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One teacher's journey to uncover a personal belief system about the teaching of writing

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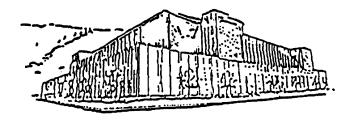ONE TEACHER'S JOURNEY TO UNCOVER A PERSONAL

BELIEF SYSTEM ABOUT THE TEACHING OF WRITING

by

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One Teacher's Journey to Uncover a Personal Belief System About The Teaching of Writing (129 pp.)

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   To determine the congruence between what is believed to be true about teaching writing in the classroom and actual classroom practice, this qualitative study examines one teacher's pedagogy with his 7th and 8th grade students. A process to discover his belief system about teaching writing in the classroom as well as determine how that belief system translates into actual classroom practice was based on a process discovered by Brian Cambourne and his co-researchers.

   Using a qualitative methodology, this project relies heavily upon recursive analysis of videotape, professional teacher journal entries, ethnographic observations of the classroom, lesson plans, and teacher comments in student folders. This study, through the identification of a belief system about teaching writing and analysis of actual classroom practices, helps one teacher improve classroom practices as well as serve as a model for teachers who seek to identify their belief system about teaching writing and improve classroom practices.

Acknowledgments

I began this paper because I questioned the relevance of my instructional practices in the writing classroom. It was completed with the help and support of several understanding and special people. I particularly would like to thank the following people and offer them my sincere appreciation:

- Dr. Marian McKenna who not only supported and guided me through this study but also became my mentor and friend;

- The 7th and 8th grade classes of Lolo School who allowed me to involve them as active participants in research;

- Dr. Jean Luckowski and Dr. Beverly Chin for taking the time to sit on my committee.

- My wife Jenny and children Abigail, Madison, and Gabriel who survived a degree of "husbandlessness" and "fatherlessness" and supported me with hugs, kisses, smiles, and encouragement.

Friends, students, and peers helped me keep in touch with reality as I worked on this project. My administrator, Alice Kupilik, took time from her busy day to observe my classroom; Jeff Crews listened to my whining without complaint and advised me on computer; Maureen Edwards completed a peer audit review of my paper. This degree and professional paper could not have been finished without the support given.

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The Problem

Teacher preparation programs provide the theoretical base and the classroom

experiences necessary to begin teaching writing in the classroom. Methods courses,

writing courses, literature and personal experience build the conceptual base; field

experiences and student teaching provide the practical application of strategies in

teaching writing.

Shapiro and Kilbey (1990) talk about how teachers are a diverse group. Different

ages, background experiences, and ethnic and cultural heritages support the idea that

teachers hold divergent expectations and beliefs about education. Thus, teachers begin

their careers with preconceived ideas about the role of the teacher.

Then graduate courses, seminars, workshops, teacher research, and teaching

experience broaden the knowledge base from which a teacher chooses instructional

strategies to teach writing. That knowledge base, however, often becomes a large

collection of what Cambourne (1994) refers to as "unverbalisable know-how" (p. 106) or

tacit knowledge. That "know-how" needs to be more formalized in the teacher's mind.

"Teaching practice without the support provided by a well-developed philosophy (set of

beliefs) proceeds at random, blindly. Teaching without purpose becomes mere activity to

'get things done'. . . " (Dobson & Dobson, 1983, p. 21).

Therefore, that "unverbalisable know-how" needs to be focused into a set of

definitive beliefs about writing in the classroom. Once that set of beliefs can be

articulated clearly and cohesively (brought to conscious awareness), then actual

classroom practices can be assessed and evaluated. This will determine whether or not a

congruence and cohesion exists between what is believed to be true about writing in the

classroom and actual teaching practices. One's belief system about teaching writing must

be congruent with actual classroom practice and adhere to a solid theoretical writing base

in order to teach student writers effective writing behaviors.

The Questions

This action research study examines a community of 7th and 8th grade writers in a

small middle school. The following questions constitute the focus of the study:

- What comprises this teacher's belief system about writing instruction?

- How do these beliefs translate into actual classroom practices?

- Do these beliefs accurately reflect current theories and practices in the
  teaching of writing?

The Setting

Student and community characteristics. Lolo, MT is a small, unincorporated but

growing community located eight miles southwest of Missoula with a population of

approximately 3,400 people. Seven and one half percent of the population is over seventy

years of age; 25.5% are single parent households; 44% of our students qualify for free

and reduced lunch. Although Lolo is not ethnically diverse, the community includes

seven Russian families with limited English proficiency. Lolo has no large, single

employer, so as a result, a large number of people commute into Missoula or down the

Bitterroot Valley to work.

Lolo's student population consists of 650 students K-8 with 42 teachers on staff.

In the morning, 6th grade students rotate every 45 minutes to mathematics, social studies,

and science classes. Language arts is taught in a three period block in the afternoon by each of the three teachers to her own homeroom group. During the student's 7th and 8th grade years, each subject is taught by subject area specialists.
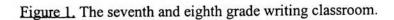
Drug and alcohol abuse among students and community members has led to a degree of disintegration in some family units. Statistics for our district from the Montana Youth Risk Behavior Study conducted by the Montana Office of Public Instruction indicate that in 1995 approximately 29% of our youth had used alcohol in the month prior to the survey.
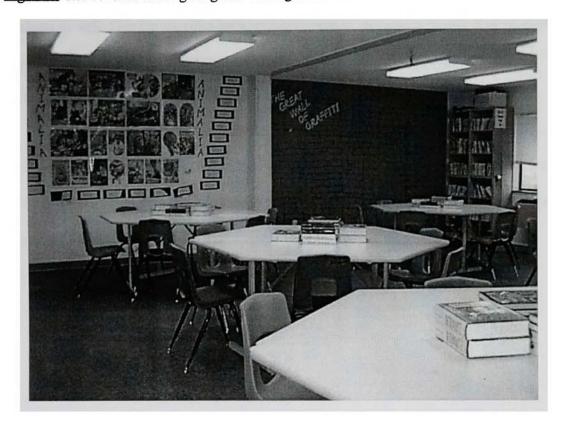
The small town nature of Lolo does not seem to negatively impact learning, although students possess a certain restlessness typical of bedroom communities with few student recreational opportunities. Student drug and alcohol use has no evident impact on student learning. The level of parental involvement in education seems to be fairly typical for a small community; some parents take an active role and others do not.

The classroom design. The seventh and eighth grade writing classroom contains five pods of tables (two tables per pod). Each table seats three students and when joined with another, seats six. Dictionaries, thesauruses and *Writers INC* reference handbooks are located in the middle of the pods for easy student access (see Figure 1). Students will use resources when they are within arms reach; however, if they must walk two feet to grab a reference book off the book shelf, the books never get used.

Tables are arranged in pods to facilitate student talk about writing as well as small group work. The design also allows a small group to gather for focus lessons on writing

Figure Captions

Figure 1. The seventh and eighth grade writing classroom.

skills. With the slight movement of a few chairs, students can see all directions in the classroom which enhances class discussion and enables unobstructed visual presentation of materials via television monitor, white board, overhead projector or computer projection device.

Tables readily move apart so that more independent writing space with fewer distractions can be obtained. Round table discussion is easily achieved by moving all tables in a circle. Such an arrangement facilitates more active student involvement in discussion.

One computer is located in the classroom behind the teacher's desk, primarily for

teacher use and classroom instruction. A scanner, digital camera, quick cam and projection device are available for student projects. Two computer labs are available to students as well. One lab provides basic word processing and serves twenty-five students; the other lab serves thirty students and provides Internet access and advanced technological production capabilities.

The class. The seventh grade class involved in the study consists of seventy-two students; thirty-eight female and thirty-four male. The eighth grade class is comprised of sixty-two students; thirty-four female and twenty-eight male. Each grade level is divided into three language arts classes. Instructional time consists of one forty-five minute period which meets on a regular daily schedule.

Literature Summary

Introduction

The underlying assumption of this study is that teacher belief systems impact instructional practices and decisions. Shapiro & Kilbey (1990) assert that it is desirable to have congruence between beliefs and practices.

If we are to foster this congruence, then teachers must be led to examine the assumptions underlying their beliefs; as well as the beliefs of others . . . . Teachers must move toward an understanding of the current knowledge concerning literacy acquisition and development. (p 63).

Components integral to accomplishing this understanding led the review of literature. Specifically, this section considers factors that influence congruence between what is believed to be true about writing in the classroom and actual classroom practice: influences of teacher belief systems on classroom practices, current theories and practices in writing, action research as a viable methodology, and journal writing for professional growth.

Influences of teacher belief systems on classroom practices. If beliefs inform behavior, action must be taken when discrepancies between the two exist or when beliefs are antithetical to what we know about children's language and cognitive development. Thus, teachers must examine the assumptions underlying their beliefs. In addition teachers need to learn to question why they are using specific instructional practices and determine how these practices relate to current theories of literacy development. These last two points are the heart of transformation in writing instruction because even though congruence may exist between beliefs and instructional strategies, the type of instruction

may not be desirable (Shapiro & Kilbey, 1990).

Kagan (1992) broadly defines teacher belief "as tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught" (p. 65). Research into teacher belief systems shows evidence of two views of teaching. Cambell and O'Laughlin (as cited in Shapiro & Kilbey, 1990) refer to the two views of teaching as mimetic or transformative while Dewey refers to them as traditional or progressive (as cited in Yaakobi and Sharon, 1985).

The mimetic approach and traditional approach are similar in nature. This view of education sees knowledge as an objective to be transmitted more or less intact to the student – fill the empty vault (mind) with something of worth (knowledge). The transformative view is one in which the learner brings something to the learning situation and the teacher helps give birth to the knowledge. Knowledge emerges as a process of interpretation and clarification of meanings related to various aspects of our experience (Dewey's progressive view as cited in Yaakobi and Sharon, 1985).

Subject matter specialization places teachers into one view of education or another. When teachers view the acquisition of knowledge specific to a subject area as unrelated to other disciplines or everyday life, they tend to isolate themselves in their discipline and maintain maximal control over learning. Teachers who view knowledge from various subject areas as interrelated and connected to everyday life seek relationships with teachers of other subjects and encourage a student-centered approach to teaching and writing tasks (Yaakobi and Sharon, 1985).

According to Barnes (as cited in Yaakobi and Sharon, 1985), teachers socialize into these views based on their academic training. A study conducted in Israel found that

"different academic disciplines exert differential effects on teachers' ideas about academic knowledge and about classroom instruction . . . . these attitudes were highly correlated with teachers' instructional strategies in the classroom" (p. 196). Foreign language teachers and science teachers tended to hold more traditional views of teaching; teachers of the humanities tended to be more progressive. These findings support work completed by Barnes and Bernstein "to the effect that teachers' academic training socializes them into a predictable set of ideas and attitudes about teaching" (Yaakobi and Sharon, 1985, p. 196).

Peterson, Fennema, Carpenter, and Loef (1989 as cited in Kagan, 1992) found that "elementary teachers with more cognitively based views of mathematics made more extensive use of word problems during instruction, displayed greater knowledge of their students' problem-solving strategies, and produced students who excelled on measures of mathematical problem solving" (p. 73).

In another study, Grossman et al. (1989) found that the level of conceptual understanding of mathematics and science teachers was directly correlated to their classroom emphasis on conceptual explanations and their modification of textbooks. Teachers with a superficial understanding of concepts relied heavily on the text and rarely modified them (Kagan, 1992). Thus "researchers have found that a teacher's beliefs usually reflect the actual nature of the instruction the teacher provides to students" (Kagan, 1992, p. 73).

In order for teachers to change their teaching practices, the change in practice must be related to a teacher's existing belief system. "Only when available knowledge is presented so that teachers can use it to inform their own actions, argues Fenstermacher

(1979), will significant and positive change occur" (Eisenhart et al, 1988, p. 51)."The

development of an elaborate and coherent set of pedagogical beliefs allows classroom

teachers to take control of uncertainty and ambiguity. Equipped with a highly personal

pedagogy, teachers can define and solve classroom problems with some sense of

confidence and certainty" (Provenzo et al., 1989 as cited in Kagan, 1992, p. 79).

The many uncertainties of classroom teaching is the most significant characteristic

suggested by research on teacher belief. In order to maintain control and continue to

orchestrate instruction in the unpredictable environment of the classroom, a teacher needs

to know whether or not things are going well; "a teacher must be able to identify, label,

solve, and evaluate the solutions to problems. Because there are no indisputable external

guidelines, teachers create their own, in the form of a personal cohesive pedagogical

system that they can support without reservation. In a landscape without bearings,

teachers create and internalize their own maps" (Kagan, 1992, pp. 79-80).

Theories and practices in writing. The methodology of writing instruction is

grounded in language development theory. "Language development follows three distinct

stages: from external or social speech to egocentric speech, and then to inner speech"

(Everson, 1991, p. 8). When small children begin to utter sounds, ". . . they are purposeful

attempts at communication and social interactions" (p. 8).

John-Steiner (as cited in Everson, 1991, p. 8) says "The infant is surrounded by

language, which he or she acquires through the daily exchanges of play and mutually

articulated need." Vygotsky emphasized the importance of language as a tool when he

said, "The primary function of speech, both for the adult and for the child, is the function

of communication, social contact, influencing surrounding individuals" (as cited in

Everson, 1991, p. 8).

Egocentric speech, speech for oneself without attempts to influence others, is the first means by which the child adapts to reality. "Talking to oneself is helpful to preschool children, for it allows them to privately rehearse difficult words and complex grammatical structures" (John-Steiner as cited in Everson, 1991, p. 9). The implication is that student writers need rehearsal time to work out the difficult beginning stages of composition.

By age seven, beginning external speech has transferred to egocentric speech and egocentric speech has become inner speech. Vygotsky states (as cited in Everson, 1991) that "inner speech enables humans to plan and regulate their activity and derives from previous participation in verbal social interactions" (p. 9). So then, inner speech is a student's first true perception of reality, and because of its interactive nature, it serves best when developed socially. Language develops first socially, and second individually.

The importance of John-Steiner's and Vygotsky's observations for writing is the need for social contact. "Our students write fuller narratives, more detailed description, and clearer exposition when they are given the opportunity to talk over their ideas before they begin to write" (Everson, 1991, p. 9). The implication is that writers are better able to "make meaning" in a classroom environment where teacher and classmates interact before experimenting with writing individually.

"When creative young people form a community - however temporary it may be - they become more aware of themselves, they profit from the criticism of their peers and they learn new ways to claim their experience" (John-Steiner as cited in Everson, 1991, p. 10). Thus, a writer's need for time, space and prewriting and conferencing skills to work

through ideas has a sound theoretical base in language development (Everson, 1991).

Inner speech, which moves from part to whole conceptually, has a considerable effect on writing instruction. It is personal and best understood by the speaker. Writing, on the other hand, is meant for others, is elaborate and requires detailed thought.

Vygotsky (as cited in Everson, 1991, p. 10) says the following:

The essential difference between written and oral speech reflects the difference between two types of activity, one of which is spontaneous, involuntary, and nonconscious, [speech] while the other is abstract, voluntary, and conscious [writing]; the psychological functions on which written speech is based have not even begun to develop in the proper sense when instruction in writing starts. It must build on barely emerging immature processes. (p. 10)

Everson (1991) identifies these barely emerging immature processes as what teachers see in student writing - fragmented sentences, omitted words, unrelated detail, and confused story structure.

Inner speech sometimes leaves gaps when it is written down because it is abbreviated. Thus, a great deal of detail must be added to enhance the meaning."A single word is so saturated with sense that many words would be required to explain it in written speech" (Vygotsky as cited in Everson 1991 p.10).

Also, inner speech works semantically, not phonetically. Student writers see what they want to say, but at times during the process of writing it down, syntax, mechanics, and usage get in the way (Everson, 1991). So inner speech is the immediate precursor to writing, the influence of its characteristics, both positive and negative, are reflected in the composing process. The challenge for teachers then is to "maintain the spontaneity and

integrity of our young writers' ideas, while at the same time foster[ing] editing skills that ultimately enhance the finished product" (Everson, 1991, p. 11).

Classroom instructional designs must allow students to "externalize their thoughts gradually, freely, and completely" (Everson, 1991, p. 10). Small group discussion in the prewriting stage and sharing drafts aloud with peers or teachers aid the writer in stepping away from that personal, abbreviated inner speech to the external social speech. A more objective view of the writing is available to pin point trouble spots, make corrections, and ultimately help to develop self-editing techniques in student writers (Everson 1991).

By recognizing the relationship between inner speech and social contexts, students will be better able to experiment and mature as writers. "Writing is a synthesis or pulling together of ideas, images, disarrayed facts, and fragments of experiences. It should be taught naturally. It should be necessary for something. And it should allow the time and space and cooperation necessary for the composition to develop into a worthwhile product" (Everson, 1991, p. 11).

Action research as a viable methodology. The search for my belief system led to teacher action research as a viable methodology. Action research as a methodology, provides a contextualized approach to research. Fleischer (1994) says that teachers who conduct research into their practice and their students' learning are in a position to see their students and their classrooms in their contextual fullness. He explains the teacher's role in this way:

> The teacher as researcher movement believes that classroom teachers are uniquely positioned to conduct studies because of the multidimensional and multifaceted nature of teaching and learning. Teachers are able to observe their teaching and

their students learning and to reflect productively on the relationships between that teaching and that learning. (p. 3)

Lee Odell (1976) likens the process of research to the processes we engage in if we are to teach effectively. As teachers we continually make inferences about what is going on in our classrooms. We size up what students are doing when they read, write, speak, listen, become frustrated or refuse to do these things. We compare our conclusions about what is happening with what we expect should actually be happening. If these don't match, then we question why. We try to find new approaches to use and continue to examine them to see if they work better than others. "This process of formulating and answering questions is the essence of good teaching" (p. 106).

Teachers in classrooms are researching themselves and their students and making changes in classrooms based upon the lessons their research teaches them. They are constructing a research paradigm with potential to equate teachers' status as knowledge makers with those of the researchers who only occasionally observe their classrooms. In order to more fully appreciate teacher action research as a viable research paradigm or viable methodology, a comparison with the methodology of traditional social science research is necessary.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) talk about two paradigms that have dominated research in teaching for the last 25 years, process-product research (traditional social science research) and qualitative or interpretive studies (teacher action research).

Process-product research concerns itself with the correlation of teacher behaviors to student achievement. Teacher behaviors are considered causes and student achievement or learning is considered effects. The emphasis is on identifying specific

teacher behaviors that have a resultant effect on student learning. These teacher behaviors are then generalized to other classrooms where the teacher behaviors can be replicated. The main thrust of this research then is on observable phenomena and therefore is an "outside-in" perspective, one that is conducted by those who are outside of the day-to-day operations of the classroom.

The second research paradigm, qualitative or interpretive studies, "presumes that teaching is a highly complex, context-specific, interactive activity in which differences across classrooms, schools, and communities are critically important" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 3). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990), in critique of a book viewed as the most comprehensive synthesis of research in the field, *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, wrote that "teachers are the objects of researchers' investigations and then ultimately are expected to be the consumers and implementors of their findings. Missing from the handbook are the voices of the teachers themselves, the questions that teachers ask, and the interpretive frames that teachers use to understand and improve their own classroom practices" (p.3).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle drew upon the influences of Lawrence Stenhouse when crafting a definition of teacher research. Stenhouse (as cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990) defines research as "systematic, self-critical enquiry" (p. 3). Cochran-Smith and Lytle define teacher research as a "systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers" (p. 3). In other words, teacher research is a planned activity that reflects the teachers' desire to make sense of their teaching by recording information both inside and outside the classroom and making some sort of a written record from that information.

Cochran-Smith & Lytle relate the underlying concepts of teacher research to ideas

that Dewey proposed early in the century. At that time, Dewey felt that educational development was more reactive than pro-active – it jumped from one new technique to another. The only teachers who became more pro-active about educational development were "teachers who had learned to be adequately moved by their own ideas and intelligence" (Dewey as cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 4). In other words, teachers needed to be both consumers and producers of theories about teaching. This would occur by "reflecting on their practices and integrating their observations into their emerging theories of teaching and learning" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 4).

The positivist paradigm view of teacher research questions the validity of teacher-research because of its inability to be generalized. However, this view of understanding educational phenomena is beginning to come under closer scrutiny because of its decontextualized nature. Guba asserted that "it is virtually impossible to imagine any human behavior which is not mediated by the context in which it occurs" (as cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 6). Her point was that rather than needing generalized rules about what works in the classroom, we need insight into the hows and whys of what works within the context of a particular classroom.

The outside-in view of research does not provide the "richness of texture and intentional complexity" (Knoblauch and Brannon as cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 6) that teacher research does. According to Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1990), "teachers are uniquely situated to conduct such inquiries: They have opportunities to observe learners over long periods of time in a variety of academic and social situations; they often have many years of knowledge about the culture of the community, school and classroom; and they experience the ongoing events of classroom life in relation to their

particular roles and responsibilities" (p. 6).

The knowledge base for teaching is "complex, encompassing knowledge of content, pedagogy, curriculum, learners and their characteristics, educational contexts, purposes and values and their philosophical and historical grounds" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 7). Teachers bring these categories of knowledge to their research questions and use them in the analysis and interpretation of their findings.

Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1990) explain that "if we regard teachers' theories as sets of interrelated conceptual frameworks grounded in practice, then teacher researchers are both users and generators of theory. If, however, we limit the notion of theory to more traditional university-based definitions, then research by teachers may be seen as atheoretical, and its value for creation of the knowledge base on teaching may be circumscribed" (p. 7.)

Teacher research provides a thick and rich description of information to be added to the knowledge base of teaching. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) have identified at least four important ways in which the academic community can benefit from teacher research: Teacher journals provide rich data about classroom life which can be used to construct and reconstruct theories of teaching and learning; Teacher questions and frameworks allow for the identification of seminal issues in theory and practice; Teacher research provides the rich classroom cases needed to constitute the knowledge base of teaching; Teacher research contributes to existing theories by describing discrepant and paradigmatic cases and providing data that ground or develop alternative theories.

Journal writing for professional growth. Teachers do not look closely at the whats and hows of teaching – themselves, their students, and the teaching profession. "Men go

gape at mountain peaks, at the boundless tides of the sea, the broad sweep of rivers, the

encircling ocean and the motions of the stars; and yet they leave themselves unnoticed;

they do not marvel at themselves" (St. Augustine as cited in Holly, 1989, p. 5). We need

to marvel at our teaching practices, our students' development, and the time honored

profession of teaching. By using a journal, teachers can explore these marvels on paper

(Holly, 1989).

According to Holly (1989), five assumptions underlie the idea that journal writing

can be useful in exploring the personal and professional dimensions of teaching (pp. xii-

xiii):

- ► Conscious reflection and deliberation concerning students, curricula, oneself,

  and the profession are inherent in professional practice.

- ► Teaching is inquiry.

- ► Inquiry, curriculum development, analysis, and evaluation are inextricably

  related, ongoing, personal, professional, and collegial.

- ► Supporting learning and development in others can best be done by those who

  are engaged in similar processes (reflecting on their own work).

- ► Continuing transformation of perspective (growth) is enhanced by gaining

  distance from practice and exploring different dimensions of experience from

  different points of view.

Holly points out that there is no "Book of Teaching; the teacher writes it along the

way, drawing on learning from others, from theories and practices presented during

teacher preparation; and, beyond these, from the everyday realities of the classroom"

(Holly, 1989, p. 5). She continues with the idea that "teaching calls forth everything the

teacher is: personal and professional experience, general background, education, ethics, intelligence, and creativity" (p. 9). Journal writing "enables reflecting to be a deliberative process for appreciating the complexities and subtleties of practice" (p. 10) that becomes a part of more systematic research.

Reflection in action is part of teaching, reflection after the fact enables the teacher to gain insights for understanding student development and learning in ways that are not otherwise possible. The journal "like a camera, freezes the action and yields snapshots we can interpret and learn from" (p. 10). "By keeping a personal-professional journal you are both the learner and the one who teaches. You can chronicle events as they happen, have a dialogue with facts and interpretations, and learn from experience. A journal can be used for analysis and introspection. Reviewed over time, it becomes a dialogue with yourself. Patterns and relationships emerge. Distance makes new perspectives possible; deeper levels of insight can form" (Holly, 1989, p. 14). She explains the role of dialogue in the journal in this way:

> In a journal, the writer can carry on a dialogue with various dimensions of experience. What happened? What are the facts? What was my role? What feelings surrounded the event? What did I feel about what I did? Why? What was the setting? The steps involved? And later, what were the important elements? What preceded the event? Followed it? What might I be aware of if such a situation recurs? This dialogue, between objective and subjective views, between description and interpretation, allows the writer to become more accepting and less judgmental as a flow of events takes form. Actions interconnect and take on new meaning. (p. 14)

Writing taps our tacit knowledge, knowledge that we have but cannot articulate. "In the act of writing we express what we sense or intuit, and often what we didn't know we knew. We clarify for ourselves what had been confusing and according to Ferrucci 1982 'come to [new] conclusions and ideas about courses of action to take. . . . We should not be surprised that unconscious material surfaces so readily . . . writing stimulates this interchange and allows us to observe, direct, and understand it' " (Holly, 1989, p. 58).

Macrorie 1984 (as cited in Holly, 1989), said that "Writing is a way of thinking, of objectifying an act that has meaning. . . . As the sentences go down on the page, they become both finished statements and starting points for reflection and evaluation. The passages grow with thought" (p. 66).

Holly (1989) mentions a variety of types of journal writing. When writing analytically, the writer focuses on important aspects of a topic. By taking apart elements for examination, the nature of the topic and relationships amongst its elements are clarified. Writing as a form of evaluation includes analyzing and synthesizing information. When analyzing one takes apart the elements, whereas synthesizing involves putting them back together into a new more informative whole. "Evaluative writing can be as simple and straightforward as documenting lesson plans, then evaluating what happened; or it can be as complex as evaluating the documentation of planning and implementation of a curricular program" (p. 67).

Ethnographic journal writing allows the teacher to record facts and descriptions of classroom activities, interactions of students, and her own behavior. "At the simplest level it involves recording and describing. It can also evolve into articulating vivid

pictures of classroom life, learning and teaching, and people. . . . It is an integration of

descriptive, outside-the-self focusing and reflective, introspective, self-aware writing"

(Holly, 1989, p. 69). The reflective nature of journal writing is explained this way:

> The author looks back in writing, sometimes as an outside observer and
>
> sometimes as an interested participant who edits and interprets experience through
>
> writing. . . . Pondering is a useful part of reflective writing. Reconsidering
>
> experiences brings to light new thoughts and different dimensions. Just-lived
>
> events slowly (sometimes suddenly) make sense and connect with other events,
>
> weaving into an evolving tapestry. Written reflections provide stationary yet
>
> flexible pictures that can be manipulated so that different dimensions and
>
> perspectives on experience may be exposed. As humans and perhaps especially as
>
> educators, we reflect continuously. Most of our reflections, however, are fleeting.
>
> Reflective writing enables us to ponder thoughts long enough to form connections
>
> and learn from experience. (Holly, 1989, p. 74).

Methodology

<u>Introduction</u>

This study is truly a journey to discover my belief system about writing in the

classroom. Brian Cambourne (1994) writes that " . . . tacit knowledge (intuition,

unverbalisable know-how, unconscious understandings, values, beliefs, ideology etc.)

plays a crucial role in teaching" (p. 20). Cambourne and thirty-eight other co-researchers

developed a means to make their beliefs about literacy explicit. Their goal was to find a

congruence between their belief systems about literacy and evaluation. Mine is to find a

congruence between what I believe to be true about teaching writing in the classroom and

actual classroom practice. What follows is a means to discover my belief system about

teaching writing in the classroom as well as determine how that belief system translates

into actual classroom practice based on a process discovered by Cambourne and his co-

researchers.

<u>Procedures</u>

Teacher reflection was the process used to determine what was believed to be true

about teaching writing in the classroom. Three specific questions were posed to get to the

root of my belief system:

- ► What is effective writing behavior?

- ► How is it best acquired?

- ► After it is acquired, what should it be used for?

These questions provided a starting point and a focus; however, the responses to these

questions needed to be followed up with the question, "Why do I believe that?" until I felt

I had reached that inner core of what I truly believed and why. Once my belief system

about teaching writing was brought to conscious awareness, the next step was to find out what those beliefs looked like when translated into practice. The beliefs needed to be recognized in the daily ebb and flow of classroom teaching.

Knowing that multiple data sources confirm and illuminate one another to achieve that thick and rich description necessary to inform my belief system about teaching writing in the classroom, data was collected in the following forms: videotape of classroom practices, teacher comments in student folders, lesson plans, ethnographic observations, and professional journal. This "process of gathering data from a multiplicity of sources we call triangulation" (Elliott, 1995, p. 2) aided in the corroboration and identification of discrepancies.

Three thematic units were videotaped and reviewed for classroom teaching practices. All student work was collected throughout two of the units and placed in folders. Twenty eighth grade folders and 22 seventh grade folders were analyzed for evidence to support my belief system.

Lesson plans for the thematic units as well as other lesson plans were collected and reviewed for evidence that supported my belief system about teaching writing in the classroom. Lesson plans consisted of basic weekly outlines of what would be covered, handouts, and specific dialogue to be shared with the students.

In addition to the lesson plans, periodic ethnographic observations by student teacher, peer, and administrator throughout the school year were reviewed for evidence of classroom practices. The observer recorded observations of all happenings in the classroom during a 45 minute period of time. The time of the happening was identified and observer reflections upon those happenings were written down. Following the

observation, the teacher observed reflected upon the happenings during the class and recorded them on the back of the observer form.

A professional journal was kept during the course of the school year. Teacher reflections on classroom practices and happenings in the seventh and eighth classroom were analyzed to provide insights into classroom teaching practices.

Throughout the study, I preserved the role of participant by engaging in the activities, as well as the role of observer by reflecting upon the activities. At times I became involved in the classroom activities directing the lesson or conferencing with students. At other times, however, I retreated to my observation post, watched, and reflected upon the students writing behaviors and interactions with one another.

<u>Analysis</u>

A process of interpreting data which emerged from Cambourne's teacher researcher group (Cambourne & Turbill, 1994, p. 107) was used as a basis for comparing my beliefs about teaching writing to actual classroom practices:

- ► reflections on my belief system were sorted into a small number of categories to reduce its complexity,

- ► a descriptive label was assigned to each category,

- ► categories chosen grew out of what was believed to be true about teaching writing, and

- ► a framework with four categories for interpretation was created.

The interpretive framework was used to show a summary of components of my belief system and overall philosophy of teaching writing. Then data collected from reviewed videotape, teacher comments in student folders, lesson plans, ethnographic

observation, and teacher journal was categorized and placed into the interpretive

framework to show the relationship between belief and classroom practices. "Since these

categories are derived from my belief system, they are by definition meaningful. The way

data is distributed across these categories begins to imbue them with meaning. They stop

being data and begin to turn into information" (Cambourne & Turbill, 1994, p. 111). That

information Cambourne refers to was reflected upon and summarized to inform this

study.

<u>Overview of the Findings</u>

The following section presents a summary of the beginning reflections which lead

to the formation of my belief system – what is effective writing behavior, how is effective

writing behavior acquired, and for what is writing used. The core of my belief system is

synthesized into a brief statement of belief and presented in an interpretive framework

summarizing the components of my belief system by category. Interaction between

teacher beliefs and classroom practice will be explored.

<u>Peer Audit Review</u>

Maureen Edwards, social studies teacher at Lolo Middle School, conducted a peer

audit review. Her written analysis of the research base, methodology, and findings from

this study provided a unique, unbiased view of an outsider looking in (see Appendix G, p.

122).

Teacher Belief System

<u>The Beginning</u>

Effective writing behavior reflects individual development and is manifested

through student's active participation in some aspect of the writing process model

(Atwell, 1987; Applebee, 1986; Graves, 1994; and Calkins, 1994) – prewriting,

precomposing, composing, sharing, revising, editing, evaluating, and publishing (Olson,

1987). Donald Murray (1968) (as cited in Dixon-Krauss, 1996) describes effective

writing behavior as,

> . . . exploration, both the discovery of meaning and the discovery of form
>
> [–] . . . no hard and fast rules apply. The writer sees, finding the 'ordinary
>
> extraordinary and old truths new'; the writer writes, having 'the courage or
>
> the compulsion to reveal himself' and making a commitment; and the
>
> writer rewrites, using craft to turn 'inspiration into creation'. Writing is a
>
> process, Murray describes, not a rigid procedure. (pp. 102-103)

Sondra Perl (1980) in her article, "Understanding Composing" (as cited by

D'Aoust, 1987, p. 8) explained that "Writing is not simply a linear process but a

"forward-moving action that exists by virtue of a backward-moving action." Once

students write, they look back at their words to figure out what they have said, revisit

their plans and ideas, and move forward to elaborate on those ideas. They may share the

beginnings of their writing with a peer and based on feedback, decide to head in a

different direction with the writing.

The writing stages overlap one another and sometimes the lines between them

blur. The stages are ongoing and indeed some may not even occur in a formal manner. A

student's own mental processes dictate the recursive nature of a piece of writing, not the stages of the writing process themselves. At any given point in time within the writing classroom, students exhibiting effective writing behavior might be involved in one of the following activities: conferencing with the teacher about a piece of writing, collaborating with peers, brainstorming pieces of an experience, reading works from the author's chair to an audience, or sharing works with the larger community by presenting a piece of writing to a local group.

The teacher's role is to facilitate these writing processes, to understand the development of each student as a writer and build upon that development so that students acquire the expertise to truly communicate effectively. Therefore, effective writing behavior includes the teacher as the one who pushes the students to develop and grow as writers. He restructures the classroom and reevaluates his role as a writing teacher to ensure that students acquire effective writing behaviors. "Our job is not to get language *into* the head of a child. Our job is to get it *out*" (Thomas, 1987, p. 6).

In order to become effective writers, students must be provided the opportunity to grow individually. Two students in the same class at the exact same stage of development is the exception. Student writers need to consciously be aware of the skills they understand and use effectively as well as those skills which still need nurturing and developing. Then the writer, his peers, and the teacher can work together to develop what the writer needs to know and enrich what he already knows to more fully develop his writing potential.

Teaching grammar and usage within the context of student writing is a means to help students acquire effective writing behaviors. Writers need to learn writing skills;

however, learning them in isolation inhibits transferability to written work. By pin

pointing areas of need in an individual's or in a small group's written work, the teacher

can provide skill instruction through focus lessons to target the skill. Once the skill has

been learned or remediated, students can incorporate it into their writing. This transfer

from learning to written work is immediate.

Time is essential to becoming an effective writer. "In order to help students write,

writing must be expected and time for writing must be allowed" (Dixon-Krauss, 1996,

p. 104). Teachers need to provide sustained and uninterrupted time to work through the

writing process. Students require time to initiate thinking, plan writing, write, share,

revise, edit, and evaluate their work.

To acquire effective writing behaviors, the teacher must model and provide

sharing activities so that students can effectively discuss their writing. If students aren't

taught how to discuss a piece of writing, feedback often results, in statements such as, "I

like it," or "Good," which are meaningless statements. In order to revise written work,

students need constructive dialogue.

Statements like, "What do you think about . . . .," or "How should I . . .," type of

social interaction assists students in assembling their thoughts and gives them direction.

We construct meaning by taking what we know and integrating more knowledge into that

meaning. Students need to use the same process with their writing; significant talk time

allows that to happen.

By providing ample time to work through the writing process, and by virtue of

what opportunities the stages in the process offer, students and teacher build a community

of writers willing to discuss freely the craft of their writing in a supportive classroom

environment. Thus, students are able to learn from others how to be an effective writer and take risks with their writing.

Writing process stages can provide the means to become a better writer; however, the teacher needs to facilitate the writing process in such a way that students learn how to explain why they write the way they write – learn how to actively interact with the text they are writing. To be better writers, students must be taught to write metacognitively or actively –a conscious monitoring of one's own thinking during the writing process. By listening to how a writer thinks during the writing process, students can begin to grasp the concept of how they think when writing. Once students are capable of thinking actively about their own writing, they are put in touch with their own problem solving abilities which allows them to assess and see what thinking must occur before they can write (Judd, 1987, p. 16).

Through sharing with peers or conferencing with a teacher, questions asked specific to a piece of writing can help lead students to think more actively about their writing. By nudging the students towards thinking about why their characters act the way they do or why the setting influences the plot and so forth, students become more aware that writing does not just happen. A reason exists for the manner in which we create pieces of writing to achieve a desired effect on our audience.

Providing opportunities to write frequently and effectively in all domains (Olson, 1987) for a variety of purposes and audiences is necessary to become an effective writer. Students seem to have an affinity for particular domains of writing. The type of thinker a student is tends to lead to a preference in writing. Those students who are logical, concrete sequential, left brain thinkers have a tendency to gravitate to the more

informative or expository writings. Those who are more right brained in nature with random abstract minds have a tendency to lean towards the creative writing.

Teachers also seem to have an affinity for particular domains and that affinity translates into classroom practice. Typically, at the lower elementary level, writing is primarily in the sensory/descriptive or imaginative/narrative domains – the more creative ones. At the upper levels, especially in the content areas, teachers have a tendency to emphasize practical/informative or analytical/expository writing. When encouraged to write in all four domains, students will become stronger writers overall.

Writing within the sensory/descriptive domain allows the writing to be based on concrete details. Students use all five senses to gather information and use those details to create a word picture of a person, place, or object. Learning to focus and sharpen powers of observation and choosing precise words to convey the sensory description are taught within this domain.

The intent of the imaginative/narrative domain is to tell a story. Doing so requires the student to build on the first domain and put descriptive detail into a sequence. Within this domain, the student learns ordering; beginning and ending; transition and balance; suspense and climax. The action of an event, placed in proper sequence, is embedded with observed sensory details, thus enriching the story.

Practical/informative writing allows the presentation of information without a great deal of interpretation or analysis. Students learn accuracy, clarity, attention to facts, appropriateness of tone and conventional forms by working in this domain.

The final domain students would write within is analytical/expository which is the most abstract. This type of writing explains, persuades, and influences. It teaches writers

to analyze, organize and develop their written work. The writer learns to examine closely, see relationships and build logical arguments. Often times the other three domains are utilized to make a point in this type of writing (McHugh, 1987, p. 82).

Writing is a process of discovering. Through the process of acquiring effective writing behavior, we learn new things about what we think and feel. The process forces us to reconsider judgements based on past experiences, and to reevaluate feelings rooted in those experiences. Writing provides the means for introspection and reflection about life and issues that effect life, because writing is used as a tool to organize and shape thinking. To keep discourse alive and vibrant, the need to describe events and places, tell stories both real and imagined, inform, explain, persuade, cajole, and influence must be satisfied. Writing formalizes thought processes so they can be shared with an audience – even if that audience is one's self.

Summary of Core Belief System.

The developmental nature of writing is at the core of my belief system about teaching writing in the classroom. My writing classroom must acknowledge that each writer is at a different stage of development and allow for growth where it needs to occur.

For that growth to occur, I need to provide writers with ample opportunities to talk effectively about their writing at all stages of the writing process: prewriting, precomposing, composing, sharing, revising, editing, evaluation, and publishing. This helps build that community of writers willing to freely discuss the craft of writing and take risks with writing.

Those risks must come through writing experiences in all four domains (sensory - descriptive, imaginative - narrative, practical - informative, and analytical - expository) to

become a complete writer. By writing within these domains, students learn to write

metacognitively because they are taught to think actively about their writing.

The recursive nature of the writing process emphasizes the fact that it is not a

discrete set of steps that dictate movement in a sequence from prewriting to publishing. In

order to be recursive, sustained time to work through the writing process is necessary to

bring a written piece to completion.

During this sustained work time, focus lessons can be implemented to teach

writing skills. Writing skills taught in isolation do not readily transfer to work in

progress; focus lessons provide the means to teach the skill and apply the skill

immediately in written work.

Interpretive framework linked to belief system. Four categories were identified

from the core summary of my belief system to create an interpretive framework: attitude,

knowledge of writing processes, classroom environment, and writing skills development.

For the ease of the reader, tables are employed to condense evidence from each

source of data to support the individual components of each category of beliefs. For a

more complete view of data by source and category refer to Appendices A - E. Table 1

offers a visual form of the components of my beliefs within each category.

Table 1

Interpretive Framework: Summary of Components of Belief System by Category

Category	Component of Belief System
Attitude*	▶ The core of my belief system is the developmental nature of writing. My writing classroom must acknowledge that each writer is at a different stage of development and allow for growth where it needs to occur.
	▶ Sustained time to work through the writing process is necessary to bring a written piece to completion.
	▶ To be a complete writer, writing experiences in all four domains (sensory/ descriptive, imaginative/narrative, practical/ informative, and analytical/expository) must occur.
	▶ Students must learn to write metacognitively by being taught to think actively about their writing.
Knowledge of Writing Process*	▶ The recursive nature of the writing process implies that it is not a discrete set of steps that dictate sequential movement from prewriting to publishing.
	▶ The writing process consists of the following stages: prewriting, precomposing, composing, sharing, revising, editing, evaluating, and publishing.
Classroom Environment*	▶ Writers must be provided with ample opportunities to talk effectively about their writing at all stages of the writing process. This helps build that community of writers willing to share the craft of their writing freely and take risks with their writing.
Writing Skill Instruction*	▶ Writing skills taught in isolation do not readily transfer to work in progress. Focus lessons can be implemented to teach writing skills; lessons provide the means to teach the skill and apply the skill immediately in written work.

▶   Attitude is the teacher's thoughts and feelings toward the teaching of writing in the classroom.

▶   Knowledge of writing processes is evidenced by the stage process model of writing being modeled by the teacher and practiced by the students.

▶   Classroom environment refers to establishing and maintaining a classroom where students feel comfortable writing, sharing, and taking risks.

▶   Writing skills instruction consists of beliefs toward teaching grammar, mechanics, and usage.

Emergent Themes Classification

Introduction

Although my belief system about teaching writing appears to have been reduced to a discreet set of beliefs, nothing could be further from the truth. The individual beliefs which comprise my core belief system are intertwined – they interact, support and extend one another. In order to inform my belief system and show a congruence between them and classroom practice, they have been made more explicit. What follows is an analysis of each component of my belief system by category and the manner in which it is evidenced in the writing classroom (see Appendices A – E for a synthesis of each category by source).

Attitude Toward Writing in the Classroom

Developmental nature of writing. By attempting to keep a record of writing development for each student, I planned to identify the writing abilities of each student. The hope was that I could pin point strengths and deficiencies in student writing. Then by use of individual conference, small, or whole group focus lesson, I would be able to teach the skills necessary to help them become more effective writers.

The school year began with the greatest of intentions on my part. Binders were set up with a divided section for each seventh grade student. Questionnaires (see Appendix F) were completed by student ("Myself as a Learner") and parent ("My Child as a Learner") and placed in the binder. The purpose was to get to know the child through eyes other than my own. The binder also contained a "Reading and Writing Observation" form (see appendix F). This was used to note development of student approaches to writing as well as development of skills. As I began to note those comments, I felt as if I

knew more about the students as writers than I had in any other year. By keying in on a

piece of writing and identifying the strengths and deficiencies of that writing, I was able

to internalize their abilities. For the first time in my teaching career, I felt that I could be

asked a question about a student's writing ability and be able to respond accurately with

evidence to support the response.

However, my system of noting student writing development on the individual

observation forms was discontinued. Observing 72 students and recording comments on

all students was difficult to complete given the nature of the 45 minute revolving door

and need to keep up with 150 students during the course of the day.

In retrospect, a more effective means to handle the management aspect of record

keeping could have been implemented. Six to seven students a week could have observed

and information on writing development for each student noted. At the time, the reading

and writing development observation form (see Appendix F) was viewed as the sole

means to record writing development rather than one of many. Two techniques to track

student development, however, did prove effective – draft book and folder (see Table 2).

The draft book was a means for students to keep an ongoing source of free writes

as well as all notes, doodles, clusters, and writings that occurred at some time throughout

the stage writing process model. As a collection of valuable information, it had great

potential. Student thought processes could be evidenced in the prewriting, precomposing,

and revisions stages. Since I teach seventh and eighth grade, to have a collection of draft

books for two years would reveal valuable insights into student development.

I recognized the value at the time, which was why I wanted to use a draft book

Table 2

Summary of Evidence by Source: Attitude – Developmental Nature of Writing

Source	Evidence
Observations of Video Tape	Students had opportunity to approach the writing process in their own way. Teacher conferenced with students and worked with them on writing skills based on the piece of writing.
Teacher Comments in Folder	Comments on student work were generated while conferencing with each student. Strengths and areas of improvement were noted on student writing development sheets.
Lesson Plans	Notations were made to use beginning of the year writing as a basis for focus lessons, to record specific observations about development in folders, to conference with students, and to work with students based on need/frustration level.
Ethnographic Observations	No comments were made related to this belief.
Journal Reflections	Writing was viewed as formative in nature with students making their own decisions about writing. Using a draft book was a means for students to keep a contained source of writings and plans for the year. Anecdotal records and work samples were means to show writing development Keying in on skills to be developed and more effectively using focus lesson with students was necessary.

approach, yet the use of the draft book could have been managed better. Unfortunately,

they were not collected from students and used as a source to inform this study. The

management problems associated with the draft book were that students would use them

for other classes, tear pages out, or leave it at home. Keeping the draft book in the

classroom would have solved all of those problems, but created another – students needed

them to write at home. Perhaps by requiring them to be left in the room at all times except

when working on a draft at home necessitated its use, I could have better controlled those

problems.

The possibilities that keeping a draft book opens up for in tracking student writing

development over time is promising. If students kept a draft book throughout their

seventh and eighth grade years, an incredibly rich source of writing development

information would have been at my fingertips. This information would inform my teaching as well as demonstrate effective writing development for students, parents, and administrators.

The second means to collect student writing development information which proved effective was the collection of formative pieces of writing that lead up to a summative piece. Two thematic units used this method of tracking student development: "Finding a Place in This World", and "Expect the Unexpected: Looking at Things in Different Ways."

"Finding a Place in This World" was an eighth grade unit connecting literature and writing in order to strengthen their understanding of the relationships between conflict, character, and plot. Literature formed the conceptual base for the relationships; a series of writings provided the means to explore those relationships. Each piece of writing in the series showed student development in the craft of writing with regards to the literary relationships practiced in those writings. Sitting down with students, talking about those writings, noting comments on their work (see Appendix B), and then laying out all writings side by side, the development could be traced. Subsequently, a narrative was written as a summative evaluation of the thematic unit and evaluated based on the students growth in developing those relationships.

"Expect the Unexpected: Looking at Things in Different Ways" was a seventh grade unit developing student use of imagery in writing. Again literature was used as a conceptual base to demonstrate the use of imagery; focus lessons provided review of personification, simile, and metaphor; a series of writings practiced the use of imagery with a summative piece written within the sensory/descriptive domain. Student writings

were collected in a folder throughout the unit and examined for use of imagery with a specific focus on the summative piece of writing. Comments on student development in the use of imagery was noted in the folder (see Appendix B).

I like to provide students with the opportunity to approach the writing process in their own way. However, they need to be provided with the tools to do so. All of the writing units provide those tools by modeling all stages of the process. By the time students are well into their eighth grade year, many are able to move around comfortably within the processes, but a majority still seem to need the structure of each stage. The key seems to be helping students build a repertoire of tools to use when necessary so they can write effectively.

Conferencing with students informally and formally was an effective means to help them grow individually as writers. Since the ability to abstract and translate that abstraction into writing in 12 - 14 year old students varies tremendously, conferencing provided a means to identify each student's ability level. As a result, each student could be nudged to push that comfort zone or work within the zone of proximal development to which Vygotsky refers (Dixon-Krauss, 1996, p. 78).

Conferencing also allowed the means to identify skill areas that needed to be developed or remediated in groups of students. This is incredibly valuable in two ways. Students who need the remediation or development in a skill can get it immediately and incorporate the skill into the current piece of writing. Those who do not need the remediation or development can continue to work undisturbed by a lesson that is unnecessary.

Conferencing also provides a means to assess whether or not the whole group is

able to put into practice the broader writing skill being developed. This informs the teacher about instructional methods. If a majority of the students don't have a clue, something is obviously amiss. Then the teacher can step back, regroup, and provide another look at the skill being developed.

Through individual conferencing, a teacher can identify a range of skills that most students need assistance developing. Focus lessons can address those skills for students effectively in small group or whole group situations. As a time saver, whole group or small group focus lessons are better than individual lessons. I spent more time conferencing effectively with students individually. The personal contact and the ability to reference the skill in context for the student was important, and at this stage in their writing development, was found to be more effective.

I do believe in the developmental nature of writing. The tendency is to develop writing abilities with all students, but try to key in on specific areas of need through conferencing. By helping students better recognize their strengths and deficiencies in writing, they would be empowered to take more responsibility for their writing as the year progresses.

Need for sustained time to write. The second attitudinal belief I profess is the idea that sustained time to work through the writing process is necessary to bring a written piece to completion. An analysis of video and lesson plans showed that sufficient class time was often devoted to developing a piece of writing. When a piece of writing was developed based on the steps in the writing process and also connected to a theme area of study, the piece was given ample time to be written and modified according to individual student needs. However, when a writing assignment was given which did not allow for

the writing process to be used by the students, sufficient time was not usually allocated to complete the piece.

The 45 minute class period per day was insufficient to develop a solid writing program because the institutional demands of the communication arts curriculum require me to teach reading, writing, spelling, literature, speaking, thinking, listening, and acting. To truly develop students' abilities to write, they need to write daily for an extended period of time, but that cannot happen in my classroom. Graves (1983) contends that "writing has never taken hold in American education because it has been given so little time. Writing taught once or twice a week is just frequent enough to remind children that they can't write and teachers that they can't teach" (as cited in Runyon, 1993, pp. 34-35).

My nemesis as 7th and 8th grade language arts teacher has been teaching writing within the time and curricular constraints given. I need to develop an integrated language arts program that puts my beliefs and theories of teaching writing into practice and can be delivered in 45 minutes five days a week (see Table 3).

Table 3

Summary of Evidence by Source: Attitude – Need for Sustained Time to Write

Source	Evidence
Observations of Video Tape	Lack of class time to conduct individual conferences places more on students' shoulders to comment.
Teacher Comments in Folder	No comments were made related to this belief.
Lesson Plans	Plans allowed for class time to write.
Ethnographic Observations	One observer recorded that time was given to write stories.
Journal Reflections	Time to work with each student was hard to find and the 45 minute period was an obstacle to effective writing.

In retrospect, I really have begun to create an integrated program with my

thematic units using the communication arts curriculum as a base. However, by doing so, the purpose, form, and content of any writing become directed by the nature of the thematic unit. Since the thematic unit is teacher created, the writing is directed by teacher rather than student. Therefore, student choice as to audience and form is negated.

Students coming into the seventh grade haven't been equipped completely to direct their own writing. Perhaps by building on that element of student choice in the writing units I have developed, students will begin to be provided the means to make their own decisions about writing. Then when they become eighth grade students I can shift increasing responsibility to the students. Hopefully, by the end of their eighth grade year, students will be able to make their own responsible decisions in all phases of the writing process.

Writing experience in all four domains. Students need to have experience writing in all four domains (sensory/descriptive, imaginative/narrative, practical/informative, and analytical/expository) in order to allow ". . . students the opportunity to write on a variety of topics in a variety of modes, in a variety of genres" (Runyon, 1993, p. 33). Evidence of classroom practice lends credence to this belief; however, writings in the sensory/descriptive and imaginative/narrative domains tend to predominate (see Table 4).

In the sensory-descriptive domain students wrote personification poems, extended metaphors, Repulsive Creature writings, setting descriptions, and a variety of other writings that were descriptive in nature. Short stories, narrative essays, and free verse poetry were examples of imaginative-narrative writing.

I think one of the reasons those two domains were used most often was because

Table 4

Summary of Evidence by Source: Attitude – Writing Experiences in Four Domains

Source	Evidence
Observations of Video Tape	Students writings were within the sensory/descriptive and imaginative/narrative domains.
Student Portfolio/Folders	Students wrote within the sensory/descriptive and imaginative/narrative domains.
Lesson Plans	Students wrote within the sensory/descriptive, imaginative/narrative, practical/informative, and analytical/expository domains.
Ethnographic Observations	Students writings were within the sensory/descriptive and imaginative/narrative domains.
Journal Reflections	Students wrote within the sensory/descriptive, imaginative/narrative, and analytical/expository domains.

Of the close tie to literature in the communication arts curriculum. That literature was used as a conceptual model for student writing. Students also tend to have the most experience writing in these domains and enjoy it more. Therefore, I have a tendency to follow suit. Perhaps because the practical/informative and analytical/expository domains seem to be most used in graduate work, I prefer to steer away from them in the classroom.

Most times when I mention any form of research, students groan because they equate it with a report. I prefer to use research as a means to process information on a topic or issue and then use that background to inform their writing regardless of domain. For example, in the seventh grade Repulsive Creature writing (a writing from the "Expect the Unexpected" unit), students searched for the most repulsive creature they could find and identified the physical and behavioral traits which proved it to be repulsive. Then, in writing, they convinced me that the creature qualified as a truly repulsive creature. Students took the background information on the creature's repulsiveness and completed

a change of feeling writing incorporating imagery. They had to present their creature as a desirable one by turning those repulsive traits around and presenting the creature in a positive manner.

Whenever interdisciplinary units were created, it seemed the practical/informative and analytical/expository domains dominated. Students learned to write basic essays comparing the differences between the thirteen colonies in the seventh grade. All seventh and eighth grade students write science abstracts and papers for their Science Fair project. Analytical-expository types of writings completed by students included an environmental issues essay, personal reflective essays, persuasive issues essays, and advertising campaigns. While interdisciplinary activities are valuable in student education, perhaps one of the dangers of this kind of activity is perpetuating the separation of subject areas as disciplines.

Learning to write metacognitively. The final attitudinal belief about teaching writing in the classroom refers to the need for writers to think actively about their writing – to write metacognitively. Development of metacognition was evidenced in video, lesson plans, student portfolios, and teacher journal. The main method was effective questioning techniques modeled by the teacher to the class numerous times within the course of the writing process. The questions served to aid students in thinking more actively about their writing. For example, in one student's "Finding a Place in This World" narrative, the "showing" writing didn't stand out. The question was asked, "How could we see the basketball players and your reaction to them and still get the idea you were confused?" An excerpt from my journal explains further the use of questioning:

The trick then is to thoughtfully reflect on what was written and as

a recursive process, go back and thoughtfully rewrite making changes

based on crafting story reasons. Is the main character developed fully?

Was he or she revealed to the reader in the best manner? How did the

conflict unfold? Why did I jump the reader in the middle of the conflict?

Was it effective? If not where should I begin the conflict? Those are the

kinds of questions to thoughtfully reflect and act upon. (Appendix E)

The use of questioning is a skill I have developed which helps students think more

actively about their writing (see Table 5). Video discloses students asking similar

questions of other students. In conference with myself, some students were able to ask

those questions of themselves as we discussed their work. By offering additional

sustained time for writing and the opportunities that develop out active thinking about

writing, perhaps my teaching practices could be even more effective.

Table 5

Summary of Evidence by Source: Attitude – Learning to Write Metacognitively

Source	Belief
Observations of Video Tape	Use of questioning to get students to think actively about their writing.
Student Portfolio/Folders	Questions asked on written work provided students an opportunity to think more actively about the craft of writing.
Lesson Plans	Students explained how they approached certain aspects of a written piece or how they used an element of writing to achieve a desired effect. Written self-assessments of writing were completed.
Ethnographic Observations	Questioning and class discussion occurred.
Journal Reflections	Encouraging students to use sophistication of thought.

During the revision stage, thoughtful input from peers and teacher provide the

catalyst for getting students to think metacognitively. The reason is because students are

encouraged to rethink and re-see what they've written so their vision for the writing can

be clearly communicated to the reader.

Overall, when teaching students to think metacognitively, I stimulate them to rethink and re-see and reshape their writing. Questioning as a means to accomplish that predominates. Encouraging students to explain how they approached a piece of writing or how they used a particular element was the second means to encourage students to think metacognitively.

Knowledge of the Writing Process

Recursive nature of the writing process. The recursive nature of the writing process was evidenced in all sources of information in one main area – revisions (see Table 6). In my journal (see Appendix E) I noted that ". . . the trick then is to thoughtfully reflect on what was written and as a recursive process, go back and thoughtfully revise, making changes based on crafting story reasons."

Table 6

Summary of Evidence by Source: Knowledge of Writing Process – Recursive Nature of the Writing Process

Source	Evidence
Observations of Video Tape	Importance of revision stressed in light of returned to work and looking at the piece of writing.
Student Portfolio/Folders	Comments resulted in students returning to some phase of the writing process to bring the piece to completion.
Lesson Plans	The recursive nature of writing is inherent in the revision phase.
Ethnographic Observations	Students return to prewriting or precomposing to develop ideas for the piece.
Journal Reflections	Acknowledgment that writing is a recursive process.

During that thoughtful reflection, students make decisions to return to their prewriting or precomposing for more ideas, add details to more fully establish

relationships between elements in the writing or completely refocus a piece because it

isn't accomplishing the intended goal. "If the writer's rereading is sophisticated enough

to recognize a gap between his intentions and what he sees on the page, he will want to

rework his text" (Graves, 1994, p. 226).

Revision is inherent in all the writing lessons in which students participate and

illustrates the recursive nature of writing. Donald M. Murray (1982) describes writing as

" . . . a conversation between two workers muttering to each other at the bench. The self

speaks, the other self listens and considers. The self proposes, the other self considers.

The self makes, the other self evaluates. The two selves collaborate" (as cited in Jagger,

1985, p. 190). His example depicts the recursive nature of writing well.

In *The Art of Teaching Writing,* Lucy McCormick Calkins (1994) talks about

how she uses words as a lens because she looks through them to what she wants to say.

She emphasizes the recursive nature of writing in this manner:

> I often begin by writing the cliched, expected phrases . . . but then, pulling
>
> back, I realize that no, these words aren't exactly honest, and so I focus in
>
> again to try to tell the truth. This, then, is the writing process. I shift
>
> between drafting and revision frequently as I write. For me, revision
>
> does not mean repairing a draft; it means using the writing I have already
>
> done to help me see more, feel more, think more, learn more. (p. 39)

Use of stage writing process model. As evidenced in all sources of data,

students sharing writing with peers and teacher seems to be important in my writing

classroom. Sharing, one of the stages in the writing process, "gives students an

opportunity to discuss and use knowledge" (see Appendix A: Table A2). Sharing writing

is critical if students are to realize whether or not they are truly getting across the intended meaning of a piece to their audience. Peers and teacher help them step outside their writing and see it through another lens. Students shared writing both formally and informally in my classroom depending upon purpose.

At times they had the opportunity to tell the whole class what they had done with a story, "students read their breakthrough experience aloud" (see Appendix C: Table C2); at other times they read partners writing, " . . . discussing the issue of conflict related to a story being written" (see Appendix D: Table D2). Although sharing occurs naturally with teens, a means to equip them with the tools to share effectively about writing needs to be taught rather than occur as a result of a natural progression step by step through the writing process.

The stage model of the writing process consists of a set of writing stages through which a student progresses as she writes. However, that set of stages is not a discrete set of steps to be followed in order to bring a piece of writing to completion. Graves (1994) points out that some teachers misunderstand process writing. "They deliberately take children through phases of making a choice, rehearsing, composing, and then rewriting. Of course, these processes exist, but each child uses them differently. We simply cannot legislate their precise timing" (p. 82). This is easy to understand but harder to regulate in the classroom as teachers operate within many time constraints.

On one level I knew that students did not need to use those steps in a prescribed order, yet classroom practice indicated that from the composing stage through the publishing stage, students did progress at their own pace and make their own decisions. Two reasons informed my thoughts about this: the prewriting and precomposing stages

were used as means to establish a knowledge base from which to write; and students needed to have prewriting and precomposing skills taught so that they could have a repertoire of tools to help them approach a piece of writing.

Typically I create exercises that encourage students to become actively involved in creating a knowledge base or frame of reference on which they can base writing. For example, the thematic unit "Finding a Place in This World," was introduced by students brainstorming the many, varied, and unusual ways we try to fit in (see Appendix C: Table C2). Students were broken into small groups to brainstorm and write their thoughts on large sheets of paper. Group by group, students shared their responses with the rest of the class while the teacher recorded responses on a master sheet. After reviewing the list, the teacher lead a discussion analyzing the reasons why the need to fit was important. In journals, students wrote about why it was important for them to fit in. Following the journal writing, the teacher shared his reasons about fitting in and any willing students shared their journal responses (see Appendix C: Table C2).

I considered this building a conceptual base for the thematic unit, which lead to an imaginative/narrative piece of writing incorporating the idea of fitting in. This stage would be considered prewriting. It was prescribed because the teacher directed the activity; however, the value lies in helping build the conceptual understanding for the unit and the piece of writing. To extend this concept even further, the students completed another prewriting activity – an analysis of song lyrics.

Students listened to the song "Looking for a Place in This World" by Wayne Kirkpatrick and Amy Grant. The idea was to connect what the lyrics were saying about finding a place in this world to our need to fit in. By doing so the connections between

the concept and its relationship to the student's lives was brought into a sharper focus as well as broadened. After small and large group discussion (see Appendix C: Table C3), students responded personally to the lyrics – what the lyrics meant to them. This, to me, was a prewriting activity that needed teacher direction to help students conceptualize the theme area in which they wrote.

Precomposing activities included the use of literature as models which contained elements of the theme as well as strong conflict and character development. Focus lessons were used to develop character and conflict to further deepen student understanding of those elements within the literature as well as in writing (see Appendix C: Table C2). This stage of the writing process was orchestrated by the teacher. Although students did not make their own decisions, I saw value in providing a conceptual framework or scaffolding for students to write when I integrated literature and writing in thematic units.

Clearly, the theme of the writing, prewriting activities, precomposing activities and domain of the writing was prescribed by the teacher, but from that point on, students' use of writing processes was dictated by the needs of the student. In actuality, when students approached the piece of writing, they had gained writing skills through a series of focus lessons and a conceptual understanding of the theme area in which to write through a series of activities and literature models, but they still had to use whatever writing processes were necessary to create a piece of writing. Although those activities were viewed as prewriting and precomposing stages in the writing process, they weren't. In reality, the only part of the writing process taken out of the hands of the students was choice of domain and inclusion of the theme "finding a place in this world."

Some writing lessons most decidedly prescribed the writing process from

beginning to end (see Table 7). In fact, five writing units specifically spelled out each

stage in the writing process from beginning to end (see Appendix C: Table C2). My

intentions in using the lessons were good, but not properly informed. Comments by

students (during the precomposing stage where they were clustering events in their lives

that made a lasting impression) should have informed my teaching practice (see

Appendix A: Table A2).

Students knew the assignment was to write a narrative essay about an event in

their lives that left a lasting impression on them. Some students did not have a need to

Table 7

Summary of Evidence by Source: Knowledge of Writing Process – Use of Stage Writing Process Model

Source	Evidence
Observations of Video Tape	Sharing was most evident. Prewriting, precomposing, and writing occurred.
Student Portfolio/Folders	Composing and revision stages were present.
Lesson Plans	Five writing lessons evidenced all stages. Sharing was prominent with mention of each stage at some point in lesson plans.
Ethnographic Observations	Precomposing, composing, and sharing were observed.
Journal Reflections	Sharing was commented on often. Comments were made about revising and prewriting.

cluster all the events in their lives because they had already chosen the event they wanted

to write about. They questioned why there was a need to complete the clustering

assignment. Why couldn't they just begin to write? My response was that I wanted them

to practice clustering as a technique to discover topics. Perhaps they might uncover

another event that would be an even better topic to use in their writing.

This may have sounded logical; however, during the course of writing the

narrative essay students would have discovered if the event was the best choice. Any

student struggling with ideas could have continued with a cluster to find one. If clustering

didn't work, then another strategy to come up with an idea could have been introduced

via individual or small group focus lesson.

The logic in prescribing the writing process was that students needed to be

exposed to each of the stages before they were ready to make their own decisions about

writing. They needed prewriting skills, precomposing skills, revision skills, and editing

skills before they could write all by themselves. Students weren't given credit for their

own innate writing ability.

Providing the skills to be a better writer within each of those stages was

necessary; however, the problem lie in prescribing the writing process as the means by

which those skills were acquired. Focus lessons on ways to approach writing, plan

writing, revise or edit writing can be presented to a whole group, small group, or

individuals as needed. Requiring students to work through the process as the teacher

presents it is an unnecessary waste of time.

Classroom Environment

Introduction. When analyzing the data relevant to classroom environment, a

subcategory appeared – classroom management. This subcategory consisted of those

elements that helped maintain a sharing and caring environment where students could

take risks and write freely. Establishing the "point of the day . . . clearly and [tying] it . . .

to [the] assignment" (see Appendix D: Table D3) began the day. Communicating

expectations for daily classroom operations and behavior set a tone and reaffirmed the

elements necessary for a friendly classroom. "Writing can vary – and writers can grow –

when the environment is unvaryingly reliable. The predictable schedule, physical

arrangement of my classroom, and patterns of my response combine with the predictable

structure of each day's class . . . " (Atwell, 1987, p. 74).

Classroom management. Atwell (1987) was curious about where good ideas for

writing come from when students write on topics of their own choosing. She asked her

students to identify their best work and describe how they came up with the topic. Out of

that information came a description of a writer's environment – "all of the circumstances,

arrangements, and provisions that enable writers to find and explore their own ideas" (p.

98).

Students identified their need to tell stories and acknowledged that everyone has

ideas for writing. The teacher, then, needs to realize that and let the students know she is

interested in listening to those stories or ideas or experiences. Providing time every day

for the whole class to share and encouraging peer conferences so students come to know

what others write about and for whom they've written, begins to establish a community

of writers. Students need to keep lists of possible topics in a folder for easy reference as

well as a list of topics on which they have written. During conferencing the teacher needs

to talk with students about how they come up with topics and why they choose particular

topics to write about in order to help them think more metacognitively about writing.

Encouragement needs to be given to nudge students to consider content subject areas as

sources of topics. Focus lessons (mini-lessons) are a means to help with topic searches as

well as introduce skills, and the craft of writing. To practice that craft, students need daily

blocks of time to work through the writing processes and take ownership of their writing

so that they can bag a piece of writing and move on to other topics. Finally, finding

sources for students to publish their writing is necessary for establishing that writer's

environment because writers write to be read (pp. 98-99).

Atwell's students' advice on establishing a writer's environment is common sense, yet I hadn't really thought about the basic day to day management and set-up operations of the classroom as playing a part in creating a positive writing environment. Of all their advice, the one most evidenced in my classroom practice was sharing. All sources of data included some mention of sharing student writing (see Table 8).

After teaching for so many years, the daily ebb and flow of beginning a class and ending a class seem to be automatic. Getting students quieted down and settled in when they arrived to class was a given on a daily basis. The classroom routine varied from day to day depending on where we ended up the day before in a lesson. That routine that students need to count on was never really evidenced in my classroom. "When methods for teaching writing and classroom routines and schedules are always changing, children are not apt to monitor their own writing processes, steering their way through a piece. Instead they wait for their teacher's agenda" (Jagger, 1985, p. 193).

The value in empowering students to use a set routine lies in reducing start-up time and acknowledging that they can make decisions about using their time wisely and appropriately. "This predictable environment, with each area and its uses clearly established, sets the stage for students' experimentation, decision-making, and independence. Writers . . . can exert ownership because they're not waiting for the teacher's motivational pre-writing activity or directions for 'fixing' a piece of writing; instead, they're using the tools and procedures at their disposal to motivate and improve their own writing" (Atwell, 1987, p. 64).

Table 8

Summary of Evidence by Source: Classroom Environment – Building a Community of Writers

Source	Evidence
Observations of Video Tape	Opportunities to share with classmates individually, small group, and whole class were given. Class discussion was student writing focused. Teacher conferencing and short visits with students occurred. Ensuring students were on task, getting them settled in to work, and circulating around the room to work with students on adverse behavior was noted.
Student Portfolio/Folders	Notes about a student who was unsure of himself as a writer were kept. Student/teacher conferences sharing writing occurred. Comments written about the strengths and deficiencies of a piece were presented in a positive manner.
Lesson Plans	Students worked, shared, and presented work individually, in small group, and whole class. Assigning table groups and small groups for activities was noted.
Ethnographic Observations	Working with individual students and clarifying assignments or moving students in the right direction were noted. Students sharing work, helping them discover the answers, and identifying needs of students were identified. Discussion was used for specific reasons. Giving, explaining, and clarifying instructions occurred. Tied together the day's assignments with the greater picture. Moving around the room and getting students to begin working and working with students on adverse behavior was noted.
Journal Reflections	Reflections about making discussion student centered and the use of discussion in the classroom were made. A note that not liking to put kids on the spot was made in reference to just establishing a safe environment. Devising a means to keep better track of which students need to ensure all students are receiving comments in my binder was mentioned. Frustration with the 45 minute time period to deliver the Communication Arts curriculum was noted.

Students with behavioral issues fell into the subcategory of management. They made themselves noticeable at times and were handled in a consistent manner. Circulating around the classroom to work with students helped keep the friskier students focused. Those students spending time unwisely were encouraged to get busy (see Appendix A: Table A3 and Appendix C: Table C3). A learning center, which has computers for student use and is always very quiet, was available for those students, who by request (mine or theirs), needed a less distracting environment.

Noting student development in folders was a daily management issue. Structuring class time to accommodate as many students as possible was necessary. Conferencing took more time than I expected. In retrospect, I was not letting students take ownership of the writing, I was allowing them to let me take responsibility for their writing. We discussed, I questioned. Ultimately, however, I directed what the piece of writing should be by expecting them to take all comments and revise the writing to fit my vision. Don McQuade (1984) said that "The good writing teacher isn't responsible *for* his students' writing. He is responsible *to* his students" (as cited in Atwell, 1987, p. 64). My intentions were sound, my teaching practice was misinformed. However, through conferencing with students, class discussions, and students sharing work small group or whole class, a community of writers did begin to form.

Community of writers. In my personal professional journal (see Appendix E: Table E3), I wrote that "I felt really good about today's reflection and reading of student writings. I think they enjoyed the writing. I feel like several read their writings because they felt good about them in a non-threatening environment." That idea of a non-threatening environment is critical to building a community of writers. Atwell (1987) talks about how writers are vulnerable. Writing is personal and adolescents are laying themselves "bare for the world to see" (p. 66). Writers want their teacher and peers to listen and provide responses that acknowledge the value in what they have to say. "A writer wants response that takes the writer seriously and moves him or her forward, again, response that gives help without threatening the writer's dignity" (p. 66).

All sources of evidence supported the building of a community of writers (see Table 8). Class discussion was student writing focused. Peers helped one another discover

answers within their writing and thus identified areas of need. In my journal, references were made to the use of discussion in the classroom and making discussion student centered. "I want to do less yapping and more student centered discussion" (see Appendix E: Table E3).

Clearly classroom practices evidence the right pieces to build a community of writers. The reality is that the elements necessary to provide that safe, risk-free environment are either not developed to their fullest potential or not implemented at all. Rothermel (1996) wrote that "effective learning communities allow teachers to be able to teach and students to be able to learn" (p. 81). He identified nine characteristics of successful classroom learning communities:

1. They have teachers who extend the personal touch.

2. They have teachers and students who demonstrate mutual respect.

3. They have teachers who define performance outcomes and use rubrics to assess them.

4. They have teachers who build dependable structures and routines in the classroom.

5. They have teachers who create engaging lessons and workshops.

6. They have teachers who establish classrooms that connect curriculum with student's lives.

7. They have teachers who believe all students can succeed.

8. When teachers and students commit to learning and are held accountable, teachers and students both need to be held to high standards.

9. They have parents who are involved.

Rothermel (1996) and Atwell (1987), both advocate dependable structures and routines in the classroom as a characteristic of effective classrooms. By beginning class with some type of opportunity to allow time to talk about issues and questions, the teacher will have better-focused students for the remainder of the class. I agree with the process, but the type of writing classroom would dictate the structure.

Rothermel is proposing a ten day workshop approach whereas Atwell advocates a daily workshop approach. Thus Rothermel's idea of "daily meetings allow[ing] the development of the classroom learning community and give[ing] students regular opportunities to practice the skills of discussion" (1996, p. 82) would make sense for his classroom. The sharing Atwell refers to at the end of each day would have a similar effect.

Teachers who create engaging lessons and workshops grab the interest of students and build an effective classroom learning environment. Allowing them the opportunity to do what they do best, talk, helps give personal meaning to workshop. The trick is helping them focus that talk around the writing process. Like Atwell, Rothermel believes that teachers are an integral part of the classroom writing community as writers. "When teachers are willing to risk in their writing and public speaking as they expect their students to, they develop students who will risk themselves to achieve quality work in the classroom" (p. 82). My students would come to know me as a writer if I wrote in the classroom also. I shouldn't ask my students to do that which I wouldn't do as well.

Rothermel points out the fact that an effective classroom environment is one with parental involvement. Parents need to know what is going on in order to become partners. Adolescents are notorious for giving little or no information about their lives in school.

They either didn't do anything or it was boring – they had to work all day. Phone calls home, parent newsletters, postcards telling something positive about a student all tell parents that they are welcomed and necessary in their child's education. Effective communication helps parents understand classroom practices that lead to better writers. Dispelling myths about effective teaching practices helps parents understand the learning process and ultimately contribute to that community of writers.

The classroom environment in my teaching practices is headed in the right direction. I know what needs to be done to help establish an effective classroom environment and build that community of writers who feel they can bare their souls and share freely with teacher and peers. The question to keep in the forefront of my mind is, "Am I building that classroom of developing, effective writers through my thoughts, words, and deeds?"

<u>Writing Skills Instruction</u>

<u>Writing skills development.</u> My beliefs in this area are sound. Writing skills taught in isolation do not readily transfer to work in progress. In an excerpt from *Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching*, Hillocks writes that "the study of traditional school grammar (i.e., the definition of parts of speech, the parsing of sentences, etc.) has no effect on raising the quality of student writing. . . . Taught in certain ways, grammar and mechanics instruction has a deleterious effect on student writing"(p. 5). A statement by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer (1963 as cited in Weaver, 1996) support Hillock's assertion:

In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based upon many types of students and teachers, the conclusion can be stated in

strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a

negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice

in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of

writing. (p. 10)

An effective means to teach writing skills and technique is through focus lessons;

students have the opportunity to apply the skill immediately in written work. Calkins

(1994) puts it this way:

In mini-lessons we teach *into* our students' intentions. Our students are first

deeply engaged in their self-sponsored work, and then we bring them together

to learn what they need to know in order to do that work. This way, they stand

a chance of being active meaning-makers, even during this bit of formal

instruction. First our students are engaged in their own important work.

Then we ask ourselves, 'What is the one thing I can suggest or demonstrate

that might help the most?' (pp. 193-194)

In classroom practice as evidenced by my journal I acknowledged the need to

identify more grammar skills on which to develop focus lessons (see Table 9). "I think at

times I contrive assignments so they [students] can learn mechanics or style, etc. and

maybe I need to let those elements etc. being taught evolve naturally from student

experience which directs writing and perhaps I should have a checklist of the types of

writing and skills to be addressed and then work to include them in" (see Appendix E:

Table E4).

Table 9

Summary of Evidence by Source: Writing Skills Development

Source	Evidence
Observations of Video Tape	Whole class focus lessons predominantly in showing and telling writing were presented.
Student Portfolio/Folders	Comments about areas of strength and deficiencies were noted. Comments on student works nudged students to work within specific skill areas depending upon the nature of that particular piece of writing.
Lesson Plans	Whole class focus lessons were planned. Daily oral language was used.
Ethnographic Observations	Some focus lessons were observed. Daily oral language was used.
Journal Reflections	Acknowledged the need to identify more grammar skills on which to develop focus lessons. Allowing those skills to arise within the context of student writing more was noted. Focus lessons keyed in on specific areas of student need. Daily oral language was used.

Two related entries in my journal also refer to the use of focus lessons: "I also need to target a grammar skill to develop a focus lesson around and incorporate that lesson into the next major writing"; and "So I'll try to keep the workshop relevant to most and use it as a review and reinforcement of skill or to introduce a new or undeveloped concept." Appendix C: Table C4 lists the types of focus lessons that were evidenced in lesson plans: similes, showing writing, sentence expansion, character development, adding details, use of hook and transitions in writing. Appendix A: Table A4 explains some of those lessons and summarizes some focus lessons as evidenced through recursive observation of video tape.

My beliefs were sound; evidence shows the use of focus lessons to teach skills and technique. However, two problems contradictory to the true use of focus lessons arose. One, I professed the need to let the focus lessons come out of student work, yet that was not clearly evidenced in classroom practice. Two, the focus lessons were too lengthy.

On the one hand I am saying that focus lessons should come from student work, which is exactly right, and in the same breath I am saying I need a checklist to make sure all skills are being addressed. If I let student work dictate the need for instruction, then a checklist is unnecessary. Besides, I would be keeping notations in a book that showed student strengths and deficiencies in each piece of writing. Students would also be keeping track of strengths and deficiencies in their folders. The record would exist, but it would be developmental per individual, not a prescribed curriculum that needs to be artificially injected into a workshop.

Along similar lines, I made reference to identifying a grammar skill around which a focus lesson could be developed. Sound practice; however, the rest of the comment indicated that it would be used in the next major writing. The fallacy of that comment is that the skill should not be taught within the next writing, it should be incorporated in the current writing if the need exists. My belief was sound and my intentions were good, but effective practice of the belief was not manifested in the writing classroom.

The second problem contradictory to the notion of focus lessons was their length. My lessons were long, taking anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes depending on the lesson (see Appendix A: Table A4). One of the characteristics of focus lessons is the brevity. According to Weaver (1996) and Atwell (1987), they typically take no more than five to ten minutes.

Weaver (1996) talks about how teachers make the mini-lessons become maxi-lessons because we have been taught that lecturing is not effective teaching practice. Thus, we turn them into question and answer sessions that take a long time. "But mini-lessons become diffuse and clumsy when we teachers persist in the question and answer

mode that is pervasive in our schools" (p. 199). Question and answer is a component of my focus lessons. The nature of the activity created as a means of teaching the focus lesson is what adds length to the lesson. Most times students practice the skill as a part of the focus lesson, which takes it outside the context of a piece of writing.

For example, students conducted research for a science fair project. I thought they should learn the use of note cards and bibliography cards (see Appendix D: Table D4). I constructed a great 30 minute focus lesson that modeled the use of both and allowed the students to practice with an article that I chose. Although learning how to use note cards can be valuable, students should have been allowed to find an article, book selection, or written interview that contained information related to their project. Then they would have been using what was learned from the focus lesson in a practical manner. Not only would the skill have been taught in context, but the need for artificial practice using an article I chose would have been eliminated. "A key feature of mini-lessons is that students are not given follow-up exercises to practice what has been taught. The teacher simply helps them use the information if their writing suggests a need for the skill and the students seem ready for it" (Weaver, 1996, p. 151).

Focus lessons offer teachers the opportunity to provide tips on writing that may be valuable to students, often times without much if any obvious interaction with students. They can be presented to the whole class if most would benefit or to individuals or small groups if a few have need of a skill or technique. As students gain control of skills in writing, then more advanced elements of that skill can be incorporated into lessons if appropriate. The teacher does not assume that what has been taught in a focus lesson will or should be learned by all students. The ideas are added "to the class pot" (Calkins,

1986, as cited in Weaver, 1996, p.151). Teachers must be kidwatchers and kidlisteners in

order to decide *what* to teach in a focus lesson and *when* to teach the focus lesson,

(Weaver 1996).

Changing Classroom Writing Practices

A Beginning

The journey to discover my belief system about writing has taken me full circle. Like Nancy Atwell, I have taken a hard look at my writing classroom and found it wanting. In her book *In The Middle*, Atwell (1987) talks about how she questioned her assumptions about teaching writing, read research about effective practices, observed kids and tried to make sense of those observations in order to do her best for them, (p. 4). This has been my journey, and like Atwell, I admit the need to reconceptualize my view of teaching writing, let go of some practices and modify others. For a concise summary of my beliefs, theoretical base supporting my beliefs, evidence of classroom practice to support the existence of my beliefs, and accompanying changes in practice as a result of this study, refer to the matrix in Appendix H, page 125.

In his early research, Graves (as cited in Atwell, 1987) made a statement that sums up the crossroads at which I now stand:

> It is entirely possible to read about children, review research and
>
> textbooks about writing, 'teach' them, yet still be completely unaware
>
> of their processes of learning and writing. Unless we actually structure
>
> our environments to free ourselves for effective observation and
>
> participation in all phases of the writing process, we are doomed to
>
> repeat the same teaching mistakes again and again. (p. 8)

While I am not completely unaware of students' processes of learning and writing, I am not adequately providing the means for them to acquire effective writing practices. Langer and Applebee (1987) quote a teacher whose explanation of teacher practices

uncannily matches mine:

> What happens is we teachers start an assignment with a form in our
>
> mind and we know exactly what we want and we adapt things according
>
> to that form. Pushing the kids into it. You'll even find kids using words
>
> that you consider inappropriate and you have to pull back, you have to
>
> let them get the point for themselves. It's a very tough thing to let the
>
> kids go. I think the reason I do it [control so much of the student
>
> thinking] is I know where I want to go, and it's very hard for me to
>
> give that up. The kids want you to structure it because the kids are grade
>
> conscious and they know if I have some idea of what an "A" is that
>
> I'd better let them know so they can meet it. And the school system
>
> is structured. The textbook, the district competency test, the district
>
> objectives, [parental and administrative expectations, students' learned
>
> conceptualization of writing and grammar practices] all force me in a
>
> certain line of 'This is where I have to be going' . . . Having the right
>
> answer makes teaching easier 'cause I know what I'm looking for.
>
> Not having the right answers makes it more chancy. (p. 83)

Fortunately, the journey I have embarked on has reached the crossroads. I am now ready

to take what is true about teaching writing in the classroom and move it into the next

stage of my journey. My belief system about teaching writing, albeit sound theoretically,

needs to be more clearly and truthfully evidenced in practice. Change will not occur

overnight; however, like writing, change is a recursive process and will require strength

of conviction and support from administration and parents to occur.

Institutional Constraints

Instructional. As a result of failed mill levies and continued lack of increased

funding from the state at Lolo school, a decrease in the number of teachers and student

subject offerings has occurred. Therefore, funding additional staff to provide students

with two 45 minute periods to develop reading and writing abilities is not possible.

Large class sizes and adjusted teaching loads will occur next year as well. I will

teach three classes of eighth grade language arts (22 students per class), two classes of

seventh grade (29 students per class) and one class of sixth grade (25 per class).The

preparation time required for the additional class (sixth grade) will significantly increase

an already large workload.

Parent, child, and administrative perceptions. An effective means to manage the

paper load must be found. Students and parents expect that each piece of writing is read,

edited, and commented on so changes can be made and the work receives the "A" that

they feel it so justly deserves. Their perceptions of best teaching practices are not always

in congruence with the teachers' perceptions.

How learning is best acquired, for example, is the most misunderstood concept by

child and parent. A means to effectively educate parents must be found so that they

understand the reasons why each piece of work is not read, or the traditional method of

skill and drill grammar instruction by which they learned is not effective. The desire to

have their child prepared for high school helps perpetuate the traditional methods of

teaching.

Students become so well-trained in the traditional model of teaching as they work

their way from kindergarten to seventh grade that they expect teaching practices to

continue in the same manner. Weaning them away from that concept of learning is not an easy task. A comfort zone has been established and when students are pushed outside that zone, they become unsure of themselves as learners. They don't see that they are learning, because the learning isn't a discrete set of steps from one point to another.

Not all administrators understand effective teaching practices. As a result, they question whether or not a teacher is truly teaching students what they should be teaching them. Administrators are under pressure to produce high test scores for public consumption. That pressure is communicated to staff members in the form of the need to 'teach the basics,' because doing so will increase standardized test scores.

Curriculum. Language arts is taught in six 45 minute periods of time. The 45 minute class period would be sufficient if writing were the only instructional demand for that time. However, the Communication Arts curriculum includes teaching the area of writing as well as reading and literature. Research indicates that a minimum of 45 minutes should be devoted to both reading and writing.

A second demand on time comes in the form of interdisciplinary studies. While writing, reading, and literature can be effectively integrated into interdisciplinary studies, not all teachers understand or care about effective writing or reading practices. Thus, in many units, reading and writing are delegated to mere exercises rather than tools to build learning. Interdisciplinary studies that do not use reading and writing effectively interrupt the ebb and flow of the classroom as well as deplete the amount of time available for solid writing experiences.

The writing curriculum is sound in the sense that it asks us to ensure that students are exposed to skills necessary to become effective writers. The manner in which the

curriculum is presented, however, perpetuates the isolated practice of those skills.

Grammar, mechanics and usage skills are individually listed out which implies that they

are a discrete set of skills that need to be taught.

Textbooks. An integrated reading and writing series is provided for classroom use

and is expected to be used. Connecting literature with writing is a sound practice, yet the

reality is that the integration works at cross purposes with effective writing practices.

Writing exercises attempt to use processes, but are in reality curriculum controlled,

teacher mandated writing. Thus they end up as inadequate models of teaching writing.

Teaching of grammar, mechanics and usage in the series is relegated to instructions such

as "Have the students use pronouns in their writing."

Final thoughts. Institutional constraints on making changes in effective writing

practices need to be aligned with one another. "Instructional change does not take place

when it is in conflict with institutional values" (Langer and Applebee, 1987, p. 147). The

change must begin within myself. By teaching writing with effective practices and

communicating clearly with administration, peers, students and the community at large, I

can begin to bring those constraints into alignment.

Toward a Reconceptualization of Writing Instruction

Throughout the reflections about the components that comprised my belief

system, it was evident that a true congruence between my belief system and classroom

practice does not exist. The components of my belief system are solidly grounded in

theory, but my interpretation of writing theory supported some ineffective writing

practices. As well intended as my practices were, they must be refocused and reinformed

by current theory to bring practice and belief into congruence. Thus, my journey

continues and indeed it should because if I ever stop searching for the means to become a better teacher, then I fail both myself and the students I am teaching.

Atwell's workshop approach provides a conceptual base for beginning to build an alternate view of writing instruction. For middle school students in particular, the workshop approach provides a structure to keep them on track while at the same time "affording them the responsibility and autonomy they're ready to begin assuming as they approach adulthood" (Atwell, 1987, p. 18).

As a beginning, I need to let a set of principles guide my classroom practices. Atwell (1987) outlines them in her book *In The Middle*. She presents a fixed framework consisting of seven principles which informs teaching and student learning:

1. *Writers need regular chunks of time* – time to think, write, confer, read, change their minds, and write some more. Writers need time they can count on, so even when they aren't writing, they're anticipating the time they will be. Writers need time to write well.

2. *Writers need their own topics*. Students should use writing as a way to think about and give shape to their own ideas and concerns.

3. *Writers need response*. Helpful response comes during – not after – the composing. It comes from the writer's peers and from the teacher, who consistently models the kinds of restatements and questions that help writers reflect on the content of their writing.

4. *Writers learn mechanics in context*. They learn from teachers who address errors as they occur within individual pieces of writing, where these rules and forms will have meaning.

5. *Children need to know adults who write.* We need to write, share out writing

with our students, and demonstrate what experienced writers do in the process of

composing, letting our students see our own drafts in all their messiness and

tentativeness.

6. *Writers need to read.* They need access to a wide-ranging variety of texts,

prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction.

7. *Writing teachers need to take responsibility for their knowledge and teaching.*

We must seek out professional resources that reflect the far-reaching conclusions

of recent research into children's writing. And we must become writers and

researchers, observing and learning from our own and our students' writing. (pp.

17-18)

All seven principles are basic, straightforward tenets and closely align with my belief

system about teaching writing. At issue is ensuring that the principles in this framework

are adhered to in light of the institutional demands that constrain the writing classroom.

Atwell's writing workshop approach offers an effective means to ensure the use of

the principles; however, it assumes a daily 45 minute writing period. Given that the entire

communication arts curriculum is to be delivered during the course of the year in that

period of time, modifications to her workshop approach are necessary. This can be better

accomplished by blending the structure and elements of Atwell's workshop approach

with Rothermel's (1996) "Ten Day Writing Workshop" concept, which "has the

flexibility to permit language arts teachers to teach to their passions as well as to integrate

the curriculum with teammates" (p. xv).

Rothermel's workshop approach is such that his writing workshop lasts for ten

days (give or take a few depending on student needs) and follows a prescribed daily agenda. Following the ten day workshop, students work on other areas of the school curriculum. A few weeks later, he returns to the workshop for another ten days. What is appealing about this set up is that both workshop and other areas of the curriculum coexist. The down side is that his prescribed agenda leaves little room for composing and is teacher directed. Little student ownership of writing can occur if a draft has to be complete in one day and the teacher chooses the theme area for them.

The structure of Atwell's daily writing workshop "follows a predictable pattern of five-minute lesson, quick status-of-the class check, at least half an hour for the workshop's main business of writing and conferring, and five or ten minutes for the concluding whole-class share session. The routines may require time to take on meaning, but the structure they provide is in place from the start" (Atwell, 1987, p. 77).

The blend I intend to make between these two approaches allows the entire communication arts curriculum to be taught. My proposal is to teach a theme area such as "Expect the Unexpected" or "Looking for a Place in This World" because it connects with students' lives and covers other areas of the curriculum (speaking, acting, listening, thinking, reading). Following that theme area study, I would conduct writing workshop. Students could choose to use the theme area as a catalyst for writing.

I propose to use approximately a four week period of time for the theme area study and five weeks for writing workshop each quarter. That way students will have had the opportunity to explore literature and other areas of the curriculum in a meaningful manner as well as write for a long periods of time. This approach to teaching the curriculum also provides for interdisciplinary units with teammates.

<u>Final Reflections</u>

In his book, *A Fresh Look at Writing*, Graves (1994) stated:

When you decide to focus on the conditions that make for sound,

long-term literacy, you enlist in a lifetime venture. Cultivating a

classroom that encourages and sustains writing takes far more

work than other methods because it forces us to look first at

ourselves . . . . In one sense, teachers are the chief 'condition'

for effective writing. (p. 113)

The process I have gone through to discover my belief system has forced me to look at

myself – my beliefs and my teaching practices. Now I am ready to continue my journey

with a renewed sense of purpose and direction.

I am ready to step into the shadow of Atwell, Graves, and Calkins and put into

practice my belief system, practice what is professed with effective methodology. All the

processes aren't expected to run smoothly. I will strive to create the kind of writing

classroom that Atwell (1987) describes:

[in which] my students and I try out and test our beliefs about language,

its learning, and its teaching. What we do, day in and year out, is our

theory in action. When my kids and I enter language together, collaborate

as theorists, and act on those theories in the classroom, we forge and

inhabit a common ground where the logic of their learning and my

teaching can finally converge and become one. (p. 22)

<u>Questions for Further Consideration</u>

One area that I would like to explore further is the nature of the adolescent and

how it impacts learning in my classroom. Vygotsky (1978) said that " . . . teaching should

be organized in such a way that reading and writing are necessary for something . . . [a]

purely mechanical [exercise will] soon bore the child; his activity will not be manifest in

his writing and his personality will not grow. Reading and writing must be something the

child needs . . . writing must be 'relevant to life' . . . [and it must] be taught naturally . . .

children should be taught written language, not just the writing of letters" (as cited in

Dixon-Krauss, 1996, p. 110). A writing workshop provides opportunities for students to

interact in many ways and construct meaning. How can I build on the strengths of how

adolescents learn and use those strengths to establish an effective community of writers?

Jagger (1985) talks about how we incorrectly equate good teaching with knowing

the research and putting theory into practice. Teachers need to take their knowledge of

how their students learn and relate the findings and ideas of theory to their own models of

language:

> Careful observations over time will reveal individual styles and patterns of
>
> language use. Patterns emerge, teachers can reflect on them, comparing
>
> the information to past observations and to their knowledge of language
>
> development, to determine what their students know and can do with
>
> language. When combined with informed reflection, observation
>
> becomes inquiry; that is, careful study which leads to sound judgements
>
> about children, and to continual learning for the teacher. (p. 5)

Therefore, the second area I will continue to explore is a version of my original

question for this study. How will the changes I am making in classroom practices help to

bring my belief system about teaching writing into congruence with classroom practices?

What I need to do in my classroom to answer this question and inform the next stage of

my journey is to observe and reflect on language use in many different instances. Time

and continued observation of classroom practices and reflection will tell the tale.

Appendix A

Synthesis of Recursive Video Observations by Category

Table A1

Attitude as Evidenced by Recursive Video Observations

Lack of time to conduct individual conferences is why whole class looks at work.

Knowledge of learning style choice in manner in which writing is approached.

Help zero in on aspects students need to zero in on.

Teacher conferenced with students about work.

Teacher walks around and talks with students about the paper they are reading.

Questioning is an effective means to get author to see ways he could improve writing.

Elicited comments that showed students reflecting on the craft of writing.

Elicits with questions, more depth from their response.

Make conscious decisions and be able to explain why you create characters you do. Why jump into action or not. Why we develop out as we do.

What was the hardest about using a fill-in-the-blank story? Not enough to go on, have to come up with reasons why. In what ways did it seem easier to write a story?

I wonder if there is another way you can let that happen because . . ..

How easy was it to jump right into the conflict?

Were you able to reveal more about the character in this story, way he thought, felt, etc. Asked more questions about the craft of writing relative to this one.

Questioning sequence to elicit knowledge about using conflict in the story in order to help all see the necessary information about establishing conflict. Helps the author as well as the other students understand the intricacies of writing. More questioning to reinforce writing instruction and understanding of short stories.

Relates writing type to a personal issue in kid's lives.

Relates a watermark in teacher's life to students. Personalizes and makes connection between the concept of a watermark and real life.

Personalizes again the idea of what they are doing and gives it a realness.

Connects with where the student is in life.

Table A1 contd.

Attitude as Evidenced by Recursive Video Observations

Discussed how a watermark relates to a watermark in our lives. How an event positive or negative in our life can leave a lasting impression on us and we take that watermark with us.

Related story of how a person would handle a smoking situation with a kid personalizes the idea of what they are doing and gives it a realness.

Today we are going to take a closer look at ourselves. What kinds of things make us who we are and why are we who we are. Students respond. Discussed nature vs nurture debate as far as which had the most influence in our lives.

When you create your poem patterned after Walt Whitman, you'll use your own lives. What has been important in you life at various times.

Table A2

Knowledge of Writing Process as Evidenced by Recursive Video Observations

Sharing. Gives students an opportunity to discuss and use knowledge of story structure and elements.

Sharing. Students read their writing and audience claps. Teacher uses questions to get class to help see ways to improve on aspects of writing.

Recursive. You are going to write a story and have decisions to make. Probably revise three or four times as you go back and look at elements you're working on.

Sharing. Students have opportunity to tell the class what they have done with the story.

Precomposing. Brainstorm with class a list of events that could leave a lasting impression on us.

Prewriting. Cluster the events in their lives that left lasting impressions.

Prewriting. Created a web of each bored behavior observed. Identified what each on looked like. Asked what were specific behaviors I actually did. Crossed out those that were not specific behaviors. Placed into categories that had sound, sight, touch. These help us see the action in a description. Focused down to a single word phrase that described my behaviors. Related to behaviors and elicited descriptors. Had them choose one description and put that at the center of their own web.

Feel free to **share** writing with classmates as you work.

Sharing. Read partners writing to identify good showing words and phrases that brought to life the writing.

Sharing. Students are visiting about work.

Table A3

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Recursive Video Observations

Not all students engaged or interested in listening. Perhaps a way to pull all in or not. Seems the idea was to get all student's conflicts.

Discussion helps students better understand why and what works well in the writing.

Emphasizes the purpose of writing instruction at this time.

Gave many opportunities to respond.

Elicited comments that showed students reflecting on the craft of writing.

Wonder again at managing things in such a way that students can be more involved in a smaller group.

Gives students an opportunity to discuss and use knowledge of story structure and elements.

Perhaps more discussion or searching with partners group would allow them to better identify with peer support.

Teacher mentions one thing he thought about this story with the elements.

How does the mood of Angie's compare to others - similarities. Discussed what deep means.

Feel free to share your writing with classmates as you work.

Students work quietly and visit about writing. Teacher conferenced with students about writing.

Teacher walks around and talks with students about the paper they are reading.

Read to whole class. Perhaps by equipping students to accomplish the same thing with partners or small groups, more would be actively involved.

I especially like how you read with emphasis the words you wrote because it brought to life your story. Questioning ensued along similar lines. Teacher mentioned what he liked especially helped create that classroom environment.

Gave many opportunities to respond.

Teacher said it was neat to see the differences students bring to writing as a way to see the uniqueness of each author and how they use that in the story. Another student reads.

I do need you to focus up here please.

Table A3 contd.

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Recursive Video Observations

Motions for student to dump the gum.

Clarifies assignment with students as he passes out drawing paper.

Students are visiting about work.

Those of you who have a tougher time settling in may go to a quieter place to work.

Walks around the classroom. Excuse me gentlemen. Means to keep students on task.

Take another minute or so to settle in and then we'll have a quiet time so you can truly think and access your memories. Allows some quite talk and continues to circulate amongst students.

Take 30 seconds to get settled in. Ok, get settled in now please.

Clarifies assignment for student.

What I'd like you to do is raise your hand if you have a comment or question.

Take 2-3 minutes to settle in.

Speaks quietly to a student about behavior.

Explains we will have a framework to create your won free verse poem patterned after Walt Whitman.

Teacher circulates and reminds them to settle in.

Table A4

Writing Skills Instruction as Evidenced by Recursive Video Observations

Focus Lesson. Go back and revisit showing vs telling writing because we are trying to recreate a motion picture in the reader's mind. Sentence on the board used as a catalyst for creating showing statements – the things we do that indicate nervousness. What it looks like. What it sounds like.

Focus Lesson. Read a model of a narrative essay with class. Gives students an idea of the type of showing vs telling writing. Students identified single words or groups of words that indicated she was excited about her A paper. Underlined or circled words that indicated she was sad. The words create the picture. As a class, identified those words. Asked if they were telling, what would they be.

Focus Lesson. Assign a model of a lasting impression to be read aloud by students and teacher in class.

Focus Lesson. Asked what BB Bored did. All gave telling statements. Explain differences between showing and telling. Put a telling sentence on the overhead and read the showing paragraph. Cue students to pick out the parts that show. Instruct them to write down all words phrases that help them see, touch, feel, or taste what is going on in the paragraph.

Focus Lesson. Students listen and imagine the painting that teacher describes orally. Students draw what they see in their mind based on teacher description. Teacher puts on the overhead a transparency of painting and asks who was able to recreate aspects of it. The point was to illustrate showing vs telling writing.

Appendix B

Synthesis of Teacher Comments in Student Folders by Category

Table B1

Attitude as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

What if you don't tell us the answer in the first part and build up the tension with making all cuts until the last one? Your character needs to come to life and other characters need to be in this story. What about a buddy or a jerk player who thinks he's better and causes you to look bad because he is jealous of your ability or wants to play point guard also? What were the dogs doing? How can we see them and your reaction to them and get the idea you were confused? What if your always played with them when coming home, but not today. Let us see you and smell you at practice for the first cut and give us your hopes and thoughts about making the cut. Then do the second, then bring to life the third cut so the suspense of why you didn't make the cut comes out. What happened in the halls? What went through your mind? Use dialogue to have him tell you.

How could we see you arrive and see the place you stayed? All of a sudden you go from being in the car to going to bed. Bring some of these to life or do you really even need this? Could the conflict occur the next day? What did you see as you gazed back and forth? How could you bring it to life like it actually is happening. How could you be more specific with where you went? Work on the paragraphing to help us see this better.

What if you jumped right to the scene of finding your dad on the floor? What was said to police and to you? How can we see this happen? Bring this to life.

This would be a good place to bring a sequence of happenings to life.

Let's talk about the journal story idea. We should get this from the story. What if you just begin with the paper airplane? How would that effect your story? Do you sign your notes sincerely? How could we find out what she looks like at the same time she shakes her head? Could we find out if you are a new student at this point? What did this look like? Confused at your meaning. Would a person say this? What if he just, "You can't . . . Cootie woman." Bring this to life. Let us see you run, hear the laughs from the bus, and see you trip and fall. Wouldn't she see the pain in your eyes or marks on face and wonder what happened? Why wait to see what happens? Seems to need more discussion. Beginning journal here instead of beginning where you did would be good. Almost like we need a few more words to close out her thoughts and feelings.

Table B1 contd.

Attitude as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Heather you tell this well and your thoughts and feelings come through well. Now create a story from this. Who is this person? How did she become a loner? What specific happenings in her life occurred? Bring it to life!

How can you let us know this? This is confusing. Why did he say and do what he did? What would happen if you jumped directly into the action? Have someone actually do what you say. By paragraphing you'll make this a great deal more readable.

What did she do when she got there? Did it startle him? Could she flashback and actually see the accident replaying in her mind? Show us. Did she straighten the blanket? Heave the heavy saddle onto her back, cinch the saddle adjust the stirrup? Did the horse skiddle to the side, toss his head, nip at you when putting the bridle on? I think by eliminating this the reader should see that it was the case. If you tell us or describe how he swished his tail then you could eliminate the end. We should know this. What do you mean by she brought him in? Is a full gallop a pitter patter? The end doesn't quite work, because how could she tell this without having lived to tell it?

How can we know it is a bed without saying it is one? What if you make this present tense? Help us see this. How can you bring these flashbacks to life so we can see them? How could you bring out your father's role more? Show us this happening. How did you get out of bed? Why were drugs lying around? Especially in a hospital? Let's hear the dad tell it and when he does could we find out how your got aids?

Your story used simile well. I noticed one personification which was used effectively. Yet I didn't notice any metaphors, so I am not sure if you understand them or know how to use them. Remember to paragraph when something else happens (shift in the action). Also, proofing through for complete sentences and missing words. By reading it out loud you can pick up on the missing words. You did the best job I've read so far of writing about our creature in a positive light. I had hoped to see some imagery-simile, personification, metaphor, however. Your "Of Course" story was unique in the use of the items at the end. No one did that.

Your "Beast" story had personification and simile. Simile seems to come to you fairly easily. You labeled one simile when it was personification. A goof or are you somewhat unsure with them? With no metaphors, I assume that you don't understand them well enough to use them in writing. Always proof for complete thoughts and double check the verb tense. The creature story also had one simile. Again, check the complete thoughts.

Table B1 contd.

Attitude as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

You have a way with words. Your description and choice of words worked very well. Similes and personification were there. Metaphor looks a little shaky. When you do other writings, refresh your memory on them. I'd like to see you really dig into your writings Patrick because you a have a great way about you. I'd like you to really put out more, because of your talents. You have a super metaphor at the end of your creature writing Patrick. It really gives a good picture of lice. Good job on your "Of Course" writing. Creative use of spies' pocket contents. I would like to have seen some imagery included.

Your "Beast" story indicates you know how to use imagery. Remember to paragraph so readers can better see all the pieces of you story. Your creature story also shows the use of metaphor and simile. Your "Of Course" story was outstanding. Great use of imagery.

Your "Beast" writing shows you know how to use similes well. I noticed one personification and one metaphor. They are harder to use than simile I think, but still very effective. A few more metaphors and personifications would show me better how well you understand their usage. Remember to double check for complete thoughts and paragraphs when their is a shift in the action. At times you also use a comma to hook together complete sentences. Tuck this in the back of your mind so you remember with other writings. Your change of feeling leech writing had a good simile. I would've liked to have seen metaphor and personification as well to check your use of them. Your "Of Course" story fit the framework. I noticed one clue from the spies' pockets and one simile. More contents would add to the spy-like nature of this story.

You used imagery well in the "Beast" writing. It's obvious you know how to use it and where to use it in the writing. Your showing writing is getting better. I noticed, however, that your verb tense isn't always consistent. At times you have an incomplete thought. Keep that in mid for future writings and ask me to help you work on these things. Great metaphor in your komodo dragon writing. I would have liked to see some simile and personification as well to help us see hte dragon and what it can do more clearly. Again, paragraphing when you have a switch in action is important as well as double checking complete sentences.

From reading your "Invisible Beast" it's apparent you have a solid grasp on using simile, metaphor, and personification. Spelling seems to be a challenge to you, however. I didn't see any imagery in your creature/change of feeling writing though. You were great in class at identifying and explaining their meanings

You show a solid grasp of the use of imagery. Your beast was good at using it. Your choice of words helped create a visual picture. Your "Of Course" story used imagery well also. Nice job.

Table B1 contd.

Attitude as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

You definitely have a good grasp on personification, metaphor, simile. You did well with all three in the story. The trick will be to continue using them at the right times. Your "Beast" story was fine with the use of imagery. Your creature writing did also. Your "Of Course" story was great. You tied together the contents of the spies pockets and also used imagery.

Similes seem to be fairly easy to use. Personifications seem to be ok. You used both well in your writings. I sense confusion yet with metaphors In both writings you didn't have any. This is one area to work on with your descriptive writing. Your "Of Course" story was unique in that she wasn't killed. You incorporated some of the items. Yet, I was confused at times (the rubies at the end).

Your practice activities and sounds of silence writing indicate that you have a good understanding of how to use imagery. However, I didn't see any in your change of feeling writing – the creature writing. Story was good. Personification of time standing still fit well.

Adam you have a good sense of using simile. Personification and metaphor, on the other hand, appear to be a challenge for you. I didn't see correct usage in either of your pieces of writing. As we continue other writings remember this and ask for a review and clarification so you can use them effectively. Your story was interesting and you had some good detail. However, incorporating the content of the spies pockets was part of the assignment.

You have a real good way with words. You crafted a nice piece of writing, "The Invisible Beast." It was short but your imagery was outstanding. You seem to understand the use of it well, but struggle at times with creating ones you like. Your creature writing included simile. I would like to have seen you expand it out with more metaphor and personification, however.

You understand imagery and are able to use it well. I would like to see you use it in other writings as we continue to write. You have good comments. Speak up more in class! Your "Of Course" story incorporated a great number of the spies' pocket stuff.

Table B1 contd.

Attitude as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Your use of imagery in "Invisible Beast" was right on. You seem to have a solid grasp of how they should be used. I didn't see use of metaphor or personification in the change of feeling writing. Your sense of paragraphing seems to be moving in the write direction. Your "Of Course" story was humorous and sort of quirky. I noted simile but more would have been nice. You were creative with the use of the spies' contents.

Your sounds of silence writing indicates that you have a solid grasp of imagery and now how to use it. Your word choice was sophisticated. However, I didn't see any evidence of imagery in the creature writing. Your "Spy Game" story used a lot of the items from our class activity. I like the idea of the IRA.

Lindsay you understand simile very well. I think that metaphors are harder for you. I didn't see any in the "Invisible Beast" or change of feeling writings. Personifications also seem somewhat difficult to include in your writing. You were able to include them in our daily practice assignments, but it was tougher to put in writings. Always double check for complete sentences.

Basic not in depth explanation.

Basic response, not completely formed sentences.

Well explained with use of paragraphing and transition also.

Paragraphing good used a conclusion to the writing, good vocabulary.
Story setting - good descriptions and use of senses to help create mood and setting. Places where could
almost make less descriptive - too much. Use of flashback at start and end of writing.

Explained out with more statements.

Scattered thought misspellings and omissions, not coherent or connected.

Answered problem, however, detail and explanation was minimal. Setting description had a lot of telling, but covered many details. Needed more showing.

Well written response evidence of organization, strong thinking and completeness. Setting - Great job of imitating Paulson's style. Quiet mood. Well done.

Setting good use of language to pull us in - unique way. Voice was good. Incredible piece.

Short explanation could have used more depth. Setting good visuals blending and expanding the showings together would flesh out more. Needed a sense of connectedness.

Table B1 contd.

Attitude as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Setting good vocabulary well written description.

Setting sound of windmill was a good touch. Stated the mood rather than showed.

Setting referred to you. Began strong. Some good visuals 'finger of moon'. Stated the mood.

Descriptive yet could show more.

Well done. Good description and vocabulary.

Setting very well written and good use of language.

Did a survey which was creative. However, explanation was weak. Spelling weak attitude=additude. Setting had a great beginning and interesting thoughts.

Could have used more details and she acknowledged it first. Setting well said, good detail., However, more showing could add more.

Setting good sounds and visuals but a few places told more.

Setting good use of vocabulary, interesting premise, but almost too story like.

Setting needed more showing to create the picture.

Setting had good use of language to create the setting and alluded to the mood.

Setting could have used more showing details.

Setting had good details but perhaps less one after another. Interesting thought put into the setting. Paragraphed and explained response.

Well thought out in content. More advanced vocabulary. Admitted she did it quickly which shoed through in format.

Looked at the issue from both sides. Was able to articulate the depth verbally and make connections between abstract thoughts.

Well thought out response, paragraphed and explained with example.

Seems unsure of himself as a writer. Didn't think it was good enough. Spelling was rough. More detail and thorough explanation in writing needed.

Her personality and strong opinions show through clearly. Well-written observations right on target.

Setting had great visual description.

Table B2

Knowledge of Writing Process as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

What if you don't tell us the answer in the first part and build up the tension with making all cuts until the last one? Your character needs to come to life and other characters need to be in this story. What about a buddy or a jerk player who thinks he's better and causes you to look bad because he is jealous of your ability or wants to play point guard also? What were the dogs doing? How can we see them and your reaction to them and get the idea you were confused? What if your always played with them when coming home, but not today. Let us see you and smell you at practice for the first cut and give us your hopes and thoughts about making the cut. Then do the second, then bring to life the third cut so the suspense of why you didn't make the cut comes out. What happened in the halls? What went through your mind? Use dialogue to have him tell you.

How could we see you arrive and see the place you stayed? All of a sudden you go from being in the car to going to bed. Bring some of these to life or do you really even need this? Could the conflict occur the next day? What did you see as you gazed back and forth? How could you bring it to life like it actually is happening. How could you be more specific with where you went? Work on the paragraphing to help us see this better.

What if you jumped right to the scene of finding your dad on the floor? What was said to police and to you? How can we see this happen? Bring this to life.

This would be a good place to bring a sequence of happenings to life.

Let's talk about the journal story idea. We should get this from the story. What if you just begin with the paper airplane? How would that effect your story? Do you sign your notes sincerely? How could we find out what she looks like at the same time she shakes her head? Could we find out if you are a new student at this point? What did this look like? Confused at your meaning. Would a person say this? What if he just, "You can't . . . Cootie woman." Bring this to life. Let us see you run, hear the laughs from the bus, and see you trip and fall. Wouldn't she see the pain in your eyes or marks on face and wonder what happened? Why wait to see what happens? Seems to need more discussion. Beginning journal here instead of beginning where you did would be good. Almost like we need a few more words to close out her thoughts and feelings.

Table B2 contd.

Knowledge of Writing Process as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Heather you tell this well and your thoughts and feelings come through well. Now create a story from this. Who is this person? How did she become a loner? What specific happenings in her life occurred? Bring it to life!

How can you let us know this? This is confusing. Why did he say and do what he did? What would happen if you jumped directly into the action? Have someone actually do what you say. By paragraphing you'll make this a great deal more readable.

What did she do when she got there? Did it startle him? Could she flashback and actually see the accident replaying in her mind? Show us. Did she straighten the blanket? Heave the heavy saddle onto her back, cinch the saddle adjust the stirrup? Did the horse skiddle to the side, toss his head, nip at you when putting the bridle on? I think by eliminating this the reader should see that it was the case. If you tell us or describe how he swished his tail then you could eliminate the end. We should know this. What do you mean by she brought him in? Is a full gallop a pitter patter? The end doesn't quite work, because how could she tell this without having lived to tell it?

How can we know it is a bed without saying it is one? What if you make this present tense? Help us see this. How can you bring these flashbacks to life so we can see them? How could you bring out your father's role more? Show us this happening. How did you get out of bed? Why were drugs lying around? Especially in a hospital? Let's hear the dad tell it and when he does could we find out how your got aids?

Your story used simile well. I noticed one personification which was used effectively. Yet I didn't notice any metaphors, so I am not sure if you understand them or know how to use them. Remember to paragraph when something else happens (shift in the action). Also, proofing through for complete sentences and missing words. By reading it out loud you can pick up on the missing words. You did the best job I've read so far of writing about our creature in a positive light. I had hoped to see some imagery-simile, personification, metaphor, however. Your "Of Course" story was unique in the use of the items at the end. No one did that.

Your "Beast" story had personification and simile. Simile seems to come to you fairly easily. You labeled one simile when it was personification. A goof or are you somewhat unsure with them? With no metaphors, I assume that you don't understand them well enough to use them in writing. Always proof for complete thoughts and double check the verb tense. The creature story also had one simile. Again, check the complete thoughts.

Table B2 contd.

Knowledge of Writing Process as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

You have a way with words. Your description and choice of words worked very well. Similes and personification were there. Metaphor looks a little shaky. When you do other writings, refresh your memory on them. I'd like to see you really dig into your writings Patrick because you a have a great way about you. I'd like you to really put out more, because of your talents. You have a super metaphor at the end of your creature writing Patrick. It really gives a good picture of lice. Good job on your "Of Course" writing. Creative use of spies' pocket contents. I would like to have seen some imagery included.

Your "Beast" story indicates you know how to use imagery. Remember to paragraph so readers can better see all the pieces of you story. Your creature story also shows the use of metaphor and simile. Your "Of Course" story was outstanding. Great use of imagery.

Your "Beast" writing shows you know how to use similes well. I noticed one personification and one metaphor. They are harder to use than simile I think, but still very effective. A few more metaphors and personifications would show me better how well you understand their usage. Remember to double check for complete thoughts and paragraphs when their is a shift in the action. At times you also use a comma to hook together complete sentences. Tuck this in the back of your mind so you remember with other writings. Your change of feeling leech writing had a good simile. I would've liked to have seen metaphor and personification as well to check your use of them. Your "Of Course" story fit the framework. I noticed one clue from the spies' pockets and one simile. More contents would add to the spy-like nature of this story.

You used imagery well in the "Beast" writing. It's obvious you know how to use it and where to use it in the writing. Your showing writing is getting better. I noticed, however, that your verb tense isn't always consistent. At times you have an incomplete thought. Keep that in mid for future writings and ask me to help you work on these things. Great metaphor in your komodo dragon writing. I would have liked to see some simile and personification as well to help us see hte dragon and what it can do more clearly. Again, paragraphing when you have a switch in action is important as well as double checking complete sentences.

From reading your "Invisible Beast" it's apparent you have a solid grasp on using simile, metaphor, and personification. Spelling seems to be a challenge to you, however. I didn't see any imagery in your creature/change of feeling writing though. You were great in class at identifying and explaining their meanings

You show a solid grasp of the use of imagery. Your beast was good at using it. Your choice of words helped create a visual picture. Your "Of Course" story used imagery well also. Nice job.

Table B2 contd.

Knowledge of Writing Process as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

You definitely have a good grasp on personification, metaphor, simile. You did well with all three in the story. The trick will be to continue using them at the right times. Your "Beast" story was fine with the use of imagery. Your creature writing did also. Your "Of Course" story was great. You tied together the contents of the spies pockets and also used imagery.

Similes seem to be fairly easy to use. Personifications seem to be ok. You used both well in your writings. I sense confusion yet with metaphors In both writings you didn't have any. This is one area to work on with your descriptive writing. Your "Of Course" story was unique in that she wasn't killed. You incorporated some of the items. Yet, I was confused at times (the rubies at the end).

Your practice activities and sounds of silence writing indicate that you have a good understanding of how to use imagery. However, I didn't see any in your change of feeling writing – the creature writing. Story was good. Personification of time standing still fit well.

Adam you have a good sense of using simile. Personification and metaphor, on the other hand, appear to be a challenge for you. I didn't see correct usage in either of your pieces of writing. As we continue other writings remember this and ask for a review and clarification so you can use them effectively. Your story was interesting and you had some good detail. However, incorporating the content of the spies pockets was part of the assignment.

You have a real good way with words. You crafted a nice piece of writing, "The Invisible Beast." It was short but your imagery was outstanding. You seem to understand the use of it well, but struggle at times with creating ones you like. Your creature writing included simile. I would like to have seen you expand it out with more metaphor and personification, however.

You understand imagery and are able to use it well. I would like to see you use it in other writings as we continue to write. You have good comments. Speak up more in class! Your "Of Course" story incorporated a great number of the spies' pocket stuff.

Table B2 contd.

Knowledge of Writing Process as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Your use of imagery in "Invisible Beast" was right on. You seem to have a solid grasp of how they should be used. I didn't see use of metaphor or personification in the change of feeling writing. Your sense of paragraphing seems to be moving in the write direction. Your "Of Course" story was humorous and sort of quirky. I noted simile but more would have been nice. You were creative with the use of the spies' contents.

Your sounds of silence writing indicates that you have a solid grasp of imagery and now how to use it. Your word choice was sophisticated. However, I didn't see any evidence of imagery in the creature writing. Your "Spy Game" story used a lot of the items from our class activity. I like the idea of the IRA.

Lindsay you understand simile very well. I think that metaphors are harder for you. I didn't see any in the "Invisible Beast" or change of feeling writings. Personifications also seem somewhat difficult to include in your writing. You were able to include them in our daily practice assignments, but it was tougher to put in writings. Always double check for complete sentences.

Paragraphing good used a conclusion to the writing, good vocabulary.
Story setting - good descriptions and use of senses to help create mood and setting. Places where could almost make less descriptive - too much. Use of flashback at start and end of writing.

Setting description had a lot of telling, but covered many details. Needed more showing.

Well written response evidence of organization, strong thinking and completeness. Setting - Great job of imitating Paulson's style. Quiet mood. Well done.

Setting good use of language to pull us in - unique way. Voice was good. Incredible piece.

Setting very well written and good use of language.

Did a survey which was creative. However, explanation was weak. Spelling weak attitude=additude. Setting had a great beginning and interesting thoughts.

Could have used more details and she acknowledged it first. Setting well said, good detail., However, more showing could add more.

Setting good sounds and visuals but a few places told more.

Setting good use of vocabulary, interesting premise, but almost too story like.

Setting good visuals blending and expanding the showings together would flesh out more. Needed a sense of connectedness.

Table B2 contd.

Knowledge of Writing Process as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Setting good vocabulary well written description.

Setting sound of windmill was a good touch. Stated the mood rather than showed.

Setting referred to you. Began strong. Some good visuals 'finger of moon'. Stated the mood.

Setting needed more showing to create the picture.

Setting had good use of language to create the setting and alluded to the mood.

Setting could have used more showing details.

Setting had good details but perhaps less one after another. Interesting thought put into the setting. Paragraphed and explained response.

Looked at the issue from both sides. Was able to articulate the depth verbally and make connections between abstract thoughts.

Well thought out response, paragraphed and explained with example.

Seems unsure of himself as a writer. Didn't think it was good enough. Spelling was rough. More detail and thorough explanation in writing needed.

Her personality and strong opinions show through clearly. Well-written observations right on target.

Setting had great visual description.

Table B3

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

What if you don't tell us the answer in the first part and build up the tension with making all cuts until the last one? Your character needs to come to life and other characters need to be in this story. What about a buddy or a jerk player who thinks he's better and causes you to look bad because he is jealous of your ability or wants to play point guard also? What were the dogs doing? How can we see them and your reaction to them and get the idea you were confused? What if your always played with them when coming home, but not today. Let us see you and smell you at practice for the first cut and give us your hopes and thoughts about making the cut. Then do the second, then bring to life the third cut so the suspense of why you didn't make the cut comes out. What happened in the halls? What went through your mind? Use dialogue to have him tell you.

How could we see you arrive and see the place you stayed? All of a sudden you go from being in the car to going to bed. Bring some of these to life or do you really even need this? Could the conflict occur the next day? What did you see as you gazed back and forth? How could you bring it to life like it actually is happening. How could you be more specific with where you went? Work on the paragraphing to help us see this better.

What if you jumped right to the scene of finding your dad on the floor? What was said to police and to you? How can we see this happen? Bring this to life.

This would be a good place to bring a sequence of happenings to life.

Let's talk about the journal story idea. We should get this from the story. What if you just begin with the paper airplane? How would that effect your story? Do you sign your notes sincerely? How could we find out what she looks like at the same time she shakes her head? Could we find out if you are a new student at this point? What did this look like? Confused at your meaning. Would a person say this? What if he just, "You can't . . . Cootie woman." Bring this to life. Let us see you run, hear the laughs from the bus, and see you trip and fall. Wouldn't she see the pain in your eyes or marks on face and wonder what happened? Why wait to see what happens? Seems to need more discussion. Beginning journal here instead of beginning where you did would be good. Almost like we need a few more words to close out her thoughts and feelings.

Table B3 contd.

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Heather you tell this well and your thoughts and feelings come through well. Now create a story from this. Who is this person? How did she become a loner? What specific happenings in her life occurred? Bring it to life!

How can you let us know this? This is confusing. Why did he say and do what he did? What would happen if you jumped directly into the action? Have someone actually do what you say. By paragraphing you'll make this a great deal more readable.

What did she do when she got there? Did it startle him? Could she flashback and actually see the accident replaying in her mind? Show us. Did she straighten the blanket? Heave the heavy saddle onto her back, cinch the saddle adjust the stirrup? Did the horse skiddle to the side, toss his head, nip at you when putting the bridle on? I think by eliminating this the reader should see that it was the case. If you tell us or describe how he swished his tail then you could eliminate the end. We should know this. What do you mean by she brought him in? Is a full gallop a pitter patter? The end doesn't quite work, because how could she tell this without having lived to tell it?

How can we know it is a bed without saying it is one? What if you make this present tense? Help us see this. How can you bring these flashbacks to life so we can see them? How could you bring out your father's role more? Show us this happening. How did you get out of bed? Why were drugs lying around? Especially in a hospital? Let's hear the dad tell it and when he does could we find out how your got aids?

Your story used simile well. I noticed one personification which was used effectively. Yet I didn't notice any metaphors, so I am not sure if you understand them or know how to use them. Remember to paragraph when something else happens (shift in the action). Also, proofing through for complete sentences and missing words. By reading it out loud you can pick up on the missing words. You did the best job I've read so far of writing about our creature in a positive light. I had hoped to see some imagery-simile, personification, metaphor, however. Your "Of Course" story was unique in the use of the items at the end. No one did that.

Your "Beast" story had personification and simile. Simile seems to come to you fairly easily. You labeled one simile when it was personification. A goof or are you somewhat unsure with them? With no metaphors, I assume that you don't understand them well enough to use them in writing. Always proof for complete thoughts and double check the verb tense. The creature story also had one simile. Again, check the complete thoughts.

Table B3 contd.

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

You have a way with words. Your description and choice of words worked very well. Similes and personification were there. Metaphor looks a little shaky. When you do other writings, refresh your memory on them. I'd like to see you really dig into your writings Patrick because you a have a great way about you. I'd like you to really put out more, because of your talents. You have a super metaphor at the end of your creature writing Patrick. It really gives a good picture of lice. Good job on your "Of Course" writing. Creative use of spies' pocket contents. I would like to have seen some imagery included.

Your "Beast" story indicates you know how to use imagery. Remember to paragraph so readers can better see all the pieces of you story. Your creature story also shows the use of metaphor and simile. Your "Of Course" story was outstanding. Great use of imagery.

Your "Beast" writing shows you know how to use similes well. I noticed one personification and one metaphor. They are harder to use than simile I think, but still very effective. A few more metaphors and personifications would show me better how well you understand their usage. Remember to double check for complete thoughts and paragraphs when their is a shift in the action. At times you also use a comma to hook together complete sentences. Tuck this in the back of your mind so you remember with other writings. Your change of feeling leech writing had a good simile. I would've liked to have seen metaphor and personification as well to check your use of them. Your "Of Course" story fit the framework. I noticed one clue from the spies' pockets and one simile. More contents would add to the spy-like nature of this story.

You used imagery well in the "Beast" writing. It's obvious you know how to use it and where to use it in the writing. Your showing writing is getting better. I noticed, however, that your verb tense isn't always consistent. At times you have an incomplete thought. Keep that in mid for future writings and ask me to help you work on these things. Great metaphor in your komodo dragon writing. I would have liked to see some simile and personification as well to help us see hte dragon and what it can do more clearly. Again, paragraphing when you have a switch in action is important as well as double checking complete sentences.

From reading your "Invisible Beast" it's apparent you have a solid grasp on using simile, metaphor, and personification. Spelling seems to be a challenge to you, however. I didn't see any imagery in your creature/change of feeling writing though. You were great in class at identifying and explaining their meanings

You show a solid grasp of the use of imagery. Your beast was good at using it. Your choice of words helped create a visual picture. Your "Of Course" story used imagery well also. Nice job.

Table B3 contd.

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

You definitely have a good grasp on personification, metaphor, simile. You did well with all three in the story. The trick will be to continue using them at the right times. Your "Beast" story was fine with the use of imagery. Your creature writing did also. Your "Of Course" story was great. You tied together the contents of the spies pockets and also used imagery.

Similes seem to be fairly easy to use. Personifications seem to be ok. You used both well in your writings. I sense confusion yet with metaphors In both writings you didn't have any. This is one area to work on with your descriptive writing. Your "Of Course" story was unique in that she wasn't killed. You incorporated some of the items. Yet, I was confused at times (the rubies at the end).

Your practice activities and sounds of silence writing indicate that you have a good understanding of how to use imagery. However, I didn't see any in your change of feeling writing – the creature writing. Story was good. Personification of time standing still fit well.

Adam you have a good sense of using simile. Personification and metaphor, on the other hand, appear to be a challenge for you. I didn't see correct usage in either of your pieces of writing. As we continue other writings remember this and ask for a review and clarification so you can use them effectively. Your story was interesting and you had some good detail. However, incorporating the content of the spies pockets was part of the assignment.

You have a real good way with words. You crafted a nice piece of writing, "The Invisible Beast." It was short but your imagery was outstanding. You seem to understand the use of it well, but struggle at times with creating ones you like. Your creature writing included simile. I would like to have seen you expand it out with more metaphor and personification, however.

You understand imagery and are able to use it well. I would like to see you use it in other writings as we continue to write. You have good comments. Speak up more in class! Your "Of Course" story incorporated a great number of the spies' pocket stuff.

Table B3 contd.

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Your use of imagery in "Invisible Beast" was right on. You seem to have a solid grasp of how they should be used. I didn't see use of metaphor or personification in the change of feeling writing. Your sense of paragraphing seems to be moving in the write direction. Your "Of Course" story was humorous and sort of quirky. I noted simile but more would have been nice. You were creative with the use of the spies' contents.

Your sounds of silence writing indicates that you have a solid grasp of imagery and now how to use it. Your word choice was sophisticated. However, I didn't see any evidence of imagery in the creature writing. Your "Spy Game" story used a lot of the items from our class activity. I like the idea of the IRA.

Lindsay you understand simile very well. I think that metaphors are harder for you. I didn't see any in the "Invisible Beast" or change of feeling writings. Personifications also seem somewhat difficult to include in your writing. You were able to include them in our daily practice assignments, but it was tougher to put in writings. Always double check for complete sentences.

Basic not in depth explanation.

Basic response, not completely formed sentences.

Well explained with use of paragraphing and transition also.

Paragraphing good used a conclusion to the writing, good vocabulary.
Story setting - good descriptions and use of senses to help create mood and setting. Places where could
almost make less descriptive - too much. Use of flashback at start and end of writing.

Explained out with more statements.

Scattered thought misspellings and omissions, not coherent or connected.

Answered problem, however, detail and explanation was minimal. Setting description had a lot of telling, but covered many details. Needed more showing.

Well written response evidence of organization, strong thinking and completeness. Setting - Great job of imitating Paulson's style. Quiet mood. Well done.

Setting good use of language to pull us in - unique way. Voice was good. Incredible piece.

Short explanation could have used more depth. Setting good visuals blending and expanding the showings together would flesh out more. Needed a sense of connectedness.

Table B3 contd.

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Setting good vocabulary well written description.

Setting sound of windmill was a good touch. Stated the mood rather than showed.

Setting referred to you. Began strong. Some good visuals 'finger of moon'. Stated the mood.

Descriptive yet could show more.

Well done. Good description and vocabulary.

Setting very well written and good use of language.

Did a survey which was creative. However, explanation was weak. Spelling weak attitude=additude. Setting had a great beginning and interesting thoughts.

Could have used more details and she acknowledged it first. Setting well said, good detail., However, more showing could add more.

Setting good sounds and visuals but a few places told more.

Setting good use of vocabulary, interesting premise, but almost too story like.

Setting needed more showing to create the picture.

Setting had good use of language to create the setting and alluded to the mood.

Setting could have used more showing details.

Setting had good details but perhaps less one after another. Interesting thought put into the setting. Paragraphed and explained response.

Well thought out in content. More advanced vocabulary. Admitted she did it quickly which shoed through in format.

Looked at the issue from both sides. Was able to articulate the depth verbally and make connections between abstract thoughts.

Well thought out response, paragraphed and explained with example.

Seems unsure of himself as a writer. Didn't think it was good enough. Spelling was rough. More detail and thorough explanation in writing needed.

Her personality and strong opinions show through clearly. Well-written observations right on target.

Setting had great visual description.

Table B4

Writing Skills Instruction as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

What if you don't tell us the answer in the first part and build up the tension with making all cuts until the last one? Your character needs to come to life and other characters need to be in this story. What about a buddy or a jerk player who thinks he's better and causes you to look bad because he is jealous of your ability or wants to play point guard also? What were the dogs doing? How can we see them and your reaction to them and get the idea you were confused? What if your always played with them when coming home, but not today. Let us see you and smell you at practice for the first cut and give us your hopes and thoughts about making the cut. Then do the second, then bring to life the third cut so the suspense of why you didn't make the cut comes out. What happened in the halls? What went through your mind? Use dialogue to have him tell you.

How could we see you arrive and see the place you stayed? All of a sudden you go from being in the car to going to bed. Bring some of these to life or do you really even need this? Could the conflict occur the next day? What did you see as you gazed back and forth? How could you bring it to life like it actually is happening. How could you be more specific with where you went? Work on the paragraphing to help us see this better.

What if you jumped right to the scene of finding your dad on the floor? What was said to police and to you? How can we see this happen? Bring this to life.

This would be a good place to bring a sequence of happenings to life.

Let's talk about the journal story idea. We should get this from the story. What if you just begin with the paper airplane? How would that effect your story? Do you sign your notes sincerely? How could we find out what she looks like at the same time she shakes her head? Could we find out if you are a new student at this point? What did this look like? Confused at your meaning. Would a person say this? What if he just, "You can't . . . Cootie woman." Bring this to life. Let us see you run, hear the laughs from the bus, and see you trip and fall. Wouldn't she see the pain in your eyes or marks on face and wonder what happened? Why wait to see what happens? Seems to need more discussion. Beginning journal here instead of beginning where you did would be good. Almost like we need a few more words to close out her thoughts and feelings.

Table B4 contd.

Writing Skills Instruction as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Heather you tell this well and your thoughts and feelings come through well. Now create a story from this. Who is this person? How did she become a loner? What specific happenings in her life occurred? Bring it to life!

How can you let us know this? This is confusing. Why did he say and do what he did? What would happen if you jumped directly into the action? Have someone actually do what you say. By paragraphing you'll make this a great deal more readable.

What did she do when she got there? Did it startle him? Could she flashback and actually see the accident replaying in her mind? Show us. Did she straighten the blanket? Heave the heavy saddle onto her back, cinch the saddle adjust the stirrup? Did the horse skiddle to the side, toss his head, nip at you when putting the bridle on? I think by eliminating this the reader should see that it was the case. If you tell us or describe how he swished his tail then you could eliminate the end. We should know this. What do you mean by she brought him in? Is a full gallop a pitter patter? The end doesn't quite work, because how could she tell this without having lived to tell it?

How can we know it is a bed without saying it is one? What if you make this present tense? Help us see this. How can you bring these flashbacks to life so we can see them? How could you bring out your father's role more? Show us this happening. How did you get out of bed? Why were drugs lying around? Especially in a hospital? Let's hear the dad tell it and when he does could we find out how your got aids?

Your story used simile well. I noticed one personification which was used effectively. Yet I didn't notice any metaphors, so I am not sure if you understand them or know how to use them. Remember to paragraph when something else happens (shift in the action). Also, proofing through for complete sentences and missing words. By reading it out loud you can pick up on the missing words. You did the best job I've read so far of writing about our creature in a positive light. I had hoped to see some imagery-simile, personification, metaphor, however. Your "Of Course" story was unique in the use of the items at the end. No one did that.

Your "Beast" story had personification and simile. Simile seems to come to you fairly easily. You labeled one simile when it was personification. A goof or are you somewhat unsure with them? With no metaphors, I assume that you don't understand them well enough to use them in writing. Always proof for complete thoughts and double check the verb tense. The creature story also had one simile. Again, check the complete thoughts.

Table B4 contd.

Writing Skills Instruction as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

You have a way with words. Your description and choice of words worked very well. Similes and personification were there. Metaphor looks a little shaky. When you do other writings, refresh your memory on them. I'd like to see you really dig into your writings Patrick because you a have a great way about you. I'd like you to really put out more, because of your talents. You have a super metaphor at the end of your creature writing Patrick. It really gives a good picture of lice. Good job on your "Of Course" writing. Creative use of spies' pocket contents. I would like to have seen some imagery included.

Your "Beast" story indicates you know how to use imagery. Remember to paragraph so readers can better see all the pieces of you story. Your creature story also shows the use of metaphor and simile. Your "Of Course" story was outstanding. Great use of imagery.

Your "Beast" writing shows you know how to use similes well. I noticed one personification and one metaphor. They are harder to use than simile I think, but still very effective. A few more metaphors and personifications would show me better how well you understand their usage. Remember to double check for complete thoughts and paragraphs when their is a shift in the action. At times you also use a comma to hook together complete sentences. Tuck this in the back of your mind so you remember with other writings. Your change of feeling leech writing had a good simile. I would've liked to have seen metaphor and personification as well to check your use of them. Your "Of Course" story fit the framework. I noticed one clue from the spies' pockets and one simile. More contents would add to the spy-like nature of this story.

You used imagery well in the "Beast" writing. It's obvious you know how to use it and where to use it in the writing. Your showing writing is getting better. I noticed, however, that your verb tense isn't always consistent. At times you have an incomplete thought. Keep that in mid for future writings and ask me to help you work on these things. Great metaphor in your komodo dragon writing. I would have liked to see some simile and personification as well to help us see hte dragon and what it can do more clearly. Again, paragraphing when you have a switch in action is important as well as double checking complete sentences.

From reading your "Invisible Beast" it's apparent you have a solid grasp on using simile, metaphor, and personification. Spelling seems to be a challenge to you, however. I didn't see any imagery in your creature/change of feeling writing though. You were great in class at identifying and explaining their meanings

You show a solid grasp of the use of imagery. Your beast was good at using it. Your choice of words helped create a visual picture. Your "Of Course" story used imagery well also. Nice job.

Table B4 contd.

Writing Skills Instruction as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

You definitely have a good grasp on personification, metaphor, simile. You did well with all three in the story. The trick will be to continue using them at the right times. Your "Beast" story was fine with the use of imagery. Your creature writing did also. Your "Of Course" story was great. You tied together the contents of the spies pockets and also used imagery.

Similes seem to be fairly easy to use. Personifications seem to be ok. You used both well in your writings. I sense confusion yet with metaphors In both writings you didn't have any. This is one area to work on with your descriptive writing. Your "Of Course" story was unique in that she wasn't killed. You incorporated some of the items. Yet, I was confused at times (the rubies at the end).

Your practice activities and sounds of silence writing indicate that you have a good understanding of how to use imagery. However, I didn't see any in your change of feeling writing – the creature writing. Story was good. Personification of time standing still fit well.

Adam you have a good sense of using simile. Personification and metaphor, on the other hand, appear to be a challenge for you. I didn't see correct usage in either of your pieces of writing. As we continue other writings remember this and ask for a review and clarification so you can use them effectively. Your story was interesting and you had some good detail. However, incorporating the content of the spies pockets was part of the assignment.

You have a real good way with words. You crafted a nice piece of writing, "The Invisible Beast." It was short but your imagery was outstanding. You seem to understand the use of it well, but struggle at times with creating ones you like. Your creature writing included simile. I would like to have seen you expand it out with more metaphor and personification, however.

You understand imagery and are able to use it well. I would like to see you use it in other writings as we continue to write. You have good comments. Speak up more in class! Your "Of Course" story incorporated a great number of the spies' pocket stuff.

Table B4 contd.

Writing Skills Instruction as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Your use of imagery in "Invisible Beast" was right on. You seem to have a solid grasp of how they should be used. I didn't see use of metaphor or personification in the change of feeling writing. Your sense of paragraphing seems to be moving in the write direction. Your "Of Course" story was humorous and sort of quirky. I noted simile but more would have been nice. You were creative with the use of the spies' contents.

Your sounds of silence writing indicates that you have a solid grasp of imagery and now how to use it. Your word choice was sophisticated. However, I didn't see any evidence of imagery in the creature writing. Your "Spy Game" story used a lot of the items from our class activity. I like the idea of the IRA.

Lindsay you understand simile very well. I think that metaphors are harder for you. I didn't see any in the "Invisible Beast" or change of feeling writings. Personifications also seem somewhat difficult to include in your writing. You were able to include them in our daily practice assignments, but it was tougher to put in writings. Always double check for complete sentences.

Basic not in depth explanation.

Basic response, not completely formed sentences.

Well explained with use of paragraphing and transition also.

Paragraphing good used a conclusion to the writing, good vocabulary.
Story setting - good descriptions and use of senses to help create mood and setting. Places where could
almost make less descriptive - too much. Use of flashback at start and end of writing.

Explained out with more statements.

Scattered thought misspellings and omissions, not coherent or connected.

Answered problem, however, detail and explanation was minimal. Setting description had a lot of telling, but covered many details. Needed more showing.

Well written response evidence of organization, strong thinking and completeness. Setting - Great job of imitating Paulson's style. Quiet mood. Well done.

Setting good use of language to pull us in - unique way. Voice was good. Incredible piece.

Short explanation could have used more depth. Setting good visuals blending and expanding the showings together would flesh out more. Needed a sense of connectedness.

Table B4 contd.

Writing Skills Instruction as Evidenced by Teacher Comments in Student Folders

Setting good vocabulary well written description.

Setting sound of windmill was a good touch. Stated the mood rather than showed.

Setting referred to you. Began strong. Some good visuals 'finger of moon'. Stated the mood.

Descriptive yet could show more.

Well done. Good description and vocabulary.

Setting very well written and good use of language.

Did a survey which was creative. However, explanation was weak. Spelling weak attitude=additude. Setting had a great beginning and interesting thoughts.

Could have used more details and she acknowledged it first. Setting well said, good detail., However, more showing could add more.

Setting good sounds and visuals but a few places told more.

Setting good use of vocabulary, interesting premise, but almost too story like.

Setting needed more showing to create the picture.

Setting had good use of language to create the setting and alluded to the mood.

Setting could have used more showing details.

Setting had good details but perhaps less one after another. Interesting thought put into the setting. Paragraphed and explained response.

Well thought out in content. More advanced vocabulary. Admitted she did it quickly which shoed through in format.

Looked at the issue from both sides. Was able to articulate the depth verbally and make connections between abstract thoughts.

Well thought out response, paragraphed and explained with example.

Seems unsure of himself as a writer. Didn't think it was good enough. Spelling was rough. More detail and thorough explanation in writing needed.

Her personality and strong opinions show through clearly. Well-written observations right on target.

Setting had great visual description.

Appendix C

Synthesis of Lesson Plans by Category

Table C1

Attitude as Evidenced by Lesson Plans

Using Art Transparency #4, students will write a description of "A Hilly Scene" by Samuel Palmer describing not only the physical scene but also the mood and your response to it..

Present hyperbole: Explain how you lead the reader into the hyperbole.

Give class time to write.

Write in folders about how well students use clues from the story to create conversation.

Conference

How do students feel about the names they were given? Invite them to express opinions privately and to answer this question: Should teenagers be allowed to change their names?

Using the medium of crayon resist with watercolor wash, students will create their favorite scene or character from the story. Once complete, they will in writing describe the hags as fully as possible based on clues in the text that helped them create their artistic depictions. This writing will take the form of alliterative phrases to enhance the imagery of a hag.

Work on pictures and alliterative phrases.

Your responses to people and experiences help make you the person you are. Pass roll of toilet paper around class. Pull off 1-5 squares. For every square, tell us one unique thing about yourself. Tie those uniquenesses to theme.

Have students get out their story outlines. Reflect on the process of creating a story plot from an article. What did you think of the process of creating a story plot from an article? What started your creative juices flowing? Was it a particular sentence, a certain work or phrase, or maybe a picture that was included with the article? Do you feel it would be fairly easy to write the stories you have outlined? Would they be more complete, well-written because you first made outlines?

You are going to write the opening paragraphs describing the setting and establishing the mood for a story.

Table C1 contd.

Attitude as Evidenced by Lesson Plans

Written Self-Assessment: How well do you think you conveyed the mood? What details seem to be particularly effective? Which ones need improvement?

Record in student folders how well they use pronouns I and we, include feelings without assuming what the other character feels, and not shifting to a different point of view.

Introduce "The Christmas Box" a novel to be read aloud. Relate it as a short story to Monday's examination of plot structure and direct it to writing a short story to blend with stories written about gingerbread houses made in home economics.

The example from the story was "Be true to yourself, you're the one you have to be with for the rest of your life." What the students failed to do was truly search their experience and create a lesson that reflected that experience. They also made them an immediate saying that they felt fit life rather than a lesson that came out of experience.

Teacher assess the outlines and discusses with students while moving about the classroom. Record observations in binder.

Have author's self-analyze their writing by writing down the story elements.

Work with students as necessary depending on need and frustration level.

Please have them give good thought to the sound lessons from their life.

Have students complete the following statements in their spirals: I hope that one day I will live in a . . . Some day I would like to have . . . All my life I have dreamed of . . . Life would be perfect if . . . Discuss responses. What if your parents picked out husbands or wives for you? How would you feel?

Theme: Many influences touch our lives, and we have to decide what really matters to us.

Brainstorm the kinds of firsts students have had in their lives. Think of a first in your life and describe it in a "Quick write".

Think about one of the goals you'd like to achieve.

Tell students that throughout our lives we meet a lot of people who in some way or form help us find our place in this world. We will use writing as a process of discovering how that happens.

Form: Descriptive/narrative

Reflective writing begins with a personal question, a personal need to examine some part of your experience.

Table C1 contd.

Attitude as Evidenced by Lesson Plans

Collect writing folders.

Do you feel that marriages have a better chance of being successful when the partners are fimilar backgrounds?

Write an article for the school newspaper describing an unfair situation in your school and explaining how to correct it.

The writing is to be used to [gather data] for focus lessons.

Brainstorm the many, varied, and unusual ways we try to fit in.

Individually students respond personally to the lyrics. What do they mean to you?

Ability to abstract and form relationships will be noted. Coherency of thought and organization of ideas will be noted.

The purpose is to examine, explain, or comment upon some part of your 8th grade year.

Note those who contribute and encourage others as well.

As a whole group brainstorm what the students think will be the good things and what they think will be the bad things about being in high school. Talk about what they are most looking forward to about being in highschool.

Led the discussion into an analysis of why it seems important to us to feel that we fit in. Students write about why it is important for them to fit in in journal. Teacher shares personally what he feels about fitting in.

Many events both positive and negative have made lasting impressions on our lives. Though these events sometimes coincide with the events that are supposed to be important for us like our 16th birthday, first car etc. other incidents overlooked by the outside world may actually be more meaningful. Share some of my own. As a class and individually, brainstorm lists of events.

Table C2

Knowledge of Writing Process as Evidenced by Lesson Plans

Writing Lesson: There Was A Child Went Forth - includes **all stages of writing process**

Writing Lesson: Watermarks - includes **all stages of writing process**

Writing Lesson: Bobby B. Bored - includes **all stages of writing process**

Writing Lesson: Should I or Shouldn't I: Unresolved Conflict - **includes all stages of writing process**

Writing Lesson: Writing a Journal Entry - includes **all stages of writing process**

Edit final turn-in-able copy.

Sharing: Have each student read his/her response.

Share descriptions.

Conference and **revise** and proofread [**edit**].

Sharing: Have students read their breakthrough experience aloud. Place author's chair in front of class and have students read sitting on the stool.

Prewriting: Free write about some or all aspects of your 8th grade year, letting your ideas take you where they will.

Composing: Describe someone you've met in a chance encounter, yourself, or someone you know that you want to write about.

Precomposing: Carefully study your free writing. Look for parts that you like and want to explore further. Also look for any emerging idea that could serve as the focus for your essay. Continue gathering, focusing, and organizing your thoughts as needed.

Composing: Write your first draft freely, allowing your own personality to come through in your writing. Use any planning and organizing you have done as a general guide for your writing.

Revising: Read through your first draft two or three times. Ask a classmate to read it as well. Make sure to add information if your subject is not completely developed; also make sure that all of the parts are arranged in the best order.

Evaluating: Is the writing focused around one idea? Does the writing sound honest and sincere? Does the writing form an effective whole, moving smoothly and clearly from one point to the next? Will readers appreciate the treatment of the subject?

Share setting descriptions in small group.

Table C2 contd.

Knowledge of Writing Process as Evidenced by Lesson Plans

Editing: Make all corrections necessary in spelling and grammar etc.

Revise for content.

Students **evaluate** stories using product descriptors.

Prewriting: Begin brainstorming about unfair situations in school.

Precomposing: Look over your brainstorming notes and pick a situation that you feel is unfair but could be corrected if your suggestions were to go into effect. List solutions for several problems before you pick cone to write about.

Composing: Draft your article. Use the ideas generated.

Table C3

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Lesson Plans

Have students compare responses with a partner.

Present alliterative phrases and artwork.

Share in small groups.

Share descriptions.

Practice reading to emphasize fluency. After all are read, discuss common elements and breakthrough experiences.

Assign tables and working groups. Cover behavioral expectations and guidelines for library use.

Break students into manageable groups and give them two minutes to brainstorm on butcher paper.

Group brainstorming.

Group by group share with rest of class the ways and why's we try to fit in. Teacher record responses and class discusses them.

Students share written responses with class.

As a whole group brainstorm and discuss . . . .

Table C4

Writing Skills Instruction as Evidenced by Lesson Plans

Practice the use of appositive, introductory prepositional phrases and specific nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives [focus lesson on sentence expansion taught these].

Focus Lesson: Showing vs telling writing 7th.

Focus Lesson: Similes with *Fat Chance Claude*.

Daily Oral Language: Throughout the entire year.

Focus Lesson: Sentence Expansion/Parts of speech review.

Focus Lesson: Note cards for science fair research.

Focus Lesson: Developing characters.

Focus Lesson: Adding details.

Focus Lesson: Showing vs telling writing 8th [two instances].

Focus Lesson: Using a hook in writing.

Focus Lesson: Use of transitions

Appendix D

Synthesis of Ethnographic Observations by Category

Table D1

Attitude as Evidenced by Ethnographic Observations

Recorded Observation	Reflection on Observation
Gave today 30 minutes to work on stories. Teacher moved around to help with questions.	
"Finding a Place in This World" song with lyrics on the overhead projector. Students make written comments/class discussion.	I think this song is a great addition to the daily topic - fitting in. Fitting in is a very appropriate topic for 8th graders as they enter 9th. Piaget's identity vs. Role confusion developmental stage. They will have to find a way to fit into adult society quite soon.
Why do people feel the need to fit in? Discussion in class.	Students are providing thoughtful, intelligent answers and suggestions.
Assignment given with personal story to demonstrate/give example of Christmas boxes.	Personal experience seemed to quiet the class. All eyes went to teacher.

Table D2

Knowledge of Writing Process as Evidenced by Ethnographic Observations

Use of focus lesson on personification and student brainstorming as a **composing** activity.	
Having more students **share**.	Encourages students.
Introduced a **precomposing** activity. I like all creatures, you must prove it is really disgusting. Passed out forms. Students took off researching.	Changed teacher role - director of repulsive creature institute. Intriguing idea. I think the way you changed student to teacher role's was a great idea.
Students seated discussing issue of conflict related to story being written. **Sharing**.	
Gave students option to go back to other writing to develop ideas. **Recursive**.	

Table D3

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Ethnographic Observations

Recorded Observation	Reflection on Observation
Returned students question to them and asked questions.	Got students thinking about the story/showed who was listening and who wasn't.
Moved from front of room to side and back to front.	Students paying attention followed with their eyes/ class quiet today - involved?
Telling class to settle in and repeated assignment.	Better than telling class to be quiet/more effective.
Another minute to settle in/class gets quiet.	Positive.
Moved to back of room to explain assignment to student.	Most instruction given from front of room/move around more?
Most students writing.	Gives them time to think and come up with own ideas.
Kneels down and talks to special student (LD) to get them started.	Could give him choices/other students can create ideas, but that's not one of his strengths.
Asks for volunteers/student reads/some students talking/listens and looks at talkers/responds to readers.	Class quieted/not many shared/only 2.
Talks to students who haven't begun to work/reexplains directions.	Gets all but one student started.
Gave verbal directions and then wrote questions on the board then gave verbally again. Attempt to get all students to understand.	Students quit talking to each other as soon as teacher quit talking.
Walks to students and reminds them to behave.	
David begins class with direction - setting tone.	Attentive students.
David, aide, and student teacher move around room to help with individual help.	Good interaction with students.

Table D3 contd.

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Ethnographic Observations

Recorded Observation	Reflection on Observation
Students complained room was too cool.	Explained with humor why keeping fans on. I'm chilly too.
Clarifying importance of characters - students finishing homework, getting settled, share what they did.	Allowed time for students to finish: good or bad?
Having more students share - asking anyone, random.	Good: keeps all on their toes to encourage students to be done on time.
Students asked to put things away and push in chairs.	Lined up to leave - good exit.
Making things more specific. Reinforces no excuses.	Prevents student from sitting idle - consequence for not being prepared?
Read through assignment directions - points out type of words students may use: Clarifies exactly what students will do.	Clear directions - students know what they need to do.
Point of the day explained clearly and tied to assignment.	Seems to flow, carries over from day before. Excellent: backs self up and refocuses the whole class.
Begin game - explanation.	Students answering. It seemed like you down played competition. Didn't unify groups with name - good. All students individually responsible for knowing, now one r or harassed for not knowing, but at the same time it felt more like a discussion/Quiz than a "Game".
Explain or help students discover answers - don't emphasize points right or wrong.	Teams started offering each other answers - interesting?
Sampled students on having difficulty getting started	Again using student questions to keep others. Excellent - much better than just lecturing on how to write.
Teacher direction giving specific ideas for how to proceed.	Asked for student suggestions. Not much response.

Table D3 contd.

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Ethnographic Observations

Quiet prodding for Pat to apply himself.	I really like the structure and approach you use with students. A very nice cooperative group.
Class discussion.	All students seem actively engaged. Requires imagination and ingenuity.
Each group is given a different question to answer.	Group discussion leads to considering nursing homes - old folks are real people too. Students seem engaged and are providing thoughtful, relevant insights.
Go for it! Students took off with zeal - seem to be interested.	The students zealous search reveals interest in assignment. Most students seemed to know where to begin - by not telling them specifics they are forced to explore the library. Those that are lost you seem to have enough time to help get started individually. It was neat to watch the students support to help each other, reassure each other that a creature is repulsive enough.

Table D4

Writing Skills Instruction as Evidenced by Ethnographic Observations

Recorded Observation	Reflection on Observation
Summary - use of overhead. Paraphrasing - example of article found. Create reference card - overhead - passed out blank cards - students asked to complete sample as Dave did it.	Students were involved and connected. Explains why format for note cards needs to be precise.
Demonstration of when must quote. How to cite.	Nice job with two overheads to show student example of how to paraphrase and getting necessary information.
Gave instruction for guided practice. Students given article, assignment requirements written and given orally.	Excellent practice sheet.
Reading orally, written instructions.	Nice timing - breaking down into parts for kids.
Students are correcting the sentence of the day.	Students are well-behaved. I like the sentence of the day idea.
Quick walk through review - creating personifications: read examples, students picked out the human like characteristics.	Short examples. Good - able to remember longer examples. Hard to recall correctly. Good practice for listening skills.
Purpose: Create pictures -see things differently.	Clarifies reason for lesson.
Discussing character/conflict. Identifies a student's beginning story with earlier reading.	
Review - clarification of metaphors. Students giggling, listening, interested.	I noticed that students listened carefully - personally invested in their "creations" and in seeing what other students did. Better than providing examples.
Using student samples to explain conflict/characterization.	Incorporating student idea in giving examples is good.
Dave is handing out sheets with sentences that need to be grammatically correct.	I think these sentences offer wonderful opportunities for students to practice and learn correct grammar.

Appendix E

Synthesis of Professional Journal by Category

Table E1

Attitude as Evidenced by Professional Journal

Math is prescribed and developmental, writing is developmental but should it be prescribed?

Anecdotal records help me see things more in their [student's] writing because I'm mores focused on it.

I think I like to individualize a lot for students when I work with them and then read their final best, but that is really hit and miss and doesn't always address other skills.

I like the sophistication of thought that I'm encouraging them to use.

We'll see their development through the collection of stuff.

I will begin to trace the development of their understanding by looking back to the work they have turned in to date - all of a formative nature. Along with this final piece of writing I will be able to complete a summative evaluation of the unit.

We worked on the five paragraph essay type expository/analytical type of writing.

The main objective with this writing is formative in nature. The formative evaluation will be for correct usage, explanation of why it was used where it was used, and its interpretation.

Time to spend with each student and work on them [revisions] is hard to find.

I've begun anecdotal records on all students - I find it helps me see things more in their reading and writing because I'm more focused on it. I have three-ring binders with recording sheets. I just need to make sure I consistently look at all students. As I become more familiar with students and they with me, I think I'll do better. Perhaps I could go table by table or alphabetically in looking at students.

I have also begun to read some of their writing and respond with observations more quickly. I realize with 140 kids, I cannot evaluate all in writing. I will collect final drafts of writings from classes on a rotating basis.

I have students keeping a draft book. All our brainstorms, free writes, clusters-precomposings etc. will be there. All drafts will remain in that book with the exception of a final for my evaluation.

I'd like them to make their own decisions about writing.

Time seems to be my biggest obstacle - the 45 minute assembly line makes it tough.

Table E1 contd.

Attitude as Evidenced by Professional Journal

Some of the students are realizing they don't like what they've done or want to make changes, others sense the need but do not know how to proceed. Those are the ones I need to make sure I identify so I can give them extra help.

I think at times I contrive assignments so they can learn mechanics or style, etc. and maybe I need to let those elements etc. be taught evolve naturally from student experience which directs writing and perhaps I should have a checklist of types of writing and skills to be addressed and then work to include them in.

I think perhaps I will try to identify those with specific areas of need and pull them together for a focus lesson on that element. All the flashback users to discuss techniques and so on.

Perhaps by using more literature, writing experiences can arise.

So much of what I do is tied to a theme area – so creating assignments within that area [is needed].

I need to be sure and tie that theme concept in to the novel *The Shadow Club* to help extend it. I think the theme also will tie effectively to the use of imagery in writing.

So tomorrow, we'll pull them together and blend the fitting in to finding a place in this world to short story literature and analyzing that literature in light of the theme as well as element analysis.

We'll use the story to tie it to the theme concept and analyze for author's purpose [as well as] how he sequenced the events to develop out the purpose.

I think it is critical to get students to talk more about the assignments, because they are all related to writing a narrative and connect with the theme "Finding a Place in this World."

Sometimes I think they need to explore ideas in writing without preconceived ideas of what it should be or look like ahead of time. The reason being that we sometimes preset students to create pieces of writing in a particular mold and that then inhibits the natural inclination to explore. We essentially give them our's or someone else's way of looking at writing rather than their's. So we get more canned responses, more rigid responses. So good explanation and talking through of ideas and ways might prove more beneficial in the long-run and then choose a model for the writings that really need a model. The stereotyped five-paragraph essay or research paper would be good examples. The more technical or analytical type of writings would fall into this category. I guess the short stories we read actually fit this category. I used them as models of character development. In these cases, it was real literature used as a model and analyzed so that they could learn how to better assemble stories.

Table E1 contd.

Attitude as Evidenced by Professional Journal

I would rather use the poem to get at what feelings the sights and sounds mentioned in the poem might evoke, then blend it into writing an episode about being pursued and using imagery to evoke emotions and establish mood.

Table E2

Knowledge of Writing Process as Evidenced by Professional Journal

The trick then is to thoughtfully reflect on what was written and as a **recursive** process, go back and thoughtfully **revise** making changes based on crafting story reasons.

Writing is such a **recursive** process and I wish I could impress upon them that this is the case. I think they see it on one level and then in reality feel that once it is down it is down or they only **revise** once.

The idea behind today was to share ideas with one another. **Sharing**.

We'll have plenty of time for **revisions** so I think we will be able to deal with those issues.

Prewriting. For eighth grade and what we are doing, I think it is critical to get students to talk more about the assignments, because they are all related to writing a narrative and connect with the theme "Finding a Place in this World."

The idea behind today was to **share** writings with one another.

Sharing. I like the idea that they had an opportunity to read several different episodes and see how others used imagery for effect.

Table E3

Classroom Environment as Evidenced by Professional Journal
_____

I'm still frustrated with the time I have to do it all.

Time seems to be my biggest obstacle - the 45 minute assemble time makes it tough.

I consider quality responses to give example and explanation and be directly related to experience or stories. I don't think I communicate my expectations clearly in this area.

I'll be interested in the follow-up discussion to catch their reactions to the importance of fitting in.

The discussion was a natural lead in to "A Place in This World."

I think it is critical to get students to talk more about the assignments.

I want to do less yapping and more student centered discussion.

I realize with 140 kids, I cannot evaluate all [student work] in writing.

All drafts will remain in that book with the exception of a final for my evaluation.

I also need to tag my binder for those kids I have yet to make notations on. It seems that many who respond more regularly have more. I would like to pull the others out more, but I do not like to put kids on the spot. We are still developing that safe environment for sharing and responding.

I felt really good about today's reflection and reading of student writings. I think they enjoyed the writing. I feel like several read their writings because they felt good about them in a non-threatening environment.

Table E4

Writing Skills Instruction as Evidenced by Professional Journal

Focus Lesson. We worked on the five paragraph essay type of expository/analytical writing. Introductions and conclusions are difficult for them I think they are for all. We created thesis statements to drive the papers then developed the reasons for believing the thesis statement.

Focus Lesson. The t-chart for a brainstorming of key attributes helped begin that process [a comparison of objects to write similes]. The Venn diagram helped key in on the actual similarities and differences as all key attributes were plotted. As we plotted them it was somewhat helpful because we were able to see similes emerge.

The models in the book, the short stories, were used for example.

I think at times I contrive assignments so they can learn mechanics or style, etc. and maybe I need to let those elements etc. being taught evolve naturally from student experience which directs writing and perhaps I should have a checklist of the types of writing and skills to be addressed and then work to include them in.

I also need to target a grammar skill to develop a **focus lesson** around and incorporate that lesson into the next major writing.

Focus Lesson. So I'll try to keep the workshop relevant to most and use it as a review and reinforcement of skill or to introduce a new or undeveloped concept.

I did daily oral language last year and I liked how we spent five minutes on a couple of sentences. It was a good quick refresher and enhancement of editing practices.

Appendix F

Data Collection Forms

a.   Ethnographic Observation Form

b.   Myself as a Learner Form

c.   My Child as a Learner Form

d.   Reading/Writing Development Observation Form

Time	Observation Date:	Observer:
	Recorded Observations	*Observer Reflection*

Student Form

Myself As a Learner

Student   Date

Check Yes or No. Then write about yourself.	Yes	No	About Me
1. I usually • read daily. • write daily. • watch TV daily.	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	
2. I often • am curious about things. • try to finish what I'm doing. • try to do things well. • do things in new ways. • get frustrated quickly. • like trying new ideas. • like to express my opinions.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
3. I understand what I • read. • write. • watch.	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	
4. I explore ideas by • reading. • writing. • drawing. • watching. • talking.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
5. I enjoy working • with others. • by myself.	☐ ☐	☐ ☐	
6. I am someone who • is proud of my work. • sees how I am doing better. • sets goals for myself.	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	

7. I like to read about

8. I like to write about

9. I like to watch

10. I like to learn about

My Child As a Learner

Child's Name   Date

Please comment and provide examples of your child's learning in the following areas.			
My child	**Yes**	**No**	**Comments/Examples**
1. usually • reads daily. • writes daily. • watches TV daily.	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	
2. often • is curious. • persists with what s/he is doing. • perfects what s/he is doing. • does things new ways. • becomes easily frustrated. • likes trying new things. • likes to express opinions.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
3. understands what s/he is • reading. • writing. • watching.	☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐	
4. explores ideas by • reading. • writing. • drawing. • watching. • talking.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
5. enjoys working • with others. • alone.	☐ ☐	☐ ☐	
6. is someone who • is proud of achievement. • recognizes own growth. • considers new possibilities. • sets goals for self.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
7. likes to read about			
8. likes to write about			
9. likes to watch			
10. likes to learn about			
11. Additional comments and reactions:			

My Name	Relationship to child
I can be reached at	

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Teacher Form

ding and Writing Observations

Student   Teacher

Date	Reading Observations
	Record your observations of the student's reading development across a range of contexts.

Date	Writing Observations
	Record your observations of the student's writing development across a range of contexts.

Appendix G

Peer Audit Review

The most effective teacher in a classroom is experience – whether it be the experience of the students interacting with new information or the experience of the teacher in presenting options for learning. As a progressive teacher, I view education as a process rather than a product. The acquisition of knowledge is secondary to the realization of new experience; students are better served (and thus better educated) when they know *how* to find information rather than accumulate information for its own sake. Because I believe this in my own teaching, the theories and research methodologies selected by David Christensen for his research are seen as pertinent and effective for perusal by teachers interested in analyzing their own particular beliefs about teaching.

I agree with Christensen's premise that every teacher needs to examine her underlying beliefs about learning and must evaluate the correlation of these beliefs to instructional methodology. Teachers who no longer ask themselves if what they do is working, or is pertinent to the students, or is important in the overall education of a child are teachers who have lost an edge in the educational process. Students survive all kinds of teachers and certainly educations occurs at many levels. The most productive education occurs, however, from those teachers that, as Dewey puts it, " . . . had learned to be adequately moved by their own ideas and intelligence." A teacher who conducts consistent research into her teaching methods *as defined by her beliefs* is a teacher who has the best chance of producing "educated" students because the processes for both are the same.

Reflections on theories of education produced by both educators in the classroom and academia in general are critical to teachers, not because they represent "new things to try out" in the constant search for excitement in education, but because they represent sounding boards against which every teacher should be testing her own beliefs. Accumulating methodologies is meaningless as well unless the methods follow the pattern of a teacher's belief system. In this way, I agree with Christensen that reviewing teacher-based research in the classroom is valid for teachers, not because everyone should necessarily adopt the methods, but because it shows teachers the *process* by which good teachers can mold method to belief.

The question of how to critically review one's own belief system and the methodologies that grow out of it can be served be reviewing processes used by other teachers, even if those processes are more specific to a certain type of teaching style or personality preference. In reviewing Christensen's process of classroom evaluation, for example, I find that his observations and conclusions about effective teaching are pertinent to my own classroom, even though the processes I would use may not necessarily include journal writing, for example. The strength of Christensen's work is that he clinically analyzes self-evaluation as a process necessary to effective teaching and demonstrates a model by which teachers can understand its validity.

The hours of documentation and analysis by Christensen of both student and teacher input into the writing process is valuable to those teachers who do not have the time to repeat the process in their own classrooms. The difference in levels of success between students in a structured class process versus students who are given individualized instruction at their own point in the process is pertinent to teachers who

are trying to teach skills of any kind to students.

Christensen's beliefs about giving students ownership of their writing was tempered by classroom observations of students who needed to see questioning techniques modeled before they could effectively use those techniques in peer editing, for example. Student ownership of writing to Christensen did not mean giving *free rein* to writing as is commonly misconstrued, but in giving students individual and critical attention at their particular stage of development in the writing process.

Critical examination of the processes by which students actually learn is a tedious and clearly subjective enterprise. To contain beliefs into a systematic structure which can be analyzed and reviewed by other teachers is a true benefit to the teaching profession. While many teachers have clear belief systems, and many can relate their methodologies to their belief systems, few teachers take the time to actually test those beliefs and methods in the field. Reviewing that process of examination by Christensen can help each teacher evaluate her own belief system and the methods by which those beliefs are actualized in the classroom.

Appendix H				
Summation of Study Matrix				
Belief	Theoretical Base	Evidence	Change in Practice
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Attitude: *Developmental Nature of Writing*	Graves (1983, 1994) Calkins (1986, 1994) Atwell (1987) Everson (1991) Dixon-Krauss (1996)	All data sources except ethnographic observation showed support.	Institute a more effective means to individual growth. Implement workshop approach.
Sustained Writing Time	Graves (1983, 1994) Calkins (1986, 1994) Atwell (1987)	All data sources except teacher comments in student folders showed support.	Implement workshop approach.
Writing Within a Variety of Domains	Runyon (1993) Olson (1987) Graves (1983, 1994) Calkins (1986, 1994) Atwell (1987)	All data sources showed support.	Model the idea of teacher as a writer. Greater student self-direction within a workshop approach.
Teaching for Metacognition	Graves (1983, 1994) Calkins (1986, 1994) Atwell (1987) Lange & Applebee (1987) Applebee (1986)	All data sources showed support.	Fine tune teacher and student conferencing skills within a workshop approach.
Knowledge of Writing Processes: *Use of Process Writing*	Graves (1983, 1994) Calkins (1986, 1994) Atwell (1987) Applebee (1986)	All data sources showed support.	Reconstrued view of writing processes. Greater student self-direction.
Recursive Nature of the Writing Process	Graves (1983, 1994) Calkins (1986, 1994) Atwell (1987) Murray (1992)	All data sources showed support.	Develop out the true nature of revisions within a workshop approach. Reconstrued view of writing processes.
Classroom Environment: *Building a Community of Writers*	Graves (1983, 1994) Calkins (1986, 1994) Atwell (1987) Rothermel (1996)	All data sources showed support.	Implementing a workshop approach. Effective communication of workshop approach with students, parents, and administrators.
Writing Skills Development: *Focus Lessons used to Develop Skills*	Graves (1983, 1994) Calkins (1986, 1994) Atwell (1987) Weaver (1996)	All data sources showed support.	Reconstrued view of focus lessons implemented within a workshop approach.

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