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THE EFFECT OF FOCUS CORRECTION ON THE WRITING OF URBAN SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS USING THE CUMULATIVE WRITING FOLDER PROGRAM ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

A Dissertation Presented

by

MARY GRASSA O´NEILL

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

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 1990

Education

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THE EFFECT OF FOCUS CORRECTION ON THE WRITING OF URBAN SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS USING THE CUMULATIVE WRITING FOLDER PROGRAM ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

A Dissertation Presented

by

MARY GRASSA O´NEILL

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Dedicated to Thom, Thomas and Joseph

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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF FOCUS CORRECTION ON THE WRITING OF URBAN SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS USING THE CUMULATIVE WRITING FOLDER PROGRAM ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

SEPTEMBER 1990

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Directed by: Professor Atron Gentry

The purpose of this study was to determine if the focus correction strategy of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program had a positive effect on students´ overall writing skills and on the major writing areas of mechanics, style, content and organization.

A pre and post exploratory study was used in this research with a sample of 22 grade 7 urban middle school students. The study looked for significant differences between high and low repetitions of focus correction areas (FCAs) and their effect on achievement. Writing samples were assessed with holistic and primary trait scoring.

The important findings of this study are that:

- The Cumulative Writing Folder Program works and produces significant increases in students´ writing

skills overall and for all variables studied: mechanics, style, content and organization ($p < .001$). It especially works as a way to focus teachers´ attention on writing and as a means for teachers and administrators to provide a set of strategies that everyone can use.

- A balance of FCAs should be used. An overemphasis on mechanics may actually decrease students´ mechanical skills.
- The frequency of FCAs may not be as important as the focusing of the correction itself.

These results are all the more meaningful because they were achieved in an inner city middle school with minority students. They reinforce the notions that an atmosphere of literacy can be created, good writing can be taught, and classroom practices make a difference.

Further research must be done to determine if the positive results were due to frequency of writing, consistency of approach, the management system, oral reading, or using past papers to teach new skills which are the other major components of this program, or to the atmosphere of literacy at the study school, and to find out what number of Focus Correction Area repetitions works best. Additionally a study should be done to examine which individual focus correction areas have the greatest effect on writing performance. When research responds to these issues, American schools will produce more effective writers and the teaching of writing will be closer to reaching its potential.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Chapter One discusses the need for the study at a national level, the need for the study at a local level, provides a description of the program, the purpose of the study, the hypotheses and a summary.

Good writing is a powerful tool: it distinguishes a person´s message and makes it stand out from the mass of other writing competing for attention. It focuses a person´s ideas, which is why writing skill correlates highly with the ability to think well--to analyze, to weigh, to decide [Dumaine, 1983].

Need for the Study - A National Perspective

Despite its importance, a 1990 National Assessment of Educational Progress report showed that American students were writing no better in 1988 than they were fourteen years earlier.

All of the major reports of the last ten years--including the National Assessment of Educational Progress [Applebee, 1986, 1990], A Nation at Risk [National Commission on Education, 1983], and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching [Boyer, 1983]--indicate that the teaching of writing is either ignored or far from reaching its potential.

Recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress [Applebee, 1990] tells us that:

- Most students in grades 4, 8 and 11 can do minimal work in writing. Minimal writing describes the least possible amount of writing in terms of length and involves no elaboration.
- Some can do adequate work in writing. Adequate writing means students can complete only simple tasks that require little organization and elaboration.
- Very few can write well.
- Teachers´ classroom practices make a difference.

Anthony Brandt in a Psychology Today article [Brandt, 1982], writes that the problems with writing in America are not just media hype. Government publications and internal memos are so poorly written that some states have had to pass "plain English" laws to enforce standards of brevity and clarity on the writing produced by government agencies. President Carter, shortly after his inauguration, issued an executive order to federal agencies to write their endless memos and reports in readable English. Business people constantly complain that secretaries, junior executives and even highly educated MBA´s can´t spell, can´t construct grammatically correct sentences, and can´t express themselves clearly in writing.

In fact, Benjamin Bloom [Koerner, 1986] asserts:

> Most of us never did learn to write as youngsters. I find my graduate students seem to learn the art of writing as they do their research. They rewrite their dissertations four to eight times before I am satisfied. They should have learned to do this in two or three retakes [p. 64].

Ernest Boyer [1983] through the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has urged us to make clear and effective writing, "a central objective of the school" [p. 91].

Clearly there is an interest in the teaching of writing.

> In the last decade, there has been a surge of research interest in an intellectual skill that had been overlooked for perhaps a century---writing [Hull and Bartholomae, 1986, p. 4].

Researchers who study writing instruction almost all arrive at the same conclusion: students at all grade levels do not write enough. There is simply not enough writing practice to develop the skill. The September 5, 1984 issue of _Education Week_ summarized some of the major research on this problem.

> One survey of writing instruction in elementary schools, sponsored by the National Institute of Education, reported that most instruction consisted of workbook exercises and drills in penmanship, vocabulary, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and standard English usage, with very few opportunities for students to actually write.
>
> From a 1978 Ford Foundation report entitled "Balance the Basics: Let Them Write," Donald Graves, a professor of English education at the University of New Hampshire, surveyed school systems that supposedly stressed writing. He found that second graders averaged only three pieces of writing in three months´ time and that secondary school students wrote even less.
>
> John Goodlad, in his 1983 book, _A Place Called School_, published the results of a survey of 39 public elementary, junior high, and high schools that revealed that while students spent a lot of time on writing in the early years, the tasks mostly involved answering simple questions and filling in blanks. By junior high school, the frequency of writing had dropped by one-third; by high school, by one-half.
>
> "We usually think of the English class as the place where students are taught to write," stated Mr. Applebee. "But, in fact, students write more outside of English. They write slightly less than half of their school writing for the English classes and slightly over half for their other

> subjects. Because of that, what they do in their other academic subjects has a strong influence on their notions of writing and what matters in writing."
>
> Mr. Applebee and his colleagues have conducted one of the most comprehensive studies on writing in the public schools, known as "The National Study of Secondary School Writing." Between October 1979 and April 1980, they observed 68 teachers in all major academic disciplines in two high schools. In addition, they surveyed 754 high-school teachers in six subject areas who had been identified by their principals as "good" teachers.
>
> The observational study revealed that while students held a pencil about 44 percent of the time during class, only 3 percent of that time was spent composing prose of a paragraph or more. The rest of the the time was spent taking notes, filling in blanks, and answering questions that required no more than a word or a sentence in response---what Mr. Applebee calls "word/sentence level skills." About 3 percent of students´ homework involved writing a paragraph or more.
>
> Of the longer pieces, the typical writing assignment was a page or less, consisted of a single draft, and was completed in less than a day, the study revealed. Only one-third of the teachers reported asking their students to write frequently and at great length [Olson, 1984].

Need for the Study - A Local Perspective

According to the superintendent of the major urban area used in this study, his Urban Education Plan would

> . . . be the major driving force in the urban public school system for years to come, mobilizing change and attracting support to the school system [Wilson, Introduction, p. 1].

The Plan´s initiatives were the result of an extensive outreach effort which began in 1985 and ended in 1987. In total, 4,337 responses to a 26 item questionnaire were received from teachers, administrators, parents, high school students, and business, cultural, university, community and other collaborators.

Among all constituencies, there was a very strong agreement on the importance of writing. A Project Team with a broad-based constituency developed a statement of the writing problem and recommended solutions and goals.

One goal which is a mandated part of the system´s blueprint for improvement is " . . . to improve the teaching and learning of writing across all curriculum areas K-12" [Wilson, Writing, p. 1].

One of the major recommendations was to implement a cumulative writing folder system to manage student writing in all classrooms in grades 4-12. The Curriculum and Instruction staff of this urban school system chose the Collins Cumulative Writing Folder System as the best approach to a uniform citywide writing program. Thus it became the mandated program for 55,000 students. The program has been implemented since 1987. No aspects of the program have been formally studied. This study attempts to determine the effectiveness of the focus correction area (FCA) component of the program.

In the next section, this program adopted by the urban school district, the Cumulative Writing Folder Program, is described.

Description of the Program

According to Collins [Collins, 1989] the Cumulative Writing Folder Program was created in 1982. From 1982 to the present more than half a million students have used the Cumulative

Writing Folder Program in the United States, Canada and in seven foreign countries.

He says the program is very popular in the northeastern United States. School systems in every state on the eastern United States seaboard have had workshops and training in the implementation of this program which has been endorsed by the Pennsylvania State Department of Education and constitutes the mandated writing program in major urban areas in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

By the summer of 1989, more than 25,000 copies of Collins' book, The Effective Writing Teacher [Collins, 1985] had been sold.

This study examines the effectiveness of the focus correction component of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program to determine if it is effective and if FCA frequency leads to success or failure in the area of writing.

Definition of Terms

The Cumulative Writing Folder Program consists of four elements which include a writing management system and three strategies for teaching: oral reading, focus correction and using past papers to teach new skills.

The four elements of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program are described below [Collins, 1988].

Classroom Management System

The classroom management system is an actual folder--the Cumulative Writing Folder calls for a standard composition heading and correction symbols, uniform record keeping and a step-by-step description of how students should develop and revise their compositions.

These elements reinforce the key teaching strategies of the program.

The system requires that all compositions completed by a student during a school year be kept in the folder in sequential order. This provides students, parents, teachers and administrators with a complete, accumulated file of written compositions. The number and type of assignments on each is included.

According to Collins,

> This systematic record is especially important in the area of writing where accountability is high but evaluation is difficult and subjective [Collins, 1988, p. 1].

Oral Reading

Oral reading requires students to read their drafts out loud to themselves slowly and carefully. In class this is to be done using a "one-foot voice"---a voice that can´t be heard by someone standing more than one foot away.

Once students are successful reading aloud their work to themselves they must have a peer read the composition slowly and carefully to the writer.

> Oral reading is a critical element of the program for three reasons:
>
> It is the single most effective way to help students revise and edit their papers; it causes students to take responsibility for their writing; and it promotes sharing of writing and reader reaction [Collins, 1988, p. 4].

Using Past Papers to Teach New Skills

Using past papers to teach new skills means that students practice the new writing skills that have been taught by editing and/or reviewing compositions that are already in the Cumulative Writing Folder. This element can be used for any writing skill a teacher wants to learn.

The compositions in the folder are an excellent and very relevant source of practice sheets---far more challenging and interesting than grammar book drill experiences.

Focus Correction

Focus correction is a selective approach to correcting student writing. To use this strategy, the teacher selects from one to three critical problem areas and corrects compositions using only those areas. Students know the FCAs before they begin their first drafts. Any FCA can be selected. A mix of four major writing categories--mechanical, stylistic, content and organizational areas--is recommended.

The Cumulative Writing Folder has been used by more than half a million students and is the mandated program for several major school systems. This makes it an important writing program for this decade. This research will test one of the key components of the program, focus correction, to determine if it leads to success or failure in writing.

Focus correction is the most controversial aspect of the program [Collins, 1989]. Traditionally teachers have used analytical correcting, a method which involves the correction of every single error. This method is overwhelmingly specific and laborious for the teacher to execute. It results in compositions being riddled with "red penciling." An analytically scored paper may discourage the teacher who has trouble finding the time to correct every error in every line of student writing and may discourage the student as well.

> Think about the reality of your classroom: how often do you see students carefully examining a corrected paper, carefully looking for each error? [Collins, 1989, p. 7]
>
> Most students want to know the grade and be done with it. Focus correcting changes this attitude by helping the student consider the quality of the paper in relation to a few clearly specified criteria, rather than an infinite number of highly subjective criteria [Collins, 1988, pp. 7-8].

Since teachers themselves were taught with analytical scoring and it´s the way compositions have been scored historically, many feel politically it is wise to continue with the tradition. Another reason for the controversy is that although the Cumulative Writing Folder Program´s focus correction component is widely used, no empirical studies have been done to show if it is effective [Collins, 1990].

According to Collins [1990], there are several theoretical perspectives and successful teaching strategies on which the Cumulative Writing Folder Program is based. The writing process movement contributed the notions of having the writers read their written work to themselves and others, writing for multiple audiences and including rough draft, feedback, revision, editing and final copy as important stages of the writing task. The Cumulative Writing Folder Program also grows out of the whole language movement. Whole language is defined by Dr. Collins as students discussing ideas, writing their ideas, reading what they´ve written and then using past writings to practice new skills rather than teaching and drilling skills in isolation. The Cumulative Writing Folder Program has a diagnostic prescriptive base and borrows from mastery learning particularly in the selection and frequency of repetition in focus correction areas.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if the focus correction strategy of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program as used by urban seventh graders had a positive effect on students´ writing skills overall and on mastery of four independent variables:

1. Mechanics
2. Organization
3. Style
4. Content

This study involved manipulative variables because the attempt was to gather information that will improve the teaching of writing and ultimately the writing skills of students.

Hypotheses

Students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who repeatedly had been taught specific skills through the focus correcting strategy should be more successful in mastering those skills than those students who have had the focus correction areas less often or not at all.

1. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the five mechanical focus correction areas will have significantly higher mechanical skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.
2. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the four style focus correction areas will have significantly higher style skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.
3. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the four content skill areas will have significantly higher content skill scores as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.
4. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the two organization skill areas will have significantly higher content skill scores as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

5. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the sum total of all focus correction areas will have significantly higher overall writing skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by holistic scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

Summary

The writing performance of U.S. students "is quite simply 'bad'" [Lapointe, 1986, p. 3]. The skills of the nation's school children fall far short of the high standards called for in A Nation at Risk [National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983]. Since writing is one of our most important communication skills we must look at the variables within the writing programs themselves to learn which lead to success or failure in writing.

This study looked at the focus correction component of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program to determine its effect on student writing. Comparisons of the pre and post test scores of the group were made. Specifically the study examined grade seven urban middle school students who were exclusively Black, Hispanic or Asian and who participated in the Cumulative Writing Folder Program's focus correction component to see if it effected students' success or failure in writing in four specific areas: mechanics, content, style and organization and to see if it effected students' overall success or failure in writing.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Problem

Why should we be concerned with the teaching of writing in our schools?

Recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress [Applebee, 1990] tells us that:

- American students were writing no better in 1988 than they were ten years earlier and
- In 1990 new goals in writing must be set if high school graduates are to be able to manage their lives and our society successfully.

Government publications and internal memos are so poorly written that some states have had to pass "plain English" laws to enforce standards of brevity and clarity on the writing produced by government agencies. President Carter, shortly after his inauguration, issued an executive order to federal agencies to write their endless memos and reports in readable English. Business people constantly complain that secretaries, junior executives and even highly educated MBA´s can´t spell, can´t construct grammatically correct sentences, and can´t express themselves clearly in writing [Brandt, 1982].

In fact, Benjamin Bloom asserts

> Most of us never did learn to write as youngsters. I find my graduate students seem to learn the art of writing as they do their research. They rewrite their dissertations four to eight times before I´m satisfied. They should have learned to do this in two or three retakes [Koerner, 1986, p. 64].

Ernest Boyer, through the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has urged us to make clear and effective writing "a central objective of the school" [Boyer, 1983, p. 91].

Is it possible to help students develop the "higher order" intellectual skills demanded by the writers of A Nation at Risk [National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983]? What constitutes an effective writing program? Does research recommend any mode or focus of instruction as being particularly successful? What classroom practices can teachers use to improve the quality of student writing? Answers to these questions will provide the context or conceptual framework for this literature review.

Historical Perspective on Research in Writing

> In the last decade, there has been a surge of research interest in an intellectual skill that had been overlooked for perhaps a century---writing [Hull and Bartholomae, 1986, p. 4].

As one part of a comprehensive review of research on writing Hillocks [1986] recently reviewed almost every experimental study completed from 1963 through 1982. Among many researchers in the field of writing, these studies are currently in disrepute.

Cooper and Odell [1978] claim that the authors in their Research on Composing share "one audacious aim---that of redirecting and revitalizing research in written composition" [p. xiii]. Their aim was to redirect research away from the kind of experimental studies summarized by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer in 1963. They argue that the Braddock review was based on the assumption that "we already had a thorough understanding of written products and processes" [p. xiv], an assumption which Cooper, Odell, and their co-authors see as unwarranted. They believe that "ultimately, comparison-group research may enable us to improve instruction in writing," but not before such research is "informed by carefully tested theory and by descriptions of written discourse and the processes by which that discourse comes into being." Emig [1982] sees much less promise for "comparison group" studies. Her attack is launched against the whole "positivist" research "paradigm," by which she apparently means testing hypotheses in experimental designs in or out of laboratories.

The strongest attack against experimental studies was launched by Graves [1980]. He insisted that such research in writing was "an exercise for students to apply courses in statistics to their dissertations." When referring to experimental studies conducted between 1955 and 1972, Graves stated that most of this research "wasn´t readable and was of limited value. It couldn´t help teachers in the classroom" [Graves, 1980, p. 914]. Experimental research, he claimed, "is written for other researchers, promotions, or dusty archives in a language guaranteed for self-extinction." Graves believed that the findings of experiments cannot be applied with comparable results anywhere but the experimental classrooms. If Graves was right, we should find that results of experiments on similar instructional variables have little in common, that their results were highly heterogeneous.

Despite some current disdain for experimental studies, it seems wise to examine them for several reasons. First, the total number of experimental studies completed in the past twenty years exceeds the total number of studies included in the Braddock bibliography. Second, even a quick review of the published studies indicates that many of them have heeded the advice of Braddock and his colleagues, who had correctly criticized the lack of carefully designed experiments. Third, new techniques have been available for integrating the results of experimental studies since 1978 [Hillocks, 1984].

Two of the most prolific theoreticians currently conducting research in the area of writing are George Hillocks and Arthur Applebee. Both have written major theoretical works on this topic.

Hillocks´ main emphasis is on experimental studies. Applebee focuses on experimental studies and studies that examine the status of writing and reasoning activities in American schools. Their findings and those of their fellow researchers will be described in this review.

Research in writing over the past two decades has been marked by a return of attention to the writing process [Applebee, 1984]. A seminal study done by Emig [1971] clearly demonstrated that the writing process is both complex, recursive and worthy of study in its own right. A large number of studies on the writing process followed during the next ten years. Flower and Hayes [1980a, 1980b, 1981] have presented a very formalized model of the writing process stressing the importance of problem solving strategies in successful writing.

The most compelling findings from these process oriented studies according to Applebee [1984] are:

(1) Writing involves a variety of recursively operating subprocesses rather than a linear sequence;

(2) writers differ in their uses of the processes; and

(3) the processes vary depending on the nature of the writing task.

The National Institute of Education´s study of writing in the secondary school [Applebee, 1981, 1982, 1984] is one of the most extensive recent studies of the ways in which students are asked to write. The study found writing activities in school were limited in both frequency and scope. About 44% of observed class time involved paper-and-pencil activities but most of that time students merely recorded short answers of one word to a sentence in length. Only 3% of secondary students´ school time or homework time involved writing. Instead multiple choice, short answer and a variety of worksheet formats abound. When students were asked to write, the teacher usually assigned a topic, length and due date. The rest students did themselves.

English teachers are more likely to teach specific writing skills than their colleagues. Most content area teachers if they assigned writing at all did not attempt to teach students how to write. The old maxim, "Students learn to read and write in elementary school. In secondary school students read and write to learn," is a widely held, if erroneous, notion to which most teachers ascribe. But even in English most instruction happens after the writing. Second drafts are rarely required in any subject [Applebee, 1987].

Information on elementary schools suggested similar patterns. Graves [1978] found little writing in elementary school instruction. The National Assessment of Educational Progress [1986] showed young children do very little writing.

As an exercise Cooper [1981] proposed a writing program certain to fail---a program that hampers writing development, confuses students about how skilled writers write and precludes students gaining any insight into the ways writing can help them.

In all classes in the curriculum we would hardly ever ask students to write more than two or three sentences. On the rare occasions when we asked students to write more we´d tell them to keep it to less than a page. We´d request that compositions be finished on the spot. Students would write to the teacher, as examiner, to show command of new material. We´d limit our comments about the writing task to length and format and provide no help with the writing task itself.

When students gave us their writing we´d limit our responses to mechanics. We wouldn´t talk to students about their writing nor would we display or publish it. On the few occasions when we asked for a revision, we´d be satisfied with small corrections and additions.

It will shock and dismay many people to learn that a research study done by Applebee [1981] demonstrated the writing program just described is the standard program in American middle and high schools. These conditions may account for the brevity of writing reported by researchers [Emig, 1971].

If writing is so important why is so little school time devoted to it?

According to Applebee and Langer [1984] the current lack of emphasis on writing is not so much a conscious choice of what is important but rather a complex interaction of other influences on curriculum: (a) a model of instruction that defines learning in terms of knowledge to be transmitted, with frequent testing to assess the success of the transmission process; (b) demands for coverage of content in an increasingly overcrowded curriculum; (c) lack of clarity about the value of extended writing experiences as part of the process of mastering the various academic disciplines; and (d) lack of models of how writing activities that require more extended reasoning processes can be embedded within the curriculum.

Their National Study focused on instruction at the secondary school level, but results from studies of elementary school programs are very similar [Graves, 1978; Petty and Finn, 1981]. Students do little extended writing, and when they do, it tends to involve a process of recitation rather than reasoning.

Applebee [1987] recommends a comprehensive means of evaluating a school writing program by specifying the "danger signals" to avoid and the steps to improve.

His danger signals include:

1. low or declining scores on writing tests;
2. easily graded objective tests;
3. omission of writing from schoolwide assignments;
4. support systems that do not provide services to students;
5. complaints by students or teachers about low levels of writing achievement.

To improve writing instruction Applebee [1987] recommends that we:

1. mobilize interest in improving writing instruction;
2. encourage a schoolwide emphasis on writing;
3. resist efforts to solve writing problems with remedial writing courses;
4. reward good writing;
5. ensure a place for writing when the school adopts any new instructional technology;
6. capitalize on community concern about writing;
7. support inservice programs on writing instruction.

Although the literature stresses that writing needs to be taught across all curricular areas, finding schools where this receives more than lip service is difficult [Applebee, 1987].

Under current conditions students have very little time to learn to write. To write well one needs to be able to

1. conduct memory searches;
2. construct and reconstruct complex plans;
3. process much more than one might produce in an extended conversation;
4. revise in more than a mechanical fashion [Hillocks, 1987, p. 75].

What types of instruction have the greatest impact in enhancing students´ abilities to deal with a wide range of writing problems? George Hillocks [Hillocks, 1986] recently published the results of his analysis of every aspect of writing instruction. His meta-analysis involved research on research to look for consistent trends across more than 500 experimental studies which were conducted nationwide. By comparing the measurable results of the various methods, as shown in the studies, the researchers evaluated which groups of methods produced more desirable results than others.

Modes of Learning

Hillocks [1984, 1986] outlined four modes of learning: presentational, natural process, environmental and individualized.

Presentational Mode

The presentational mode is characterized by (1) relatively clear and specific objectives, (2) lecture and teacher led discussion; (3) the study of models; (4) specific assignments or exercises; and (5) feedback coming primarily from teachers. The presentational mode is the most common mode of instruction in composition. Certainly it has more in common with what Applebee [1981] found in the schools than has any other mode.

Natural Process Mode

The natural process mode is characterized by (1) generalized objectives; (2) free writing about whatever interests the students; (3) writing for an audience of peers; (4) generally positive feedback from peers; (5) opportunities to revise and rework writing; and (6) high levels of interaction among students. Treatments in this mode often refer to the teacher as a "facilitator" whose role is to free the student´s imagination and promote growth by establishing a positive classroom atmosphere. Treatments in this mode provide a low level of structure and are not directional about the qualities of good writing. In fact, proponents of this non-directional mode of instruction believe that students are only stultified by exposure to what they see as arbitrary criteria, models, problems, or assignments. In the words of Parker [1979],

> writing demands usually to be preceded by a period of exploratory talk about what the students have chosen to write on, a time in which ideas and the language to express them can be generated. It demands also the freedom for students to choose the forms suitable to their material and their purposes.

He adds:

> writing is learned by doing it and sharing it with real audiences, not by studying and applying abstract rhetorical principles in exercises which the teacher alone will read and judge [p. 36].

Parker´s dicta help clarify both the natural process mode and the presentational mode with which he contrasts it [Hillocks, 1984, p. 12].

Environmental Mode

The environmental mode is characterized by (1) clear and specific objectives; (2) materials and problems selected to engage students with each other in specific processes; (3) activities, conducive to high levels of student interaction concerning specific tasks. Teachers in this mode, in contrast to the presentational, are likely to minimize lecture and teacher-directed discussion. Instead they would structure activities so that students work on tasks in small groups before moving on to similar tasks independently. Although principles are taught, they are not simply announced and illustrated as in the presentational mode. Instead they are approached through concrete materials and problems, when students work through these problems the principle is illustrated and students engage its use. For example, writing about one of thirty pieces of rock, so that another student will be able to read the composition and choose the rock described, from among the thirty, illustrates both the necessity of thinking about possible audience responses and the necessity for using precise detail. In the environmental treatment, the teacher may lead a brief discussion of a sample of student writing, helping students apply a set of criteria to it. Following that discussion, students apply the same criteria to other pieces of writing, not only judging the piece, but generating ideas in response to several questions about it in order to improve it. Use of the criteria or scale involves concrete revisions [Sager, 1973]. While the environmental mode shares the ideas of emphasizing processes (other than listening as a teacher) and student interaction with the natural process mode, it differs sharply from the latter in the structure of the materials and activities.

Individualized Mode

In the individualized mode of instruction students receive instruction through tutorials, programmed materials of some kind, or a combination. The focus of instruction may vary widely, from mechanics to researching, planning, and writing papers. The chief distinction is that this mode of instruction seeks to help students on a one-to-one basis.

These findings [Hillocks, 1984, 1986] are important for instructional practice, policy making, and research. They indicate that the dimensions of effective instruction are quite different from what is commonly practiced in schools (the presentational mode). In the most common and widespread mode (presentational) the instructor dominates all activity with students acting as the passive recipients of rules, advice, and examples of good writing. This is the least effective mode examined, only about half as effective as the average experimental treatment.

In the natural process mode, the teacher encourages students to write for other students, to receive comments from them, and to revise their drafts in light of comments from both students and the instructor. But the teacher does not plan activities to help develop specific strategies of composing. This instructional mode is about 25 percent less effective than the average experimental treatment, but about 50 percent more effective than the presentational mode. In treatments which examine the effects of individualized work with students, the results are essentially the same.

Hillocks [1984, 1986] has labeled the most effective mode of instruction environmental, because it brings teachers, student, and materials more nearly into balance and, in effect, takes advantage of all resources of the classroom. In this mode, the instructor plans and uses activities which result in high levels of student interaction concerning particular problems parallel to those they encounter in certain kinds of writing. In contrast to the presentational, this mode places priority on high levels of student involvement. In contrast to natural process, the environmental mode places priority on structured problem solving activities, with clear objectives, planned to enable students to deal with similar problems in composing. On pre-to-post measures, the environmental mode is over four times more effective than the traditional presentational mode and three times more effective than the natural process mode [Hillocks, 1984].

Foci of Instruction

In addition to modes, Hillocks´ [1984, 1986] analysis involves particular foci of instruction, that is, types of content or activities which teachers of composition expect to have a positive effect on writing. These include the study of traditional grammar, the study of model compositions, sentence combining, scales and criteria, and free writing. Like modes of instruction, the foci of instruction examined have important ramifications for instructional practice.

Grammar and Mechanics

Grammar, defined as the study of parts of speech, kinds of sentences, clauses, etc., remains a common way to teach composition in schools. The purpose of such programs is to help students understand how the English language works. Many teachers assume that such knowledge is critical to clear and effective writing, even though linguists have argued that such grammar does not adequately describe language.

In 1963, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, in light of the review of research to that time, concluded that the study of grammar had no effect on the quality of student writing. The studies Hillocks [1986] examined force the same conclusions.

Given the findings of research on process, we cannot expect grammar study to contribute much to the quality of writing.

Every other focus of instruction examined in this review is stronger. Taught in certain ways, grammar and mechanics instruction has a negative effect on student writing. School boards, administrators, and teachers who impose the systematic study of traditional school grammar on their students over long periods of time in the name of teaching writing do them a disservice which should not be tolerated by anyone concerned with the effective teaching of good writing. Teachers concerned with teaching standard usage and typographical conventions should teach them in the context of real writing problems. But what about accountability? Healey addressed this exact question:

> This whole business of "teaching Warriner´s because of the standardized tests scores" is one of the biggest red herrings around. As soon as someone says this to me, I say, "Tell me which standardized tests you´ve read lately. Which ones have you actually sat down and read closely? Find me the questions that ask you to teach this section of Warriner´s." Well, you´re not going to find them in any of the good tests. Not on the CAT, not even on the new CTBS, not on the SAT. None of these tests asks for grammatical points. What they all do ask for is usage [International Quarterly, 1984, p. 15].

Models

The study of model pieces of writing is one of the oldest, most traditional tools of the writing teacher. It dates back to ancient Greek academies which required students to memorize orations. In today´s curriculum, use of models of excellence is still common. Usually, students are required to read and analyze pieces of writing, thought to exemplify principles or characteristics of good writing and later to recognize and then imitate their features.

However, this treatment does not teach the procedures for producing a piece exhibiting the characteristics studied. It is one thing to identify a good piece of writing and quite another to produce it, just as it is one thing to identify a magnificent painting and impossible for most of us to replicate it.

The presentation of models is significantly more useful than the study of grammar [Hillocks, 1987] and therefore has a place in the English program. But if used almost exclusively, models are considerably less effective than other available techniques.

Sentence Combining

The sentence combining treatment was pioneered by Mellon [1969] and O´Hare [1971]. They showed that practice in combining simple sentences into more complex ones results in better writing. For example, students are asked to consider sentences such as #1 and #2 below and then, by following specific cues or their own imaginations, to produce something like #3.

1. The basketball team was playing the championship game.
2. The basketball team scored a record number of points.
3. Playing the championship game, the basketball team scored a record number of points.

That this treatment results in students´ writing longer sentences is clear [Hillocks, 1984]. A number of researchers support these findings that direct instruction in sentence combining results in greater syntactic complexity and increased writing quality [O´Hare, 1973; Moren et al, 1978; Faigley, 1979]. Hillocks´ [1984, 1986] research shows sentence combining, on the average, to be more than twice as effective as free writing as a means of enhancing the quality of student writing.

Free Writing

Free writing is a treatment commonly prescribed in the professional literature, particularly since the early seventies. Generally, it involves asking students to write about whatever they are interested in. Freewriting involves sharing ideas, experiences, and images, peer feedback in small groups, redrafting and at some point teacher feedback. The idea underlying this treatment is simply that allowing students to write without restrictions will help them discover both what they have to say and their own voices in saying it [Hillocks, 1984].

This treatment generally eschews the use of grammar, model compositions, criteria for judging writing, and so on, as inhibiting and restrictive [Ganong, 1975; Gauntlett, 1978; Parker, 1979]. It sometimes includes prewriting activities such as brainstorming and clustering, which act as aids in searching memory for information. Such activities are often grouped together and referred to as the process approach to writing.

Freewriting represents a clear advance over traditional instruction in writing reported by Applebee [1981], instruction that usually provides no prewriting activity, no opportunity for revising, and no feedback until after the writing is finished. This traditional instruction (which simply provides an assignment) results in student writers who believe that only one draft is necessary. The resulting writing may be cosmetically more appealing, but it is usually superficial and poorly organized and developed.

Clearly, young writers must learn that effective writing involves a complex process that includes prewriting, drafting, feedback from audiences, and revising. At the same time, free writing and the attendant process orientation are inadequate strategies when used as the sole focus of instruction. As a major instructional technique, free writing is more effective than teaching grammar in raising the quality of student writing. Even when examined in conjunction with other features of the "process" model of teaching writing, these treatments are only about two-thirds as effective as the average experimental treatment and less than half as effective as environmental treatments.

Scales

Scales, criteria and specific questions that students apply to their own or others´ writing have a powerful effect on enhancing the quality of writing. When using the criteria systematically, students seem to internalize them and use them to generate new material even when they don´t have the criteria or scales in front of them [Hillocks, 1987]. These treatments are two times more effective than free writing techniques.

Inquiry

The focus of instruction with the greatest power is inquiry [Hillocks, 1987]. This method involves focusing student attention on strategies for transforming raw data. For instance, students might find and state specific details that vividly convey personal experience, examine data to develop and support explanatory generalizations or analyze situations that present ethical problems and develop arguments about those situations.

Inquiry is three-and-a-half times more effective than free writing and over two-and-a-half times more effective than the traditional study of models [Hillocks, 1986].

The history of educational reform suggests that effective change requires recognition that education

> . . . is a complex process, dependent on the understanding and expertise of the individual teacher faced with the individual student . . . and that The Bay Area Writing Project offers one model that recognizes and accepts this complexity; the challenge for us is to use this model or to develop better alternatives to bring about change in our schools [Applebee, 1981, p. 462].

Since Applebee has done comprehensive studies of writing inside the classroom and shows us what´s going on in writing instruction in English classes and in other content areas, we accept this recommendation. In his own words, however, Applebee states that

> What seemed to distinguish the outstanding classes from the others observed was the nature of the three-way relationship between the teacher, the task, and the student . . . and even more so in the few (lessons) that were really exceptional, the students were faced with problems that had to be solved out of their own intellectual and experiential resources [Applebee, 1981].

Here he supplements and extends his earlier recommendations and is describing the environmental mode and the inquiry focus highly touted by Hillocks [1984, 1986].

The results of some of the studies vary greatly. Each, however, seems to have its place in the writing curriculum. Sentence combining, scales and inquiry all make some use of models but they don´t emphasize the study of models exclusively. Structured free writing, where writers record their ideas on a topic, can be easily and successfully integrated with other techniques as a method of invention and memory search.

The results reported by Hillocks and Applebee have important ramifications for educators at every level--national, state and local. In its 1986 Writing Report Card, Archie Lapointe, Executive Director of NAEP writes,

> Performance in our schools is, quite simply, ´bad.´ the skills of the nation´s schoolchildren fall far short of the high standards called for in A Nation at Risk.

and

> Well over 60 percent of America´s 110 million salaried workers generate written material on a regular basis (Office of Technology Assessment). In view of the results reported here, one has to wonder just how ´appropriately and effectively´ they all communicate [Lapointe, 1986, p. 3].

Applebee´s reports do support the most effective mode or foci of instruction identified above. Although much of his report stresses the free writing focus and natural process mode of instruction as effective, his own [Applebee, 1987] data in the same report shows that

> The writing achievement of students with extensive exposure to process oriented writing activities was not consistently higher than that of students who did not report receiving such instruction,

the recommendation of his report is that, "We may need to develop more systematic approaches to process instruction" [Applebee, 1986, p. 87].

The NAEP reports written by Applebee could be strengthened by emphasizing that teachers need to plan problems conducive to students working together on a variety of composition problems (environmental mode) and by suggesting sentence combining, inquiry or the application of criteria as important extensions of free writing and the process approach.

The results of Hillocks´ study [1986] have important implications for research. First, they belie assertions by Graves and Emig that experimental research has no value for classroom teachers and that it has no utility for composition researchers. The controlled treatments with similar instructional variables included in this study have comparable (homogeneous) results. It is indeed possible to transfer effective strategies from the experimental to the real classroom. More importantly, it is possible to determine the effectiveness of treatment variables through experimental designs. To cast such research aside in favor of a complete reliance on case study methods as Emig and Graves recommend is folly. Researchers concerned with effective instruction in writing can make a happy marriage of the best case study and experimental methods, using careful observations to identify variables and experimental designs to test them.

Additional research needs to be done if we are to determine the most effective integration of these various instructional techniques. However, educators cannot afford to ignore the differences in treatment that this review presents.

The Cumulative Writing Folder Program

One national writing program claims to teach writing effectively. It does not rely on the grammar book or the presentation of advice and rules, or expect students to learn by osmosis simply by writing whatever they want for an audience of their peers. It makes systematic use of what we´ve learned about modes of instruction. And it also makes use of the instructional foci which have been demonstrated to be effective. This writing program is called The Cumulative Writing Folder Program. It was designed by John Collins and is currently in use by over 500,000 students in the United States, Canada and seven foreign countries. It is the mandated writing program in several major cities in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Michigan. Its teaching strategies are oral reading, focus correction and using past papers to teach new skills [Collins, 1988]. As conceived by Dr. Collins, it is the embodiment of the environmental mode because at its core it, "takes advantage of all the resources of the classroom" [Hillocks, 1986, p. 246]. The teacher diagnoses and selects focus correction areas and uses student compositions as models. The students read and react to one another´s papers.

The three teaching strategies in the Cumulative Writing Folder Program receive much support in the literature.

Oral Reading

In *Writing to be Read*, Macrorie talks about the place of oral reading in his approach to teaching writing.

> Later I asked the teachers to read their own work aloud to themselves before they brought it to class. And if possible, to get someone else, relative or friend, to take the writer´s paper and read it aloud for meaning as we did in class, first with rehearsal and then confronting the writer. During both these read-alouds of the paper, the author caught weak repetitions, bad word choices, and grammatical errors. . . . Automatically, voices and ears made these read-alouds into editing sessions.
>
> Speaking and writing are performing arts--I say these things because writing is more like conversation than we realize [Macrorie, 1984, pp. 4-6].

In Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition, Donald Murray assents:

> Once the writing is produced, it is shared. I have come to believe that this sharing, at least in the beginning, should be done orally [Donovan, 1980, p. 15].

This is further supported by Kilpatrick who states:

> I have a theory about writing. The theory goes to this effect: the chief difference between good writing and better writing may be measured by the number of imperceptible hesitations the reader experiences as he goes along" [Kilpatrick, 1984, p. 29].

> Because good oral reading skills are not easy to master and because oral reading involves self-exposure, it is critical that it be stressed over a period of years so that students have the opportunity to become skillful and the practice becomes habitual. I stress this point because it brings us back to my primary theme: the Cumulative Writing Folder is a program that should be implemented over a period of years to have maximum impact [Collins, 1988, p. 7].

Using Past Papers to Teach New Skills

This means taking a paper a student has already written with perhaps the focus correction areas of correct spelling, imaginative word choice and a strong beginning and using that paper to apply new focus areas such as audience, strong ending and use of metaphors. Usually this is done by placing a student´s past composition on the overhead and involving the class in discussing a specific dimension--and identifying a paper's strengths and weaknesses. This results in a much stronger composition.

The best writing lessons Applebee and his colleagues observed in 300 classroom visits are described below:

> In the better lessons, and even more so in the few that were really exceptional, the students were faced with problems that had to be solved out of their own intellectual and experiential resources. Often, they would work together to solve problems posed by the teacher; this forced students both to articulate their solutions more clearly and to defend them in the face of opposing opinions. The subject of discussion seemed less important than the openness of approach; what mattered was the sense the students could offer legitimate solutions of their own, rather than discover a solution that the teacher had already devised [Applebee, 1981, p. 105].

Murray points out a difficulty with this technique, but also a remedy:

> Writing means self-exposure. No matter how objective the tone or how detached the subject, the writer is exposed by words on the page. It is natural for students and for writers to fear such exposure. That fear can be relieved best if the writer, the fellow students, and the teacher look together at the piece of writing to see what the piece of writing is saying, and even if they listen to the piece of writing with appropriate detachment [Donovan, 1980, p. 19].

Focus Correction

Focus correction, also known as focus instruction, is a selective approach to teaching writing skills and correcting student writing. Using this method the teacher chooses one, two, or three critical problem areas and teaches and corrects only those areas. Students are told the focus areas before they begin their first drafts. Any focus areas may be selected and a mix of mechanical, stylistic, content and organizational skills is recommended [Collins, 1988].

> Focus correcting is difficult for most teachers. It runs contrary to our experience as students and teachers because correcting compositions usually means noting every error in every line. But think about the reality of your classroom: how often do you see students carefully examining a corrected paper, carefully looking for each error? Most students want to know the grade and be done with it. Focus correcting changes this attitude by helping the student consider the quality of the paper in relation to a few clearly specified criteria, rather than an infinite number of highly subjective criteria [Collins, 1988, pp. 7-8].

A great deal of expert opinion exists about focus correction:

Hillocks´ meta-analysis found that:

> The scales, criteria, and specific questions which students apply to their own or others´ writing also have a powerful effect on enhancing quality. Through using the criteria systematically, students appear to internalize them and bring them to bear in generating new material even when they do not have the criteria in front of them [Hillocks, 1986, p. 249].

Expanding on his findings in an interview in the September 5, 1984, Education Week, Hillocks stated:

> One of the most startling findings was that "teacher comment on papers doesn´t appear to have much effect on improving the quality of writing. Basically, teacher comments tend to be what I call diffuse," he says. "They´re aimed at a great many elements of the written product, and my guess is that most student writers can´t assimilate all that . . . There´s one study in which teachers corrected every error and students had to rewrite the papers. And in that particular treatment, the students lost considerable ground--at least one standard deviation--and I suspect that´s because the comments were so negative" [Olson, 1974, p. 13].

Rosen further supports this component:

> Selectivity. Rather than engage in intensive error-correction when responding to student writing, teachers are encouraged by recent writing researchers and theorists to adopt a more moderate approach to error. Research has never been able to show that circling all errors--the error-hunt

> approach to marking--makes a significant difference in writing quality; instead it discourages the student whose paper is full of mistakes and focuses students on errors instead of ideas [Rosen, 1987, pp. 67-68].

Collins also recommends using focus correction areas to redirect students through a sequence of drafts that will result in a much better final draft. He suggests that students might first focus on areas such as audience, form and content and later, in another draft, move to an area like mechanical accuracy. Students thus can receive feedback and grades for each draft but with different considerations. This way he asserts that, "students will not be overburdened by more feedback on a single draft than anyone can possibly use" [Collins, 1988, p. 11].

Donovan supports this:

> The traditional prose model approach with its emphasis on product tends to dictate rules, structures, and patterns for writers. In essence students are encouraged to know what their essays should look like before they have written them Emphasis on the product usually leads to difficulties with the process. Because they are given no sense of priority or sequence, because they do not understand writing as a process, students are confused about how to write, and they typically try to tackle all aspects of a writing project simultaneously. They worry about the organization of ideas, spelling, paragraph development, transitions, factual information, footnote and bibliography form, and style all before writing the first sentence of what should be an exploratory rough draft [Donovan, 1980, p. 25].

Summary

This study will primarily be concerned with variable teaching strategies that effect success or failure in writing.

The review of the literature identified four modes of instruction. One mode of instruction termed the environmental mode was found to be the most effective way to teach writing.

As conceived, the Cumulative Writing Folder with its core teaching strategies of oral reading, focus correction and using past papers to teach new skills can be an embodiment of the environmental mode so highly regarded by Hillocks and others. Each program component has been shown to be supported by the literature.

The most difficult part of the program for most teachers is focus correcting [Collins, 1988].

Although the various components of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program find support in this review, no empirical studies have been done to show if using the focus correction component of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program results in improved writing. This research study will attempt to answer this question.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The last two chapters presented the background of the study and a review of the related literature. This chapter describes the research design, the sample, the treatment, the measures, the method of statistical analysis and provides an operational definition of the study´s important terms.

The study seeks answers to questions with the expectation that meaningful answers will be found to those questions posed by the study. Of equal interest is the possibility of generating new questions.

The data this study presents should lead others to probe further and seek additional information about the Cumulative Writing Folder Program and focus correcting. The design of the study makes it readily replicable by others knowledgeable in the area of writing.

The Sample Used in the Study

A purposive sample of 22 of 79 grade 7 students in one urban middle school participated in the study. This number included 28% of all students enrolled in the grade 7 cluster in the school. One hundred percent of the students were age-appropriate. The students ranged from 11 to 13 years of age at the beginning of the study and at the end of the 10 month study were between the ages of 12 and 14. Fifty-nine percent were Black, 23% were Hispanic, and 18% were Asian.

Eighty-six percent of the children came from homes below the poverty level as measured by the number of children eligible for the federal free lunch program.

Forty-five percent of the students were male, 55% were female.

All of the students in the study were required to participate in the Cumulative Writing Folder Program because it was the mandated program for the urban middle school which they attended. Furthermore, all of the students were required to use the Cumulative Writing Folder Program in every academic area--which included reading, English, mathematics, science and social studies--because it was a mandated component of a special schoolwide program called Project Promise. (See Appendix G for a complete description of Project Promise.) Students´ writing assignments were a part of their overall grade point average in the courses described above.

All of the students were taught by all of the teachers.

Sampling and Description of the Subjects

Subjects were selected according to the following criteria:

All students enrolled in the Grade 7 cluster of a large urban middle school were involved in the study. The total number of students was 79.

From this group only those students who met the following criteria were considered to be eligible:

- students who had been in the Grade 7 cluster for the entire school year from September through June (The total number was 48 students.)
- students who took both the pre and post test writing sample (The total number was 45 students.)
- students who were in regular education (The total number was 33 students.)
  (Students in special education and/or bilingual programs were not included.)
- students for whom Cumulative Writing Folders were available from each of three major subject areas: reading, English and science (The total number was 33 students.)

The fourth major subject area of these students was math. On the advice of Dr. John Collins [Collins, 1989] math folders were not included because, according to Collins, writing in math class tends to be shorter, less detailed and of a different type than that done in the other content areas. It must be noted that during a change in school administration eleven (11) folders were lost, making the data for these 11 students incomplete.* This makes the final number of students for whom complete data was available twenty-two (22) students. Complete data includes:

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* The 11 students for whom complete data is missing are not different from the 22 students selected in terms of race, sex, or achievement based on a review of their student assignment information, permanent school records and a discussion with the teaching team.

- pre test writing sample
- post test writing sample
- Cumulative Writing Folder from English class
- Cumulative Writing Folder from Reading class
- Cumulative Writing Folder from Science class

All 22 students were involved in the study. Since each student involved had three writing folders, a total of 66 folders were studied.

The school system used in this study assesses student achievement in reading/language arts each spring using the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test. Since writing is a component of the language arts, although not a part of this particular test, students´ Metropolitan scores are provided for descriptive purposes. For the spring of 1989 the range of percentiles on the Metropolitan Reading Test for the 22 students in the study was from 21 percentile to 84 percentile with a median of 45 percentile. (See Appendix A for more detailed information.) The sample group is below the national norm for this test and is also somewhat below the 50 percentile median for the entire grade 7 class in the school.

Description of the Teachers

The teachers in the project ranged in age from approximately 30 years of age to approximately 57 years of age and had been teaching between 9 and 20 years.

One teacher primarily taught developmental reading, one primarily taught remedial reading, one primarily taught science and one primarily taught English. Two of the teachers were certified to teach reading, one was certified to teach math and the other was certified to teach computer education. None of the teachers was certified to teach English.

Three of the teachers were female. One was male.

Three were white. One was black. All taught on the same Grade 7 teaching team. All received 20 hours of training on the Cumulative Writing Folder system from the developer of the system and had another 6 hours of team conference hours available to them for further training or support. All teachers had taught writing using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program for three years.

Design of the Study

A pre and post exploratory study was used in this research to determine if there was a relationship amongst four independent variables all related to focus correction. Because of the diagnostic prescriptive nature of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program each of the student subjects had a unique pattern of focus correction area repetition. Each may have had high repetition of some focus correction areas and low repetition of others. The study looked for significant differences between high and low repetitions of focus correction areas and their effect on achievement.

The independent variables included the following major categories of writing:

1. Mechanics
2. Organization
3. Style
4. Content

The independent variables were the amount of focus correction area used in each of the four areas listed above.

The dependent variable, or that which the study measured, was what the researcher expected might change. It might or might not result that students who frequently used focus correction areas in the category of mechanics in their writing samples had post writing samples with fewer errors in mechanics and this change in mastery of mechanical skills may have been higher than in those students whose work involved less attention to focus correction areas in mechanics.

A cross tabulation is included for each of the variables that looks like this and includes a chi-squared statistic with a

	Pre/Post Comparison		
	Decrease	Small Increase	Large Increase
High			
Low			

Decrease is the term used to categorize those students whose scores on the post test were lower than their pre test scores. A small increase is the term used to categorize those students whose post test scores were one point higher than their pre test scores. A large increase is the term used to categorize those students whose post test scores were two or more points higher than their pre test scores. These comparative terms were chosen by the researcher because the distribution was narrow and therefore the categories could not be expanded.

Treatment, Assumptions and Controls

Assumptions and Controls

The following controls were placed on the subjects of the study, the environment and the procedure.

Entry Level Skills

Entry level skills of the subjects were sufficiently equivalent. All subjects had completed the same basic grade 6 curriculum Fifty-nine percent had been exposed to the Cumulative Writing Folder Program in grade 6. Forty-one percent were introduced to the Cumulative Writing Folder Program in grade 7. To determine entry level skills all subjects were given a pre-test as part of the treatment. Taking the pre test did not have an effect on the students because the pre test was just one of many writing samples students did throughout the year.

Competency of Subjects

1. Based on the subjects having met the entrance requirements for grade 7, which included prespecified grades in all

subjects including reading/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, all were competent to complete the course of study.

2. Since all subjects enrolled in the grade 7 cluster of this urban middle school were involved in the Cumulative Writing Folder Program, it was assumed that the Hawthorne Effect was not a factor as all students participated in the same year-long program and processes. A purposive sampling of students involved in the program was used.
3. The study was controlled for maturation since all students matured over the same ten month period of the study.

Time of Day

Since the schedule of the school was flexible, changed daily and was controlled by the teachers in each cluster, and further since the Cumulative Writing Folder Program was used in every academic subject (reading, English, math, science and social studies), the time of day in which students were taught writing was not a factor to be considered.

Physical and Mental Condition of Subjects

Subjects´ physical and mental conditions were not considered to have an effect on the results of the study. All subjects were involved in the program for an entire school year and had ample opportunity to make up work they missed because they were overtired or ill.

Pacing

1. Pacing was assumed to be irrelevant to the study since subjects usually were self-paced. Writing assignments were not timed nor were administrative requirements placed on subjects to complete writing assignments within a specified time.
2. Subjects were advised to use class time to complete most assignments and encouraged to use time outside of class in study skills or during homework time to get additional time on task.

Interest of Subjects

1. It was assumed that levels of interest about completing the writing assignments varied.
2. It was assumed that levels of conscientiousness about and motivation for the writing assignments varied.

Age, Sex and Race of Subjects

1. It was assumed that age, sex, socio-economic status and race of the subjects were not major factors for consideration in the study since 100% of the students were age appropriate in the age range of 11-13 years; 45% were male; 55% were female; and 59% were Black, 23% were Hispanic, and 18% were Asian. Eighty-five percent were from low socio-economic levels as measured by their eligibliity for the free or reduced federal lunch program. It must be noted, however, that in the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America´s students know and can do in

various subject areas, the most recent findings in writing indicate that overall the gap in writing performance between Black and Hispanic students and their White counterparts remained large. White students´ scores continue to be higher than their minority counterparts [Applebee, 1990].

2. It was assumed that age, sex, race, and socio-economic levels of the subjects might limit the generalizability of the study.

Environment

1. All academic areas used for the study were away from traffic patterns and there was limited ingress and egress to minimize noise and distraction.
2. It was assumed that the environment in which the study was conducted, an urban middle school, might limit the generalizability of the study.

Equipment

1. It was assumed that lack of familiarity with the Cumulative Writing Folder Program might affect the study; therefore, all teachers had received 20 hours of training in the use of the system from the developer of the Cumulative Writing Folder and another 6 hours of team conference hours were available to them for further training or support. All teachers had taught writing using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program program for three years.

2. It was assumed that since no audio-visual equipment was necessary for the program that its use was not a factor to be considered.

Experimenter Influence

It was assumed that subjects might be influenced by the presence of an experimenter; therefore, the experimenter was not involved directly with the subjects.

Integrity of Subjects

It was assumed that the integrity of the subjects was not a factor to be considered. The program was a part of students' regular school day and course of study on which they were graded and given every opportunity to achieve as well in this area of the curriculum as in all other areas of the curriculum.

Use of Cumulative Writing Folder Program

It was assumed that subjects were involved in all components of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program: the management system, using oral reading to revise, focus correcting and using past papers to teach new skills because it was the mandated writing program for the urban school system they attended and was an integral part of the Project Promise Program in which they participated. Each subject had a Cumulative Writing Folder in every academic area. Folders were routinely collected, reviewed and evaluated by supervisory staff, although there was no other check on teachers; therefore it can not be determined if oral reading or using past papers to teach new skills actually were incorporated in the classes.

Limitations of the Study

The factors which might limit the generalizability of the study results to minority students in middle schools with school-wide writing programs are listed below:

- This study involved students who were 59% Black, 23% Hispanic, and 18% Asian; 45% were male and 55% female; all were between the ages of 11 and 13.
- All students attended the same urban or inner-city middle school where 86% of the students´ families were below the poverty level, receiving free or reduced lunch and in a school with the second lowest socio-economic level of the 22 schools in this inner-city system.
- All students were enrolled in a school-wide program called Project Promise which incorporated the following:
  - an emphasis on reading, writing and math in all content areas
  - interdisciplinary instruction
  - team teaching
  - parental involvement
  - an extended school day of 90 minutes Monday through Thursday
  - half day of school every Saturday.
- Teachers involved volunteered for this program and had to commit to teaching writing across all curriculum

areas as a condition of employment. Teachers also were required to participate in and were paid an additional salary for all training on the Cumulative Writing Folder Program.

These factors might limit the generalizability of the study results but will not affect the validity because all students are involved in the Project Promise Program which is described in Appendix G.

Operational Definitions

The Cumulative Writing Folder Program

The Cumulative Writing Folder Program is designed to structure the writing process. It provides schools with a writing program--a unified set of techniques and expectations about student writing. The program is designed for grades 4 through 12 for students in regular education, special education, with the gifted and talented and in English as a Second Language Programs. The four elements of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program are: a classroom management system, oral reading, using past papers to teach new skills and focus correcting. Each component is described in Chapter I. Focus correcting is of primary importance in this research.

Focus Correction

Focus correction is a selective approach to correcting student writing. To use this strategy, the teacher selects from one to three critical problem areas and corrects compositions using only those areas. Students know the focus correction areas before they begin their first drafts. Any focus correction area can be selected. A mix of mechanical, stylistic, content and organizational areas is recommended.

The focus correction areas, or independent variables, for this study are mechanics, style, content and organization.

Criteria for each major area of writing performance--mechanics, style, content and organization--were defined and measured by sets of objectives actually taught to students in the sample and designated as focus correction areas by the teachers of the sample group. They are not inclusive of all possible objectives for the area but rather indicate those objectives the student had been taught and could be expected to demonstrate. (See Appendices B, C, D and E.) The criteria used for measuring performance in each of the four areas are described below.

Mechanics

The criteria for defining and measuring the performance in the area of mechanics is:

1. Students capitalized the first word in each sentence.
2. Students capitalized the proper nouns.
3. Students wrote in complete sentences.
4. Students used correct spelling.
5. Students used appropriate end punctuation.

Style

The criteria used for defining and measuring performance in the area of style were:

1. Students used figures of speech in their writing.
2. Students had good introductions in their writing.
3. Students included a summary in their writing.
4. Students used descriptive words.

Content

The criteria used for defining and measuring performance in the area of content were:

1. Students answered the question or stuck to the topic.
2. Students stated their opinions.
3. Students included details about the topic.
4. Students included facts about the topic.

Organization

The criteria used for defining and measuring performance in the area of organization were:

1. Students used the prescribed format which was:
    - students wrote their names on the top line, right hand side.
    - students left at least one inch margins on both sides of the paper.
    - students skipped a line between each line they wrote.
2. Students used paragraphing to indicate transitions in their writing.

Measures

Over the last twenty years a successful national movement has replaced standardized multiple choice tests of writing achievement, known as indirect measures of writing, with measures that are based on actual samples of students´ writing, known as direct measures of writing [Applebee, 1989]. As the assessment instrument has changed, so too has the process of interpreting results. Each new approach to assessing writing brings new constructs of good writing and differing tasks and criteria to judge its success.

Direct measures of writing achievement have become popular because of the growing belief that writing involves more than the mastery of syntax, usage and word choice, the traits or elements, assessed in most indirect measures of writing performance.

> For whatever psychometric precision might be gained in multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank tests of writing achievement, critics charge that these generally have amounted to little more than technical exercises, measuring students´ mastery of grammar and usage [Applebee, 1989, p. 5].

The current, widespread use of direct writing assessments, which addressed one set of concerns, raises questions for developing and interpreting results from large scale assessments. For instance, the evaluative criteria used may result in different estimates of students´ writing achievement.

Applebee [1989] asserts that one of the most difficult tasks in designing a direct writing assessment is deciding what constitutes an operational construct of good writing.

Good writing has meant different things to different people throughout the course of history. In 16th-century England, writing and copying were considered synonymous. People who learned to sign their names neatly and legibly were considered good writers. This, of course, revealed nothing about the writer´s fluency, spelling, sentences or development [Applebee, 1989].

Widely varying concepts of good writing do exist today. In the 1960s, Paul Diederich [Diederich, 1974] and his colleagues from Educational Testing Service organized a panel of 53 professionals in fields such as law, business and the natural sciences. Each professional evaluated and graded 300 writing samples on a scale of one to nine. The results varied so widely that no essay received fewer than five different grades and 100 of the essays received every grade from one to nine.

Diederich [Diederich, 1974] found that the divergent evaluations resulted from the different emphases placed by the evaluators on distinct features of the writing: mechanics, organization, flavor and wording (style), and ideas expressed (content). With the results of this study Diederich developed a scale that focused readers´ attention on each feature separately and assigned consistent weights in moving from the individual features to a more global judgment of writing quality. This scale has evolved into what is now called holistic scoring, a system of evaluation which has been very influential in the move from indirect to direct measures of writing achievement because of its relatively quick, impressionistic techniques which make it possible to score many papers in a short period.

Large scale writing assessments generally rely on these holistic scoring methods [Freedman, 1983]. In holistic scoring, writing samples are ordered from best to worst, based on the rater´s general impression of the overall quality of the paper in relation to other papers written for the same assessment task. A training process that uses range finder papers to illustrate levels of writing quality controls for the varying emphases individual raters might place on different aspects of the writing, e.g., mechanics, style, organization or content. Despite the fact that Diederich´s approach to holistic scoring began by identifying separate features of writing, in the end his holistic scoring method uses the features only as a way to determine a total score. Ultimately, Diederich stated that experienced readers could determine the total score without rating the individual aspects of a piece of writing [Diederich, 1974].

> In contrast, two other common approaches to scoring direct writing samples--analytic scoring and primary trait scoring--place their emphasis on a series of distinct features of the writing, usually for the purpose of providing a more comprehensive or diagnostic profile of a writer´s abilities. Typical features of writing examined in analytic scoring include mechanics, focus, organization, and elaboration. Rating scales used in this type of scoring imply that the specified features can be distinguished from one another within a single piece of writing. In practice, however, the scales used in analytic scoring often overlap, making conclusions about differences in performance between scales somewhat misleading.

> Alternatively, the primary trait scoring system rests on a view of writing as purpose-driven; the mark of good writing, therefore, grows out of how well the goals of a particular writing task have been achieved [Applebee, 1989, p. 11].

The primary trait scoring system was developed by Richard Lloyd-Jones and Carl Klaus in collaboration with the National Assessment of Educational Progress and requires the test developer to identify the purpose of the writing prompt, and, using sample papers, to specify different approaches and levels of success in meeting that purpose. Although primary trait scoring does not tell anything about the writer´s mastery of the various aspects of writing or the writer´s general fluency, it does measure the writer´s relative success in dealing with the demands of a particular writing task [Mullis, 1980]. To provide a comprehensive picture of writing skills, an assessment using primary trait scoring should include tasks that include a variety of demands [Applebee, 1989].

> Although these three scoring systems reflect differing conceptions of the most important elements of good writing, they are not completely independent of one another. Better writers are likely to be better at many kinds of writing tasks, and results from different scoring systems generally show at least a moderate pattern of intercorrelation. For example, NAEP used both primary trait and holistic approaches to score four writing tasks that had been administered at different times between 1974 and 1984 to various age groups. Correlations between the two scoring systems are summarized in Table 1.1. Though related (the median correlation is .50), the two systems evidently capture different aspects of performance.

TABLE 1

Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Primary Trait and Holistic Scores for Trend Tasks in the 1984 National Writing Assessment

	1974			1979			1984		
	Age			Age			Age		
Writing Task	9	13	17	9	13	17	9	13	17
Hole in the Box	.59	.45	.45	.51	.44	.54	.47	.48	.58
Dali	--	--	--	.57	.51	.57	.56	.54	.60
Aunt May	--	--	--	.46	--	--	.50	--	--
Split Sessions	--	--	--	--	.29	.31	--	.32	.34

Source: Arthur N. Applebee, Judith A. Langer, and Ina V.S. Mullis, Writing: Trends Across the Decade, 1974-84 (Princeton, NJ: National Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service, 1986): p. 70.

> The differing nature of the two systems is most clearly evident when progress across the grades in students´ ability to write a report about a painting by Salvador Dali is examined. On the primary trait scale, the percentage of students providing adequate responses (i.e., receiving scores of three or four on a four-point scale) in 1984 rose from 2.8 at age 9 to 38.2 at age 17. The higher overall levels of performance on the holistic scale reflect the normative nature of that measure; that is, students in the same sample are judged against one another; hence approximately half will always do well and approximately half will do poorly. The "criterion-based" primary trait scale, on the other hand, is anchored to the rhetorical requirements of the task and the particular constraints under which the task is administered. It is quite possible with such a scoring scheme for nearly all of the students in a sample to do well or for nearly all to do poorly.
>
> In summary, while direct assessments permit us to see what students are able to do in writing, the view offered by each evaluation system is constrained by the particular construct of writing that drove the development of that system in the first place [Applebee, 1989, pp. 11-13].

Since the Cumulative Writing Folder Program relies exclusively on focus correcting, a selective approach to scoring student writing, in which the teacher selects one, two, or three writing traits and corrects only for them, primary trait scoring will be selected as the evaluative measure for each of the four major categories of writing.

Focus correcting, like primary trait scoring, requires the test developer to identify the purpose of the writing assignment. Also, focus correcting and primary trait scoring measure the writer´s relative success in dealing with the demands of a particular writing task. In the criterion-based primary trait scale and the focus correcting method, which both are anchored to the particular requirements of the task and the constraints under which the task is administered, it is possible for nearly all of the students in a sample to succeed or fail.

The primary trait scoring guides for this study were developed to focus raters´ attention on how successfully each writing sample accomplished the task specified by the writing prompt on one of the four major writing objectives: mechanics, style, content or organization.

This involved:

- isolating particular features of the writing essential to accomplishing the objective;
- developing criteria, based on the focus correction areas taught to students for each major objective;
- determining various levels of performance based on those features and criteria.

Papers were rated against the performance criteria, rather than in terms of relative quality within the population sampled. On a simple task, it is possible that all papers might be rated in the highest categories. On a difficult task none might move out of the lowest categories.

This scoring system used in this study is based on the Primary Trait Scoring System used by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) which

> . . . is an ongoing, congressionally mandated project established to conduct national surveys of the educational attainments of young Americans. Its primary goal is to determine and report the status of and trends over time in educational achievement. NAEP was initiated in 1969 to obtain comprehensive and dependable national educational achievement data in a uniform, scientific manner. Today NAEP remains the only regularly conducted national survey of educational achievement at the elementary, middle, and high school levels [Applebee, 1986, p. 60].

For the writing samples in this study the NAEP five levels of proficiency were defined for each task. The five levels are unrateable, unsatisfactory, minimal, adequate, and elaborated.

Unrateable samples included those that were off task or unreadable. These samples were assigned a zero rating.

Unsatisfactory samples were those that failed to demonstrate a basic understanding of the mechanics, style, content or organizational purpose of the writing. These samples were assigned a rating of one point.

Minimal responses recognized the elements needed to meet the objective but were not managed well enough to ensure the intended effect of the writing that resulted. These samples were assigned a rating of two points.

Adequate responses included those features critical to accomplishing the objective. Adequate responses are likely to have the intended effect. These samples were assigned a rating of three points.

Elaborated responses went beyond the merely adequate, reflecting a higher level of coherence and elaboration that is highly desirable, if not absolutely necessary. These samples were assigned a rating of four points. In addition all writing samples were evaluated using a second procedure, holistic scoring. Holistic scoring was used to determine if there was any change in the overall quality of the writing.

The writing samples in this study, then, were evaluated using two procedures: primary trait and holistic scoring. For each procedure, raters scored all the papers at the same time. Each kind of scoring was done by the same group of raters. (See Appendix F.)

This study attempted to determine if students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who had particular objectives, or traits, selected as focus correction areas on writing samples had significantly higher achievement levels in the focus correction area than those students who had fewer samples on the same focus correction area as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring. It also attempted to determine if students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who had frequent use of focus correction areas had significantly higher achievement levels overall than those students who had less frequent experience with focus correction areas as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by holistic scoring.

Step by Step Procedures for the Study

The study was conducted using the following plan:

1. All students enrolled in the grade 7 cluster of an urban middle school took a pre test writing sample in September at the beginning of the ten month study period. The topic and directions were the same for both the pre and post writing samples.

- -

PRE and POST WRITING SAMPLE

Please give this assignment before ______________________. It should take 20 to 40 minutes each day for two consecutive days. Copy the following paragraph on the board and read it out loud to your students.

> Assignment:
>
> "Pretend this is a contest. Students who write a good description will get the vacation they describe. Write the best description you can. Make sure the judges know the place you would like to spend your vacation, what you would like to do when you are there, why you would like to do those things, and why that particular place would be a good place to do them."

Then say, "Don´t worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar. You´ll have a chance to correct later. Just write the best description you can."

Collect the first drafts.

The next day return the first drafts and say, "It´s time to go back and make corrections or changes. You may make the corrections right on your first draft or you may rewrite the story on a new sheet of paper. This time pay attention to spelling, punctuation, and grammar."

Collect both the first draft and the final draft and return them to ________________________ by ________________________.

- -

Grade 7 was selected for the study because the Cumulative Writing Folder Program was introduced to 59% of the students in grade 6 and they were, therefore, familiar with the program.

2. Writing was taught to students in every class using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program: reading, English, mathematics, and science. Students had a writing folder in each of these classes and used the focus correction area component on every writing assignment.

   All academic content area teachers were required to use the Cumulative Writing Folder Program as a part of the interdisciplinary focus of the school under study.

   Students were required to write a minimum of one writing assignment per month per class, for a minimum of 10 months. Since students take four major subject academic courses annually the minimum total of compositions written per student is 40.

3. Some focus correction areas were chosen by the entire staff of the school for grade 7. Other focus correction areas were determined by the team as was the frequency of FCA repetition. In this study, the team was the Seventh Grade Teaching Team. Still other focus correction areas were chosen by the individual teacher to reflect students´ needs in a particular course or subject area.

4. Teachers were checked on a regular basis to be sure all were implementing the program.

Cumulative Writing Folders were collected regularly and evaluated according to specific criteria in these ways:

- self evaluation--teachers evaluated their own folders at staff meetings
- peer evaluation--teachers evaluated each others´ folders at staff meetings
- supervisory evaluation--administrators evaluated teachers´ folders on an individual basis periodically. All folders were collected schoolwide at mid-year for evaluation.

This was done in order to determine if the Cumulative Writing Folder Program was being implemented.

5. Staff training was provided to staff prior to the start of the school year so that each teacher was familiar with the Cumulative Writing Folder Program and was knowledgeable regarding its implementation.

All teachers received a minimum of 20 hours of training on the Cumulative Writing Folder Program prior to and/or during the school year. Teachers were paid their hourly union rate for participating in the training.

The training was done by the creator of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program, Dr. John Collins. He conducted large and small group workshops and training sessions. In addition, team conferences with Dr. Collins and others trained by him were available on request.

6. All students took a post test writing sample on the same topic as the pre test writing sample. The post test writing sample was administered in June, at the end of the 10 month study period.

7. The pre and post test writing samples were evaluated using the primary trait and holistic scoring techniques. Each writing sample was evaluated by two readers experienced in primary trait and holistic scoring. The readers were trained for the specific writing prompt with sets of anchor papers which exemplified the different score points in the primary trait scale. Training continued until scorers were either in agreement or differed by only one point on the anchor papers. If the two readers´ initial ratings in any characteristic differed by more than one point, the sample was read by a scoring supervisor who resolved the discrepancy and who decided on a final score for that trait. (See Appendix F for the number of discrepancies resolved in the scoring for this study.) All readers were professional educators who have scored writing samples using the primary trait and holistic method at grades 6 through 12 over the past five years. The results were analyzed to determine if there was a relationship amongst the variables.

In particular, the effects of four independent variables, all related to focus correction areas, were measured as was the overall or general performance on the assessment.

8. The frequency of focus correction areas used by each student was determined by counting and categorizing the focus correction areas on all writing samples collected. (See Appendix B and Appendix C.) Frequencies and student responses were charted. (See Appendix D and Appendix E.)

9. An analysis of variance with repeated measures was used. It was determined that the null hypotheses would be rejected at the .05 level of significance.

10. Students were divided into high and low focus correction groups based on the high range and low range of frequency for each focus correction area chosen. For this study all focus correction areas that were taught to all of the students over the course of the 10 month study period were sorted into the appropriate major writing category and became objectives for that variable.

Summary

This study examined the focus correction component of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program. Specifically this study looked at grade 7 urban middle school students who were exclusively Black, Hispanic or Asian, and who had participated in the Cumulative Writing Folder Program which focused on teaching variables to see if the variables effected students´ success or failure in writing.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to look at the focus correction component of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program. Specifically the study looked at grade 7 urban middle school students who were exclusively Black, Hispanic or Asian. These students participated in the Cumulative Writing Folder Program which emphasized certain teaching variables. The study sought to determine if the focus correction strategy of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program had a positive effect on mastery of four independent variables as measured by primary trait scoring of pre and post writing samples.

1. Mechanics
2. Style
3. Content
4. Organization

The study also sought to determine if the focus correction strategy had an effect on the overall quality of writing as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by holistic scoring.

The study involved manipulative variables as a way of gathering information to improve the teaching of writing and ultimately the writing skills of students.

A purposive sample of 22 of 79 grade 7 students in one urban middle school participated in this exploratory study.

This chapter examines the results of the study. It includes a presentation of the data, a cross tabulation for each of the variables, an analysis of the results and a summary.

Analysis

The first step in the analysis of the effects of focus correction areas (FCAs) on writing performance was to determine if the Cumulative Writing Folder Program was an effective way to teach writing. This initial analysis examined whether or not any significant change in student writing occurred over the course of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program. This change was measured with a pre-test and post-test of the sample of urban, seventh graders using writing samples assessed by primary trait scoring. As stated earlier, primary trait scoring was targeted on four independent variables: mechanics, organization, style, and content. A holistic variable was also included. If no changes occurred between the pre-test and the post-test, further hypothesis testing would not have been necessary because the program itself would have been ineffective.

Pre-test/Post-test Analysis

Given the small sample of students in this exploratory study (n = 22), a paired, T-Test was conducted on the pre- (T1) and post-test (T2) scores in each of the five areas mentioned above. In every case, the difference between the T1 and T2 was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Table 2 displays the means for the T1 and T2 in each area along with the significance level.

TABLE 2

Paired T-test-Results of Pre and Post Tests

Variable		Mean	Significance level
Mechanical	T1	4.77	
	T2	6.41	(p < .001)
Style	T1	4.18	
	T2	5.82	(p < .000)
Content	T1	4.59	
	T2	6.59	(p < .000)
Organization	T1	5.27	
	T2	7.41	(p < .000)
Holistic	T1	4.09	
	T2	5.46	(p < .000)

(n = 22)

Clearly, the initial analysis demonstrates that a significant change in writing scores, assessed by both a primary trait and holistic method, resulted in this sample. The results indicate that the Cumulative Writing Folder Program was very effective in increasing student writing scores overall and for all four variables studied. A second level analysis was then conducted to examine how the frequency of FCAs may have resulted in this demonstrated significant change.

Hypotheses Testing

Two different analytical techniques were used to test the five hypotheses first presented in Chapter 3 and listed below:

1. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the

five mechanical focus correction areas will have significantly higher mechanical skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

2. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the four style focus correction areas will have significantly higher style skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.
3. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the four content skill areas will have significantly higher content skill scores as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.
4. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the two organization skill areas will have significantly higher content skill scores as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.
5. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the sum total of all focus correction areas will have significantly higher overall writing skills as measured by a

pre and post writing sample assessed by holistic scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

The first technique was to apply a multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measures to test the significance of FCAs effects on the change in the students´ writing skills, measured with pre- and post-test assessments. Once the level of significance of the relationship of FCAs to the writing skills had been determined, the nature of the relationship was examined using a simple cross-tabulation analysis. This effort was designed to uncover the degree and direction of the relationships. The results of the analysis on each of the five skill areas is examined below.

Hypothesis One: Mechanics

Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the five mechanical focus correction areas will have significantly higher mechanical skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

A mechanics skills score (MSS) was constructed to test whether or not focused attention on correction areas (FCAs) would significantly increase the mechanical skills of students (n = 16). This MSS consisted of the simple sum of the frequency each student was corrected in each of the five mechanical skill areas (i.e., beginning capitalization, complete sentences, end punctuation, proper nouns, and spelling). This total score ranged between 32.0 and 73.0 with a median score of 57. Table 3 displays the cross tabulation of mechanics by mechanics change.

TABLE 3

Cross Tabulation of Mechanics by Mechanics Change

Count Row Pct. Col Pct. Total Pct.	Decrease 1.00	Small Increase 2.00	Large Increase 3.0	Row Total
Lo 1.00	1	7	1	9
	11.1	77.8	11.1	56.3
	33.3	63.6	50.0	
	6.3	43.8	6.3	
Hi 2.00	2	4	1	7
	28.6	57.1	14.3	43.8
	66.7	36.4	50.0	
	12.5	25.0	6.3	
Column	3	11	2	16
Total	18.8	68.8	12.5	100.0

Significance <.035

To test this first hypothesis, the MSS was divided into two more or less equal groups (the median was used as the dividing point), those students with relatively low total frequency on the five FCAs (32-54) and those with relatively high frequency on the five FCAs (60-73). These two groups were then compared in a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with repeated measures. The dependent variable in this case was the difference between the pre-test score on the Mechanical area of the primary traits and the corresponding post-test. The two MSS groups represented the categories of the independent variable/factor in the analysis. The result of this analysis was significant ($p < .035$) meaning the probability of the results being due to random error was quite low. In other words, there is a significant difference in average mechanical skills between subjects that received a high frequency of mechanical FCA intervention and those that received a low frequency of mechanical FCA intervention. Thus, the null hypothesis, that no difference exists, is rejected.

The general direction of the relationship between the frequency of mechanical skill FCAs and the change in mechanical writing scores shows that as the relative frequency of total FCAs increases, the relative mechanical writing score tends to decrease. In fact, those students that decreased in their mechanical writing skills were more than twice as likely to have had high frequency on the total FCAs than low frequency. And those that had a small increase in mechanical writing skills were twenty percent more likely to have had low frequency than high.

The implication from this finding is that the more teachers in this study stressed mechanical FCAs, the less likely the students were to improve their mechanical skills.

The students in this study had a median frequency of 57 mechanical FCAs on their compositions with a total sum of all FCAs having a median of 94.5. This means that with a total FCA median of 94.5 and a mechanical FCA median of 57, the typical students received approximately 60% or more of their targeted intervention in the area of mechanical skills. Mechanical skills represent only 25% of the total FCA pool in this study. As a result students had more than half of their instruction in an area that represented only one-fourth of the curriculum.

This study was designed to look at student writing in four major writing areas. However, the typical student received over 60% of his targeted intervention in only one of the four areas, mechanics.

Hypothesis Two: Style

Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the four style focus correction areas will have significantly higher style skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

A style skills score (SSS) was constructed to test whether or not focused attention on correction areas (FCAs) would significantly increase the writing style skills of students (n = 17). This SSS consisted of the simple sum of the frequency each student had the focus correction area in style (i.e., figures of speech, good introductions, summary and descriptive words). This total score ranged between 1.0 and 13.0 with a median score between 5.0 and 6.0.

To test this second hypothesis, the SSS was divided into two more or less equal groups with the median used as the dividing point, those students with a relatively low frequency on the four FCAs (1.0 - 5.0) and those with relatively high frequency on the four FCAs (6.0 - 13.0). These two groups were then compared in a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with repeated measures. The dependent variable in this case was the difference between the pre-test score on the style skills area and the corresponding post-test score both measured by primary trait scoring. The two SSS groups represented the categories of the independent variable/factor in the analysis. The result of this analysis was not significant ($p < .292$) meaning the probability of the results being due to random error was possible. Table 4 displays the cross tabulation of style by style change.

TABLE 4

Cross Tabulation of Style by Style Change

Count Row Pct. Col Pct. Total Pct.	Decrease 1.00	Small Increase 2.00	Large Increase 3.0	Row Total
Lo 1.00	2 28.6 100.0 11.8	2 28.6 33.3 11.8	3 42.9 33.3 17.6	7 41.2
Hi 2.00		4 40.0 66.7 23.5	6 60.0 66.7 35.3	10 58.8
Column	2	6	9	17
Total	11.8	35.3	52.9	100.0

Significance <.292

In other words, there is not a significant difference in average style skills between subjects that received a high frequency of style FCA intervention and those that received a low frequency of style FCA intervention. Thus the null hypothesis fails to be rejected. The findings, however, cannot be discounted completely, due to the small sample size (n = 22). The findings are useful for examining the relationship between FCA frequency and style skills.

The study shows that a relationship exists between relative frequency in style FCAs and change in style skills. Those students that had a large increase in style skills were 18% more likely to have had high frequency in style FCAs than low frequency in style FCAs. Those with a small increase in style skills had a similar relationship. Both students that decreased received relatively low frequency in style FCAs.

The implication from this finding is that the more teachers in this study stressed style FCAs the more likely students were to improve style skills. The less frequently teachers in this study stressed style skills the more likely students were to decrease in style skills.

Hypothesis Three: Content

Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the four content skill areas will have significantly higher content skill scores as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

A content skills score (CSS) was constructed to test whether or not focused attention on correction areas would significantly increase the content of student writing (n = 16). This CSS consisted of the simple sum of the frequency each student was corrected in each of the four content skill areas (i.e., answered the questions or stuck to the topic, stating opinions, including details about the topic and including facts about the topic). This total score ranged between 1.0 and 7.0 with a median score of 4.0.

To test this third hypothesis, the CSS was divided into two more or less equal groups. The median was used as the dividing point. The students with relatively low total frequency on the four FCAs were in one group (1.0 - 3.0) and those with relatively high FCAs (5.0 - 7.0) were in the other group. These two groups were then compared in a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with repeated measures. The dependent variable in this case was the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on content as measured by primary trait scoring. The two CSS groups represented the categories of the independent variable/factor in the analysis. The result of this analysis was $p < .762$ which is not significant. Table 5 displays the cross tabulation of content by content change.

TABLE 5

Cross Tabulation of Content by Content Change

Count Row Pct. Col Pct. Total Pct.	Decrease 1.00	Small Increase 2.00	Large Increase 3.0	Row Total
Lo 1.00	1	7	2	10
	10.0	70.0	20.0	62.5
	50.0	63.6	66.7	
	6.3	43.8	12.5	
Hi 2.00	1	4	1	6
	16.7	66.7	16.7	37.5
	50.0	36.4	33.3	
	6.3	25.0	6.3	
Column	2	11	3	16
Total	12.5	68.8	18.8	100.0

Significance <.762

This result was similar to the result for style described above and showing virtually no relationship between frequency of content FCAs and content skills. Thus the null hypothesis that no difference exists, fails to be rejected. The significant change in scores must have been from some other variable.

There may in fact be a very weak relationship here. Subjects that received low frequency on content FCAs were slightly more likely (13%) to have small increases than large increases. Subjects that received low frequency on content also were slightly more likely (17%) to have large increases in content.

The implication here is that when students had slightly less targeted intervention on content skills they were more likely to have small or large increases in content skills. It should be noted that the small number (n = 16) in this area means that six students showed no change between pre and post test scores and that the median range of frequency of content skills was only 4. This indicates that content had the lowest frequency of intervention of all five variables and, therefore, is the area where the conclusions are the most difficult to determine.

Hypothesis Four: Organization

Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the two organization skill areas will have significantly higher content skill scores as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

An organizational skills score (OSS) was constructed to test whether or not focused attention on correction areas (FCAs) would significantly increase the organizational skills of students (n = 15). This OSS consisted of the simple sum of the frequency each student was corrected in each of the two organization skill areas (i.e., using the prescribed format including placement of name, use of margins, skipping lines and use of paragraphing to indicate transitions). This total score ranged between 7.0 and 17.0 with a median score of 11.0.

To test this fourth hypothesis, the OSS was divided into two more or less equal groups. The median was used as the dividing point. The students with relatively low FCAs in organization ranged from 7.0 to 10.0. Those with relatively high FCAs ranged from 12.0 to 17.0. Using MANOVA, or multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measures, the two groups were compared. The dependent variable was the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on organization measured by primary trait scoring. The two OSS groups represented the categories of the independent variable factor in the analysis. The result of this analysis was not significant ($p < .824$) meaning the probability of the results being due to random error was high. Table 6 displays the cross tabulation of organization by organization change.

TABLE 6

Cross Tabulation of Organization by Organization Change

Count Row Pct. Col Pct. Total Pct.	Decrease 1.00	Small Increase 2.00	Large Increase 3.0	Row Total
Lo 1.00	1	2	4	7
	14.3	28.6	57.1	46.7
	100.0	33.3	50.0	
	6.7	13.3	26.7	
Hi 2.00		4	4	8
		50.0	50.0	53.3
		66.7	50.0	
		26.7	26.7	
Column	1	6	8	15
Total	6.7	40.0	53.3	100.0

Significance <.824

In other words there is not a significant difference in average organization skills between subjects that received a high frequency of organization intervention and those that received a low frequency of organization FCA intervention. Thus the null hypothesis, that no difference exists, fails to be rejected.

In retrospect, the nature of organization FCAs selected by teachers in this study lacks substance. There were only two organizational skill areas. They were format and paragraphing. The major classroom emphasis in organization was on format. While a consistent format such as placement of name, use of margins and skipping lines has symbolic and classroom management implications, it could not be expected to produce changes in the way students organize their compositions. Rather if teachers had used organizational FCAs such as proper sequence of detail or information, transitions, beginnings and endings that establish focus and purpose, etc., the results may have been different here and the definition of organization would have been more complete.

Hypothesis Five: Holistic

Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the sum total of all focus correction areas will have significantly higher overall writing skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by holistic scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

A holistic score (HS) was constructed to test whether or not focused attention on the total of all FCAs would significantly increase the overall writing skill of students (n = 16). This HS consisted of the simple sum of the frequency each student was corrected in each of the four major skill areas: mechanics, style, content and organization. This total score ranged between 54.0 and 116.0 with a median score between 94.0 and 95.0.

To test this fifth and last hypothesis, the HS was divided into two more or less equal groups with the median used as the dividing point. The students with relatively low total frequency on the four major FCAs ranged from 54.0 to 94.0. Those with relatively high frequency on the four major FCAs ranged from 95.0 to 116.0. These two groups were compared using MANOVA, multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measures. The dependent variable in this instance was the difference between the pre and post test holistic score of overall writing performance. The two HS groups represented the categories of the independent variable factor in the analysis. The result of this analysis approached significance at $p < .17$ meaning the probability of the results being due to random factors is somewhat low. In other words, the difference in overall writing skills as measured holistically for students who received a high frequency of total FCA intervention and those that received a low frequency of total FCA intervention is somewhat significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, that no difference exists, fails to be rejected. Table 7 displays the cross tabulation of the total sum of all FCAs by holistic change.

TABLE 7

Cross Tabulation of Total Sum of All
Focus Correction Areas by Holistic Change

Count Row Pct. Col Pct. Total Pct.	Decrease 1.00	Small Increase 2.00	Large Increase 3.0	Row Total
Lo 1.00		5 55.6 50.0 31.3	4 44.4 80.0 25.0	9 56.3
Hi 2.00	1 14.3 100.0 6.3	5 71.4 50.0 31.3	1 14.3 20.0 6.3	7 43.8
Column Total	1 6.3	10 62.5	5 31.3	16 100.0

Significance <.167

The general direction of the relationship between the total number of FCA interventions and the change in overall writing skills measured by holistic scores is a moderately strong relationship.

The study shows that students who had large increases in holistic scores were four times more likely to have had low frequency in total FCAs than high frequency in FCAs (44.4% vs. 14.3%). However those with relatively small increases in holistic scores were 16% more likely to have had relatively high frequency in total FCAs than low frequency in FCAs.

It should be noted that approximately 60% of total FCA time was spent on mechanics. This overemphasis of mechanics, which is one of the four variables which represent the four major areas of writing, has been shown to decrease student mechanical skills. Only 19% of student FCAs were in organization. Five percent were in style and 4% were in content. A more balanced targeted intervention of FCAs may have produced different results especially since the area that received the most intervention, mechanics, proved to decrease mechanical skills amongst those students who had high FCA frequency in mechanics.

Summary

The results of the analysis of the study´s five hypotheses, their significance and the acceptance or rejection of the null hypotheses are listed below.

Hypotheses

1. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the five mechanical focus correction areas will have significantly higher mechanical skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait

scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

The results of the analysis of this hypothesis were significant at $p < .035$. Thus the null hypothesis, that no difference exists, is rejected.

2. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the four style focus correction areas will have significantly higher style skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

   The results of the analysis of this hypothesis were not significant, $p < .292$. Thus the null hypothesis fails to be rejected.

3. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the four content skill areas will have significantly higher content skill scores as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

   The result of this analysis was $p < .762$ which is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, that no difference exists, fails to be rejected.

4. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the two organization skill areas will have significantly higher

content skill scores as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

The result of the analysis of this hypothesis was not significant at $p < .1824$. Thus the null hypothesis fails to be rejected.

5. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the sum total of all focus correction areas will have significantly higher overall writing skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by holistic scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

   The results of this analysis approached significance at $p < .17$. Since the results are only somewhat significant, the null hypothesis, that no difference exists, fails to be rejected.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents a major summary of the study, including the bases of the research, purpose, discussion of the limits of the study, statement of the problem, design and procedures, and results.

The second section presents a discussion of the important conclusions derived from the research activity.

The third section offers recommendations regarding the applications of the study´s findings and the need for future research.

Summary of the Study

The skills of the nation´s school children continue to fall far short of the high standards called for in A Nation at Risk [National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983]. A review of trends in student writing achievement across the 14-year period from 1974 to 1988 shows that,

> Levels of writing performance in 1988 appeared to be substantially the same as in 1974. Many students continued to perform at minimal levels on the NAEP writing assessment tasks, and relatively few performed at adequate or better levels.
>
> At the middle school level . . . the net effect over the 14-year period is one of relative stability. Mixed trends between 1974 and 1979 were followed by consistently improved performance between 1979 and 1984. However, between 1984 and 1988, eighth grade students showed more declines than gains, reducing performance to approximately the 1974 and 1979 levels [Applebee, 1990, p. 6].

For decades educators have been discussing the problem of poor student writing performance and diligently searching for answers and solutions. A great deal of research has been done in an attempt to resolve the problem. Different, sometimes newer, instructional strategies have been tried, found to be inadequate and discarded in favor of still other newer methods.

A great deal of national attention has been focused on the effort to improve writing instruction and the public is very aware of the crisis as more and more students complete their schooling and enter the work force with poor writing skills.

The major urban school system used in this study as a part of its effort to mobilize change and attract support to the school system found that there was a very strong agreement amongst all of its constituencies on the importance of writing. One of the school system´s major goals was to improve the teaching and learning of writing across all curriculum areas. It adopted the Collins Cumulative Writing Folder Program in all classes grades 4-12 as the best approach to a uniform citywide writing program. Intended to provide a management system and three strategies for teaching--oral reading, focus correction and using past papers to teach new skills--at least on the surface it appears to offer some legitimate relief for the problem. Though not a panacea, the Cumulative Writing Folder Program, adopted by several states and scores of communities in the U.S. and abroad, holds some promise of helping educators learn to manage the often unwieldy task of teaching students to write. In particular it provides teachers with a systematic record of student writing which is very important in the area of writing where evaluation is difficult and usually subjective but accountability is high.

It teaches students to read their papers aloud, use past papers to learn new skills and to know the areas that the writing will be corrected for before the writing begins. This last area, called focus correction is the most controversial aspect of the program. The reason focus correction provokes some controversy among educators is that it´s new and untested. It also breaks with the tradition of analytical scoring which historically has been the method used to correct student writing. Teachers and parents are used to analytical scoring. It´s the way their writing was scored and the way they´ve always scored their own students´ writing. Focus correction and its effects are the major aspects of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program which are measured by this study.

Bases for the Study

The bases for the study were the assumptions that good writing can be taught and that teachers´ classroom practices make a difference. All of the major reports of the last ten years indicate, however, that the teaching of writing is either ignored or far from reaching its potential. Researchers who have studied writing instruction almost all arrive at the same conclusion: students in all grades do not write enough. There is simply not enough writing practice to develop the skill. One of the major reasons teachers report that keeps them from teaching writing is that correcting it is both tedious and time consuming and often subjective. When writing is taught and practiced there is not agreement among theorists and practitioners as to which strategies make a difference. The basis for this study is that focus correction is an objective, simple and time saving method of assessing students´ writing. Focus correction utilizes a selective approach to correcting student writing. Using this strategy, the teacher selects from one to three critical problem areas and corrects compositions using only those areas. Students know focus correction areas (FCAs) before they begin writing.

The Problem

There is general agreement among educators that we should be concerned with the teaching of writing in our schools. Recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress [Applebee, 1990] shows that in 1990 new goals in writing must be set if high school graduates are to be able to manage their own lives and our society successfully. The notion that focus correction may be an important variable to be considered in teaching writing may be a valid one, but little or no research attention has been given to it. Although widely used, no empirical studies have been done to show if focus correction is effective.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine if the focus correction strategy of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program as used by urban seventh graders had a positive effect on mastery of four independent variables: mechanics, style, content and organization, and further to determine if it had an effect on the overall quality of writing.

The study involved manipulative variables to gather information that would improve the teaching of writing and ultimately the writing skills of students.

Limits of the Study

Cognizant of the many dimensions of writing and the multiplicity of instructional modes available, the author chose to investigate one aspect of writing, focus correction, as used in the Collins Cumulative Writing Folder Program. Focus correction is a selective approach to correcting student writing.

The Cumulative Writing Folder Program, used by more than a million students, is the mandated program for several major school systems which makes it an important writing program for this decade. Traditionally teachers have used analytical correcting, a method which involves the correction of every single error. This method, which can be overwhelming for the teacher to execute, often discourages the teacher who has trouble finding the time to correct every mistake in every line of student writing. It often discourages the student as well since most students want to know the grade and be done with it. Teachers themselves and parents were taught with analytical scoring. It has been the method that has been used historically. Because of its innovative nature, focus correction is clearly a controversial aspect of the program. No empirical studies have been done to show if it is effective.

The factors which might limit the generalizability of this exploratory study are:

- a small sample size (n = 22)
- the population, which was exclusively inner city, seventh graders who were Black, Hispanic or Asian. Eighty-six percent of these students´ families were below the poverty level.
- the academic preparation of the teachers. None of the teachers in this program were trained or certified English or writing teachers. Their areas of training and certification were reading, science and computer education.
- the achievement level of the group. Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test results for this group show the median percentile as 45. This is both below the national average and below the median for the entire grade 7 class at this school which had a median at the 50 percentile.

Design and Procedures of the Study

A pre and post exploratory study was used in this research. Because of the diagnostic, prescriptive nature of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program each of the student subjects had a unique pattern of focus correction area repetition. The study looked for significant differences between high and low focus correction areas and their effect on writing achievement measured by pre and post writing samples assessed for overall achievement using holistic scoring and assessed for the independent variables of mechanics, style, content and organization using primary trait scoring. Because the intent was to compare the performance of students having differing levels of focus correction areas in the same instructional setting there was no control group, and all subjects participated in the same writing program with the same instructional treatment.

The subjects, a purposive sample of 22 of 79 grade 7 students in one urban middle school, were required to participate in the Cumulative Writing Folder Program because it was the mandated program for the school which they attend. Furthermore, they were required to use the Cumulative Writing Folder Program in every academic area because it was a mandated part of a special schoolwide program called Project Promise. (See Appendix G for description of Project Promise.)

Given the small sample of students in this exploratory study (n = 22), a paired T-Test was conducted on the pre (T1) and post (T2) test scores in each of the five areas mentioned above to look for statistical significance. In addition, two different analytical techniques were used to test the following five hypotheses:

1. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the five mechanical focus correction areas will have

significantly higher mechanical skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

2. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the four style focus correction areas will have significantly higher style skills as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.
3. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the four content skill areas will have significantly higher content skill scores as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.
4. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the two organization skill areas will have significantly higher content skill scores as measured by a pre and post writing sample assessed by primary trait scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.
5. Urban seventh grade students using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program who receive more targeted intervention in the sum total of all focus correction areas will have significantly higher overall writing skills as measured by a

pre and post writing sample assessed by holistic scoring than those students receiving less targeted intervention.

Results of the Study

There was significant justification to reject Hypothesis 1 at the .03 level. Hypothesis 5 approached significance at $p < .17$. These results were somewhat significant, but the null hypothesis failed to be rejected.

The null hypothesis for 2, 3 and 4 failed to be rejected at the .05 level.

Conclusions

The first step in the analysis of Focus Correction Areas on writing performance was to examine whether or not any significant change occurred over the course of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program. This change was measured with a pre-test and post-test of the sample assessed by both primary trait scoring for the independent variables mechanics, style, content and organization and by holistic scoring for overall writing performance. In every case the difference between the pre and post test was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Clearly this initial analysis demonstrated that a very significant change in writing scores assessed by both primary trait and holistic methods resulted in the sample. These results prove conclusively that the Cumulative Writing Folder Program works. The students improved their writing skills significantly in all areas.

Then the analysis moved to more specific hypotheses to examine how the intervention of FCAs may have resulted in this demonstrated significant change. All five hypotheses were based on the assumption that students who received more rather than less targeted intervention in the individual and collective focus correction areas would have significantly higher skills for each of the five variables. This study was based on the premise that the frequency of FCA intervention would have an important impact on achievement. This did not prove to be the case for style, content or organization where the results were not significant.

In the two areas that were significant, mechanics and overall writing quality, as the relative frequency of total mechanics FCAs and the total sum of all FCAs increased, the relative mechanical writing score and the overall writing score tended to decrease.

A number of possible interpretations may account for these findings. This discussion will focus on the frequency of focus correction areas and the independent variables of mechanics, style, content, organization and overall quality of writing.

In regard to frequency of focus correction areas, it should be noted that FCAs were chosen by teachers based on diagnosed needs of students and were repeated until teachers believed mastery was achieved. Additionally, the Cumulative Writing Folder Program provided feedback and reinforcement throughout so that the students were aware of the areas in which they needed review. In addition to the inherent nature of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program providing for rehearsal, each writing sample focused the attention of the student on the important aspects of the material being presented, and provided cues for memory support.

In regard to the mechanics variable, it was expected that since total frequency in this one area ranged between 32.0 and 73.0 with a median score of 57.0 as compared to the total sum of all FCAs ranging from 54.0 to 116.0 with a median of 94.5 this made mechanics FCAs the most frequent single variable for all students. Instead of increasing student achievement, the study showed that as the relative frequency of mechanics FCAs increased the relative mechanical writing score decreased. Since mechanical skills are objective, simple and easy to define and measure, teachers usually place a great deal of emphasis on their mastery. This was true in this study as in most writing classrooms. The results indicate that an overemphasis on mechanics may actually decrease mechanical skills. Excessive use of any one FCA, which may be the case with the mechanics variable, may result in overkill or provide students with oversaturation so they begin to pay less rather than more attention to mechanical accuracy.

In regards to the style variable there was a relationship between relative frequency in style FCAs and change in style skills. Those students with both large and small increases in style FCA scores were more likely to have had high frequency in style FCAs than low frequency in style FCAs. It is interesting to note that the range here was from 1.0 to 13.0 with a median score between 5.0 and 6.0, dramatically less than for the mechanics variable. This suggests that in some areas less intervention may be more effective than more intervention.

A review of the results for content indicates that the range of FCAs for this variable was between 1.0 and 7.0 with a median score of 4.0. As with style there is virtually no significance between frequency of content FCAs and content skills. The same is true for organization skills with a frequency range of 7.0 and 17.0 and a median of 11.0. It should be noted that in the organization area only two different FCAs were used. This is at least only half as many as for each of the other variables. This may have had an effect on the results.

The major classroom emphasis in organization was on format. While a consistent heading, etc. has symbolic and classroom management implications it could not be expected to produce changes in the way students organized their compositions. If teachers had included other important organizational FCAs such as transitions, sequencing of ideas, etc., the organizational definition would have been more substantive and the results may have been more significant.

The overall quality of writing variable did approach significance but again, as with mechanics, there was a moderately strong relationship between relative frequency of total FCAs and overall writing skills. In fact, those with large increases in holistic scores were four times more likely to have had low frequency on total FCAs than high.

These results are surprising for they belie the assertion that practice makes perfect or that the more time you spend on a specific task the better able you are to perform that task. This study shows that often the opposite is true and that too much attention can be as bad as too little attention.

Another factor to consider is the atmosphere of literacy in the school at which this study was conducted. The focus of the educational program was reading, writing and mathematics. All teachers were required to incorporate instruction in each of these areas across the entire academic program. This meant that writing wasn´t just taught in English class. It was taught in science, social studies, reading, and even in math class. Students used the Cumulative Writing Folder Program in all of their major subjects. The students were taught reading across the curriculum as well. Students were required to read what they wrote and write about what they´d read. They truly made the reading/writing connection.

Using the Cumulative Writing Folder Program across the curriculum gave students the following advantages not offered in the standard program in American middle and high schools [Applebee, 1981, 1987; Cooper, 1981]:

- Students were required to read their compositions aloud to themselves and their peers. According to Collins [1988, p. 4], this is "the single most effective way to help students revise and edit their papers" because it causes them to take responsibility for their writing.

It also promotes sharing of writing and reader reaction.

- Both English and content area teachers taught students how to write.
- Most instruction happened before not after the writing.
- Second drafts were required routinely in all subjects.
- Subjects regularly were required to write a paragraph or more.
- Students had several audiences for their writing including their teachers, their classmates and their adult promising pen pals.
- Comments about the writing provided help with the writing task itself and were not limited to length, format or mechanics.
- Student writing frequently was displayed and published.

Such a program, according to Cooper [1981], is one designed to succeed because it fosters writing development, teaches students about how skilled writers write and helps students gain insights into the ways writing can help them.

The program also gave students permission and ample opportunity to write, prior knowledge about how each writing sample would be scored, and the realizations that their writing did not have to be perfect.

Although researchers and educators understand that this atmosphere of literacy is far from the norm, students at the school were unaware of this. In fact, the first year that the

Cumulative Writing Folder Program was introduced across the curriculum, students were stunned and protested having to write in any class other than English. By year two there continued to be resistance but students would regale visitors with stories about how different and unusual their school was. One of the most frequently repeated reasons for this was that they had to do reading and writing in every class. By year three, students didn´t realize that this was different. They´d been involved in the Cumulative Writing Folder Program for their entire tenure at the school and they thought that the major emphasis on reading and writing across the curriculum was done in every school. What should be stressed here is that the atmosphere of literacy at the school was not typical. The fact is that it was so pervasive in all offerings at the school that students did not know that they were involved in anything unusual. They accepted it as the norm for the middle school experience.

The important findings of this study are that:

- The Cumulative Writing Folder Program works and produces significant increases in students´ writing skills overall and for all variables studied: mechanics, style, content and organization. It especially works as a way to focus teachers´ attention on writing and as the means for teachers and administrators to provide a set of strategies that everyone can use.

- A balance of FCAs should be used. An overemphasis on mechanics may actually decrease students´ mechanical skills.
- The frequency of FCAs may not be as important as the focusing of the correction itself.

These results are all the more meaningful because they were achieved in an inner city middle school with minority students. They reinforce the notions that an atmosphere of literacy can be created, good writing can be taught, and specific classroom practices make a difference.

Recommendations

The following recommendations concern the application of the findings of this research, and suggestions for future research.

The clear finding that the Cumulative Writing Folder Program was very effective in increasing students´ overall writing skills and students´ skills for all four variables studied: mechanics, style, content and organization over and above the usual indices is of educational significance. This finding provides strong data to recommend the use of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program because it produces results. The seventh graders in this study scored as well or better than a comparable NAEP national assessment of eighth graders [Applebee, 1990] and a comparison of the paired T-test results showed statistically significant results in all five areas ($p < .001$).

But the question that must be answered is what produced these results. Further research must be done to determine if the positive results were due to any or all of the following factors:

- Frequency of writing. Students in this study wrote approximately 40 compositions during the year. This is about four times the national average. Since studies show [Olson, 1984] most students do very little writing, the emphasis on writing across the curriculum and the resulting increase in the frequency of writing compositions may have played a part in the increased writing achievement of students.
- Consistency of approach. Students in this study used the Cumulative Writing Folder Program in all academic areas. They used the writing folders for all samples and engaged in the draft, focus correction, oral reading and revision strategies as prescribed in the program. They knew that each writing sample would be measured by some objective criteria--the FCAs. They learned to pay attention to those areas and as a result didn't have to worry about every single writing skill but were left alone to develop their writing ability without being over corrected or analyzed in every skill area.
- The three other major components of the Cumulative Writing Folder Program. The management system, oral reading and using past papers to teach new skills are

the other major components of this program. No attempt was made to measure their effect in this study.

Research in these areas is necessary to determine their effect on student writing.

The finding that an overemphasis on mechanics decreased students´ mechanical writing skills was significant. This suggests that a balance of FCAs across the four major areas of writing (mechanics, style, content and organization) might produce better results. It also suggests that any one variable or writing area should not be overemphasized because more is not always better. A balance of FCAs is actually recommended in the Collins´ Cumulative Writing Folder Program and should be adopted by practitioners.

In fact, the Cumulative Writing Folder Program Teacher´s Guide cautions teachers to use a balance of FCAs.

> Focus correction areas should be selected to represent stylistic, mechanical, content and organizational features. Teachers should not limit focus correction areas to mechanical errors, such as capitalization and punctuation. If they do, students will feel that good writing means trying to avoid punctuation and spelling errors. If students develop this attitude their desire to write well will be destroyed. Remember, encouraging students to write a beginning that will make the reader want to read on is as important as encouraging the students to avoid run-on students [Collins, 1985, p. 3].

The teachers in this study either ignored or at least failed to implement this recommendation.

A review of the definitions of each variable, or writing area, in this study shows that some are somewhat limited in scope. This is due to the fact that teachers covered a relatively limited number of the possible FCAs in all areas except mechanics. This was especially true in organization where one of the two FCAs was format where the validity of the definition is questionable because the FCAs chosen by teachers were not substantive. Including a larger variety of FCAs over a relatively limited number of repetitions is recommended.

As with any research as many questions are raised as are answered. Questions this research raises include:

- How clearly stated to students were the FCAs? This is unknown as it was not a part of this study. However, students must have a very clear understanding of FCAs for learning to take place.
- Were FCAs simply assigned or were they taught? This study provides no check to determine if there was actual classroom demonstration or teaching of FCAs or if FCAs were just assigned without instruction. As with any skill teaching, a definite period of demonstration followed by practice and then application is recommended.
- What was the academic preparation of the teachers or more explicitly would it have made a difference if a certified English teacher worked on the teaching team used in the study? No answer can be given to this question but further studies should include this factor.

- What mode of instruction was used? The review of the literature for this study identified four modes of instruction. One mode of instruction termed the environmental mode was found to be the most effective way to teach writing. As conceived, the Cumulative Writing Folder is an embodiment of the environmental mode. The program, however, can and has been implemented in classrooms across the country using the other less effective modes: presentational, natural process, and individualized. This study did not test to determine which mode of instruction was employed. Further research should consider the mode of instruction used.

It was clear that other variables besides frequency must have been responsible for the T test results. It may be that what is significant is the task of focusing the correction, not the frequency with which it is done. The findings suggest that when students are aware of the criteria by which their work will be measured, good writing becomes an achievable goal.

More research must be done to determine why this program produces such good results; to find out what number of FCA repetitions works best; to employ a larger sample and to determine which individual FCAs within the four major areas of writing have the greatest effect on writing performance.

APPENDIX A

PROFILE OF SUBJECTS

Student	Sex	Age on 9/1/88	Race	May, 1989 Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test Score Percentiles
A	Female	13 years	Black	25
B	Female	12 years	Hispanic	37
C	Male	13 years	Black	73
D	Female	12 years	Black	65
E	Female	12 years	Hispanic	53
F	Female	13 years	Black	35
G	Male	13 years	Black	not available
H	Female	12 years	Black	84
I	Female	12 years	Black	82
J	Male	12 years	Black	45
K	Male	12 years	Asian	25
L	Female	12 years	Black	79
M	Male	12 years	Black	76
N	Female	12 years	Hispanic	73
O	Male	12 years	Asian	27
P	Female	11 years	Black	45
Q	Male	13 years	Hispanic	30
R	Male	12 years	Asian	21
S	Female	12 years	Asian	35
T	Male	12 years	Hispanic	73
U	Male	12 years	Black	24
V	Female	11 years	Black	not available
Totals: 22 students		Female 55% Male 45%	Black 59% Hispanic 23% Asian 18%	Range percentile = 21-84 Median percentile = 45

APPENDIX B

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA COUNT BY SUBJECT RESPONSE

	A	B	C	D	E
Answered Question				|	
Beginning Capitalization	|||	|	𝍸	|||	𝍸
Complete Sentences	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||
Content	𝍸 ||	𝍸 𝍸 |	𝍸 𝍸 ||	𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |||
Descriptive Words		||	𝍸 ||	||	𝍸 ||||
Details	||||	||	||	|	||
End Punctuation	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸
Facts	||	||			|
Figures of Speech		|		|	|
Format	𝍸 ||	𝍸	𝍸 ||||	||||	𝍸 |||
Good Introduction	||			||	||
Opinion			|		
Paragraphing	𝍸 ||	|||	|||	||||	|||
Proper Nouns	𝍸 𝍸 |	||||	𝍸	𝍸 ||||	𝍸 𝍸 |
Science Words	||||	||	𝍸	|||	|||
Spelling					
Story Elements	||	||	|||	||	||
Summary		|	|	|	|
Hearing Words		|			

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA COUNT BY SUBJECT RESPONSE

	F	G	H	I	J
Answered Question	𝍷			𝍷	
Beginning Capitalization	𝍸	𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷
Complete Sentences	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍷𝍷	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍷𝍷
Content	𝍸 𝍸 𝍷	𝍸 𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍸 𝍷	𝍸 𝍸 𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍸 𝍷
Descriptive Words	𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷	𝍸 𝍷	𝍸 𝍷
Details	𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷	𝍷	𝍷	𝍷𝍷
End Punctuation	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍷	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍷	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍷	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍷
Facts	𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷	𝍷	𝍷𝍷	
Figures of Speech				𝍷	𝍷
Format	𝍸 𝍷𝍷		𝍸 𝍷𝍷	𝍸 𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍸 𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷
Good Introduction	𝍷	𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷
Opinion			𝍷	𝍷	
Paragraphing	𝍸 𝍷𝍷	𝍸 𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷
Proper Nouns	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍸 𝍷	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷
Science Words	𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷𝍷
Spelling	𝍷			𝍷𝍷	
Story Elements	𝍷𝍷	𝍷	𝍷𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷	𝍷𝍷
Summary			𝍷	𝍷	𝍷𝍷

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA COUNT BY SUBJECT RESPONSE

	K	L	M	N	O
Answered Question					
Beginning Capitalization	𝍸	|||	𝍸 |	||||	|||
Complete Sentences	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸
Content	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸	𝍸 |||	𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||
Descriptive Words	|||	||||	||	||||	|||
Details	||||	||	||	|	|||
End Punctuation	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |||
Facts	||				||
Figures of Speech		|	|	||	
Format	𝍸 ||	𝍸	𝍸 |||	𝍸 ||	𝍸 ||
Good Introduction	|	|	|||	|	||
Opinion					
Paragraphing	𝍸 |||	||	|||	|||	𝍸 |||
Proper Nouns	𝍸 ||||	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸	𝍸 𝍸
Science Words	||||	|||	|||	|||	||||
Spelling			|		|
Story Elements	||	|	||	|	|
Summary	|	|	|	|	

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA COUNT BY SUBJECT RESPONSE

	P	Q	R	S	T
Answered Question					
Beginning Capitalization	|||	𝍸 ||	𝍸	𝍸	||
Complete Sentences	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍸 ||||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |
Content	𝍸 ||	𝍸 ||||	𝍸 𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 ||
Descriptive Words	||||	|	𝍸 ||	|	||
Details	|	||||	|||	||||	||
End Punctuation	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |||
Facts		|	|	|	||
Figures of Speech	|				
Format	𝍸 |	𝍸 |||	𝍸 ||	𝍸 |||	||||
Good Introduction	||		|	|	|
Opinion					
Paragraphing	|||	𝍸 |||	𝍸 |||	𝍸 ||||	𝍸 |||
Proper Nouns	𝍸 ||||	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 |||
Science Words	||||	||	𝍸	||||	|
Spelling					
Story Elements	|	||	||	||	||
Summary	||		|		|

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA COUNT BY SUBJECT RESPONSE

	U	V
Answered Question		
Beginning Capitalization	||	𝍸 |
Complete Sentences	𝍸 𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||||
Content	𝍸	𝍸 𝍸 |||
Descriptive Words	|	||||
Details	|	||
End Punctuation	𝍸 𝍸 |||	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||
Facts	|	||
Figures of Speech		||
Format	𝍸	𝍸 |||
Good Introduction		
Opinion	|	
Paragraphing	|||	|
Proper Nouns	||||	𝍸 𝍸
Science Words	||	||||
Spelling		
Story Elements	||	||
Summary	|	

APPENDIX C

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA VALUE LABELS

MECHANICS

Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
32.00	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
39.00	1	4.5	4.5	9.1
43.00	1	4.5	4.5	13.6
44.00	1	4.5	4.5	18.2
45.00	1	4.5	4.5	22.7
46.00	1	4.5	4.5	27.3
51.00	2	9.1	9.1	36.4
53.00	1	4.5	4.5	40.9
54.00	1	4.5	4.5	45.5
57.00	4	18.2	18.2	63.6
60.00	1	4.5	4.5	68.2
61.00	2	9.1	9.1	77.3
62.00	1	4.5	4.5	81.8
64.00	1	4.5	4.5	86.4
71.00	1	4.5	4.5	90.9
72.00	1	4.5	4.5	95.5
73.00	1	4.5	4.5	100.0
TOTAL	22	100.0	100.0	

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA VALUE LABELS

STYLE

Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
2.00	3	13.6	13.6	18.2
4.00	3	13.6	13.6	31.8
5.00	4	18.2	18.2	50.0
6.00	4	18.2	18.2	68.2
8.00	2	9.1	9.1	77.3
9.00	2	9.1	9.1	86.4
10.00	1	4.5	4.5	90.9
11.00	1	4.5	4.5	95.5
13.00	1	4.5	4.5	100.0
TOTAL	22	100.0	100.0	

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA VALUE LABELS

CONTENT

Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	2	9.1	9.1	9.1
2	4	18.2	18.2	2
3	4	18.2	18.2	45.5
4	5	22.7	22.7	68.2
5	4	18.2	18.2	86.4
6	2	9.1	9.1	95.5
7	1	4.5	4.5	100.0
TOTAL	22	100.0	100.0	

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA VALUE LABELS

ORGANIZATION

Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
7.00	2	9.1	9.1	9.1
8.00	3	13.6	13.6	22.7
9.00	2	9.1	9.1	31.8
10.00	2	9.1	9.1	40.9
11.00	3	13.6	13.6	54.5
12.00	3	13.6	13.6	68.2
14.00	2	9.1	9.1	77.3
15.00	3	13.6	13.6	90.9
16.00	1	4.5	4.5	95.5
17.00	1	4.5	4.5	100.0
TOTAL	22	100.0	100.0	

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA VALUE LABELS

TOTAL SUM

Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
54.00	1	4.5	4.5	4.5
67.00	1	4.5	4.5	9.1
70.00	1	4.5	4.5	13.6
74.00	1	4.5	4.5	18.2
77.00	1	4.5	4.5	22.7
78.00	1	4.5	4.5	27.3
81.00	1	4.5	4.5	31.8
84.00	1	4.5	4.5	36.4
85.00	1	4.5	4.5	40.9
87.00	1	4.5	4.5	45.5
94.00	1	4.5	4.5	50.0
95.00	2	9.1	9.1	59.1
98.00	1	4.5	4.5	63.6
99.00	2	9.1	9.1	72.7
100.00	1	4.5	4.5	77.3
101.00	1	4.5	4.5	81.8
105.00	1	4.5	4.5	86.4
116.00	1	4.5	4.5	90.9
119.00	1	4.5	4.5	95.5
123.00	1	4.5	4.5	100.0
TOTAL	22	100.0	100.0	

APPENDIX D

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA

FREQUENCY AND SUBJECT RESPONSE DISTRIBUTION CHART

Beginning Capitalizations

Frequency	Subject Response
1	2
2	2
3	5
4	4
5	6
6	2
7	1

Complete Sentences

Frequency	Subject Response
13	1
14	2
16	1
17	1
18	2
19	1
20	4
22	2
23	2
24	2
25	1
29	1
30	1
32	1

Answered Questions

Frequency	Subject Response
0	19
1	2
2	1

Content

Frequency	Subject Response
5	2
6	2
7	3
8	4
9	1
10	2
11	2
12	1
13	3
17	1
18	1

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA

FREQUENCY AND SUBJECT RESPONSE DISTRIBUTION CHART

Descriptive Words

Frequency	Subject Response
0	1
1	3
2	6
3	2
4	5
5	0
6	2
7	2
9	1

End Punctuation

Frequency	Subject Response
13	1
15	1
16	2
18	3
19	1
20	1
21	3
22	1
23	1
24	1
25	2
26	2
27	2
28	1

Details

Frequency	Subject Response
1	6
2	9
3	2
4	5

Facts

Frequency	Subject Response
0	7
1	6
2	9

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA

FREQUENCY AND SUBJECT RESPONSE DISTRIBUTION CHART

Frequency	Subject Response
Figures of Speech	
0	12
1	8
2	2
Format	
0	1
4	2
5	3
6	1
7	7
8	6
9	2
Good Introduction	
0	5
1	8
2	8
3	1
Opinion	
0	18
1	4

Frequency	Subject Response
Paragraphing	
1	1
2	1
3	10
4	1
7	3
8	5
9	1
Proper Nouns	
4	2
5	2
6	1
8	2
9	5
10	8
11	2
Science Words	
1	1
2	3
3	7
4	9
5	2

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA

FREQUENCY AND SUBJECT RESPONSE DISTRIBUTION CHART

Frequency	Subject Response
Spelling	
0	18
1	3
2	1
Story Elements	
1	5
2	14
3	3
Summary	
0	7
1	13
2	2

APPENDIX E

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA

FREQUENCY OF SUBJECT RESPONSE SUMMARY

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Answered Question				1		1			1		
Beginning Capitalization	3	1	5	3	5	5	1	4	4	4	5
Complete Sentences	19	18	23	20	32	20	20	17	29	22	20
Content	7	11	12	8	18	11	8	6	13	6	10
Descriptive Words		2	7	2	9	4	2	2	6	6	3
Details	4	2	2	1	2	4	2	1	1	2	4
End Punctuation	27	16	18	25	25	21	21	18	26	26	23
Facts	2	2			1	2	2	1	2		2
Figures of Speech		1		1	1				1	1	
Format	7	5	9	4	8	7		7	8	9	7
Good Introduction	2			2	2	1	2	3	2	2	1
Opinion			1					1	1		
Paragraphing	7	3	3	4	3	7	7	3	3	3	8
Proper Nouns	11	4	5	9	11	10	9	6	10	9	9
Science Words	4	2	5	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
Spelling						1			2		
Story Elements	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	3	2	2	2
Summary		1	1	1	1			1	1	2	1

FOCUS CORRECTION AREA

FREQUENCY OF SUBJECT RESPONSE SUMMARY

	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
Answered Question											
Beginning Capitalization	3	6	4	3	3	7	5	5	2	2	6
Complete Sentences	14	18	23	30	25	14	24	22	16	13	24
Content	5	8	8	17	7	9	13	10	7	5	13
Descriptive Words	4	2	4	3	4	1	7	1	2	1	4
Details	2	2	1	3	1	4	3	4	2	1	2
End Punctuation	16	19	21	28	27	15	20	24	18	13	22
Facts				2		1	1	1	2	1	2
Figures of Speech	1	1	2		1						2
Format	5	8	7	7	6	8	7	8	4	5	8
Good Introduction	1	1	1	2	2		1	1	1		
Opinion										1	
Paragraphing	2	3	3	8	3	8	8	9	8	3	1
Proper Nouns	10	10	5	10	9	10	8	10	8	4	10
Science Words	3	3	3	4	4	2	5	4	1	2	4
Spelling		1		1							
Story Elements	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Summary	1	1	1		2		1		1	1	

APPENDIX F

INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS

PRE AND POST TEST SCORES

Student	Variable									
	Mechanics		Style		Content		Organization		Holistic	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
A	5	7	5	7	4	7	8	8	4	6
B	6	6	4	4	6	5	5	8	4	5
C	3	4	3	6	4	5	3	7	2	5
D	4	8	4	5	5	8	5	8	5	5
E	5	8	5	8	6	8	5	8	5	8
F	4	6	4	4	3	7	6	8	4	5
G	4	5	3	6	3	7	2	5	2	4
H	4	6	3	4	4	5	6	8	4	5
I	4	8	5	8	5	8	4	8	6	6
J	7	8	5	8	7	8	5	8	7	7
K	3	5	4	4	5	6	5	7	2	4
L	5	7	4	6	4	7	6	5	4	5
M	4	8	4	8	4	8	6	7	4	8
N	6	8	4	8	4	8	6	8	4	8
O	4	6	5	5	4	7	6	8	5	5
P	8	7	6	6	7	6	8	8	4	6
Q	7	5	6	5	6	6	5	6	4	4
R	2	7	2	5	2	5	4	8	3	5
S	8	5	6	4	8	4	8	8	6	4
T	2	5	3	6	2	7	2	8	2	5
U	4	6	3	5	4	5	5	8	4	5
V	6	6	4	6	4	8	6	6	5	5

Number of Discrepancies in Scores Amongst Readers that had to be Resolved at Each Scoring:

Variable	Number
Mechanics	0
Style	2
Content	0
Organization	1
Holistic	2

APPENDIX G

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT PROMISE

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL
Project PROMISE

Boston's Middle School looks like an ordinary inner-city school in many ways. It's housed in an aging building on a busy street in the heart of Its students come from some of the poorest neighborhoods of and bring with them all the academic and social needs of urban students everywhere.

But the is an *extraordinary* school. Its students' test scores are among the highest in the city. It attracts far more students that it can enroll. Its staff has the lowest absenteeism rate of any school in Boston. It has been cited by the Carnegie Foundation as a model for middle schools across the country. By all measures, it is a school that is working for its students, its parents, and its staff.

The key to that success has been Project PROMISE. Modeled on a similar program begun by Superintendent Laval S. Wilson when he was in Rochester and developed under the direction of the principal, Mary Grassa O'Neill, Project PROMISE at the incorporates many of the components of successful schools:

A LONGER SCHOOL DAY

All students are in school 90 minutes more, Mondays through Thursdays, than students at other schools, adding up to almost 40% more class time than is required by law. students also take classes on Saturdays.

TEAM TEACHING

The clusters all its students, including those in special needs and bilingual programs, into groups of 100-150 students, one for each of the three grades. There is also a multilevel cluster, with half of its students from the school's Spanish bilingual program.

Each cluster is taught by a team of nine teachers who make all decisions about their cluster: how the cluster is structured, what classes students are assigned to, how the budget is spent, what materials are used, how the curriculum is developed and organized, what common rules govern the cluster and what discipline is used.

Built into the longer school day are daily and weekly planning sessions for each cluster team, allowing them to review what they're doing and plan what they want to do. It also allows them to address problems as soon as—and often before—they occur and to devise solutions.

INTERDISCIPLINARY INSTRUCTION

The takes team teaching a step further, incorporating reading, writing and math into all classes. The school's structure encourages teachers to work together on curriculum issues, with the cluster team coordinating efforts so that related skills are taught and reinforced in all classes.

The cluster team also plans units together. They may, for example, develop and schedule a two-day unit on the Industrial Revolution, studying it from all perspectives in all classes.

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING

The cluster team also sets the class schedule for their cluster, alloting time as teachers request it. This flexibility allows the staff to develop lessons around a subject, not around a 42-minute period.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The staff recognizes that parent participation is critical to their efforts. Two parent coordinators keep in touch daily with parents, respond to their concerns, and head off problems *before* they begin.

The efforts are paying off, in big ways. The staff, students and parents know what a success the school is, and now everyone else does too. This year, the Middle School won a prestigious Secondary Schools Exemplary Award from the United States Department of Education, the only inner-city middle school in New England ever to do so.

APPENDIX H

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FORM: LETTER TO PARENTS

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE NORTH ZONE SUPERINTENDENT

April 9, 1990

Dear Parent:

Since last year I have been preparing and writing a Dissertation for my Doctorate Degree. As part of my research, I examined writing papers from Mr. Anderson, Ms. Droge, Ms. Haddad and Ms. McNamara's seventh grade classes.

While your child was a student in these classes, the John Collin's Writing Folder Program was used. This Writing Program is still being used today in all seventh grade classrooms in the Boston Public Schools as part of the Education Plan.

During their writing classes, many focus correction areas were used . All of these strategies or areas are accepted techniques used in middle school writing programs. My study compares the results of the writing samples of those students who had a large number of total focus correction areas with those students who had a smaller number of total focus correction areas.

This letter is to inform you that neither your child's name nor the individual results of his/her writings will be used. Your child's identity will be kept strictly confidential. I will be very happy to share the results of this study with you when it is complete. If you would like a copy of the study results, please tear off the bottom of this sheet and send it to me at the address below.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at

My very best wishes to you and your child as eighth grade graduation draws near. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Mary Grassa O'Neill

Mary Grassa O'Neill

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Please send me the results of the dissertation study

Student's Name	Parent's Signature

Please mail this form to: Mary Grassa O'Neill, North Zone Supt.

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