

THE EFFECT OF DAILY JOURNAL WRITING
ON READING ACHIEVEMENT OF
FIRST GRADE STUDENTS

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Purpose for the Study

People read or communicate in one language or another, often without giving much thought to the process involved. Educators should be concerned with all the processes of reading since it is a professional responsibility to teach young children to read effectively.

Merina (1995) stated that an estimated 90 million adults in the United States can read only at a fifth grade level, and 40 million of those adults can barely read or write at all. The U.S. Government (1993) found that 47 percent of adults in the U.S. could not use a bus schedule or write a brief letter stating a billing error concern they may have.

The problems associated with having limited reading skills in United States have been well documented. Children who have difficulty learning to read do less well in other subject areas, have lower self esteem, pose greater discipline problems in school, and are less likely to complete a high school

education. For adults, limited reading ability is correlated with unemployment, crime, lack of civic awareness and involvement, poor health maintenance for self and family, and other social problems (Shanahan & Barr, 1995).

As educators, we need to help focus our youngsters to have a strong desire to read and assist them in seeing the importance and the need to be able to read in our society. Hopefully, a focus supporting literacy development in the youth of our country would contribute to a decline in adult illiteracy.

To help alleviate the problems associated with adult illiteracy, teachers perceive that their goal is to prepare children for the real world, so that they are productive members of society. This preparation includes strong support in literacy acquisition in the early grades.

Research has documented that a comprehensive, balanced approach to literacy development includes reading and writing (Morrow, 1993). There is a need to expand the research to study reading and writing together in the beginning stages of literacy instruction.

Teale and Sulzby (1986) challenge educators to reconceptualize their conceptions of early reading and writing theory, as well as curricula and instructional practices to encompass a more integrative,

developmental viewpoint. They have suggested the term "emergent literacy" to reflect this change in perspective. Emergent literacy is a description of the long process a child goes through in order to become literate (Clay, 1991). Emergent literacy begins early in a child's life and is ongoing (Strickland, 1994-95). This perspective implies that children going to school will be at different points in the emerging literacy process (Clay, 1991). Researchers who subscribe to the concept of emergent literacy propose that reading and writing are viewed developmentally as well as integratively. Literacy is a process in which both reading and writing are intricately interwoven.

Dyson (1982) has suggested that through writing children establish the connection between reading, writing, and language. Reading and writing share common developmental origins and can develop naturally in literate cultures (Goodman, 1986).

Studies conducted by Sulzby (1986) indicate that children are inventing, discovering, and developing literacy as they grow up in a literate society. They develop many insights about the function of written language for themselves and for adults who are important in their lives. They discover that written language makes sense, and as members of a literate society they make sense of written language. Furthermore, they develop concepts or principles about

how written language makes sense. Research studies by Sulzby show that children become knowledgeable about the various systems of language used in writing and reading. They are aware that reading and writing represent ideas, knowledge, and thoughts as well as representing some aspects of oral language (Sulzby, 1986).

Theory and research are beginning to support the practice of having students learn to read and write concurrently in beginning literacy instruction rather than withholding writing instruction until reading is mastered. Teale (1986) suggested that reading and writing are not separate processes, nor do they develop sequentially. The processes are mutually supportive and intimately tied with oral language.

The connection between reading and writing is one of the key aspects of emergent literacy. A child's desire to read and write needs to be developed simultaneously. "Concepts about the nature of language in print apply to both activities: what is learned in writing becomes a resource in reading and vice versa" (Clay, 1991, p.96). Writing contributes to early reading progress in several ways. The child's writing is a rough indicator of what the child is attending to in print (Clay, 1991), and it is also an indicator of the strategies the child is using for word production. Writing, however, is not the only area educators must

focus on when teaching reading.

A recent national study as cited in the IRA Position Statement of reading instruction in American public schools found that 98 percent of primary-grade teachers regard phonics instruction as a very important part of their reading program. Further, the study found that primary-grade teachers engage their students in phonics lessons on a regular basis as part of instruction in reading and writing.

Although there are many different approaches to phonics instruction, all phonics instruction focuses the learner's attention on the relationships between sounds and symbols as an important strategy for word recognition. (International Reading Association, 1997).

Phonics instruction, to be effective in promoting independence in reading, must be embedded in the context of a total reading/language arts program (Routman, 1992). When children engage with texts themselves as readers or writers, they begin to orchestrate this knowledge of how written language works to achieve success. It is within these kinds of contexts of language use that direct instruction in phonics takes on meaning for the learner.

Learning the phonetic principles of our language, however, is only one part of the reading process. In order to grow as readers, children must also learn to

use their own knowledge, experiences, and emotions to construct personal meaning and develop a sense of text ownership (Mayher & Lester, 1983). Reading activities focusing upon students' interests and needs can engender such personal involvement.

Journal writing encourages readers to recognize, appreciate and reflect upon their personal interpretations. It also helps develop awareness of how meaning is constructed during reading because it directs readers' attention to their thought processes and reveals these processes on paper. Furthermore, journal writing integrates reading and writing processes.

Giving first grade students time to write in their personal journals may provide students with the opportunity to apply reading strategies they have developed during whole group instruction. Students are encouraged to draw and write on a topic of their choice, as the teacher is accepting of all writing. It is the researcher's hypothesis that by providing journal writing, an increase in reading achievement would occur.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effect of a daily journal writing program on reading achievement of first grade students.

Research Hypothesis

The subjects in the journal writing group (treatment group) will score better than those who are not, on measures of reading achievement.

Null Hypothesis

There will be no differences in measures of reading achievement between students engaged in journal writing and students who are not.

Limitations

The sample was limited to the seventeen students presently enrolled in the researcher's 1997-98 first-grade class.

The duration of the study was limited to eight weeks.

In the setting for this study, students are regrouped for reading/language arts instruction. Some of the students in this study went to another teacher for reading class, however, they did not participate in any form of journal writing.

Due to scheduling time constraints, the researcher felt that whole group instruction and small group time sometimes was limited.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The review of literature section addressed the following four areas: 1) how literacy develops in the early years, 2) how whole language activities support students in their use of all aspects of language, 3) the strong relationship between phonics knowledge and reading achievement, 4) the importance of daily writing in journals as part of the reading-writing process.

How Literacy Develops in the Early Years

It is important that teachers develop a curriculum that supports the natural literacy evolution of young children. To do so, it's necessary to understand how children develop as readers and writers and to be aware that children construct knowledge about written language in the same way they form knowledge about the world (Manning & Manning 1987). A teacher who realizes that children construct their own knowledge will offer children opportunities to extend their knowledge about the system of written language.

The relationship between reading and language is evident in studies of children who are early readers. It has been found for instance, that early readers score higher on language screening tests than children who were not reading early. Early readers come from homes where rich language and a great deal of oral language are used (Morrow 1993).

Written language is one expression of language, and it is the major medium through which literacy is represented. A variety of societal factors will affect the way in which children become proficient in written language. Children will acquire written language in many of the ways they acquire oral language. However, differences do exist. The ways in which written language differ from oral language in terms of its different functions, purposes, and forms will influence its development in young children (Sulzby, 1986).

Researchers have often found that adult models are important in early literacy development. It is evident that children imitate adult models and are motivated to continue using language because of positive reinforcement. Children are more likely to enter formal schooling with a disadvantage if they come from homes where one or more adults are illiterate and children are not exposed to adults reading formally or informally (reading recipes,

directions on medicine etc.) or where books, magazines, or newspapers are not visible.

Children learn about writing by observing more skilled writers and by participating with them in literacy events. People who are more proficient writers play an important modeling role in children's writing development (Morrow, 1993). Children need to observe adults participating in writing, and they must write having the guidance and support of the adult.

At the kindergarten and first-grade level, most children move from scribbling to producing random letters, to writing letters, to writing words with invented spellings, to beginning to use conventional writing. They will begin to space properly between words and use some marks of punctuation. They tend to write longer pieces, and their productions often represent wider ranges of functions and forms. According to Bissex, as stated by Morrow, this is a time when children show intense bursts of writing activity, perhaps alternating these with intense bursts of reading activity. It is important, therefore that teachers have a sense of children's writing needs and interests at this time and know how to interact with them in order to support their efforts, learning and growth (Morrow, 1993). The challenge for schools is to provide experiences that

complement children's prior experiences and to recognize individual differences in development among youngsters (Morrow, 1993). It is important that adults observe the signs and pace of the growth of children's understanding of writing, of their use of writing for a widening range of purposes, and of their ability to control various writing conventions in less primitive, more adult-like ways. Observing children's early writing development creates a context for the planned learning events and spontaneous interactions through which adults can contribute so fundamentally to children's emergent literacy (Morrow, 1993).

Teale (1982) views literacy as a result of children's involvement in reading activities mediated by literate others. It is the social, collaborative interaction accompanying these activities that makes them so significant to the child's development. Not only do interactive literacy events teach children the societal function and conventions of reading, they also link reading with enjoyment and satisfaction and thus increase children's desire to engage in literacy activities (Morrow, 1993).

How Whole Language Activities Support Students

Teachers can create the optimal early reading experience for emergent readers by creating environments where children use reading and writing

in ways that are authentic and meaningful. The philosophy known as "whole language" best describes a classroom where the major emphasis is placed on integrating all language processes of speaking, listening, reading and writing. The purpose of all the processes is to convey meaning. It is the educator's task to support children in the development of ability to decode and understand the written language he can read; to interpret daily experiences, to form concepts, and to see the relationship among things (Manning & Manning, 1987).

The following ideas are based on whole language theory: 1) Children construct their own knowledge from within rather than having it imposed on them from some outside source, 2) Language arts are social activities and are best learned through interaction with others, 3) Learning to read and write will emerge naturally as children engage in these processes in authentic ways using whole and real-life materials (Manning & Manning, 1987).

Children are more likely to become involved in formal reading if they have seen reading, writing, and speaking as functional, purposeful, and useful. Studies of early reading behaviors clearly illustrate that young children acquire their first information about reading and writing through their functional uses (Morrow, 1993). Whole language emphasizes the

functional use of language.

Emphasis in a whole language program is on the process, not the final product. Instead of pre-planned drills in letter and word formation, children are provided "with the tools and encouragement they need to continue their natural desire to construct meaningful communication through the medium of print—a process they began long before coming to school" (Raines & Canady, 1990, p.72).

Reading in a whole language program is taught using a wide variety of books and materials including children's literature, poems, song lyrics, and recipes (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991). There are no set skills the child must learn before participating in reading and writing activities. Whole language looks at the child's interests and strengths and capitalizes on them. Whole language encourages children to be responsible for their own learning.

The whole language classroom is rich in print with charts, posters and children's writings decorating the walls. The classroom contains a library/reading area with a wide range of children's literature and other reading materials. A writing center with an assortment of writing materials is also available. However, whole language classrooms should include systematic phonics instruction as well.

The Strong Relationship Between Phonics and Reading Achievement

Phonics is knowledge about the relationships that exist between speech sounds and print. Marilyn Adams addressed the issue of whole language and phonics and concluded that phonics and whole language can and should "coexist" in children's early school experience (Adams, 1990).

Chall (1989) as cited in Adams, looked at studies comparing the relative effectiveness of whole word ("look-say") versus phonic approaches to beginning reading instruction. Children who were trained through the look-say method demonstrated an early advantage in rate and comprehension of silent reading and perhaps in interest, fluency, and expression as well. In contrast, children who were taught phonics exhibited the early advantage in word recognition, particularly for untaught words, and maintained it throughout. Furthermore, there were indications that the phonics children not only caught up with but surpassed their look-say peers in silent reading rate, comprehension, and vocabulary by the end of the second grade (Adams, 1990).

Chall examined all of the studies she could find on the correlation between letter or phonic knowledge and reading achievement. A strong, positive correlation was reported in every one. For both

young readers and prereaders, familiarity with letters and sensitivity to the phonetic structure of oral language were strong predictors of reading achievement -- stronger, in fact, than IQ (Adams, 1990).

Bond and Dykstra's analyses of the First-Grade Cooperative Studies examined the following question: "Which of the approaches to beginning reading instruction produces the best reading and spelling achievement at the end of first grade?" Students who participated in systematic phonics instruction consistently exceeded students who participated in straight basal programs on word recognition achievement scores. A basal instruction is a systematic, sequential collection of materials for reading instruction. The students who participated in both systematic phonics and considerable emphasis on connected reading and meaning surpassed the students in basal-alone approaches on virtually all outcome measures. The two approaches in this category were basal plus phonics approach and the phonics/linguistics approach. In addition, the data indicated that writing was a positive component of beginning reading instruction (Adams, 1990).

The Importance of Daily Writing in Journals

Research supports the notion that combining instruction in reading and writing in the classroom

enhances children's literacy learning (Bromley, 1989). According to Fisher (1991), when students write daily, they begin to think of themselves as writers and become more engaged in the reading-writing process for their own needs and interests. Thus, journal writing encourages readers to recognize, appreciate, and reflect upon their personal interpretations (Bonilla, 1989). It also helps develop awareness of how meaning is constructed during reading because it directs readers' attention to their thought processes and reveals these processes on paper.

Writing with invented spelling seems to be a natural mode for children to learn phonics principles and to unlock the rest of the written language system (Fields, 1993). Children try to discover which letters represent the sounds they hear in words. The child starts with the idea to express, formulates the desired sentence, considers the individual words of the sentence, and isolates the sounds of those words. When children are freed from the fear of misspelling, they spontaneously experiment with writing. In the process, they learn more from their own experience with print than a teacher could ever tell them (Fields, 1993).

There are three major reasons for making the connections between reading and writing. First, it

has been demonstrated that reading and writing develop simultaneously. Even young children become aware of print in their environment and concurrently begin to read and write as they become literate (Clay, 1993). Second, reading and writing reinforce each other. At all levels as literacy develops, children's reading promotes and strengthens their writing. The reverse is also true as a knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, semantics, and form grows. Third, through reading and writing, language is used for communication. Children naturally communicate by talking and listening, and literacy activities that connect reading and writing can extend this everyday language to print (Bromley, 1989).

When reading and writing occur together in literacy activities that accomplish goals for children, then real connections are made (Teale & Sulzby, 1989). Students at all levels of literacy development benefit when they actively engage in meaning construction with language that has purpose and for which they receive tangible feedback. As students explore blended reading and writing activities and observe each other in these explorations, classrooms become literate communities where students become increasingly able to create and deal with extended texts of varying kinds (Bromley, 1989).

Journal writing is a prime example of how teachers are providing meaningful ways to develop students' written language skills. Journaling provides valuable learning experiences in many content areas. It is an activity which may make the connection between reading and writing natural, real and meaningful. Journal writing incorporates some of the natural aspects of oral language conversation and transforms it into written form for the student.

Because it encourages personal engagement in reading, journal writing helps children refine their understanding of texts and their control of the reading process. Journals invite children to use expressive language that is addressed to oneself or a trusted reader and is informal and conversational in tone. Using expressive language allows writers to explore ideas and feelings and formulate hypotheses, predictions, and questions as they record their developing meanings on paper.

Journal writing can be an important step in the integration of writing and reading. Exploration may take place in the areas of spelling, grammar, and topics. Journals written in a child's own language may make them memorable and meaningful to the child, and it's easier for him to read his journal. Routman (1988) believes journals allow teachers to get to know their students by giving insight into their

strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Graves (1973) contends that writing stimulates reading and it is preliminary to reading. Experiences in first grade classrooms by researchers corroborate these suggestions (Calkins, 1981; Giocobbe, 1981; Sowers, 1981).

Student choice in reading and writing is very important. According to Ken Goodman (1986), "Children of all ages write best when they are able to choose their own topics" (p.73). If a particular theme is being studied the teacher may want to suggest topics, however, the final choice is left up to the child. By allowing students to make their own choices, learning becomes meaningful and relevant. Also, by giving the children the right to make their own choice, the teacher is empowering students. When students are allowed to choose a topic for journal writing, the child may see the writing as functional, purposeful, and meaningful.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter serves as an overview of the methodology of the investigation. This research examined the effect of journal writing on reading achievement of first grade students. In this chapter, information on the research design is provided and a description of the subjects and the setting is shared. Information on the instrumentation is provided as well as a complete description of the procedure and the data analysis.

Design

The design for this project is Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design. The independent variable is journal writing. The dependent variable is reading achievement as measured by the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993). The subjects were randomly assigned to two groups.

Subjects

The subjects of this study were seventeen first-grade students. The students were heterogeneously grouped (all reading level abilities together) in the classroom. There were seven boys and ten girls representing ethnic backgrounds of African-American and

Caucasian. The socioeconomic status of the families of these students ranged from below lower class to lower class.

Setting

This study was conducted in a public school in a mid-sized metropolitan school district. The school's total enrollment is approximately 450 students ranging from Kindergarten through grade six. The school is located in a urban setting. The students are bused from all areas of the surrounding community.

Instrumentation

Student reading achievement was measured by results on the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993), pre-and post-tests. The Observation Survey consists of six tests, three of which were used in this research. The three tests were: 1) word test, 2) writing vocabulary test, 3) dictation test (all adapted with permission of The Ohio State University, 1990). The study was eight weeks in duration. The subjects were randomly assigned to two groups.

The word test is comprised of word lists of twenty words found in commonly adapted reading materials for primary grades. The Ohio Word Test was constructed using the high frequency words from the Dolch Word List. The researcher asked the students to read one list. The score is the number of words correctly identified. The test provides an indication of the extent to which a

child has accumulated a reading vocabulary of the most frequently used words in the reading series. The purpose of this test was to determine a student's knowledge of words in isolation (Clay, 1993).

The second subtest administered was the writing vocabulary test. By observing children as they write we can learn a great deal about what they understand about print and messages in print, and what features of print they are attending to. Writing behavior is a good indicator of a child's knowledge of letters and of the left-to-right sequencing behavior required to read English. In writing words letter by letter the child must recall not only the configuration but also the details of letter formation and letter order. A child's written texts are a good source of information about his visual discrimination of print, for as the child learns to write words, the hand and the eye support and supplement each other to organize the learner's first attempts to discover how to distinguish among different letters (Clay, 1993). In this task the student was asked to write down all the words he/she knows how to write, starting with his/her own name and making a personal list of words he/she has acquired as part of his/her writing vocabulary. This test was reliable and had a high relationship with reading words in isolation (Clay, 1993). It is not a requirement of this observation that the child be able to read the words he

has written.

The third subtest was the dictation test. In this task, also called 'Hearing Sounds in Words' the researcher asked the student to record a dictated sentence. The researcher dictated a sentence to the student. The student was encouraged to write what he/she could hear in the words dictated. The child was given credit for every sound (phoneme) that he/she wrote correctly, even though the whole word may not be correctly spelled. The scores gave some indication of the child's ability to analyze the words he/she heard or said and to find a way of recording in letters the sounds that he/she heard. The Hearing Sounds in Words test proved to be valuable indicators of change over time of a child's ability to go from his analysis of sounds in spoken words to written forms for representing these sounds (Clay, 1993).

Procedure

All subjects were exposed to whole group phonics-based instruction based on thematic mini-units within a whole language environment. The intense phonics instruction is an integration of reading, writing, spelling, and handwriting and often times it will be achieved by focusing instruction on a single topic or thematic unit. The lesson may begin with the teacher reading stories and/or poetry aloud to the students to build background and interest in the subject matter.

The children were encouraged to be active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of knowledge, by using activities that allow for experimentation with talking, listening, writing and reading. Using materials that are well-known to the children assist in providing them with a sense of control and confidence.

The environment is designed to allow the children to feel free to take risks. The students were gathered on the carpet in front of the chalkboard, not more than six feet away. The following activities took place during an intense phonics session in relation to a topic or theme: word walls, word family charts, webs, and bookmaking (See Appendix A). A variety of other phonics related lessons occurred, but the above were the focus for this study.

As the instructor wrote the days phonics lesson on the large chart, the students wrote the same thing on their individual papers. Appendix B illustrates the chart that evolved from the first day of instruction and the students continually used that chart as a reference point. As a new cue for a letter combination was learned, it was then added to the reference chart.

After whole group instruction time, the control group worked with self-correcting phonics activities and a variety of other instructional materials. Materials such as file folder games dealing with vowels and

pictures, and alphabet tiles for making words, and word families were available for the students. Most of the materials were self-correcting so as to not frustrate the student. They worked together cooperatively and learned to share from each other. Students were given individual worksheets, not more than one a week for individual assessment.

During this time, the journal writing group wrote in journals (notebooks) about any topic of their choice using any of their aids from the whole group time such as word lists, webs, word walls, dictionary. The teacher responded to all journal writing by having the child read his/her journal entry to her and the teacher acknowledged with positive and encouraging comments and a sticker, stamp or star put on his/her page as a basis for daily completion. Grades were not given for journal writing. Each student was given the chance to share his journal with the group daily. However, sharing was not mandatory.

Data Analysis

The students in both groups were given three subtests of the Observation Survey as measures of reading achievement. Each subtest yielded a raw score for each student and means and standard deviation were calculated for each group.

The pre-test scores on Observation Survey were analyzed by t-test to determine if two groups were

equivalent on Observation Survey at the beginning of the study. The post test scores were analyzed through t-test to determine differences in reading achievement as measured by Observation Survey.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Presentation of the Results

This research examined the effect of journal writing on reading achievement of first grade students and the findings related to the research and null hypothesis are presented. The researcher calculated the mean and the standard deviation of the pretests and posttests of the three subtests from the Observation Survey.

On the pretest, the results for the Observation Survey were as follows; On the word test, there were no observed differences between the scores of the treatment group ($m=1.22$, $sd=2.10$) and the scores of the control group ($m=1.12$, $sd=1.55$), $t(15) = .11$, $p>.05$. On writing vocabulary, there were no observed differences between the scores of the treatment group ($m=2.88$, $sd=3.01$) and the scores of the control group ($m=3.50$, $sd=3.85$), $t(15) = -.37$, $p>.05$. On dictation, there were no observed differences between the scores of the control group ($m=14.2$, $sd=9.82$) and the scores of the treatment group, ($m=15.2$, $sd=9.05$), $t(15) = -.22$, $p>.05$.

Since the p value was greater than .05, the pretest measures did not show any statistically significant differences suggesting that both groups are equal and any concluding results were due to treatment and not chance.

The results of the posttests are presented in table 1 below. All seventeen subjects who took the pretests also concluded the study by completing the posttest.

For each test the information shown in the table consists of the number of students that were tested (n), the means, and standard deviation.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and t Tests for Observation Survey Posttest

Subtest	Group		t
	Journal Writing (n = 9)	Comparison (n = 8)	
Word Test	5.00 (4.06)a	3.75 (2.60)	.74
Writing Vocabulary	13.33 (8.66)	7.50 (2.39)	1.84*
Dictation	28.55 (5.63)	21.62 (9.00)	1.93*

a Standard deviations are in parentheses

*p <.05

For the word test, there were no observed differences between the scores of the treatment group (m=5.00, sd=4.06) and the scores of the control group

($m=3.75$, $sd=2.6$), $t(15) = .74$, $p > .05$. On the writing vocabulary, the mean score of the treatment group ($m=13.33$, $sd=8.66$) was higher than the mean score of the control group ($m=7.50$, $sd=2.39$), $t(15) = 1.84$, $p < .05$. On the dictation test, the mean score of the treatment group ($m=28.55$, $sd=5.63$) was higher than the mean score of the control group ($m=21.62$, $sd=9.0$), $t(15) = 1.93$, $p < .05$.

Discussion of the Results

It was concluded that there is a significant difference between the mean posttest scores of the treatment group in two of the three subtests. The scores demonstrate significant gains in those subtests. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected in the subtest of writing vocabulary and dictation. No measurable increase in achievement, however, was indicated in the area of word recognition.

It appears that the time period of eight weeks allotted for the study was a sufficient amount of time for students who participated in journal writing to measurably improve their achievement in the areas of writing vocabulary and dictation.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of daily journal writing on reading achievement of first grade students.

This study supports the hypothesis that journal writing is an important element of early literacy activities. This finding supports the existing research on early literacy that suggests writing is an important element of early literacy development. The fact that the students were able to go immediately to their notebooks and begin writing, after whole group instruction lessons occurred, was beneficial. Another factor, the children were applying strategies learned and could self-check by using the cueing chart (Appendix B). The students were writing things that were meaningful to them. It was logical and made sense and was of interest to them which helps develop an awareness of how meaning is constructed, and directing their attention to

their thought processes and revealing these processes on paper. Journals written in a child's own language may make them memorable and meaningful to the child, and it's easier for him to read his journal. The students received immediate feedback because they read it aloud to others.

When children construct and create from within rather than having it imposed on them from an outside source it makes it real for them. They can see the life application of reading and writing. It is a life skill necessary for survival.

In regard to the Word test, the researcher believes that there were no significant statistical gains possibly due to the fact that the words were given in isolation, not in context. Perhaps if they were read within context they might have scored better. The Writing Vocabulary and the Dictation subtests, both of which showed significant gains, were related to writing. The researcher spent considerable time with the treatment group in writing activities. This, supports the notion that combining instruction in reading and writing in the classroom enhances children's literacy learning (Bromley, 1989).

Conclusion

On the basis of this study, it is concluded that a daily journal writing program enhanced by whole

language thematic lessons involving the use of phonics instruction can have a positive outcome on reading achievement with first grade students. All subjects in the treatment group showed some improvement in scores from writing in their journals on a daily basis. Although there was a significant difference in posttest scores between the groups, it is not necessarily due strictly to the journal writing program and whole group phonics instruction. Outside influences could have played a part, such as parental involvement, and other reading teacher. However, it is hoped that the journal writing which followed whole group phonics instruction did play a major role in the enhancement of reading achievement.

The researcher concluded that journal writing has been very beneficial for the students involved at this point of the year. She is planning to get the control group started on a journal writing program so all of the class is exposed to the positive benefits of journal writing.

Recommendations

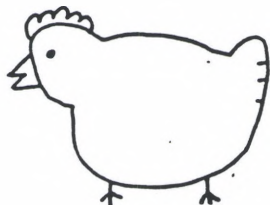
Although it does seem that journal writing is one alternative in making the reading-writing connection, the question remains in regards to how effective it is in improving reading achievement in first grade students. This study needs to be replicated with larger populations before any

substantial generalizations can be made. Future studies are needed to support the idea of journal writing as a strategy for educators to use with their students to enhance reading achievement. Educators need to determine the effectiveness of the strategy with their own group of individual students. Whether it be journal writing or some other strategy, educators must find new ways to motivate all students in becoming good readers and writers.

Appendix A

Brainstorm words on large hen

eggs chicks farm barn hut
claws cluck feathers fly
waddle legs beak



Word Families

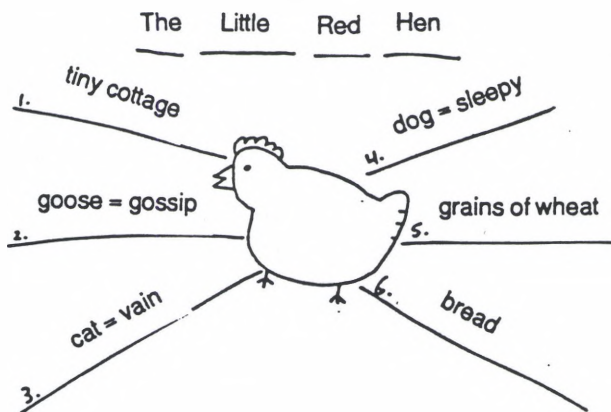
oo	en	end	ent
goose	hen	lend	tent
loose	pen	send	lent
moose	men	bend	sent
moo	ten	mend	dent
boo	den	pending	bent

too
boom
loom
doom
boots
toot
loot
food
mood
moon
cartoon
spoon
noon

Story Map

<p>Main Characters = Who</p> <p>Little red hen</p> <p>dog cat goose</p>	<p>Setting = Place</p> <p>A tiny cottage</p>
<p>Title- Author- Illustrator-</p>	
<p>Problem</p> <p>Nobody would help her.</p>	<p>Solution = Fix it</p> <p>She made the bread.</p>

Web



Name:

Step book

1. The little red hen lived in a tiny cottage.
2. The goose talked and talked.
3. The cat always brushed her fur.
4. The dog was sleepy.
5. She cut the grains of wheat.
6. She made the bread and ate it.

These are a few of the activities the children work on during a week.

Format taken with permission from Kelly M. Smith Dayton, Ohio

Appendix B

a e i o u		ph=f	
y < ^e _i		ck	
z= x=ks		sh	
		th	
		ch	
bossy r	ey=a		
ar	ay=a	gh	e
ir			
ur			
or	ou	ing	
er	ow		

This is the cueing chart that hangs in the classroom. As the year progresses additions are made.

Kelly M. Smith
Dayton, Ohio

Appendix C

Dear Parents,

I am in the final stages of completion of a Master of Science Degree in Education. The Graduate program is titled, Literature and Whole Language.

In partial fulfillment of the degree requirements, I am to complete a thesis project. My study is as follows:

**The Effect of Daily Journal Writing on
Reading Achievement of First Grade Students**

The students in my class will receive intense phonics instruction through thematic units in a whole language environment. Through random selection, half of the students will journal write and the other half will work with a variety of phonics activities. This will occur daily for approximately ten to thirty minutes.

A pre and post test will be given. The study will be conducted from September 10, 1997 through October 31, 1997. At that point I will collect my data and compile the results and finish writing chapters four and five of my Master's Project.

My professor, Dr. Kinnucan-Welsch, Mrs. Watson, our principal and I are very excited about this project. The children are in a win-win situation so everyone benefits.

Respectfully,

Sara A. Dinneen

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