in the text.

Examples: "Why did you ask for more potato?"

"I walked to the window because I wanted them to notice me."

AC <u>Action</u>

ACa <u>refers to sequence of events in narrative</u>.

Examples: "What will happen next in your story?"

"I just wanted to start at the action."

ACf <u>refers to frequency of event in story</u>.

Examples: "I like your story because it has a lot of action."

"The robbing in my story has a lot of action."

O <u>Organization</u>

Speaker refers to content arrangement. Includes any reference to grouping, ordering, chapters, division into parts, etc.

Examples: "I wanted each chapter to be about just one thing."

"Why did you make chapters?"

T Topic

Speaker refers to what the whole piece is about, defining message or intent and reference to titles.

Examples: "This whole thing is about my trip to Canada."

"Is this about red squirrels?"

L Language

Speaker refers to writer's choice or arrangement of words for meaning.

Examples: "Why did you call the lion 'ferocious'?"

"What should I call the box cars?"

LG Length

LGm

Speaker refers to how long a piece is. Emphasis is more is better.

Examples: "This is a good story 'cause it tells more and it has a lot of pages."

"This is the longest story you've ever written."

LGs

Speaker refers to how short a piece is. Emphasis is less is better.

Examples: "I don't want a super long story because I don't need all that much in."

"You've told a lot in a short space."

N <u>Neatness</u>

Speaker refers to the work's appearance.

Examples: "Don't look at this. It's too messy."

"You wrote this very neatly."

M <u>Mechanics</u>

Speaker refers to grammar, punctuation, spelling or handwriting.

Examples: "Is that how you spell <u>much</u>?"

"If I send a love letter, I use cursive."

Graves, D.H. 1982c

Feb. 23, 1982

Things I Like todo

Draft # 2

I like todo alot of things. I like to go rollerskating I can roller-skate pretty good. I wish that I could turn around in theair with rollerskates on.

I would like tolearn how to iceskate and I also watch the iceskaters on t.v. I like gymnastics most of all. I took gymnastics last summer. I learned how to do a backbend but I couldn't go back on my feet from a backbend. I can also do a handstand and I can stay up for a pretty long time. I liketo swim I learned how to swim in the nine feet last summer. I don't know how to dive yet. There are many other things I like to do.

Draft #4

Ebony Miller Feb. 23, 1982

Gymnastics

Gymnastics is a super sport. I like it because it's good to know I'm able to do the exercises. The things I learned were how to do a backbend and how to do a handstand. I can't flip over on to my feet when I do a backbend. I can do a handstand fairly well and I can stay up a pretty longtime. Sometimes I try to do a split and I'm not able to go down all the way. Before I took gymnastics I all ready knew how to do a cartwheel. When I do a cartwheel my legs go just the way they're suppose to go. My legs don't curve or bend. I had alot of fun in gymnastics.

FIGURE 4

Mini-Lesson

Focusing on a Topic

Equipment: Overhead projector

Procedure: Read draft No. 2 of child's piece and ask students how many topics they think student had. They may choose to name or count them. Show Draft No. 4 and ellicit comments as to the difference and why. Draft is not that of a child in the class.

FIGURE 5

Mini-Lesson

Leads Hunt

Procedure: Discuss effective and varied leads with students giving several examples. Ask children to verbalize the characteristics they note in strong leads. Generalized characteristics may be listed on the board and entered into journals. Give each group of three students an acetate transparency and suitable marker. Ask students to conduct a "leads hunt" writing on the acetate only those they consider to be the very best. Each student writes one or two, depending on time and class size. Place each transparency on overhead projector. Have students read and invite comments on leads.

Sample leads found by students:

There was once a hill that ate people.

A huge lump of pinkish organic glop was washed up.

Everyone came running to Shelly's room to see the baby shark that had hatched.

With her eyes still closed, the girl awoke to the sound of crying and persons talking in excited voices. Then she felt the aches in her head and in her arms -- she tried to see where she was. What had happened?

"Archie, look what I found."

The brook was quiet. It did not move. It was frozen quiet and still. It was winter.

FIGURE 6

Mini-Lesson

Honest Voice

The following poems were published in a local children's newspaper sometime prior to the time of the study.

Procedure: Make a transparency of the following pieces. Place on projector. Read each of the first four items, elliciting responses. Children may be reluctant to be critical of "published" pieces. Continue asking what they really think. Eventually someone will venture that the piece doesn't make sense, is repetitious, etc. Read the final piece. Compare the voice of the writer felt by the reader in all five pieces.

SNOWFLAKES

A SNOWFLAKE IS PART OF SNOW THAT IS A
PRETTY FLAKE OF SNOW AND THEY ARE WHITE
AND THEY ARE NICE AND SOME ARE TALL
AND SOME ARE SMALL, BUT WHAT I LIKE ABOUT
WINTER IS SNOWFLAKES. DON'T YOU?

PINK IS THE COLOR OF COTTON CANDY.
PINK IS THE COLOR OF A MOUSE IN A HOUSE...
PINK IS THE COLOR OF ANTS.
PINK IS THE COLOR OF A FENCE.
PINK IS THE COLOR OF AN AX.

THE SUN IS JUST LIKE A NEW SHINY GUN.
THE SUN IS JUST LIKE A DUMB PERSON
WALKING IN THE SUN.

SNOWFLAKES ARE GLITTERING IN THE BRIGHT
LIGHT.

SNOWFLAKES STOP GLITTERING ONLY IN THE
NIGHT.

THE PERFECT COUPLE

HOW LUCKY CAN ANYONE BE? I SIT, JUST
ME AND MY TV. AN OCCASIONAL CHIP
I HAPPILY DIP. WHAT A PERFECT
COUPLE ARE WE!

FIGURE 7

Mini-Lesson

Strong Verbs

Procedure: See next page

Jess ______________his damp hair out of his face and __________________down on the wooden bench. He __________ two spoonfuls of sugar into his cup and __________________ to keep the hot coffee from ________________his mouth.

(p.5)

Without breaking his rhythm, he ___________ over the fence, ___________across the scrap heap, _______________May Belle on the head (Owww!) and _________on to the house.

(p.5)

But one day-April the twenty second, a drizzly Monday, it had been- he ran ahead of them all, the red mud ______________up through the holes in the bottom of his sneakers.

(p.4)

Paterson, Katherine. Bridge to Terabithia. N.Y.: T.Y. Crowell, 1977.

Instructions: Students work in groups of three. They brainstorm and list below excerpt, verbs which might fit into blanks. They evaluate together, select the one they think is the best and enter it. When all students have completed this task, each group presents its choices. Teacher leads discussion of differences in word meanings and effect of word choices. Students then find and discuss Patterson's choices.

Pre-requisite skill: Knowledge of the rules of brainstorming (Osborne, 1963) including evaluation of ideas generated.

Comment: Student choices are often varied and as effective of those of the professional. Emphasis is on the effects of word choices, not selection of a right or best answer.

FIGURE 8

Mini-Lesson

Writing is Like Working With Clay

Procedure: Students are given a piece of clay and instructed to create "something" and to talk to each other about what they are doing. After a time they are encouraged to think of the similarities between working with clay and writing.

Sample responses:

1. Both take a lot of time.
2. You can change it as you go along.
3. You can make both things up.
4. You have to work carefully.
5. You have to work hard.
6. It requires skill.
7. You have to shape it.
8. You have to focus.
9. You have to play with it before you start.
10. You can make anything you want.
11. You can add details.
12. You have to put it all together at the end.
13. It has to make sense.
14. You can add and combine.
15. You pick something you know and care about.
16. You make it messy before making it clear.
17. You use your imagination.
18. You talk to people to get ideas.
19. You can "piggyback" on someone else's ideas.
20. You can unwrite - or take things out.

FIGURE 9

Handout

Procedure: Children are encouraged to comment on the statements of the writers. They may agree or disagree, but are expected to support their arguments.

N.B. - Some comments were extracted from student journals and used along with those of professional writers. See Eileen's statement.

What Writers Say About Writing...

Walter Van Tilburg Clark: Fundamentally a writer uses his ears and eyes better than the average person.

Joseph Conrad: My task...is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see.

William Faulkner: Take chances. Get it down. It may be bad, but it's the only way you can do anything really good.

E.M. Forster: How do I know what I think until I see what I say?

Carol Ryrie Brink: I like to start with something I know - a place, a person, an experience - something from which I have an emotional reaction.

Eileen McCarthy: Drafting helps, don't think it comes out perfect the first time.

FIGURE 10

PEER CONFERENCE

JEFFREY-MATTHEW

Flagg St. School April 28, 1982

Student	Concept Code	
Jeff	R	UNC vs. Georgetown. The place, New Orleans, Louisianna, in the Superdome. The date, March 29, 1982. The time, eight o'clock p.m. The reason, the NCA championship. And now for the starting line ups. At the forward position for the Georgetown Hoyas, 6'5" senior, Eric Smith and 6'7" Mike Hancock. At center, 7'0" freshman, Patrick Ewing, YAAAAY! Starting at the guard position, consensus All American senior, Eric Sleepy Floyd, YAHHHHH! and Fred Brown. John Thompson is the coach.
Matt	PEM	Of what team?
Jeff	WEM,WEO	Well, it's, ah, it's, it's for Georgetown. It's all in one paragraph. So I think you could tell. See, it's, all in one paragraph.
Matt	SAu	But if you're reading it to someone?
Jeff	A, WEI	Oh ya, maybe I should say, John Thompson is the coach of the Hoyas or somthing like that. The Tarheels of UNC, BOOHHH! At the forward position, 6'9", James Worthy and Matt Doherty. At center, 6'9" Sam Perkins.
Matt	PET	How tall is Matt Doherty?
Jeff	WET,R,I	Well, I don't, I can't, I can't tell, I don't know because only some of them I know the height. At center position, 6'9" Sam Perkins. The two guards are, Jim, Jimmy Black and Mike Jordan. The coach is Gene Smith. It should be the coach of North Carolina is Gene Smith. Now for the jump ball, and Georgetown wins it. The game is very close, but, Georgetown is still winning by one. Now it is half time.

Matt	PEO	What happened to quarter one?
Jeff	WEI	Well, um, I should, should explain the first quarter, but
Matt	PEA	Right, but the way you're saying, the way I heard it is you, the jump ball and then suddenly one team's leading.
Jeff	C,WEI,SPJ	Oh, all right. Ah, I should say like, something like, say something like, - um. Midway, I should say the game is progressing or something like that and Georgetown is still ahead, it's a very close game but Georgetown is still ahead by one.
Matt	PEI	You, you, you can say that but you, you should you could say that but you should, um, do what you want to, but I think you should include that.
Jeff	C,R	Ya, I think, I think I should too. Um, Now it is half time and Georgetown is winning by a couple.
Matt	PEM	A couple of what?
Jeff	WEM	A couple points.
Matt	PEM	Did...how many is a couple?
Jeff	WEI,SPJ, C,R	It's a couple, I didn't know exactly if it's, ...oh, ya. I should say, oh it's exact. I should, I should say exactly. Shouldn't I? All right, at the beginning of the second period UNC gets the ball. Midway through the second period UNC takes the lead. With under three minutes left, left.
Matt	PEM	For what, the game or the quarter?
Jeff	WEM	Oh, there's no quarters in college basketball.
Matt		Oh, well,
Jeff	WEM,C,I	There's only two, two halfs. All right, I'll say in the game, they, ah, with under 2,3, minutes left in, left in the game, Georgetown takes the lead. YAAAAY. Some how, UNC picked up the shot, Boohhh, It's in. Now Floyd dribbles it down the court. He takes a shot, it's in, Boohhh! Brown throws it to the wrong man. It's Rosy again.

		He's fouled by Eric Smith. It is called an intentional foul. Two shots, he misses them both. Three, two, one, Buzzzzz. UNC is the new NCA Championship...champions. The high scores were: Ewig 23, and Rosy 28.
Matt	PEI	Why should you include the score?
Jeff	WEI	Because I think it's kind of important to include them. Because...
Matt	QM	Why do you think it's important?
Jeff	M	Because, like, people like to know, like, the individual stars. Like, I know, I always like to know the individual stars.
Matt	PSP, SAu	Okay, since you like to know. Ya, some people may like that. I,
Jeff	M	I like it a lot so, I, I, I just wanted to put it in.
Matt	PEI	I'm not saying you have to change anythin, I'm just trying to point that out.
Jeff	SPS	Ya. What do ya think of my story?
Matt	QM	I think it's pretty good. Why this topic?
Jeff	M	Because I like basketball a lot.
Matt	PET	Why do you like basketball?
Jeff	WET	Because it's a sport and I like playing sports.
Matt	PET	Well, basket, baseball's a sport, why didn't you write about that?
Jeff		Because, I really wanted to write about this game because Georgetown is one of my favorite college teams. They're probably my favorite, and UNC is my favorite, is like my second favorite. So they're, they're both, ah, I like them both a lot. But I like Georgetown better and this game was very important to me.
Matt	PEM, QM	So why just, why write about just this one game? Why not write about another game that USC played in or the other two played in?

Jeff	WET,M	Well, I just wanted to, this was, this was the championship.
Matt	PET	Why didn't you write about a championship from another year?
Jeff	WET,M	Because this year was the year I really, because last year I really didn't know that much about college basketball.
Matt	PEA	Okay. Um, hello, okay, is this all, are you sure, you, jump, you jump a lot, you jump from like, one minute once he has the ball, then suddenly the other team had the lead.
Jeff	WEA	Well, it's kinda hard to write like, commentary, but I have ta. You hav' ta kinda do that, because you don't know exactly what it is.
Matt	PPV	Okay. By commentary, do you mean you're watching the game?
Jeff	WPV	Ya. I'm, I'm commenting it, like, ya, ya, like the announcer.
Matt	PPV	Okay. The announcer is, the announcer is suppose to ah, say, oh, yah, booh.
Jeff	WPV	That's the crowd.
Matt	PEI	Ya, then say that. The crowd yelled.
Jeff	C	Oh ya, you're right, ya, you're right, ya. Matt you're a good person.
Matt	QM	Why, do you think I'm right?
Jeff	WEA,M,R,A WEI,SPJ,R	Because ah, I mean, you, you don't know. It's gotta, you gotta say something like that or else. Well, I maybe, I don't need it because well, well, this, this story is supposed to be, a fast story, a fast story. Everything is going on at once. You know what I mean? Because basketball is kinda confusing if everything is going on at once. And that's kinda what I wanted it to do. So I had to make it like fast, like, like, and now here we go and, now for the starting line up. I'm like, when you, when you read this story, right, you, you don't really know like, um, let

		me think, you don't really know about, like, when you're reading this story, you don't know what's going to happen right? So if you're, if you're reading this, and you say, and you hear the yah's and everythin, it put's you in the mood. You don't say, you, you, it wouldn't sound that it's good, it's just that and Now for the starting line up. At the forward position for the Georgetown Hoyas, 6'9" senior, Eric Smith and 6'7" Mike Hancock. At center 7'0" freshman, Patrick Ewing, YAHHHH! Or, or, which one tell's better? At center 7'0" freshman center, Patrick Ewing YAHHH! At center 7'0" freshman, Patrick Ewing, the crowd roars, YAHHH!
	WEI,SPS	Which one sounds better?
Matt	Sau,PPV	I'm not saying, but I think the crowd yelling. When I, when I heard it, it sounds like you were a commentator. That kind of through me off the track.
Jeff	WPV	Well that, well I don't have to be a commentator. It's, I'm just kinda like, I, I'm just kinda like somebody who watches the game and commentating it to myself like.
Matt	RP	Okay.
Jeff	WSP,M,SPJ	And I think in my head, YAHHH! and now when they score it's BOOHH! But it kind of sounds like the commentator and it puts you in the mood if you just here YAHHH! and everything. You know what I mean?
Matt	QM	Did you use this as cheers instead of using words like YAHHH! and BOOHHH!?
Jeff	C	I should check, shouldn't I?
Matt		Ya
Jeff		Ah,
Matt	PEL	All you hear is BOOHHH, BOOHHH! You, you could say it, you, you could say, um, when you say YAHHH, you could say, um, the crowd roared in jubilation or something like that. But otherwise, from that, it's a, pretty good story.

Jeff Okay, this is Jeff

Matt Matthew

Jeff WPL Reporting from WBZ radio.

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E.H.