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A Case Study Analysis Of The Writers' Room Writing Process As An Effective Elementary Program In An Elementary School

Joan H. Moriarty

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**A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF THE WRITERS' ROOM WRITING PROCESS AS
AN EFFECTIVE ELEMENTARY PROGRAM IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

BY

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Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
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2003

ABSTRACT

A Case Study Analysis of the Writers' Room Writing Process as an Effective Elementary Program

Mentoring programs have existed in the educational system for centuries, however, the successful implementation of these programs have not always been achieved.. The research does support that the use of mentoring in many school settings has been successful in varied formats. However, the research is limited in the writing process and the effectiveness of writing mentors. There is a review of current literature pertaining to mentoring and writing process. The review of literature reflects many varied approaches to mentoring, writing programs and community partnerships. Prior research claims student growth can be defined as of academic achievement, self confidence/self esteems and student behavior. This study measured students' growth in writing with a mentor. Research methodologies selected to measure improvement or change in these areas to quantify change that may have occurred during an academic year participating in The Writers' Room Program. Data collected for analysis were from students and adults participating in this program. The students writing portfolios were analyzed in two different ways. Pieces of writing were analyzed for writing growth from the beginning of

the year to the end of the year. Pieces of writing were also analyzed for development or growth within the writing process from the first draft to the final draft for a piece of writing. An analysis of information gathered from a focus group of writing coaches was also interpreted for the adult mentors perspective of growth and value to help improve writing. Important Administration and supervision decisions are linked directly to student programs and community partnerships. This research will help to determine effective curriculum writing processes at the elementary level using community volunteers. As economic and budgetary constraints continue to be a factor in curriculum development, it is important for school districts to have documented results of effective programs to be accountable for academic achievement. The analysis of the findings in this study will help districts provide programs which are documented as successful.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

“If only I could do better in school...” or “If only I could get higher grades, I do not test well”. These thoughts self assess students’ progress and have been often heard throughout a teacher’s career from students with varied learning styles. To help the students, educators seek methodologies that will promote academic achievement for a wide and varied student population. Among the programs and strategies used to achieve this end, mentoring and coaching programs using community partnerships are highlighted in the literature regarding school reform. Such programs may offer new avenues to improve academic achievement and simultaneously to address public demands regarding educational accountability

While mentoring students is currently a chosen alternative for some educators, few research projects have studied the topic (Mc Partland & Nettles, 1991). Historically, the concept has been included in education for more than one hundred years. Educational periodicals, national publications and national conferences indicate concerns, varied definitions, as well as varied goals regarding the mentoring relationship as schools struggle to help students achieve academically; one strategy being implemented is to use community members as mentors for the student in need (Mc Partland & Nettles, 1991).

School districts have boasted many types of mentoring programs to ensure the success of all learners. Although schools may have different views of mentoring, public support of such programs indicates they are assuming responsibility for achievement. For

example, not all scholars agree about this locus of responsibility as claimed by Pellegrini. For instance, Ianni, (1992) assumes the locus of responsibility to be the child and their family. The assumption in this case is that students who need extra help because of something they lack, whether it is genetic endowment, the unavailability of trade books in the home or the economic resources of guardians. In such a model, researchers feel something is wrong or deficient with the ways parents socialize with their children; and remediation of these patterns is recommended by developing parenting skills.

Pellegrini identifies a second model in the literature which assumes the locus of responsibility resides in the school, not the family and child. This model assumes that students fail because of the content and organization of the schools, curriculum and the interaction styles of teachers. This model supports the sorting of students in schools and the term at-risk is another cog in the sorting machinery (Freedman, 1989).

Some mentoring programs for at-risk students attempt to modify behavior and skills, while others supplement and reinforce existing behaviors. Mentoring programs such as Project RAISE (Mc Partland & Nettles, 1991) and the Florida Secondary School Program described by Freedman (1991) state that the relationship between the mentor and mentee should result in increased attendance in class by the student. This behavior modification for better attendance is thought to lead to better grades, fewer failures and better student learning. Weaver & Matthews (1993) cite research studies that link achievement and self-esteem.

Not all educational critics are enthralled with the mentoring strategy and have expressed concern with these programs. Freedman and Jaffe (1993) cautioned: Mentoring is threatening to become a buzzword without meaning. We hear about mentoring for

principals, for teachers, for students, and for employees in a wide range of business and industry. There is mentoring by principals, by teachers, by students, by corporate executives, and by members of the community. There is mentoring designed to help adult mentees be better administrators, better teacher practitioners or employees; to help youth adjust to society after incarceration or institutionalization; to do better in school, take good care of their children, not get pregnant in the first place, stay out of jail, stop taking drugs -- and on and on.

Planned mentoring has been a recent technique used in a variety of situations within schools, corporations and communities. Such a variety creates diversity in defining both terms and methods, resulting in a situation that causes concern to a number of researcher Freedman (1991) states:

The literature offers numerous definitions, some of which conflict, so that empirical research about mentoring subsumes several distinct kinds of relationships. Further, descriptions of mentoring programs are so diverse that one wonders if they have anything at all in common beyond a sincere desire to help students succeed. The result of this definitional vagueness is a continued lack of clarity about the antecedents, outcomes, characteristics and mediators of mentoring relationship despite a growing body of empirical research. (p.26)

In 1989, Freedman noted that there was very little rigorous research on mentoring. Many of the success stories that Freedman reported related to heroic mentoring interventions. These have created mythological stories about the effects of mentoring. In reality, the Project RAISE program found that participating students were more likely

than the control students to improve their attendance and English grades, but not their promotion rates or scores on standardized tests (Mc Partland & Nettles, 1991; Flaxman, 1992).

Other less methodologically researched projects showed positive results with the mentoring programs. Carmola (1994) concluded that pairing adults with children provided significant relationships that benefited both partners in the relationship. Slicker and Palmer (1993) claim that mentoring decreased dropout rates and that students had slightly higher grade accumulations than students not enrolled in the program. Sapone (1989) also found that there was an improved attendance rate, test results and post graduation planning.

In contrast, there are studies that indicate that mentoring can have negative results. Supporting this position, Slicker and Palmer (1993) examined a school personnel program for at risk students in the 10th grade. Initial results in this study indicated that there was no difference between mentored students and students in a matched control group. However, when the mentor logs were inspected they indicated that the quality of the mentoring varied greatly. When mentored students were reassigned to "effective mentors" and "ineffective mentors" groups, further analysis found that effectively mentored students experienced academic achievement surpassing the control group. Ineffectively mentored students, showed a decline in academic achievement.

A possible explanation for the negative effect, according to the authors, was disappointment over the non-fulfillment of the students' expectations of mentoring. As Flaxman (1992 a) warned:

Mentoring has a mystique that only good can come from it, that nothing can go wrong and that at worst programs will not accomplish all that they could, but the youth will be better at least for the experience. But mentoring can be harmful. It can disillusion the mentor and the youth who might not enter into such a relationship again. It can make the youth cynical about yet another program which promises it can do more than it can deliver or is irrelevant to their lives. It can frustrate mentors who have difficulty reaching the student or who do not receive sufficient support from programs. It can disillusion social planners if they feel that mentoring has been oversold as a youth development strategy. (p.6)

Mentoring programs seem to face the same challenges faced by other intervention programs including student dropouts. A critical key to unlocking the success of students may be to take a closer look at the mentoring process. In order to maximize the potential of this concept, it is imperative to structure an effective program. Links between improved academic work and mentoring relationships have been noted. It is important to look at all facets of the mentor/ mentee relationship in order to construct effective guidelines that will insure success for specific curriculum areas, such as writing. Further, it is the responsibility of the school to create a curriculum structure that will maximize the student's motivation and potential to succeed, and to make sure that an ineffective program does not harm a student who is already at risk to succeed.

Background and Setting for this Study

This study was conducted in a suburban/urban school district in New Jersey that serves a residential community located twelve miles west of New York City. The residents of this community represent a diverse ethnic and socioeconomic population. Articles written over a time span of more than a decade claim this township to be a desired place to live in the tri-state area, attracting a population that seeks a mix of suburban and city advantages. In a previous study of this community, (Dunshee, 2000) cites an article in the New York Times Magazine which characterizes the community as a community under construction that addresses racial diversity like no other town in America. This district is recognized nationally as an educational leader in minority achievement and is a founding member of the National Minority Student Achievement Network.

The town setting has a racial population of approximately 63% White and 30% African American. The public school district is a Type 1 district with an appointed School Board and provides a Magnet School System for school choice. There are seven elementary schools, three middle schools and one high school in the district. School A, an elementary school, provides the setting for this study.

Background of the Writers' Room Program

The Writers' Room Program was developed in the public school district to provide trained writing coaches to help students improve their writing by coaching them through each stage of the writing process. Sheila Crowell and Ellen Kolba, the founders of The Writers' Room Program describe their program in *The Writers' Room Program Guide* (2002) as one which trains and supervises volunteer writing coaches in elementary,

middle school and high school writing centers. Developed for the Public Schools in this district in 1993, the program also provides staff development for teachers so that they work more effectively with the directors and coaches that staff writing centers. The program founders also serve as consultants for districts interested in forming their own Writers' Room Program.

The Writers' Room Program has become a national model for coaching students in writing and revising. Frank (2002) reports that The Writers' Room Program succeeds in reaching most students because the coach approaches a student's work more as a reader than as a writing specialist. A coach usually begins by telling the student writer something they liked in the writing.

Teachers recognize the need for students to have support for their writing by talking through their ideas before revising a draft and editing their work. Coaches provide the support to help students begin writing by brainstorming with a writer and then reading the first draft. Then the coach and the writer talk about the first draft and analyze how central ideas or arguments were developed, what succeeded, and what fell short. The discussion is then summarized on a response sheet that shows the writers what they have already done and what they have to do. The response sheet serves as a guide to revision for the writer, who can use or discard individual suggestions, but who must revise. The classroom teacher grades only the final draft, and all drafts are saved so that the teacher can monitor students' progress.

Franks (2002) interviewed many of the students from the district who spoke favorably of the program and claimed the students actually enjoyed the program. A few thought the coaches did not push them enough. One student, who is now a student coach

at the high school, claimed that being a student coach helped her to improve her own writing. Teachers praised The Writers' Room Program and welcomed the help in their classroom.

Crowell and Kolba (2002) state that the goal of the Writers' Room Program is to provide each student with one-on-one conferencing that every writer can use, as well as help every teacher with reading papers in the writing process approach. Crowell and Kolba believe that good coaching begins with the absolute belief that there is something good in every piece of writing. Since revision is the key to good writing, the first words, sentences and ideas are only the beginning. Strong writers as well as novice writers grow under this approach, although dramatic breakthroughs are seen more readily in the work of the reluctant, uncertain student who finally experiences success in writing.

In this district, volunteers from the community, the high school and the local university are trained as coaches during a six-week instructional period. As reader responders, they learn how to see potential in the first drafts by practicing responses on actual student papers. They also learn how to move young writers from reading and talking into writing - and how to encourage young students to move through multiple drafts. A one-month internship period follows the initial training. Under the supervision of trained coaches, trainees learn how to work with students and with each other. Group meetings before and after each class session help coaches discover what works and what needs working on during a particular day or for a particular project.

Five years ago, School A became the first elementary school to implement The Writers' Room Program. Since School A has three grades which include grade 3,4, and 5. Not all Language Arts teachers on the staff elect to utilize this program in their program.

Problem Statement

Mentoring in the writing process has a positive effect on students.

Assumptions:

Mentoring relationships have a positive effect on writing process.

Individualized attention will improve writing.

Students with varied learning styles need varied attention to grasp school concepts.

The time allotted for this study is adequate to record change in writing.

Limitations of Study

1. This study has limitations with respect to the small number of subjects in the Writers' Room program at the elementary level.
2. This study has limitations with respect to it focused only being on the elementary population in school from one school district.
3. This study has limitations with respect to only being focused on students at the elementary level who agreed to be part of the study.
4. The researcher scored the writing samples of the students as well as trained coached from The Writers' Room Program.
5. School A is designated as the Gifted and Talented magnet in this school district.
6. Language Arts teachers in School A choose to use The Writers' Room Program.

In order for all students have the opportunity to succeed in school, educators need to design effective curriculum programs. While most educators believe that working one on one, or having a mentor are beneficial concepts to help students with varied learning styles; the actual effectiveness of the relationship has rarely been studied. The

effectiveness of a writing mentor will be analyzed to determine significant achievement for students in a heterogeneous setting.

Varied definitions and varied goals have led to misinterpretation of the mentoring process. The effects of the mentor and the mentee have to be analyzed in relation to specific curriculum. This study will analyze The Writers' Room Program and the relationship of the coach or mentor and the writing growth of students at the elementary level. Key terms such as mentor, mentee and writing process must be defined and communicated appropriately when designing a program. Writing terms such as focus, peer editing, holistic scoring and process writing also must be defined as related to the Language Arts literacy.

Pressure from the state, as well as local districts to provide accountability of academic achievement have provided the impetus for schools to improve their accountability. Many have hastily put new programs in place that are ineffective. Programs are expeditiously put together and critical designs in the conceptual framework are ignored. It is important that educators utilize the most effective structure in order to maximize the potential of all students. It is important that schools understand the components of an effective program in order to help students most effectively.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship of mentoring and its positive effect on academic success of students in the writing process for third, fourth and fifth grade students. This study will also examine the insight of the mentor coaches in regard to academic achievement, self-confidence/self esteem and feelings of mentoring relationship and academic achievement of the students. The in depth analysis will

compare effective components necessary for a successful program. This study will track the change in the caliber of writing as related to a Writers' Room design process for the students and determine the success of the students. The questions guiding this research are:

1. Did the student's writing improve in The Writers' Room Program setting?
2. Did the role of the mentor/coach have an effect on the writing process?
3. What components does a writing program need to have to be effective?

To answer these guiding research questions, this study looked for data linking these questions. The research analyzed work of the students both objectively and subjectively. The subjects who agreed to take part in this study had the work analyzed objectively by using the Writing Scoring Rubric to assess the caliber of the piece of writing. The writing pieces were selected randomly from the student portfolio and were limited to a piece of writing from the beginning of the school year and a piece of writing from the end of the school year. The student writings were also selected to from the portfolio to show a sample of student work as it progresses through the writing process. These pieces of writing are also objectively rated with the Writing Rubric.

The students were given the opportunity to answer subjectively about their perceptions on their writing by participating in the student survey. This instrument allowed the student to give input of their perceptions and individual feelings of academic growth or non-growth by participating in the Writers' Room. The students were also asked if the Writers' Room helped them in other academic areas.

The basis of this research is to have an in depth analysis of a Writer's Room Project and the relationship of the coach/mentor to the growth of student writing. This

source was selected to provide the foundation to substantiate the purpose of the research. The Writers' Room program was designed to teach the process of writing by using community volunteers as writing coaches at each grade level. The mentors, called coaches for this program are community volunteers with varied backgrounds. Students in Grade 3 were introduced to the Writer's Room program design and the students in Grades 4 and 5 participated in this program for one to two years respectively.

The student's writing was analyzed after a minimum of an academic year of instruction and analyzed to determine patterns of growth in writing. The growth in writing utilized two formats. The student work was assessed using the writing rubric for the Writers' Room. Student data was collected to assess the student work over time. Early pieces of writing were assessed using the pieces of work from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. The pieces of writing were compared by using the Holistic Writing Rubric. Other pieces of writing from the subjects were analyzed within the writing process context. The draft and revision formats are presented in Chapter Four as presentation of the data.

This analysis shows the student writing development within the Writers' Room Program and in relationship to the mentor/coach. The analysis of the data from the adult subjects and student subjects explored if the effectiveness of the mentoring program springs from the relationship formed as supported in the research literature.

Breadth of Study

The organization of this study was two fold. The researcher worked with both the students and the adult coach/mentors to examine the relationship of the mentor in the writing process. The focus group was made up of elementary coaches trained in the

Writers' Room Program. An analysis of responses was qualitatively analyzed to determine patterns and trends among the perceptions of the mentor/coaches. The second part of the study analyzed the work of students in grades 3, 4, and 5 who have participated in The Writers' Room Program for at least one academic year. The student portfolios were analyzed for growth in writing as evidenced by a Holistic Rubric for Writing. The writing of the students was analyzed for growth over time and for writing growth within the writing process. Samples from the same genre were assessed for student subjects early in the academic year. Selections of writing from the same genre were assessed later in the year. The researcher used the Holistic Writing Rubric (See Table 8) for writing growth. Student writing samples were also analyzed in their initial drafts of a piece of writing. The suggestions and comments of the mentor/ coach were included in the data presentation. The final draft of the same piece of writing was presented and analyzed for growth. The researcher noted the student decision to utilize the suggestions given by the writing mentor.

The students were also asked to complete a survey about their perceptions of writing after participating the Writers' Room Program. Student responses were coded for patterns and themes. An analysis of responses was studied as related to the research questions guiding this study.

The adult subjects in this research participated in a Focus Group. The focus group was audio taped and transcribed. The researcher analyzed the responses of the focus group members and analyzed the data in relation to the guiding questions for this study.

Significance of Study

The theoretical rationale for this study is based on research that supports mentoring programs to increase academic success, and in turn be a catalyst for the internal motivation of the student. Academic success in writing will be sustained after the mentoring program and permeate other academic content areas.

This study was designed to provide a means for district administrators, school administrators, policy makers and teachers to examine the effective components of mentoring/ coaching programs in order to optimize the effectiveness of teaching the process of writing. It is important for all students to maximize their potential and educators to find ways to narrow the achievement gap prevalent in educational systems.

This research will also provide data for district leaders relating to school reform. The school reform models emphasize the value of the school collaborating with the community to enhance academic achievement; The Writers' Room Program uses community volunteers as writing coaches. School leaders and administrators can analyze data to provide an effective writing program to enhance student achievement as well as to be aligned with national standards for effective schools.

Organization of the Study

The initial chapter of this study introduces community efforts that use mentoring to increase the academic achievement of all students. Effectively designed mentoring programs may have a significant impact of student's achievement. The Writing movement in the educational setting is also explored which includes the structural basis of a Writer's Workshop design. The chapter presents the problem statement; the

background and setting of study the research questions, definition of terms, limitations and hypotheses, and the significance of the study as related to the writing process.

Chapter Two presents a review of literature pertaining to mentoring, writing process and community partnerships. In addition, there is an extensive literature review establishing definitions for individualized mentoring programs through an historical perspective of educational research. The literature review presents the characteristics of effective programs and an in depth analysis of the mentor/mentee relationship. Finally, historical perspectives about writing process and programs provide an in depth insight into the writing curriculum. School reform efforts that use community volunteers highlight academic achievement.

Chapter Three establishes the methods and procedures through which data are collected and compiled. This chapter also includes a data analysis plan and the relation of the data to the established hypotheses and guiding questions for this research.

Chapter Four presents the data. The focus group was transcribed and analyzed by the researcher looking for patterns and themes from the responses. Student data presented included the results from a survey as well as an analysis in the growth of the students' writing during the timeframe of this study.

Chapter Five discusses the findings presented in chapter four and relates the results to the literature review and previous research findings. Chapter Five evaluates the data presented in Chapter Four at the growth in the students' writing. This chapter also evaluated the students' responses from the surveys regarding their personal perceptions in relation to their writing and their relationship with the writing coach/mentor.

Definition of Terms

Conventions of writing - refers to punctuation, capitalization, spelling and variation in sentence structure

Focus - refers to how clearly a writing sample presents and maintains a main idea, theme or unifying point.

Holistic scoring - a method which trains readers evaluate a piece of writing for its overall quality before analyzing specific strengths and weaknesses

Mentor - adult volunteer paired with a student to help with academic success

Mentee - student identified as a participant in a program designed to increase academic achievement by utilizing adult volunteers as mentor or coach

Peer - a person with the same rank or ability or qualities of another

Peer editing - a peer proofreads and edits another student's writing

Rater reliability – independent evaluators score writing samples the same using a holistic rubric

Rubric - descriptive scoring scheme developed by teachers or evaluators to assess writing

Writing Process - a writing instructional model that views writing as an ongoing process and one in which students follow certain procedures for planning, drafting, revising, editing and final drafts of their writing

Writers' Room Program – A system designed to improve student writing through rigorously trained community volunteers and the program analyzed in this study.

Writing Workshop – structure of classroom instruction in the writing process and characteristics include students writing about their own topics, working at their own pace, and conferencing in regards to their writing.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces mentoring as a current issue in educational reform. The idea of mentoring presents varied definitions, as well as a mystique, that only good can come from utilizing this educational format. School districts are accountable for student success and many districts have implemented varied models of mentoring in their programs, which have produced both praise and criticism.

The background and setting for this study was identified as School A in New Jersey. The community and school setting were described as a diverse ethnic and socioeconomic population in a magnet school district. The students in grades three, four, and five who participated in the Writers' Room program at School A were identified as potential subjects for this study; School A is one of the seven elementary schools in the district. This school has a population of Grades 3 -5 and is designated the Gifted and Talented Magnet which focuses on the Arts.

The Writers' Room program was described as a mentoring/ coaching system implemented to help in the writing process. This model was developed for the Public Schools where this study took place and the leaders trained writing coaches to staff writing centers. The goal of The Writers' Room Program is to provide each student with one-to one coaching to help with the writing process. Crowell and Kolba, founders of The Writers' Room Program believe that good coaching begins with the belief that there is something good in every piece of writing and that revision is the key to all good writing. The Writers' Room program has been implemented at School A for five years.

The purpose of this study is to determine if the relationship of the mentor has a positive effect on a student's writing. The research in this project is designed to analyze

the growth of the students' writing by examining the work in the writing portfolio of each subject. The study looked at the writing growth of the student over time, as well as improvement in their writing during the revision stage of the writing process. This analysis utilized a Writing Rubric to evaluate work at the beginning of a grade level and at the end of the grade level. This rubric is used for the evaluation of the students' work as they revise pieces of writing during the writing process. The study also was designed to look at patterns and themes which emerged from the comments of the mentor coaches in the focus group for conceptual designs of effective mentoring. The Writers' Room Program can be analyzed in relation to other school reform models that form community partnerships to promote academic achievement.

Other sources of data presented were the student survey and the mentor/ coach focus group. The student survey was introduced as the source of data for information regarding the perception of each student's growth and to determine if students can attribute this growth to the mentor/coach in The Writers' Room Program. The survey was also named the source of data regarding the students' perception of growth in other academic areas. The focus group data was designed to have the researcher complete an analysis of responses to determine common characteristics regarding the role of the mentor/coach and perceptions of their role in The Writers' Room Program.

Terms related to mentoring and writing process were defined as related to the project and the organization of the study was presented according to research chapters. These included Chapter One which introduced the project; Chapter Two which presented current education literature related to mentoring and the writing process; Chapter Three which established the research design and methodology; Chapter Four which presented

the data from the adult subjects and the student subjects; and Chapter Five which analyzed and interpreted the results as related to the problem statement and purpose of the study.

CHAPTER II

A Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The review of literature is divided into sections. The first is related to mentoring programs throughout the educational history of American Schools. The second topic is related to current theories related to teaching the writing process effectively in the American School setting. The third section relates educational programs and community support.

Mentoring

Mentoring has varied definitions and has been used to imply many different forms of relationships. Fehr (1993) states that the term "mentor" originates in Homer's Odyssey. Slicker and Palmer (1993) lists other notable mentors in history. Today, Sapone (1989) states, "Mentoring is the process by which persons of superior rank, special achievement, and prestige instruct, counsel, guide and facilitate the intellect or career of persons identified as protégé's" (p. 7). Less formal synonyms for the term 'mentor' include being linked to words such as teacher, coach, trainer, positive role model, and developer of talent, opener of doors, protector, sponsor and successful leader. However, Sapone (1989) rejects these definitions as superficial and suggests the term should be used to describe only those who fill several of those roles. He further defines the mentor as "an exemplar that the protégé can admire and seek to emulate. A mentor

may provide counsel in times of stress" (p. 26).

Slicker and Palmer (1993) recognized the varied definitions of mentor and states that "the term mentor historically has meant trusted guide and counselor, and the mentor - protégé relationship, a deep meaningful association" (p.6). Rowe (1990) described a mentor as person of comparable expertise who teaches, counsels and develops a protégé within an organization. White-Hood (1993) portrayed this process as a strategy for teaching and coaching, strengthening character, improving racial harmony, promoting social change, assuring total quality education as well as creating opportunities for empowerment.

While researchers are not able to provide a proven link between the relationship of mentoring and success in school, many educators are convinced of the effectiveness of the mentoring programs. However, Flaxman (1992) and Freedman (1991) both cautioned over inflation of the effectiveness of mentoring. Many studies showed improvement but the results were not up to the expectations sought in the initial program. For example, while Mc Partland and Nettles (1991) showed increased attendance, the effects were not yet powerful enough to increase average attendance to desirable rates. The results indicated that mentoring has the capability to improve student success, but should be thought of as "a useful, but modest approach for addressing student needs" (Mc Partland & Nettles, 1993, p.570), which Freedman (1991) claimed in his previous description of mentoring as a "modest intervention" (p.2).

Mentoring programs need to have a structure. Most mentoring programs assume that the mentor relationship is two-sided. The assumption claims that the program is not successful unless the mentors and the mentees get some sort of satisfaction or learning achievement. This is claimed to be a social benefit, the mentor has an opportunity to give back something to society or the chance to make the difference in someone's life (Freedman & Jaffe, 1993). This additional goal is particularly characteristic of programs for students at-risk. As Freedman(1991) noted, "Privately, program sponsors admit that the central point of their mission is alerting middle class adults to the circumstances of poor children and re-engaging them" (1991, p.4). This sometimes-covert outcome or goal is not a component of other mentoring programs, since there is a lack of social gaps between mentors and mentees.

The establishment of mentoring programs in the public schools is a reflection of the changing complexion of American society. It became a societal trend to assume that schools were responsible in a way that had been historically the role of the family. A study by Carmola (1994) reported that in surveys completed both by the mentors and the mentees. That both thought the mentoring relationship had a positive effect on the student. Other researchers documented the difficulty of measuring the effect of the mentoring relationship. In light of the fact that the goals imply a process that takes a significant time (Ianni, 1992; Weinberger, 1992). Many of the programs simply were not

in existence long enough to produce valid data determining if the goals of the programs were being met.

Research documented the difficulty of measuring the role of the relationship between the mentor and mentee. Flaxman, (1993), stated that the measurement of human relationships is very complex and not always compliant with imposing general principles or scientific generalities. To attempt to measure how one person may be affecting another requires one to identify variables that can be measured and quantified. Yet despite the complexity, the question that remained to be answered is, "What effects are mentor programs having and especially are they cost effective?" (Carmola,1994, p. 110).

Some mentoring programs involved partnership with diverse groups that work with the school system. Corporations and private groups have provided the funding to support different projects. Southwestern Bell Foundation for example, set up mentoring programs for inner-city youth in Springfield, Missouri. Maggi (1991) stated that corporate funds have provided a financial incentive for teachers to share social time with at-risk students. Local activists in the Latino and African American communities have also begun mentoring programs in such cities as Atlanta. They felt that, "Mentoring is a buffer against the threat of social nihilism, a way of reviving the family and community networks that in the past have sustained the community against the external and internal threats" (Flaxman,1992, p.20).

The goals of mentoring are as varied as the definition and components of mentoring programs. Some common goals that mentorship programs have in common included: self-actualization, learning outcomes, behavior outcomes, and equity outcomes. Enhancement of self-esteem and self-confidence are particularly evident goals of mentoring. Ferguson and Snipes (1994) state that, "Ideally, mentoring brings about a dynamic synergism between creativity, intellectual accomplishment, and individual independence" (p.21). They feel that the role of the mentor is to steer the individual's progress toward self-identification. Slicker and Palmer (1993) reported that mentor programs have reduced dropout rates, improved self-concepts or improved individual attitude. White-Hood (1993) reported that mentoring programs for at risk students increased self-confidence or self-esteem as an outcome of the project. This improved self-esteem functioned as a means to an end; that is, if a student has increased self-confidence, he or she is more likely to do well academically and stay in school.

As an example, Project RAISE, a community service organization, targeted a high school with at-risk students. Members of the organization also tutored and mentored students from Grade 6 through high school. (Mc Partland & Nettles,1991). Another town that wanted to collaborate with the community reached out to a nearby military base. Olsen (1993) stated that unlike corporate partners, the military could not provide financial assistance, but could provide many mentors. This program claimed that a written commitment was needed between partners, and the relationships should be kept

alive with frequent contact.

Specific learning outcomes were not prevalent in the mentoring of at-risk student programs. The literature shows that "learning" as a general objective, and specific skills or learning outcomes are often not formulated. Many of the mentor programs for at risk students do have academic survival as a goal for the students. Such a goal is stated as high school graduation or continuation in a post secondary school. Slicker and Palmer (1993) note that retaining students in school is not a stated goal or objective, but that improved attitudes towards school and academic performance will lead to higher graduation rates and lower drop rates.

While researchers were not able to provide a proven link with the relationship of mentoring and success in school, many educators are convinced of the effectiveness of the mentoring programs. However, Flaxman (1992a) and Freedman (1992) both cautioned against over inflation of the effectiveness of mentoring. Many studies showed improvement but not up to the expectations of the initial program. For example, while Mc Partland and Nettles (1991) showed increased attendance, the effects were not yet powerful enough to increase average attendance to desirable rates. The results indicated that mentoring has the capability to improve student success, but should be thought of as "a useful, but modest approach for addressing student needs" (Mc Partland & Nettles, 1991, p.572), which Freedman (1992) claimed in his previous description of mentoring as a "modest intervention" (p.23).

Not all research is in agreement about the pairing of mentor and student. Freedman and Jaffe (1993) suggest that the matching of mentor and mentee is a critical component for successful and effective programs. They studied the matching of older, retired persons with students that are enduring a crisis period in their lives. Specifically, the Public/Private Ventures of five intergenerational programs used this paired matching approach. One of the most striking findings is that the most effective elder mentors were people who had not lived the most commonly considered "successful" lives. Many of the mentors had endured strained relationships, struggled at low-paying jobs and battled personal problems. These mentors seemed to understand the youth, and were able to communicate from their own experience.

Yet, according to Carmola (1994), the research does not yet indicate what types of children are more amenable to these mentoring relationships or what types of mentors are more successful in creating a meaningful relationship in the mentoring process. The success of the mentoring relationship is almost unquestionably accepted, and therefore, it is felt there is little need to be careful in pairing the mentor and student. However, Smink (1990) mentioned the element of mutual attraction being necessary or helpful in the development of the mentoring relationships.

Freedman (1991) related that common ethnic and racial ties appear to be an advantage in forging relationships between mentors and mentees. He claimed that class issues may be even more important because mentees that have had a hard life, or came

from the same neighborhood were able to talk the language of the student. Yet, Freedman (1991) continued, even more of a priority than any of these characteristics, there was a consensus among program directors that love matters the most. It is the adult who becomes involved because they enjoy spending time with the youth, rather than feel compelled to save youths from poverty, who seem to make the greatest strides.

The mentor and mentee relationships have varied characteristics within mentoring programs. Educators do not all agree on a specific model for pairing student with adults but do recognize that the relationship develops in varied phases. Kram (1985) does identify stages that the mentoring relationship pass: (a) initiation - the relationship has begun;(b) cultivation - time in which the relationship expands until its borders are defined; (c) separation - during which the initial definitions may change to external imperatives or psychological changes in one or both individual and redefinition - during which the relationship either adapts to its new demands or is ended (p.4).

Similarly, Ferguson and Snipes (1994) state that the mentoring relationship has stages of development which include Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Doubt, Initiative vs. Doubt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Confusion and Intimacy vs. Isolation. To have successful relationships between mentor and mentee, this study suggested that the mentors understand the difference between manifested persona and internalized self, help youth understand the identity process and give youth a way to promote change in their environment. Mendler (1994) suggests that mentors should have emotional preparation

to deal with hard to reach youth. The author states that the mentor must keep a caring attitude towards the mentee. At-risk students will test the environment with defiant, rebellious behavior, and it is helpful for the adult to keep in mind that this hostile behavior is a reflection of the hostility the student is facing in their personal lives.

Freedman and Jaffe (1993) also showed that significant relationships provided benefits to both partners. These relationships were divided into two types: (a) primary relationships characterized by attachments approximating kinship; great intimacy and willingness on the part of the elders to take on a full range of the youth's problems and emotions; and (b) secondary relationships in which the elders served as helpful "Friendly neighbors," who are positive, but maintain some emotional distance from the student.

As educators have varied definitions of mentoring, they also have many varied characteristics of a child who would benefit from a mentoring program. Fehr (1993) stated that the child who will benefit is a child: (a) who is passing half of his or her classes; (b) whose behavior problems tend to end with detentions and not suspensions from school ; and (c) who receives little support from their home.

Fehr (1993) cautioned having students below these guidelines in a mentoring relationship, suggesting that the needs of such students were not met in a mentoring program. Students with more severe problems have their needs met in counseling programs and not mentoring programs.

Slicker and Palmer (1993) supported earlier research of at-risk students in mentoring

programs and reported traits of at risk students through historical studies. They cited many characteristic needs concerning at risk students. Flaxman (1992 b) stated that at-risk students were more prone to self-destructive behavior, to juvenile crime, and to become a school dropout. Flaxman also stated that many of these needs could be addressed in mentor programs.

Sapone (1989) reported that the role of the mentor should be expanded in the schools to help the students at-risk improves their self worth, personal competence, and dignity in school. This view shifted the role of the mentor in the school from improving the cognitive growth of the students to affective growth of the students. Sapone also stated this emphasis shift for the mentor role reduced the potential of the mentoring concept and restricted its use to a limited portion of the school population.

Frymier & Gansneder (1989) have also researched the use of mentors in schools with at-risk students. They define at risk as "anyone who is likely to fail- either in school or in life" (p.143). The use of mentors with the students at-risk of failing is also endorsed by research referring to working with affective education. This extended use of mentors should increase the accountability of the schools to ensure the success of all students.

Research suggested that mentoring programs could be effective with and without the cooperation of parents. Fehr (1993) reported that if parents do cooperate, they should be encouraged to learn the name of every teacher their child has, as well as the subject area. Parents should also be encouraged to keep in touch with the teacher. They should

also ask their child about homework or tests coming up and any notes or progress reports from school.

The Effective Writing Process

The importance of writing in the elementary school cannot be understated. It is a crucial component of literacy and provides the basis for communication in all content areas. Therefore, schools must present the most effective writing programs for all learners. Writing curriculum has changed with the impact of the whole language philosophy, which emphasized that writing instruction should be based on a premise that students should become literate through meaning-based and purposeful reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Before changes took place, to the acceptance of whole language philosophy, writing instruction relied on worksheets that emphasized writing structures, not ideas. The teachers followed a prescribed sequence of skill worksheets and grammar drills that did not utilize higher order thinking skills (Calkins, 1986). This traditional model taught reading and writing as isolated skills and in a step-by-step process. In 1994, Lorie Stretch noted that most students were eager to participate in the language arts components, which included reading, or speaking. However, most resistance from the students came with writing, which is often plagued with frustration for both the students and the teacher. Stretch also observed students being caught in a cycle either of not knowing what to write

about a response or not wanting to put words down on paper. Both types of experiences led to the formation of negative attitudes towards writing.

Brenda Miller Powell (1996) cited four movements in education, which transformed writing programs used in schools. Powell suggests the first movement was the acceptance of whole language instruction based on the work of Goodman (1986). The second movement included the work of Atwell (1987), Calkins (1986), and Graves (1983). Each of these authors created writing environments, which focused on the writing process. Their research determined that students are more successful writers if they, (a) have the freedom to write about own interests, (b) participate in a writing process which includes prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, and (c) receive direct instruction based on their individual writing needs. Each of these researchers then created an actual structure for a Writer's Workshop for individual classrooms.

The third movement was to have the Poets and Writers in the Schools program. A professional writer would spend a week in a school doing workshops with students. As a result, students became exposed to varied forms of writing and were taught how to create their individual version of that specific genre. This movement treated students as authors and encouraged them to take part in the same process that professional writers experience as they publish actual pieces of work.

The National Writing Project was identified as the fourth movement that helped change writing instruction. This project focused on the teachers becoming better teachers

of writing, by becoming writers themselves. Professional writing teachers used the workshop model and would counsel other teachers and help each other become better writing teachers. This model highlighted everyday teachers and not experts from the outside unfamiliar with schools and communities. Calkins (1986) claimed the value of coming to an understanding that the craft of writing is a lifelong, arduous and invigorating process is crucial. He claimed that teachers, as well as students, should be involved in the same process.

The second movement, which emphasized Writer's Workshop process had three major contributors in the review of literature: Donald Graves, Lucy Calkins and Nancie Atwell, each whom has published qualitative research describing their individual findings. As early as 1983, Graves published a book *Writing: Children and Teachers at Work*. As the pioneer contributor to Writing Workshop literature, Graves described writing environments, writing stages and instructional practices in an effective elementary environment. He constructed the foundation for implementing a Writer's Workshop (Stretch, 1994).

Writer's Workshops began to be implemented all over the country based on these movements and philosophies in education. The concept was popular not only because it helped to teach writing skills, but also because the concept gave ownership of literacy development to the student. The primary goal of this writing model was to have students take pride in their work and be creative with the writing process in order to develop

literacy.

The Writer's Workshop model looked different in different class settings, but the structure and philosophy remained the same. Graves (1983) highlighted two valuable conclusions in his research and writing. First he determined that children wrote better when writing on a topic that was not assigned. Graves also recognized stages of writing, which he called prewriting, writing and post writing. The atmosphere in the classroom was also a very important aspect of a successful Writer's Workshop.

The Writing Workshop format included a conference about the writing. Graves (1983) defined the conference as the time when the child discovers, clarifies and refines what he wanted to express. It also was the time when the child came to grips with the actual process being used and learned his or her areas of strength. Lucy Calkins (1986) defined the writing conferences as the teacher's time to interact with students so that they, in turn learned how to interact with their own developing texts. Donald Graves (1983) defined this as a meeting where the teacher and student discuss the following questions, each of which implies a self-evaluation of writing: Where did this piece come from? Where is the piece now? Where will the piece be going? In these conferences, the teacher does not become the proclaimer of mistakes, but acts as a facilitator of the child's thinking process.

Stretch (1994) however, reported that the structure of the Writing Workshop is less important than the atmosphere of trust developed in the classroom. These researchers

regarded a warm atmosphere that might have curtains, stuffed animals, carpets and plants, was one of the more important elements in creating a successful Writer's Workshop. Such an atmosphere helped students to feel safe and trusted. The atmosphere helped them to produce their best efforts. Bunce-Crim (1991) recognized the need for the environment to be safe and predictable in order for the students to take risks in their writing.

Classrooms also needed to be equipped with certain writing supports. Researchers Robertson and Randol (1995) determined that a writing environment needs to include: (a) word lists, charts; (b) picture and word dictionaries; (c) a book making center for students to publish their work; (d) personal writing folders; and, (e) the freedom to talk about their writing to other students. Bunce-Crim (1991) also suggested the teacher generate ideas for writing by providing an abundance of literature to the students.

Lucy Calkins, another prominent researcher in the area of writing, was working with Donald Graves when she published her own thoughts in *Lessons from a Child* (1983), a case study of the writing development of one child through third and fourth grade. She published subsequent findings with texts *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1986) and *Writing Between the Lines* (1991). Calkins contends that the personal link between writing and living is central to Writer's Workshop. Calkins (1991) also proposed that students carry an idea book with them all of the time. Students were advised to write questions about

what they observed, write down questions they may have, on any idea or topic which interests them to help generate ideas to write about during Writer's Workshop(p.35).

Nancie Atwell presented practical strategies in her book, *In the Middle* for middle school students. She tried to motivate teachers and students to be active participants in reading and writing (Stretch1994) and she gave practical prescriptive lessons for effective writing workshops. Similar to Graves and Calkins, Atwell prescribed mini lessons for whole class instruction and individual instruction when conferencing with students.

Yet, not all research reports there have been circumstances where initial implementation of this format was successful. For example, Peg Sudol (1995) found that there were problems relating to continuity for a Writer's Workshop to be effective. The difficulty was a scheduling issue since it was hard to find a large block of time to develop writing and still "cover" other areas of the curriculum. She also related problems in providing differentiated learning and noted the difficulty of having students work on various stages of their work. The lack of deadlines also created other conflicting problems. Sudol felt that for some students, this model encouraged procrastination.

Assessment is an important part of the writing process. Scoring rubrics have become a common method for evaluating writing for grades kindergarten through high school. Brookhart (1999) defines scoring rubrics as descriptive schemes that are developed by teachers or other evaluators to guide the analysis of the products or process

of students' efforts. Often scoring rubrics are used when a judgment quality is required and a broad range of subjects and activities need to be evaluated.

Writing samples are commonly evaluated utilizing a rubric. Moskal (2000) states the judgments concerning quality of a given writing sample may vary depending upon the criteria established by individual evaluators. For example, one evaluator may be interested in language structure and another evaluator may be more concerned with the persuasiveness of a piece of writing. A good piece of writing has a combination of both of the factors, and when an educator develops a predefined scheme for the evaluation process, the subjectivity is reduced in the evaluation process. Scoring rubrics are one of many alternatives available for judging student work. These rubrics are based on descriptive scales and support the evaluation of the extent to which the criteria has been met (Brookhart, 1999)

The following table has a sample of a holistic scoring rubric with four levels. Each level describes characteristics of the response that would receive the respective score. Having a description of the responses within each score category increases the chance that two independent evaluators would assign the same score to a given writing sample. Such an outcome referred to as rater reliability (Moskal, 2000). The following is a sample rubric for a college writing sample in Table 1.

Table 1

Rubric for College Writing Sample

Assessment	Characteristics
Meets Expectations	The document can be easily followed. A combination of the following is apparent in the document: effective transitions are used throughout, a professional format is used, and the graphics are descriptive and clearly support the documents purpose.
Adequate	The document can be easily followed. A combination of the following is apparent in the document: effective transitions are used, a structured format is used, and some supporting graphics are provided but not clearly supported.
Needs Improvement	Organization of document difficult to follow due to the following conditions: inadequate transitions, rambling format, insufficient or irrelevant information, ambiguous graphics.
Inadequate	No organization of contents. Sentences are difficult to read and understand.

Educators can utilize or adapt rubrics to their individual needs. For example, teachers and or evaluators may develop their own rubrics. In order to do this, educators

identify qualities that they feel are needed to display in a student's work in order to be proficient or above proficient (Brookhart, 1999). The identified characteristics will serve as the top level of scoring criteria for the holistic rubric. Each score category should be defined using descriptions of the work and not judgments about the work (Brookhart, 1999).

For educators in elementary, middle or high school, the state of Colorado (1998) developed an online set of holistic scoring rubrics designed to evaluate varied writing samples (Moskal, 2000).

Community Partnerships in Education

Programs such as The Writers' Room depend on community volunteers for it to be run effectively. Such community partnerships have been recognized as valuable assets to school reform. According to Thomas Hatch (1998) states that the Alliance Schools in Texas claim community connections contribute to academic achievement. Through organizing efforts, parents, community members and teachers have become advocates for their schools, working for better safety, more funding and additional learning activities for the whole community. Many schools have experienced an increase in student test scores- even when the community activities have little to do with the tests themselves. This same research also notes that activities implemented by community efforts do contribute directly to student learning.

Ron Brandt (1998) describes the involvement of the public in public education depends less on organizational design than on how the educators relate to parents and community members. Reports such as the Public Agenda indicated that when it comes to school issues, the educators are often out of touch with the typical views of parents and the public. Complicating communication is the reality the people have become less trusting of institutions including schools. Schools have begun to improve relationships with community members through approaches that focus on authenticity and listening.

Ron Lewis and John Morris (1998) describe the mission of Communities in Schools is to create caring communities for students. This program is designed to help young people learn, stay in school and prepare for life. The Communities in Schools Program, also brings resources and services into the schools as well as parents and other volunteers. This particular program promotes partnerships with health care organizations, social services agencies, businesses and other groups that brings personnel into the school environment. The Communities in Schools program has also established a new partnership with America's Promise, founded by retired General Colin Powell.

The National Parent-Teachers Association supports family involvement in their child's education and have developed standards. These standards of excellence for parent and family involvement in schools address six areas. One of these areas is 'Collaborating with the Community.'" These standards and their quality indicators mesh with other national standards and reform initiatives in support of children's learning and success.

Marion County in Florida implemented a program to use retired members of the community to help in schools. This program called 100 Grandparents were invited to read in the local public schools. This program led to the senior citizens having a renewed interest in the public schools and public education. This program had the seniors come in to the school and volunteer to read to the students. Ultimately, the program created school ambassadors who promoted scholastic successes, responded to school critics and supported district needs (Smith, 1998)

Three Minnesota school districts invited business members of the community into the school by inviting members of the Chamber of Commerce and two service organizations to organize a program to present workplace expectations into the classroom as a lesson. Business volunteers included optical lens grinding, printing, quarry mining, banking and medicine. Two community members highlighted the skills the students needed and correlated them to the state standards for graduation (Bottge & Osterman, 1998).

School reform leaders from several different states including New York, Indiana, Pennsylvania and California created the Cross City Campaign to work for the improvement of urban education. This research highlighted the various definitions of community and the types of school and community collaborations. Cahill, (1996) also identifies the conceptual framework for understanding the assumptions and activities for each type of community involvement. Research into hundreds of partnerships revealed

that these are characterized by at least five different emphases. Although there is some overlap among these categories, the following are usually found: 1) provision of services to meet youths needs; 2) schools and communities as educational partners; 3) schools and communities as partners in youth development; and 4) redefining schools as educational and participatory communities. Collaborations that view schools and communities as vital partners seem to have significant promise for urban school reform.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an extensive review of mentoring programs and writing strategies found in educational settings. Mentoring programs have been a part of the educational setting in the United States for more than a century. This review provided the many interpretations and definitions of the term mentor. For example, Slicker and Palmer (1993) recognize the varied definitions of mentor and states that "the term mentor historically meant trusted guide and counselor, and the mentor - protégée relationship, a deep meaningful association" (7). Rowe (1990) described a mentor as person of comparable expertise who teaches, counsels and develops a protégé within an organization. White - Hood (1993) described this process as a strategy for teaching and coaching, strengthening character, improving racial harmony, promoting social change, assuring total quality education as well as creating opportunities for empowerment.

The recent literature on mentoring provided varied definitions, expectations, goals and structures in mentoring programs. The common thread that held any program

together seems to be the relationship of the adult and the student. Research demonstrated careful strategies should be incorporated in the structure of the program to stress the caring relationship and to support the mentor as the link in a continuous chain of caring.

Consistent support for the mentee and mentor were important components of any program. Schools needed to create these programs to enhance humanizing reforms that will make the schools and social programs an effective learning experience so that all young people will have an equitable education. Yet, the research was inconclusive about the positive effects of mentoring. It is difficult from current literature to determine optimal conditions for success for the academic achievement of all learning styles.

The writing review of literature cited four major movements that have affected the change in the teaching of writing in recent years. The literature review provided adequate evidence to support the teaching of writing process as a valuable approach (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Fielding, 1992; Graves, 1983). While the writing process is the actual process or material being taught, the writing workshop can be viewed as the vehicle to approach this task of teaching writing and organizing it. Few other approaches have received the attention in the literature of writing as this approach. The Writers' Room Program utilized the concepts of Writing Workshop developed by the prominent researchers of Graves (1983), Calkins (1986) and Atwell (1987) and added a new dimension of utilizing trained community volunteers as writing conference coaches.

The literature highlighted the strengths and the concerns of some teachers in establishing Writing Workshop. Many teachers felt this was risky because of the lack of prescribed sequence for the teaching of skills and strategies. Sudol and Sudol (1991) highlighted other concerns of teachers as related to their uncertainty of students being on or off task during the workshop time while the teacher was engaged in the conferencing with other students. In the review of literature, Sudol raised significant questions about the tradeoffs between the level of teacher control, student responsibility and the outcome value of the writing workshop. The recent push for integrated curriculum has utilized the writing workshop approach in other content areas and effective outcomes especially in science have been reported.

School reform initiatives have researched the importance of the community partnerships with public education. This review of literature helps to link the value of community volunteers mentoring in the writing process. Recent standards by the National Parent Teacher Associations include Collaboration with the Community, This school standard is recognized as a needed component for effective schools and characterized as a cornerstone for school reform.

CHAPTER III

Research Design and Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of mentoring and its positive effect on the academic success of students in the writing process for third, fourth and fifth grade students. This study was designed to analyze the effectiveness of role of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee in a mentoring or coaching program, as related to the writing process and academic success of the students. This study focused on the academic growth of writing of students at the elementary level who took part in The Writers' Room Program. The questions, which guided the research, were:

1. Did the student's writing improve in The Writers' Room setting?
2. Did the role of the mentor/coach have an effect on the student's writing process?
3. What components does a writing program need to have to be effective?

These questions were designed to map the study and analyze the problem statement that: Mentoring, in the writing process has a positive effect.

The population selected for this study was students in the third, fourth and fifth grade levels at an elementary school in an urban/suburban school district in New Jersey. Published research has confirmed the effectiveness of mentoring programs in the school

setting and has also established the effectiveness of the teaching the writing process in a workshop setting. This study analyzed The Writers' Room Program that was designed as a writing process program based on the works of Nancie Atwell, Lucy Calkins and Donald Graves - all leaders in writing process research. Outcomes of the study were designed to help district leadership implement effective programs and increase understanding of the best ways students learn to write. The research questions that focused this particular study of the mentoring relationship in writing process programs were:

1. Did the student's writing improve in The Writers' Room setting?
2. Did the role of the mentor/coach have an effect on the student's writing process?
3. What components does a writing program need to have to be effective?

The Need for Design and Methodology

The purpose and the research questions focused this study's design and methods, as well as directed and integrated the investigation. The design directed the progression of the study and gave logical sequence to the intended research procedures. The methodology determined the style and the form of this research as a case study. The design of this methodology placed this study within a particular framework that gave significance to the findings so that the resulting analysis or interpretation could be presented clearly. This form of qualitative research collected the data directly from the individuals involved in this study and helped to identify the characteristics of this phenomenon.

Leddy (1997) reinforced the need for the researcher to plan a conceptual design for investigation and equates the fastidiousness and precision of the plans to that of architect's blueprint, which indicated the appropriateness of the case study format. This case study looked at the relationship of multiple variables related to the writing process and the role or relationship of the mentor coach. The case study format also allowed for the collection of qualitative and quantitative data related to both the context and the variables. As Yin (1993) pointed out, case study methodology often reveals more variables than actual data points. The multiple variables and context could not rely on a single data collection method, but required, instead data collected from multiple sources (Yin, 1992). This particular design strengthened the validity of this current investigation.

This case study analyzed The Writers' Room Program as an effective learning program for writing and the importance of the mentoring relationship within the design of this program. Examinations of third, fourth and fifth grade students' initial writing experiences within this program format and writing samples after two semesters attempted to highlight the improvement of the student's writing for all types of learners. Analytic study of grade 5 students provided data of students who have experienced this program for two academic years. The perspectives of writing mentors and the student mentees were compared qualitatively. A quantitative analysis of writing growth was utilized to help define The Writers' Room Program design as an effective means of increasing students' academic success in writing.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship of mentoring and its positive effect on academic success in writing for third, fourth and fifth grade students. The case study approach was selected to survey the student subjects, analyze student work from writing portfolios and conduct a focus group of the adult mentors/coaches trained in The Writers' Room Program.

Chapter Three presents the need for research design and methodology as a framework for investigation. The collective sources of data for this study consisted of the writing portfolios of students, survey results of the same students and a focus group interview of adult subjects. The strategies for population identification and selection of adult and student subjects were detailed in this chapter and the data collection strategies and the data presentation were summarized. This research was based on the Case Study model for qualitative research method where the researcher explores a single entity or phenomena bounded by time and activity and collects information using a variety of data collection procedures (Creswell, 1994). Triangulation was a qualitative strategy used in this research. Multiple data collection methods supported by multiple sources of evidence, analysis and theories, all addresses the eventual validity of the findings. If similar themes appeared in the assorted data collection, the ultimate credibility of the resulting interpretations were enhanced (Dunshee, 2000).

The pattern matching strategy used in this research helped to explore the phenomena of the role of the mentor in the writing process. If the collected data matched

the theoretical assumptions or expected outcomes of mentoring in the writing process, the validity of this study increased. Likewise, the validity of the results would be augmented if the data supported rival theories about the role of the mentor in the writing process.

Setting

The researcher contacted the Superintendent of Schools for the school district where this study was to take place and requested permission to conduct research at the specific school selected in the research design in conformance to the requirements for this study (See Appendix A). Once permission for this study was granted, the researcher contacted the principal of this same school for permission to use this school as the setting for this study (See Appendix B).

The elementary school selected is the largest of all the elementary schools in the district in which it is located. This school has a student population that ranges from Grades 3 – 5. For purpose of anonymity, this school has been referred to as School A in this research.

The class size at this school is higher than the state average for both academic years. The New Jersey State Report Card reflects the following information in Table 3.

During the timeframe of this study, the student attendance percentage was higher than the New Jersey State average attendance rate. Table 4 below illustrates this information.

The student population at School A during this study was stable and had a low percentage of students moving in and out of the school. The student mobility rate was lower than the state average as reported in the New Jersey State Report Card and referred to in Table 5.

The student - faculty ratio is lower than the state average as noted in the Table 6 below. The schedule design of the school with its many elective courses lowers the faculty ratio in data. However, the basic core content courses have much higher student/faculty ratios. The core content standard classes have on the average 25 students per class.

Subjects

The subjects were students in Grades 3, 4 and 5 at the School A in an urban/suburban school district who participated in The Writers' Room Program the academic year of 2001 - 2002. The grade five students also participated in the program in the academic year 2000 - 2001. This cohort of students provided the researcher with students in Grade 5 who have had two years of The Writer's Room Program and grade levels three and four were new participants in this process and have a semester experience. Mentors were trained in The Writers' Room Program and worked with the subjects as writing coaches at the elementary level were invited to participate in a focus group.

Table 2

Student population for School A

Grade	Year		
	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
3	240	215	180
4	188	200	208
5	206	207	197

Table 3.

Average Class Size

Comparisons	Year		
	1999-2000	2000 -2001	2001-2002
School A	25	24.9	23.4
State Average	24.1	20.8	20.4

Table 4

Student Attendance Rate at School A

Comparisons	Year		
	1999-2000	2000 -2001	2001-2002
School A	95.6%	95.8%	95.8%
State Average	95.0%	94.0%	95.0

Table 5

Student Mobility Rate

<i>Comparisons</i>	<i>Year</i>		
	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
School A	6.6%	3.5%	6.7%
State Average	14.3%	13.4%	13.8%

Table 6

Student Faculty Ratio

<i>Comparisons</i>	<i>Year</i>		
	1999-2000	2000 -2001	2001-2002
School A	11.9:1	12:1	12.1:1
State Average	13.3:1	12.9:1	12.3:1

The faculty attendance during the time frame of this study was also above the state average for attendance. This is noted in the New Jersey State Report Card and presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Faculty Attendance

Comparison	Years		
	1999-2000	2000 -2001	2001-2002
School A	96.8%	97.1%	97.2%
State Average	94.1%	96.1%	96.4%

Subjects Identified

The subjects for this study were identified by using class roster lists for Grade 4 students from School A from the second semester of the 2000-2001 academic year. The class roster for students from Grades 3, and 5 registered for the academic year 2001-2002 from the same school and location provided the additional subjects for this study. The adult subjects were the coaches/mentors who have been trained as Writing Coaches for the elementary level from The Writers' Room Program. These coaches were the same adult subjects who have worked with the same grade level as student subjects at this location during the specified time frame of this study. There was not a professional relationship between any of the student or adult subjects and the researcher in this study.

The student subjects were all students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 during the Fall Semester of 2001 and Grade 4 students during the Spring Semester of 2001. The criteria for subject consideration included any student who was enrolled in The Writers' Room Program at the School A location during the time frame of the study. The work of the students was only examined if they had returned a permission slip to be a subject in the study.

The identified subjects received by U.S. mail a letter of introduction along with a return, self addressed stamped envelope the following items: Each student subject received a letter written to their parents/guardians that requested their permission to analyze the work of their child and participate in a survey during the set time of The Writers' Room Program from January - June 2002. The letter indicated that all subjects would remain throughout this study. The letter also states that the student may feel free to

withdraw their work at anytime during the study (See Appendix.C). Written permission forms were to be signed by the parent/guardian for each student participating in this study indicating informed consent. If the student subject and the parent/guardian agreed to participation in the research, a script was included for the parent guardian to read to their child/children. This form was a statement of assurance that the student understood the confidentiality of the study and the freedom to withdraw from the study at anytime during the timeframe See Appendix D and Appendix E).

This same letter was sent to the subjects in Grades 3 and 4 during the first semester of the academic year from September 2001- June 2002. The subjects with signed informed consent forms and statement of assurance became the student subjects for this research.

Adult Subjects

A letter of introduction (on behalf of the researcher and as per IRB suggestion) described the study, its purpose and its scope; also noted the anticipated focus group in relation to the analysis of The Writers' Room Program was sent to the trained writing coach/mentors. The letter asked for participation, however, indicated that the participation was voluntary and that the subjects and any data collected would remain anonymous. The letter also stated that the subjects were free to withdraw from participation at any time. Each coach willing to participate in this study returned a signed informed consent form to the researcher.

Sample Population

The sample population for both the students and the adults included all respondents who signed Informed Consent Forms and returned them to the researcher.

The sample population of students were those who a signed informed consent form by their parent or guardian, as well as a statement of assurance signed form by the student which indicating that they understood the requirements if they participated in the study. The population for the focus group came from the mentors in response the letter of introduction and their signed informed consent form. There were six mentor coaches who participated in the focus group.

Data collection occurred at School A for the student population. The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data occurred at the researcher's home office in the same town as the research. The focus group met at School B but the analysis of the focus group occurred at the researcher's home office.

Population for This Study

The population of subjects for this study included adults and children who were affiliated with The Writers' Room Program. All participants in this program were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time during the research. All participants' identities and the data collected remained anonymous. The study had no connection with the researcher's contracted responsibilities with the Board of Education in the same district. All participants were informed of all these conditions and signed Informed Consent Forms (See Appendix D) relating they understood these conditions. The student subjects had permission of their parent/guardians who signed the Informed Consent Form, and the student subjects also signed a Statement of Assurance (See Appendix E) that they understood the conditions presented in this study.

The students were selected from the school population of School A, the school in the district that participated in The Writers' Room Program in Grades 3, 4, and 5 during the school year of 2001 -2002. The subjects in grades 4 and 5 also participated in this writing program during previous academic years. A Letter of Solicitation (See Appendix D) was sent to the parents of the students requesting the participation of their child in this study. If the children and the parents agreed to be participants a Script was read to the children which emphasized that this study was voluntary and at anytime during the investigation the student subjects could have their work withdrawn from the research. The researcher asked the students for permission to analyze their writing portfolio that they had produced during their participation in The Writers' Room Program.

When permission was granted, the researcher photocopied the portfolios after making sure all identifiable marks were removed from the papers. This ensured the anonymity of the work of each subject. The researcher then analyzed the writing growth demonstrated over the academic year for the group of subjects. Patterns and interpretations of growth were gleaned from the all drafts of the writing process. A detailed interpretation can be found in Chapter IV of this investigation.

The researcher scored the students' writing using the Holistic Scoring Rubric used for all written work in grades 3, 4, and 5 in the district. This rubric is the standard scoring instrument for work developed in The Writers' Room Program. To ensure reliability of the scores determined by the researcher, outside experts also scored the

papers utilizing the same instrument. These trained Writers' Room coaches scored the work of the students and the scores were the same as determined by the researcher. The scores were not added together for a cumulative total. The student received a single score. The writing rubric and the district report cards are aligned with the same levels 1- 6 to ensure congruent assessments.

The adult subjects for this study were mentor/coaches trained in the Writers' Room process. A letter of solicitation (See Appendix F) was mailed by the U. S. Mail to adults who have been trained to work at the elementary level. This letter ensured the subjects that participation in this study was voluntary and at all times the identity of the subjects would remain anonymous. This letter invited the participants to be members of a focus group relating to the Writers' Room Program and their role as mentor coaches. A list of questions for the group is in Appendix G. The focus group was audio taped and all subjects were anonymous during the taping and transcription of the audio tape. The transcription of the audiotape is presented in Appendix I of this study, as well as the analysis of patterns and themes that emerged from the focus group session is presented in Chapter IV and discussed in Chapter V.

Setting for the Study

School A is the Gifted and Talented Magnet for children in Grades 3, 4r and 5 residing within the Public School District. The curriculum and organization reflect the belief that all students have gifts and talents and that it is the school's responsibility to

identify and nurture children's special interests and talents. This school has been recognized by the United States Department of Education as a Recognized School of Excellence (Chiles, 2000).

As reported in the New Jersey School Report Card document, School A offers a wide variety of choices to students of all abilities, interests and backgrounds. Through the unique Aesthetic and Creative "T" courses, students are able to discover areas in which they excel. Students have the opportunity to explore, in-depth courses in art, technology, contemporary living, creative dance, drama, music, leadership, philosophy and logic, foreign language and physical arts. The Writers' Room Program, which is the source of data for this project is offered at School A. There is a staff specialist who serves as the director of this program for the school. The Language Arts teachers can choose to utilize the resources of the Writers' Room. This is not a mandated program in the curriculum.

The Writers' Room Program

The Writers' Room Program provides training and supervises volunteer writing coaches in K-12 writing centers. The study took place in the same district where The Writers' Room Program was founded in 1993 by Ellen Kolba and Sheila Crowell. This program operates in the elementary, middle and high school level. This program starts with the assumption that every piece of writing contains a workable strength- something that can be worked on in the revision process. The job of the coach/mentor is to identify

and name the strength in the writing and to guide the students through the revision process.

Students of all levels participate in The Writers' Room Program in order for all learners to grow and develop their writing. The coaches go into the classrooms during the Writers' Workshop time and Kolba and Crowell (2002) state this sends a clear message to all the students that: "Writing is valued; it is important enough to have class time devoted to it. Writing is a recursive process; it involves multiple drafts based on feedback from a trusted reader" (3).

In the school district, volunteers from the community and the local university are trained as coaches in a six-week training program. The training initiates these coaches as reader responders. This sets the stage for the writing coaches to learn how to find potential in actual pieces of children's writing. The founders Crowell and Kolba state this is a critical stage to learn how to move young writers from reading and talking about ideas to utilizing the multiple draft process. The coaches have a one-month internship after the initial six-week training in The Writers' Room Program. At this stage the new coaches work with experienced coaches to experience the one-on-one working with students in the classroom setting. The coaches for the class meet before and after the session to help focus students' needs and sharpen their own coaching skills.

Sources of Data

- Data sources were the portfolio work of the student subjects in grades 3, 4 and 5 along with student surveys and the transcription of the focus group of adult subjects who participated in this study. The student portfolios provided the data evidence of writing growth of the student subjects over the academic year of 2001 -2002 who were participants the in The Writers' Room Program. The researcher used a Writing Rubric utilized in the school district as the instrument to assess writing growth. Each piece of writing utilized in this study was holistically scored using the rubric in Table 8.

Table 8

Scoring Rubric for all Written Work

Level	Criteria
6	<p>Extended information/extremely well organized</p> <p>Correct and varied sentence structure</p> <p>Very neat presentation</p>
5	<p>Extended information/well organized</p> <p>Required content covered</p> <p>Correct and (some) varied sentence structure</p> <p>Few spelling, grammatical or mechanical errors (Punctuation etc.)</p> <p>Neat presentation</p>
4	<p>Information Correct but minimal/ fairly well organized</p> <p>Required content vague</p> <p>Sentences mostly correct but limited style</p> <p>Some spelling, grammatical, or mechanical errors (Punctuation etc.)</p> <p>Presentation could be neater</p>
3	<p>Some sentences incomplete/ not organized</p> <p>Required content is present, but weak</p> <p>Sentences follow a single pattern</p> <p>Several spelling, grammatical, or mechanical errors (Punctuation, etc.)</p>
2	<p>Information lacking/not organized</p> <p>Required content is weak and difficult to decipher</p> <p>Sentences are simple and follow a single pattern</p> <p>Numerous spelling, grammatical, and mechanical errors (Punctuation etc.)</p>
1	<p>Did not make any effort to complete the assignment</p> <p>Failed to meet minimal standards</p>

The researcher selected samples of writing from the student subjects from the same genre and assessed growth in writing using the Writing Rubric. These samples

were selected from writing samples completed at the beginning of the academic year and at the end of the academic year for each subject. The scores were recorded for each subject for both the beginning and the end of the year writing. This data provided information related to the first research question which asked, Did the student's writing improve in The Writers' Room setting?

Samples of student work were also analyzed using the initial draft of a piece of writing and the final draft of the same piece of writing after the writing process stage of revision. The writing comments and suggestions by the writing coach were included in the writing process. The researcher analyzed the use of the mentor/coach suggestions to improve the writing piece. This data provided insights into the first and second research question which were; did the student's writing improve in the Writers' Room setting and did the role of the mentor have an effect on the writing process?

The data from the student surveys which were based on the Likert scale questions provided quantifiable evidence of the student perceptions about their own writing. The survey also used three open-ended questions to provide evidence about student perception and The Writers' Room format. The researcher analyzed the responses for patterns and themes that were directly or indirectly related to the research questions guiding this study. A copy of the student survey is located in Appendix E.

The focus group was comprised of the adult subjects in this study. The transcription of the audio tapes of questions and responses was another source of data and

was based on the fact that humans are social creatures that interact with each other.

Through interaction and group dynamics, individual opinions are formed and shaped. The focus groups offered the insight into the research questions focusing the purpose of the research and helped make connections between the adult and student subjects in this study.

Distinctive Features Related to Rubric

The instrument used to measure the growth of writing is based on the New Jersey Holistic Writing Rubric. The adaptation of this rubric has been designed by teachers in the district where the research took place. The students in grades three, four and five are familiar with the rubric and its characteristics. The rubric is designed with six levels. The highest score a student paper may receive is a level 6. To achieve this highest score, a the writing must be well developed and must have a neat presentation that is extremely organized, have a distinct focus and an opening and closing. The writer needs to extend information with correct and varied sentence structure. To have correct sentence structure a student must apply grammatical and mechanical language arts rules to their writing.

To receive a score of 5, a student produces a piece of writing that is well organize and has extended information. At this level, the writer has covered all the required content and writes sentences correctly. At this level the writer uses varied sentence structure using quotations, exclamatory and interrogative sentences. Varied sentence with more

details is the key feature to improve on the writing rubric. The writer has few spelling, mechanical or grammatical errors.

Students scoring a level 4 have correct information but the information is vague. The pieces of writing have less detail. This leaves the writing content vague to the reader. The students use very limited sentence styles, however, they are written correctly for the most part. The presentations at this level could be neater and a little more organized. The emergence of varied sentence structure is the key to achieving a level 4. All scores below a level 4 have the same sentence style throughout the piece of writing.

Students scoring a level 3 on the writing rubric have some of the sentences written correctly and some sentences are incomplete. The sentences all follow the same pattern and there are several spelling, grammatical and mechanical errors. The student covers the required content in the writing but has difficulty applying details to expand clarity of their writing. The student has difficulty applying language arts rules to their work.

Students scoring a level 2 attempts to work on the assignment however have difficulty organizing information and applying mechanical and grammatical rules. The writing is difficult to decipher and there are numerous errors in the writing of simple sentences. The student attempts to complete project but has difficulty with sentence structure and organization. Even with the numerous errors, the student attempts to complete the assignment.

The students scoring at the lowest level made no attempt to complete the assignment and failed to meet the minimal standards. These students produce short pieces of writing with usually just one or two sentences.

Procedure of Study

The researcher collected portfolios from the 133 students with signed Informed Consent forms and Statements of Assurance. All markings identifying students were removed after copying the student work in their portfolios. The original portfolios were then immediately returned to School A.

The portfolios were examined in two ways related to the first research question; did the student's writing improve in the Writers' Room setting? The writing was assessed using the Scoring Rubric for Written Work in Table 8. First, the researcher selected two pieces of writing, one from the beginning of the academic year and one from the end of the academic year. Using the scoring rubric, the scores were analyzed for writing growth over time in the Writers' Room setting. The scores were analyzed in a Percent Frequency Graph for each grade level. The researcher also examined writer's growth in the writing. The researcher assessed the first draft of a piece of writing and then the final draft to assess writing growth in the writing process. The researcher also examined the suggestions of the writing coaches and if these suggestions helped to improve the writing piece. The percent frequencies do not represent the growth of individual students, but trends for the student population.

Students were asked to complete a student survey (See Appendix H). The analysis of the responses provided data related to the second research question; Did the role of the mentor have an effect on the writing process? The survey gave three Likert Scale questions and three open-ended response questions for the students to answer. Responses to the Likert scale questions were represented in a Frequency Chart. The open ended responses were coded and presented in a Response Frequency Chart.

The adult mentors in this project were members of a focus group (See Appendix G). The focus group was audio taped and responses in this qualitative data were coded for response frequency. Information from the adult mentors was related to all three research questions in this study: (a) Did the student's writing improve in The Writers' Room setting? (b) Did the role of the mentor/coach have an effect on the student's writing process? and (c) What components does a writing program need to have to be effective?

Presentation of Data

Chapter Four presented the data analyzed in this study. The transcript of the focus group was analyzed in its entirety (See Appendix I). The researcher analyzed the responses to each question and encoded the responses to present the findings that emerged from the focus group. The writings of the students who participated in the study were analyzed for growth in writing from the beginning of their Writers' Room experience. The assessed growth based on the Scoring Rubric for Written Work was presented in a Frequency Chart. The growth was analyzed from a piece of writing from

the beginning of the year and a piece of writing from the end of the academic year.

Samples of student writing from their portfolios in this study were presented in Chapter Four to provide evidence of the growth of the students' skill. The student survey was also presented to have both quantifiable and qualitative data to be analyzed. Statistical summaries with percent frequencies were presented. This was not an interpretative analysis of how this sample population compared with other populations. The open-ended questions on the student survey were analyzed for emergence of patterns and themes. Analysis and presentation are presented in Chapter Five.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Three presented the research design and methodology for this case study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship of the mentor and the academic success of the student in writing. The researcher identified the selection of student and adult subjects in this study and the data collection for each group of subjects.

The student subjects were identified from the school population of School A, which is in an urban/suburban school district. The sample population was derived from the student subjects who had signed Informed Consent Forms from their parent or guardians. The student subjects also had to sign a Statement of Assurance that they understood the anonymity of their work and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time during this study. The student subjects understood the researcher would

be analyzing the work in their writing portfolio as well as completing a survey relating to The Writers' Room Program.

The writing portfolio of the student subjects would be analyzed for evidence of writing growth. Samples of student work would be measured for growth in writing over time. Student work in the same genre would be assessed at the beginning of the year and later in the academic year. The student work would be measured using the Writing Rubric in Table 8. The features of the six level writing rubric was described in relation to the writing samples. Each piece of writing from the beginning of the year and the end of the year for the subjects was assessed using this writing instrument of measure. The researcher also analyzed student work as it progressed through the stages of the writing process. Initial drafts of writing pieces would be presented along with the comments of the writing mentor/coach. The final drafts of the student work would then be presented to provide examples of growth in writing based on the suggestions of the coaches.

The adult subjects for this study were trained coaches in The Writers' Room Program and returned Informed Consent Forms to the researcher. The adult subjects participated in a Focus Group that was audio taped and transcribed. The transcription of the focus group responses was analyzed by the researcher for patterns and themes of responses as related to the research questions.

CHAPTER IV

Presentation of Data

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of mentoring and its positive effect on academic success of students within the writing process for third, fourth and fifth grade students. The questions guiding this research were:

1. Did the student's writing improve in the Writers' Room setting?
2. Did the role of the mentor/coach have an effect on the writing process?
3. What components does a writing program need to have to be effective?

This study examined the insights of the mentor coaches in relation to their work in the Writers' Room process. The questions were related to the academic achievement, self- confidence, self-esteem and feelings of the students in relation to their writing. The research also examined the perceptions of students regarding their awareness of their individual academic achievement, growth in writing and role of the mentor by using a survey. The writing portfolio of each student was examined for evidence of growth over a period of time, as well as growth development on the same piece of writing within the revision process.

To find the answers to the research questions in this study, a population of students and a population of adult subjects were identified. The student population was from an elementary school with a Grade 3 – 5 student population. The subjects participated in Writers' Room class during the timeframe of this study. The adult population was comprised of six adults trained as Writers' Room coaches for the elementary level and coached/ mentored students during the timeframe of this study.

The Writers' Room Program was implemented in the Public School district as a mentoring program designed specifically to help students with the writing process where this study took place. According to the founders of the Writers' Room, Sheila Crowell and Ellen Kolba describe this program in *The Writers' Room Handbook* as a program that trains and supervises volunteer writing coaches in K -12 writing centers. This program was developed for the Public Schools in this district in 1993 and trained writing coaches to staff writing centers. The founders also are national consultants for districts interested in forming their own Writers' Room Program.

The Writers' Room Program has become a national model for writing process. Franks (2002) reports The Writers' Room Program succeeds in reaching most students because coaches approach the youngsters as readers more than as writing specialists or tutors, teachers say. The writing coach or mentor never grades or evaluates the writing. The writing coach gets to say "This is great!" Teachers recognize the need for students to have support for their writing. The need to talk through ideas, the need to revise and edit are all facets of the Writers' Room. Coaches often brainstorm with a writer and read the

first draft. The coach and the writer talk about the first draft and analyze how central ideas or arguments were developed, where the student was successful and where they fell short. Students keep the sheet with the ideas that were summarized by the coach. Students keep the separate sheet of paper with the suggestions and comments. The students can use or discard the suggestions, but a revised paper is required. Only the classroom teacher grades the final paper. All drafts of papers are saved for the teacher to monitor the writing progress and process.

After a six-week training program, the mentor coaches begin to work in the writing classes at the elementary level. The coaches are trained to be readers and find something positive about each piece of writing. The students work with a writing coach in the classroom setting over the course of an academic year. The same coaches are usually assigned to the same class or grade level during an academic term.

Student Writings

The students at each level participated in The Writers' Room Program at an elementary school in a suburban/urban school district. The writing samples of the students were scored using a writing rubric in Table 13. The writing rubric used to assess writing in the district was utilized to measure the writing growth by the researcher. The researcher had trained writing coaches score the same pieces of writing to ensure reliable and valid assessments were assigned to each piece of data.

The writing samples from the student portfolios were analyzed in two ways to determine data related to the first research question. The researcher looked at sample writings for each of the students to determine growth in writing over the academic year.

Pieces of writing from the beginning of the year were selected for each student subject in this study. The writing pieces were then scored according to the writing rubric used for this setting. A frequency chart was tabulated for each subject for their first pieces of writing and for a piece of writing completed at the end of the year are presented in Table 9.

The rubric scores show varied ability in the writing ability for each grade level.

Table 9

Frequency Table for Scores of Writing from the Beginning of the Academic Year

Grade	Rubric Scores					
	6	5	4	3	2	1
3	0	0	1	4	30	2
4	0	0	8	28	10	0
5	1	10	18	17	0	0
Total	1	10	27	49	40	2

The students in grades three and four did not have any subjects score a five or a six on the writing rubric early in the academic year. The students in grade four had eight students be able to score a level four on the writing rubric. The students were able to write sentences correctly but wrote in a limited style. The paragraphs at the beginning of the year for grades three and four are notably shorter than the writing pieces for grade five.

The mean score for the writing rubric scored at the beginning of the year was 3.05. Sixty percent of the total students scored in the three – four range on the writing rubric in the beginning of the year. Eighty four percent of the grade four students and 100% of the grade five students achieved these levels or scored above these levels.

Eleven students in grade five were able to score a level five or six in the beginning of the year. The works examined were longer in length with extended information provided in the writing selections. Evidence of correct and some varied sentence structure were found in these pieces of writing. Level five and six selections had both Exclamatory and Interrogatory sentences in the selections. Direct dialogue and use of quotation marks were attempted by each of these students with very few mechanical errors. Writing samples completed at the end of the year were scored using the same rubric. The following Table 10 shows the breakdown of final scores for the same subjects that were graded at the beginning of the year.

The researcher recorded data of scores for the pieces of writing at the beginning of the year and end of the year for each grade level population. The following tables reflect the

trends of the scores for the entire population and not individual students. Anecdotal information about pieces of writing that were provided when there was general growth in writing from one rubric level to another. These tables do not denote a student who did not show growth in writing and received the same or lower score from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

Table 10

Frequency Table for Scores of Writing from the End of the Academic Year

Grade	Rubric Scores						
		6	5	4	3	2	1
3	0	0	4	24	9	0	
4	0	10	24	10	2	0	
5	3	19	19	5	0	0	
Total	3	29	47	39	11	0	

The mean score for the writing samples for all subjects at the end of the year was 3.79. The greatest growth was demonstrated at grades four and five. Seventy four percent (74%) of the students in grade four scored in the 4-5 range on the rubric. None of the subjects in grade four scored at the level 6. Eighty nine percent (89%) of the students in grade five scored a level four or higher with three (3) students attaining a level six. Students in grade three showed demonstrated growth in writing descriptively over the course of the year. The students whose worked improved from a level three to a level four had commonalities in their growth. The paragraphs increased length and the writers extended information, but only minimally. Many of the writers included all the required content but the sentences continued to follow a single pattern. When students began to use varied sentence styles in their writing, utilizing exclamatory sentences was the most common change to their style.

The writers still had spelling, mechanical and grammatical errors throughout their pieces of writing. Mechanical errors refer to punctuation and capitalization usage. Grammatical errors refer to subject –verb agreement, tense and correct pronoun usage. The rubric has general terms such as few spelling, grammatical or mechanical errors at a level 5, some spelling, grammatical or mechanical errors at a level 4, several spelling, grammatical or mechanical errors at a level 3 and numerous spelling, grammatical or mechanical errors at a level 2. Each piece of writing at a specific level were analyzed to determine what constitutes few, some, several and numerous spelling, grammatical or mechanical errors at each level. Table 16 shows the average number of spelling,

grammatical or mechanical errors for each writing level in the rubric from the samples of writing analyzed in the research.

Three students had grown tremendously with description and varied sentence style. These students had demonstrated better organization and there was less punctuation, grammatical or mechanical errors in this final draft of writing. The students have improved the writing score to a Rubric Score of 4. Four grade three students improved two levels on the writing rubric. The students improving from a level three to a level five improved their organization as well as sentence structure. The presentations were more extended and required content was covered in the pieced of writing.

The writing of the student subjects was also examined in the writing process. This means that the student work for a piece of writing was examined in the first draft and the final draft for the same piece of writing. These selections were written by the student and presented to a Writers' Room coach for suggestions. The students improved their writing in each grade level from the first draft to the final draft. The students valued the coaches' suggestions and incorporated them into their writing.

In the initial draft of writing by grade three students, the piece is often weak and not organized. There is an attempt to stay on the topic, yet it is not very strong. The sentence structure attempted to add detail but within a weak presentation. However, following the suggestions of the writing coach, the students work improved. The coach's suggestions for students in grade three were generally about writing sentences and paragraphs. These corrections and revisions could help a student achieve higher levels on the writing rubric once the student began applying the suggestions to their writing independently. Students in third grade are learning so many language rules for writing; it

is difficult for them to demonstrate dramatic growth in writing. No one achieved a level 5 or 6 during the course of the year. Only three students improved to a level 4 at the third grade level.

The samples provided in this students show evidence of related to the first two research questions. First, the writing in The Writers' Room setting provided evidence that a student's writing does improve in this setting. The student sample from early in the year compared to samples of writing later in the year showed evidence of growth in writing. These scores were analyzed for the writing growth of the student population and not recorded for individual students. The critical importance of the role of the mentor is reflected in the writing samples that exhibit the writing process of the students' work. The suggestions of the mentors were valued by the students and for the most part incorporated in the revised versions of the writing piece. The coach finds some strength in the writing pieces and then gives suggestions for revisions.

A student in grade four wrote an imaginative piece about the life of a rain drop. The coach writes a note to the student about the creativity of the writing piece. The coach then makes suggestions for paragraph structure, spelling and sequencing the story. The student follows the suggestions of the coach in the final draft and demonstrates writing growth in the process. The student took the advise of the coach and edited the story with regard to the punctuation spelling and grammar, however, the student did not take the advise and expand how the rain drop felt about his adventure when he arrived back home.

Students in grade four and five were more apt to have longer pieces of writing for their first drafts. A student in grade five was complimented about the imaginative story. The suggestions for students already comfortable with the writing process become more refined. The suggestions include "Remember to write the story in the first person," or "Be careful of verb tense." These suggestions help the student reduce the number of spelling, mechanical and grammatical errors if they follow the coaches suggestions. The students begin to learn that longer stories do not mean better stories. The long stories tend to have very long paragraphs. The coaches often suggest to students to be sure each paragraph is related to a topic sentence. The long stories in the first draft often have trouble staying on topic and are not organized.

However, in grade three the students often begin with very short writing pieces, the coaches often have many suggestions to add detail. The students are encouraged to use graphic organizers to write details about main topics. Grade three also had numerous suggestions relating to topic sentences, paragraphs and punctuation. The coach would write ideas such as "How did your mother feel?" or "Tell me more about what happened when you went home." The students in grade three also had a difficult time eliminating irrelevant details and this became easier for students in grades four and five.

Poor writing pieces show great improvement in the writing process. A grade four student wrote about "Being a snowflake, I have advice for you." The student's first draft was scored a level 2. It was difficult to decipher the content and meaning of the story. The student worked with the writing coach and explained or interpreted the meaning of the first draft. The final draft improved the sentence structure, though limited in variation

and style and improved spelling, grammatical and mechanical errors. The student received a score of 4 on the Writing rubric for the final draft.

A student in grade five demonstrated an example of the coach helping the student with the pre-writing. There was a positive response to draft one and the coach suggested that the student add details to the ideas they had discussed in the story web. The prewriting conference seems to have helped the student develop a story with a fairly consistent point of view and a good opening and closing to the selection. The suggestions improve the punctuation and encouraged using dialogue in the story. The student improved the sentence structure, spelling and grammatical errors. The student also used quotations for dialogue and exclamatory sentences for feeling. The story improved from level 3 to a level 5 with the excellent editing and varied sentence structure.

Students in grade four and five begin to make excellent editing corrections, especially with spelling and punctuation. The students often add some details that made the events clearer. It becomes much easier for the reader to follow the events of the story. Students with a great first draft have integrated many more details into the narrative with a clear beginning, middle and end. The writers often deleted irrelevant and redundant details from the first draft. The student become proficient at editing their work and corrected the spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors from the first draft. The n the writers can improve their writing to a level 5 on the writing rubric through the writing processes.

The writing samples provided evidence regarding the research questions one and two. The writing samples that reflected the multiple drafts and revisions in the writing process highlighted the importance of the role of the mentor in the writing process. Each

student valued the comments of the writing coach / mentor. The students reflected their writing suggestions of the mentors in the next drafts of their writing.

The writing samples over time reflected growth in the students' writing with better performance. The role of the mentor and effective writing programs did not answer the research questions directly. However, the students indicated the role of the mentor was very important in their writing growth in the student surveys. The samples of writing over time reflected the perceptions of the students that their writing did improve and indicated this improvement was related to the mentor/coach. The samples of writing selected provided evidence of the students taking the advice of the writing mentor/coaches and applying the suggestions in the final drafts of their writing piece.

Survey

The students completed a student survey that can be found in Appendix D The first three questions had the students answer in a Likert Scale format based in the range of 1 to 5. Question 1 referred to Not very true of me and 5 referred to Very true of me for the student response. There were 129 student surveys returned.

The student surveys reflected the perception of the students in relationship to the growth of their writing in the Writers' Room setting. More than half of the student population observed an improvement in their writing as a result of participating in the Writers' Room Program. The number of subjects responding a level 3 or higher on the first survey question which was: My writing has changes as since being a part of the Writers' Room was 67% and 42% recorded a 4 or higher on the survey scale. The students also noted the impact of the Writers' Room was positively noted as helping them

in other academic areas. A majority of the subjects, 53% noted this as a level 3 or higher and 32% of the subjects responded at a level 4 or higher. The coded responses are in Table 12.

The student survey was designed to answer research question two and three. The Likert portion of the survey asked the students if they felt their writing improved in The

Table 11

Percent Frequencies of Student Survey

Survey Statements	Likert Scale				
	Not true at all		Very true of me		
	1	2	3	4	5
My writing has changed since being a part of Writers' Room.	15%	19%	25%	30%	12%
Writers' Room has helped me in other academic areas.	30%	17%	21%	19%	13%
I like writing more Since being a part of Writers' Room	30%	11%	16%	18%	25%

Table 12

Percent Frequency of Students Perception About Their Writing in Writers' Room

Experience

<u>Percent</u>	<u>Response</u>
26	Always loved writing
45	Did not like writing
15	Felt good about writing
9	Felt same about writing
2	Felt different about writing
4	No response

Writers' Room Program. The open ended response sections of the survey asked the students if they thought their writing improved, then why did they think it improved? The student surveys presented the direct link of the importance of the role of the mentor in the writing process. Forty five percent of the students did not like writing before The Writers' Room Program experience. However, 47% of the students thought their writing had improved. The students cite the role of the mentor as giving them more confidence, helped with details, planning and creativity. The students noted a positive impact of the Writers' Room with 70% indicating their writing had changed since participating in this writing program.

The students who felt their writing improved stated the following reasons for improvement in their writing. Table 14 highlights the responses of the students and how they thought they were better writers over the course of the year in Writers' Room.

The students thought they were better writers because they wrote with more detail, more creativity and more confidence. In this table only two percent of the students directly relate the importance of the writing coach. But when asked why they were better writers, 13% of the students relate the coaches helped them to improve and 8% indicated the Writers' Room helped. The students indirectly relate the role of the mentor when they say they write with more detail, confidence and creativity, the students indicate the coaches helped them to achieve this because of the impact of the coaches' role throughout the program. The students who felt their writing improved stated the following reasons for improvement in the following Table.

Table 13

Percent Frequency of Responses about Change in Writing

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	70%
No	29%
No response	1%

Table 14

Percent Frequency of Responses About How They Were Better Writers After Writers' Room Experience

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Better writer	47%
More detailed	14%
More Confidence	7%
More Creative	7%
Better Vocabulary	8%
More Depth	3%
Coaches Helped	2%

The students who felt their writing improved stated the following reasons for improvement in their writing as the following, longer sentences with more detail, wrote better issues, able to write about better topics and issues, and were able to write in various styles. The students also indicated that learning editing and revision skills made their writing clearer and better to read. The students connected the mentor/ coaches to these improved writing skills with comments such as, "My writing changes because of good coaches." And "I think my writing has changed because the Writers' Room coaches are checking my work." Another student wrote, "They (writing coaches) taught me to be less vague and my writing has changed by explaining things more, I've become a better writer."

Writing in more detail was mentioned by many students as supporting evidence for their growth in their writing performance. Comments such as, "My writing has improved because they taught me so much, probably because they taught me how to do lots of things I did not know before," or "My writing has changed because they (writing coaches) have shown me how to enhance and detail my writing. I think my writing has changed because the coaches explained to me and helped me with my writing skills," directly related the writing coach as the key role to the improved writing performance. Another student wrote:

Yes, I feel my writing has changed because I feel like writing more descriptively. My writing now uses a big variety of words. I feel like people will enjoy reading my work now more than they used to. I can express my feelings better, The coaches helped me a lot to think of different words for me a lot to think of different words for one word. For example, the phrase 'She said' could change into 'she screamed' or 'she pondered.'

Table 15

*Percent Frequency of Responses About Why They Were Better Writers After Writers'**Room Experience*

Response	Percent
Better writer	35%
More Confidence	15%
Coaches helped	13%
Writers' Room Helped	8%
Worked Harder	3%
Writing Did Not Change	12%
No Response	12%
Did Not Know	4%

This link surfaced in many of the student surveys. The students directly relate the role of the mentor to their improved writing. These responses provided insight into research questions two and three that guided this study. The students identified the role of the mentor did have an effect on their writing and that this role was an effective component of a writing program.

Students also thought their writing improved because they had more confidence. Student wrote, "You made me like writing more. My writing has changed a lot from all the good things you said about what I wrote." And "I think I have gotten more confident in writing." The students described improved writing both intrinsically and extrinsically and related each of these sources directly to the writing coach.

Many students who did not think their writing improved already thought they were good writers. Comments such as, "My writing did not improve, I always liked writing" and "I liked writing before Writers' Room and my writing hasn't changed." Students who did not like writing before Writers' Room and still were not keen about writing did have positive comments related to the Writers' Room process. Some students commented, "I felt uncreative. I still do not like to write, but they made things easier for me." Other students who did not like writing prior to the Writers' Room do feel they like writing now because of the help from the coaches. A student wrote, "I was not good at it. I felt I was not a good writer and I think my writing changed because of the comments I got."

Interestingly, some third grade students answered the survey and did agree their writing had improved. When asked how their writing improved they responded, " I form my letters neater." These students did not link the survey to the writing process in the Writers' Room program but to learning cursive writing. The third grade students had the greatest struggle to attain a high score on the rubric. Developmentally, they were learning many structural rules to put their thoughts on paper accurately.

The standardized tests for Language Arts Literacy support the students' perception of improvement in their writing. The students at School A have improved their Language Arts Literacy State Assessment scores significantly with the introduction of the Writers' Room Program at School A. The percentage of students who were Proficient or Above Proficient grew 23.1% in the year after Writers' Room was part of the School A curriculum. The information is presented in Table 16.

Student perceptions that both liked and disliked writing either before or after Writers' Room do recognized the value of the mentor coach in the writing process. The students do credit their perceived growth as directly related to their role in the Writers' Room process. These perceptions directly relate to the research questions that relate the mentor as an effective part of the writing process and an important component of an effective writing program.

Focus Group

The focus group was a planned data collection strategy for this study in order to collect qualitative data. The data collected from the focus group provided patterns and themes that collaborated with descriptive study collected from the student surveys. The purpose of the focus group was to understand The Writers' Room Program and the role of the mentor/coach. The focus group was not intended to generalize from the data but to provide insights in to The Writers' Room Program and the role of the mentor coach from both the student and adult perspective.

Table 16

Grade 4 Statewide Assessment Results Language Arts Literacy for School A

Scores	Year	
	1991-2000	2000-2001
Advanced Proficient	10.7 %	6.9 %
Proficient	59.8%	86.7%
Total Proficient/		
Advanced Proficient	70.5 %	93.6%

Six subjects from the sample population agreed to participate in the focus group session held in April 2002. Each one of the focus group coaches was a parent of an elementary school children and 100% of the sample population were White and female. The transcript of the session was transcribed and is in the Appendix G.

The questions, prepared for the focus group, were related to the research questions. The responses of the focus group members were encoded for patterns and themes as they related to the guiding research questions which were: related to each of the questions. The questions prepared for the focus group can be found in the Appendix. The focus group members had similar viewpoints related to the goal of the Writers' Room program. The pattern responses are presented in Table 17.

Responses from the focus group members directly related their goal as an important key to the writing process and as an important component of an effective writing program. The members agreed their goal was to inspire, encourage and instill confidence in the student writers. Comments related to their goal as mentors included: "...to help them from the inside, maybe more direction, or just be a cheerleader at times. Saying, 'Good Job!' or 'You can do it,' or 'I like that!' sometimes helps the students confidence." Another member saw the role of the coach as a neutral person helping them. They were not the teacher who evaluates them, and they were not their parents who might also judge the writing. "The coach or the mentor gives the student a non-judgmental opinion to give them some strategies to help them get through the assignments."

The feeling of confidence emerged from many of the comments. One coach liked watching the confidence grow in a student and stated:

I saw some kids who were not proud of their first drafts become quite proud of their revision.....I think that a kind of confidence you can develop by working one on one with kids and by teaching them structure of writing and revising does develop a sense of confidence that they can take with them in everything they do.

Table 17

Theme Responses of Focus Group Members as Related to the Goals of the Writers' Room

Response	Description
<hr/> Help the Student	Encourage
	Give confidence to student
	Mechanics of Writing
	See potential as a writer
Help the School	Support Curriculum
	Give individualized attention

The focus group members saw their primary role as to inspire the students. The coaches described a difference in their roles depending on which grade level student they were helping. The coaches agreed, no matter what the grade level, every student had something to say. The younger students had more difficulty getting their thoughts from their heads to the paper. The older students were more eager to write and were more involved in the mechanics and editing process. Each of these roles had a direct connection to the mentor role and the students' writing as presented in Table 18.

Members of the focus group were also in agreement of the necessity for professional development. The following Table 19 outlines the themes that emerged from the focus group related to the structure and training.

Learning strategies to help students was an important component of this writing process. Comments such as, "The training gave us structure to coach or mentor writing" and "The training helped me to understand we were going to be helpful to kids because we were readers not because we were writers." The coaches in the focus group agreed their value was to convey the message to the students. They had to write clearly because someone was going to read this and their writing has an impact on the reader.

Table 18

Pattern of Response Related to the Role of the Writers' Room Coaches in the Writing Process

Response	Description
Help the Students	<p>Inspire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boost self esteem Organize thoughts onto paper Different roles for grade levels Take a piece of writing to a higher level Help the Curriculum Indirectly improve curriculum by collaboration with staff

Table 19

Response to the questions related to the training of the Writers' Room coaches in the Writing Process

Response	Description
Strengths	Length of time relates to commitment
	Learn how to find strengths in written work
	Learn how to work with completed pieces of writing
	Learn how to look at paper as a reader
	Classroom teachers trained in process
Areas to Improve	Be able to work with students to discuss pieces Of Writing
	Training needs to be adapted for younger grades
	Have the students be able to choose their own Topic.
	Continue professional development with coaches

The focus group members thought the mentor coaches helped with both the writing structure and the writing process of the students. Coded responses are highlighted in Table 20.

When asked directly if the focus group members felt a bond to the students they worked with in this setting, there was also agreement. One coach responded, "Oh, definitely. I think the kids get to know the coaches in their room and a sense about how a coach will respond." Another coach related that after working consistently in class, a student came up to me outside of school and began talking to me about her writing." Another member mentioned, ' A kid came up to me and said you were in the Writers' Room two weeks ago.'" The responses are presented in Table 21.

The value of the writing mentor or coach was highlighted in many responses of the focus group members. The coaches felt that the students liked working individually with the coaches. The students loved someone to pay attention to their work and this created a bond with the students. These specific examples provided evidence of the value of the coaches in the writing process. The mentors related the fact that the students recognized the value of the writing coach. They were willing to take the suggestions of the mentors when revising their initial drafts in the writing process. These suggestions were effective in the writing process and provided evidence of improved writing.

The strength of the Writers' Room program also was connected to the value of the mentor/ coach role in this writing process. The coaches associated their strength of the Writers' Room was the non-judgmental quality and support quality of the mentor. Another coach felt the working one on one with a student was the strength of the program. Many felt this was the time to be the cheerleader for the student and provide

Table 20

Patterned Response Related to the Writing Structure of Students in the Writing Process

Response	Description
Writing Structure	More complex sentences
	Higher-level vocabulary
	Taking a risk with writing
Writing Process	Better sense of organization
	Willing to revise multiple drafts
	Internalizing what they want to write
	Value of the coach

Table 21

Response to the questions related to the Bond Formed with Students in the Writing

Process

Response	Description
<p data-bbox="386 816 621 846">Multiple Evidence</p> <p data-bbox="289 909 418 938">classroom</p>	<p data-bbox="1024 816 1333 846">Connections outside the</p>
<p data-bbox="289 1085 363 1115">coach</p>	<p data-bbox="1036 997 1382 1026">Waiting to work with same</p> <p data-bbox="1040 1176 1344 1291">Students willing to take suggestions due to trust</p> <p data-bbox="1036 1356 1289 1386">Teacher role crucial</p>

positive comments and suggestions. At the same time the coaches like the opportunity to show a child how to edit for spelling and punctuation errors. There were many opportunities when working with individual to have teachable moments regarding individual needs for structure.

The responses of the coach/mentors related directly to the research questions. The focus group members gave specific examples of the value of the mentor in the writing process and also related this an important component of an effective writing process.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four displayed the qualitative and the quantitative data gathered in this study. This data was used to investigate the sample population at an elementary school in a suburban/urban school district identified as School A. The student survey, the sample of the student writing and the transcription of the focus group was presented. Each of these data sources provided evidence and specific examples that were related to the research questions. The guiding questions were:

1. Did the student's writing improve in the Writers' Room setting?
2. Did the role of the mentor/coach have an effect on the writing process?
3. What components does a writing program need to have to be effective?

The student writings selected were examples from the writing portfolios of student subjects who participated in this study. The writings selected show growth of individual subjects over time, as well as samples of writing within the writing process. There were selections from the same genre written early in the academic year and selections written later in the academic year. Students' writings were graded using the Writing Rubric presented in Table 13 and showed evidence of writing growth after

participating in the Writers' Room program. According to research presented in Chapter 2, the rubric format is an appropriate holistic assessment technique for writing. The character features of each level of the rubric were described in detail in relation to the students' writing during the academic year. The writing samples, within the writing process displayed the initial draft of a piece of writing, the suggestions of the writing mentor/coach and the final draft of the same version. These selections provided evidence of the student recognizing the value of the mentor by taking their suggestions and applying them to their work.

Student survey responses were analyzed for their perceptions related to their growth in writing relating to the role of the mentor and its value to the writing process. The student related the growth in their writing to improved confidence, writing structure, and being able to write clearer. The student responses directly related the improvement of their writing to the writing mentors.

The responses of the adult subjects who participated in this research were analyzed for patterns and themes. The adult focus group members were all trained in The Writers' Room Program at the elementary level. The members of the focus group identified their role as encouraging and inspiring the students to improve their writing. They were in agreement that a bond developed between the coach/mentors and this role was valuable to the writing process.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

Mentoring is at risk of becoming a buzzword in school reform and builds on the supposition that mentoring will improve academic achievement and narrow the achievement gap. This theme was highlighted in the literature reviews presented in Chapter Two by key researchers on this topic. Freedman (1991) stressed this finding in his research. He cautioned that mentoring presented itself as a mystique that always had a positive affect on student achievement. Fehr (1993) implicated that the mentoring process was strongly affected by the pairing of the student and the adult.

Research by Carmola (1994) reported surveys of mentors and mentees in mentoring programs both thought the relationship had a positive effect on the student. However, other researchers documented the difficulty of measuring the effect of the mentoring relationship. Flaxman (1994) stated the measurement of human relationships is very complex and not always compliant with imposing general principles or scientific generalities.

Research has also had an impact on the teaching of writing in recent years, and the writing process has been adopted by a majority of educators. The work of Calkins, Graces and Atwell changed the educational practices of teaching writing to the process method. The value or importance of the role of using coaches or mentors in the writing process can provide decision makers with effective programs. In this time of economic

and budgetary constraints on educational programs, it is important for educators to be able to provide effective programs for all the students.

Research highlights the value of school creating collaborations with community members to form partnerships. Many of the studies highlight improved academic achievement with the enhancement of these partnerships. Administrators and school leaders need to provide academic settings to promote student achievement. The recent models for school reform promote developing partnerships to ensure effective learning environments.

A review of literature pertaining to mentoring and the writing process provided the rationale for this research. The literature examined mentoring programs in the United States over the past century, as well as the emergence of teaching writing as a process. The literature examined the opposing viewpoints of educators on both of these topics in order to gather varied educational perspectives related to this topic. This prior research also provided the framework for this study as related to design and methodology. The case study design was selected for examining the relationship of the role of the mentor in the writing process. This method of research allowed for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the research question. Qualitative research design directed the strategies for collection and interpretation of the findings in this study. The following research questions provided the focus of the investigation for the effect of the mentor in the writing process. They were:

1. Did the student's writing improve in the Writers' Room setting?
2. Did the role of the mentor/coach have an effect on the writing process?

3. What components does a writing program need to have to be effective?

Specific sequential steps investigating these research questions were described in the chapters of this study. Chapter One framed the rationale and the research problem. Chapter Two provided a review of literature of both mentoring and writing process in education. This review of literature provided the theoretical base for comparison in this study. Chapter Three described in detail the research design and methodology that guided this investigation and the findings were presented in Chapter Four. The analysis and evaluation of the data collected in this study were presented in Chapter Five. This data was analyzed and evaluated within the theoretical framework and the research rationale that helped to identify implications and recommendations.

The sources of data provided support for each of the research questions. The three sources of data collection were writing samples from the student portfolio, the student survey and the adult subject focus group. Each of these sources of data was analyzed as they related to the first research question guiding this study which was: Did the student's writing improve in the Writers' Room setting?

Both the adult subjects and the student subjects made assertions, both directly and indirectly, to the value of the mentor in the writing process. Similar to the work related by Carmola (1994), the subjects defined the value of the mentor both implicitly and explicitly. The subjects were able to identify the value of the mentor relationship unlike findings reported by Flaxman (1992a) stated, "The measurement of the mentor – mentee

relationship was too complex to measure because of the complexity of human variables.”

Both student and adult subjects made connections relating to the role of the mentor in each data source.

The Writers' Room Program also supported the research provided by Hatch (1998), Brandt, (1998) and Lewis which promotes bringing community members into the schools to promote academic achievement. These trained coaches are all members of the community. The Writers' Room Program provides opportunities for school leaders to improve the perception of their schools. Community members are in the building, have the opportunity to see the rigorous curriculum and exciting projects challenging the students. The community members also see the professional standards and the untiring efforts of teaching professionals to help all students learn. This program is designed to help students improve writing, but school leaders at the same time offer the community glimpses of their educational environments.

The writing portfolios provided the research with two types of writing samples. These writing selections were student writing samples within the same genre over the course of time. The researcher selected samples from the student portfolios that were written in the beginning of the year and later in the academic year. The researcher assessed the growth in writing for each student by evaluating the writing pieces with the Holistic Writing Rubric that is in the Appendix. The growth in these writing samples cannot be directly linked to the relationship of the mentor in the Writers' Room Program.

However, the growth in this writing may be attributed to the design of the Writers' Room, which includes community mentors. The research reported Stretch (1994) stated the structure of the atmosphere is less important than the trust developed in the classroom. The students need to feel safe and trusted in order to produce their best efforts and take risks with their writing as documented by the work of Bruce-Crim in 1991. The Writers' Room is designed by the research advocating the Writing Workshop structure based on the work of Lucy Calkins, Donald Graves and Nancie Atwell. The writing of the student samples selected over the academic year provided the evidence that the student did grow in their writing within the framework structure such as Writers' Room. The researcher assessed the growth of the students' writing over time and each student showed evidence improvement over the course of the year.

However, the student work of writing samples within the writing process made a direct assertion to the value of the relationship with the mentor in the writing process. According to research in the writing process approach, writing will improve as the student develops a piece of writing through the revision process. Crowell and Kolba (2002) state they designed the Writers' Room program, on the work of Calkins, Grave and Atwell and the goal was for each student with an opportunity for one-to-one conferencing that every writer can use. The writing samples of the initial draft and final draft were presented in Chapter Four with the comments and suggestions of the mentor/coach. The pieces of writing were assessed using the Holistic Writing Rubric and

each of the pieces of writing showed improvement. These writing samples implied that not only the structure of the Writers' Room is effective, but also the mentor is valued. The student improved the pieces of writing by taking the suggestions of the mentor/coach and improving their pieces of writing.

The survey data directly links the relationship of the mentor as the being effective in the writing process. When surveyed the students answered three questions in the Likert Scale Format from 1 – 5 and 61% (n=79) answered with a level 3 or higher that their writing had changed since participating in the Writers' Room. The students also reported that they felt the Writers' Room helped the student in other academic areas with 53% (n = 68) reporting a score of 3 or higher on the Likert scale. The students that reported in the survey that they liked writing more after being a part of the Writers' Room with a score of 3 or higher were 67% (n=86). These ratings show the students' perception about their writing was better after participating in the Writers; Room program. This data implies the design of the Writers' Room with writing coaches was an effective approach.

The student survey questions which asked the students to answer the questions in an open-ended format provided data that directly linked the relationship of the mentor to the improvement of writing. When asked if their writing had improved, why they think the writing improved, the students directly related the mentors. The students cited the help of the mentors to write more clearly, with better detail and improved their editing skills. The students felt more confident in their writing because of the good things the

writing coaches said about their writing. The data from the survey is consistent with the findings of Carmola (1994) that the mentees thought the mentoring relationship had a positive effect on the student. The improved self concept is congruent with the findings of Slicker and Palmer (1993) and White-Hood (1993) improved self-esteem was a positive outcome of this mentoring program. However, in this study the students were asked why they thought their writing had improved and the mentors/coaches were named directly by the students as the source of their improvement.

The members of the focus group related the goals of the Writers' Room into two categories. The categories included goals related to the students and goals related to the classroom and curriculum. The responses for the goals of the Writers' Room were more significantly emphasized as student related goals and could be broken into many subsets. The writing coaches were in agreement regarding the relationship of the student goals. The coaches/ mentors felt the goal for each coach was to help the student they were working with to reach their potential as a writer. This overarching goal was the outcome of many subsets related to achieving the final goal of the Writers' Room. The primary goal was to have the students become writers by encouraging, improving self-esteem and improving the mechanics of writing. The focus group also thought an underlying goal was to help the school with curriculum and helping the teachers.

The goals of the Writers' Room as identified by the focus group members are similar to the goals or outcomes defined in the literature review. Research on mentoring

recognized varied definitions and components of mentoring programs, however, enhancement of self-esteem and self-confidence are evident goals in mentoring according to Ferguson and Snipes (1996).

The mentors saw their role as giving encouragement to the student to help them to see their potential as a writer. This encouragement would lead the students to improve their writing with increased complex structure as well as to take risks with their writing. The confidence would increase as the students were mentored with individual needs for mechanics instruction related to sentence and paragraph structure. This instruction can be blended into the first phases of the Writers' Room when the mentor is a reader. At this point the student is not being judged or evaluated by the mentor. The suggestions are intended to help the student put what they mean to say in words.

As the writing process continues and the student becomes confident in sharing the content of their writing, suggestions for correct mechanics of sentence structure can be applied directly to a piece of writing. The correct application of sentence structure mechanics helps the student see themselves as a writer. The improved skill increases their confidence and helps the students become better writers. This writing processes included in the research of writing process leaders Calkins (1986), Graves (1983) and Atwell (1987) that stated that students wrote better when they learned revision process of pre-writing, drafting, editing and publishing as well as receiving direct instruction in their individual needs. The improved writing also is congruent with the findings related to

community partnerships and improved academic achievement. The focus group members recognize this component as they encourage and give confidence to their students.

The role of the Writers' Room had some underlying goals identified to help and support the curriculum. The focus group members agreed that they entered classrooms and worked on pieces of writing that was related to the curriculum. They were pieces of writing that were integrated into other core curriculum subjects and not just isolated pieces of writing. As designed by the Writers' Room, the coaches did not suggest the topics or genres of writing. Yet, there were instances where the classroom teacher asked the advice of the writing coach for suggestions regarding writing projects related to the curriculum. As these projects were enjoyed by students, enthusiasm spread and other grade level colleagues incorporated similar projects into their grade level curriculum.

Another way the mentors saw Writers' Room as supporting the school was helping reduce the student to teacher ratio in a classroom. At any one time there could be four to five Writers' Room volunteers in a particular classroom that has a teacher and a teaching assistant in the classroom. An average class size is 25 students. This reduces the ratio from 2:25 to 6:25 and allowed more opportunity for individualized attention during this block of time. These ratios are different than the Writing Workshop designed by Lucy Calkins and Donald Graves (1983) in their research. Stretch (1994) stated, "The conference time in the writing process with the teacher as a time to discover, clarify and refine what they want to express" (10). The Writers' Room recognizes the need of this

individual conferencing time as a way of reducing the student adult ratio with the adult coaches/mentors.

The members of the focus group also felt a strong connection to the training program and the success of The Writers' Room. As was pointed out, the coached are all intelligent people who loved to work with children. The training gave the coaches a sense of their role; they learned a similar language to speak to the students, as well as a similar format. The six-week time frame was regarded as an important key. It was long enough for coaches or mentors to have to make an initial commitment to the program, yet not overwhelmingly too long a timeframe. The coaches in the focus group were in agreement that the training for the elementary program should highlight difference in the process when working with elementary students.

A Literature Review for both Mentoring and the Writing Process has highlighted the structure of the programs as being important to both mentoring and to the writing process. In mentoring, the research considered the format of pairing the mentor and the mentee. Freedman and Jaffe (1993) suggested the pairing of the adult and the student is a critical component of any successful mentoring program. They even went as far as to suggest the most effective mentors had not lived what is considered a most successful life. However, the pairing of the writing coach/mentor did not seem to be a critical component of The Writers' Room Program.

The coaches did not agree on their role in the Writers' Workshop process, but they did agree on the outcome. This outcome was to give the student the confidence to be a writer. One of the coaches felt their primary role was to inspire students. This inspiration was to motivate the students to put their thoughts that were in their head onto the paper as written ideas. Other coaches, who did not have the same opinion on the term inspiration, did describe their role as motivating. They did all agree that this helping the students transfer their thoughts onto paper came with confidence was an important factor at the elementary level. These findings are congruent with the research of Lorie Stretch (1994) who stated, "Writing time is often plagued with frustration for both the student and the teacher because of the difficulty of putting words on to paper."

The terms encouraging the student, bolstering the self-esteem of the young writer and inspiring young students to write more often emerged the most often when asked about third role in the writing process. A trained coach thought the role varied depending on the grade level. For example, one coach stated, "The younger students in third grade need more encouragement to put thoughts on the paper. When working in fifth grade, the students are more willing to write their thoughts from their head to the paper." Another mentor coach stated that it was the getting the students to get their thoughts from their head to the paper as the initial role of the coach. However, the longer the student has worked with the writing process, the structure and mechanics of writing became a more integral part of the coaching role.

The training for the Writers' Room was another theme that emerged in the focus group discussion. The coaches felt the training needed to be readdressed for the younger students. For example, most of the training stressed reading student work and highlighting areas of strengths. However, when working in a grade three classroom in the beginning of the year, the coach is helping the student to organize thoughts from the student's head to the paper.

The training of the Writers' Room coaches should have on going professional development. The mentors felt very strongly that sharing with other coaches was very important follow up in their own individual growth related to the process of coaching. For example, the professional development could include revising techniques or sharing techniques that were successful at varying grade levels. The professional development would also renew the idea that our role is to be a reader in this whole process and keep this idea in the forefront when in the classroom.

The writing coaches also felt it very important for the classroom professional to go through the same training as the writing coach. This was to help all use the same language to the student. The focus group members all felt the students needed to have a sense of collaboration in the classroom among all the writing coaches. Otherwise, the Writers' Room would not be successful without this key component of teacher collaboration.

Working in the classroom and getting to know the students, the writing mentors were able to see the developmental writing growth of the students. They described this growth as having the students write more complex sentences. They defined this as having longer sentences and more descriptive words. The mentors felt the students had internalized the writing process and were now able to organize their thoughts to be put down on paper. The writing growth also demonstrated a sense of writing. This sense of writing included sentence structure and paragraph development. The growth of a student's writing tends to develop a sense of the main idea and details. The student also stays on topic with the writing.

A key development in a student's writing process is the ability to grasp the idea of revision. This is a key concept for all successful writers according to the group assembled. The focus group members did concur that this was an easier concept to develop with the increased access of a word processor. It is less laborious to revise a piece of writing using the word processor. The students are more ready to make the corrections, enhancements or deletions to their writing than if they had to handwrite each draft over and over.

The members of the focus group felt that a bond or connection was developed between themselves and the students they mentored in the Writers' Room process. The coaches had different schedules and were not always in the same classroom working with the same students. When coaches maintained the same schedule they felt that a bond

occurred more readily with the students at the elementary level. However, they did have the same opinion that a bond did form at all age levels. The more comfortable the students and the coaches became with the program, the more apt this bond was to form. When asked if the coach/mentors felt a bond to the students in the Writers' Room process, the results were very positive. One example of this bond forming, was if a student worked with a certain coach in the room on a previous task, they are more apt to wait for the same coach to be free and work with them on the next question or draft. Another example of this bond forming was given by a coach who rotates classrooms and does not feel connected to any one group of children. Yet, on a social occasion outside of the classroom, a young student in Grade 3 came up to her and discussed what was happening with the piece she was writing. Another time, a student in grade five came up to me and said, "Hello, you worked in the Writers' Room with me the other day." This bond forms as stated Carmola (1994) the success of the mentoring relationship is almost unquestionably accepted; therefore, there is little need to be careful in the pairing of the mentor and the student. Unlike the research of Kram (1985) the focus group members did not identify the stages of the mentoring relationship as initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition; yet indirectly mentioned the change in the relationship over time.

One of the coaches felt a bond formed when working in the same classroom. You became apart of the classroom environment. This bond felt stronger when the teacher had a strong commitment to the program. When the teacher is committed to the program, the

students are more focused on their writing. Bonding does not happen, when the students are not focused on the task. The coaches felt very strongly that everyone being on the same page about the Writers' Room was the important link to the bonding. The teacher was the vital link for this to happen.

The focus group members concurred that the training they received and their role in the classroom did have a positive impact on the writing of the students. This became evident in the physical writing products of the students, as well as the student grasping the idea of the writing process. Once the student began to internalize the writing process, the coaches saw more improvement to the structure of their writing.

The Writers' Room coaches in the focus group identified two strengths of the Writers' Room. The first was the non-judgmental quality and support the student writers received from the program. The coaches are not perceived as a critic of a student's work. The non-judgmental approach includes not criticizing handwriting, grammar or spelling; but provides the opportunity to focus on the content of the writing piece.

The second strength identified was the opportunity to work with a student one-on-one as a writer. The students begin to understand; they are viewed as a writer, and not just looking at a particular piece of writing.

The overall connection the mentors linked to the success of the Writers' Room was the self confidence and the increase in self esteem of student writers. This was perceived as the most significant contribution to the success of the program. Each of the

coach mentors agreed they saw changes in the student work at each grade level. The focus group members felt comfortable drawing conclusions about the efficacy of their work because of the verbal feedback they received from the students and the classroom teachers.

An analysis of the data related to the second research question that was: What components does a writing program need to have to be effective?

The literature related the writing workshop setting is the most effective format for the teaching of writing. The survey results demonstrated student perception of their writing changed as a result of the Writers' Room experience. The results indicated 70% of the students thought their writing had changed. The students stated they thought they were better writers because they had more detail, more creativity, more confidence, better vocabulary and more depth to their writing. Only 2% of the students recognized the coaches specifically, when asked how they were better writers due to this Writers' Room experience but 98% implied they were better writers because of directions and support provided to have more detail, were encouraged and confidence developed, better vocabulary and depth to their writing were from the coaches' suggestions.

The implication of this data was supported in the responses of students to the question that asked them, "If your writing has changed, why do you think your writing has changed?" The students reported 67% of their writing growth was related to the Writers' Room. The subjects reported that 35% of them knew their writing was better

because they were better writers. Of these subjects that reported they were better writers, they substantiated this with responses such as they wrote better sentences, used more detail, learned to edit and had better structure to their writing. Each of these reasons has implications that the writing coach helped them with these sources of growth.

The students also identified the Writers Room as a source of their improvement 8% and specifically 13% of the students cited their writing improved because of the help of the coaches. The students supported the help of the coaches with statements such as, "The coach gave me suggestions such as, instead of saying she said, you could use better words as she pondered or she screamed." Other subjects referred to the editing skills, outlining my thoughts, punctuation and ordering my thoughts. Others responded, "The coaches explained things to me and asked me about what I was saying and made me feel better inside."

This same group had 12% not respond to this question and 17% felt that their writing did not change and 4% of the students were not sure their writing had changed. Of the students who did not feel that their writing had changed, they did not like the fact that they could not always write what they wanted to write about in the Writers' Room program.

The students answering the survey clearly felt if there was a change in their writing. They were able to identify skills in the writing process that they had improved, yet they did not feel the effect of their writing improvement in other academic areas.

Research in this paper supports the growing trend of community partnerships in the school setting. The students and the mentors both recognized the value of the mentor relationship. The mentors viewed their roles as the encouragers, inspires and non judgmental helpers to be better writers. The students who felt growth in their writing also attributed the growth to the encouragement, suggestions and teaching of the mentor coach. Participants in their roles recognized the value of this relationship.

The value of the relationship was a key question both in the survey and the focus group. This relationship became an effective component of the writing process and the responses defining the roles become interconnected. The research questions were:

1. Did the student's writing improve in the Writers' Room setting?
2. Did the role of the mentor/coach have an effect on the writing process?
3. What components does a writing program need to have to be effective?

The focus group members and the students both refer to the mentor as an important piece in this writing process. The mentors felt the connection to the student and the students identified the importance of the role of the mentor in the survey. The analysis of the student work showed improvement in student writing over time, as well as writing samples within the revision process. Evidence of student writing growth was presented in Chapter Four.

The coach/mentor in the Writers' Room program was also highlighted as an important component within the writing process. The focus group members mentioned the value of their role throughout the focus group. Each of these focus group members

went through the same training to be a Writers' Room coach, yet each personalizes their role according to individual perspectives. Throughout the focus group session the subjects stated that their role was important because of the one-to-one relationship. This was valued for the opportunity to encourage, inspire the students to believe in themselves as writers. Some of the statements that connected the role of the coach to the student included; "One of the things I like about working as a Writers' Room coach is watching the kids develop confidence", and "When I am dealing with the students I think my primary goal, my first goal is inspiration." These statements are supported by each of the subjects in the focus group. Self esteem developed by encouragement is an outcome recognized by the coaches of the Writers' Room.

The viewpoints of the varied role descriptors are congruent to the literature. Slicker and Palmer (1993) recognized the carried definitions of mentor and states, "the term mentor historically meant trusted guide and counselor, and the mentoring protégé relationship, a deep meaningful association." Similar to the research presented by Stretch (1994), the structure of the Writers; Workshop is less important than the trust developed in the classroom. Bruce- Crim (1991) also recognized the need for the environment to be safe and predictable in order for the students to be able to take risks.

The research presented in Chapter One has not proven a link between the mentor and the mentee relation to success in school; however, the highlights of the focus group indicate the development of self-confidence in the student developed better writing. The

writing process, in this study is recognized as having a positive influence by the role of the mentor. The subjects in the focus group feel that the role of the mentor helps the students to view themselves as a writer. They help the students take their ideas and organize their thoughts to be put on paper. The encouragement helps them to understand they have a great idea or plan, now they are able to elaborate and put their thoughts in writing. This component actually overlaps the role of the mentor and effective practices in the writing process. The work of Calkins (1986), Graves (1991) and Atwell all describe the teacher as the student conference director. The Writers' Room provides community partnerships in the classroom to allow smaller student ratios.

The students who completed the survey also recognized the role of the mentor/coach in the Writers' Room process. When asked if their writing had changed in the Writers' Room Process, Why? The students recognized they were better writers and many implied the mentors had helped them with more confidence, better mechanical skills and writing structure. Just 13% of the 70% who thought their writing was better actually named the mentor as the reason for better writing skills, yet all the other improvements were indirectly related to the Writers' Room format.

The value of writing is a crucial component of a literacy program in an elementary school. This research supports the writing workshop process and is valuable to educational leaders. There is adequate evidence in this research for curriculum coordinators investigate the writing process as an approach to teach writing, The Data

presented in Chapter Four connects the writing coaches/ mentors as direct links to improved writing. The Writers' Room program uses trained community volunteers, which helps ease budgetary strains. The research in this study supports the writing workshop setting as an effective process for teaching writing. The students in this study worked in the Writers' Room setting that provided trained community volunteers as additional resource to coach writing. This writing coach is a writing mentor in the classroom setting. The Writers' Room program has provided effective writing strategies for grades 3, 4 and 5 in this study. Sample writings showed growth over time for students at each grade level as well as writing growth utilizing the revision process. The students recognize the value of the writing coach and utilize most of the suggestions to improve a piece of writing.

Students recognize the value of this program and the importance of the mentor/coach in this setting. In student surveys, the students both implicitly and explicitly attribute their writing growth to this process. The adults also recognized the value of their role as cited in the focus group findings.

Recommendations

School districts need to be accountable to for the academic growth of all of their students. At this time when fiscal budgets are already strained, it would be prudent for a district top put a program in place utilizing trained community volunteers to help the academic growth of all students. It is recommended this research continue and students

surveyed each year they participate. The longitudinal timeframe would help establish baseline data regarding perceptions about growth in writing as well as actual writing improvement. The longitudinal study will also help to provide long term outcomes of writing. In addition more research could be applied to other settings which include a focus on special education or minority student achievement. School administrators should provide in-service training to the writing process to all teachers and help implement programs in the elementary programs.

Additional research is needed to further establish the effectiveness of the Writers' Room Program as an instructional practice and community partnership. Different student populations should be assesses the procedures and techniques in this approach. Would the results differ in another magnet school setting? Would the results be different if all Language Arts teachers were required to utilize the Writers' Room Program for all their classes? Administrators need to establish ongoing training in the writing workshop practice for all teachers. Since this is not a prepackaged curriculum, teachers need to learn theories which support the Writers' Room Program. Teachers should also have the opportunity for peer observations where The Writers' Room Program run effectively. Administrators should look at the writing goals for each grade level to ensure the goals are aligned with the New Jersey Core Content Standards and school reform models to enhance academic achievement by collaborating with the community.

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APPENDIX A
Letter to Request Study in District

Rand Family School
176 North Fullerton Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042

Joan H. Moriarty, EdS
Principal

March 8, 2002

Dr. Michael Osnato, Superintendent
Montclair Public Schools
22 Valley Road
Montclair, NJ 07042

As a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctorate of Education at Seton Hall University, I am required to conduct and then write a dissertation study. Having completed my course work for the doctoral program at Seton Hall, I would like to have permission to use the work of students in Grades 3, 4 and 5 at Hillside School, Montclair, NJ, to analyze for my dissertation.

This project intends to analyze the use of mentors (writing coaches) and the impact of Writers' Workshop as a process for learning to write at the elementary level. The confidentiality of all subjects and their work will be maintained in this study. The students will not be identified by name at any point in the study. There is no more than minimal risk for participation in this study. This means that the probability of harm or discomfort to a subject are not anticipated to be greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life during Writers' Room time.

The writing of each student has been saved from Writers' Room Program. The writing and all drafts have been saved in a writing portfolio for each student as designed by this writing program. This will include all drafts for a piece of writing from planning to final product. Informed Consent Forms will be returned to the director of the Writers' Room at School. Copies of student work in their portfolios will be made by the director and placed in folders that do not identify the student. As the researcher, I will examine all work to ensure that there are no names written on any piece of student work. Each student will be read an Oral Script that is grade level appropriate to understand it is voluntary for them to approve the use of their portfolios. This script will also ensure the student that they may withdraw their writings from this research at anytime.

The students with Informed Consent Forms will also be asked to complete a survey. This survey is designed to determine their perceptions about writing after taking part in the Writers' Room Program. The surveys will also be confidential and not identified by name for this study.

APPENDIX B
Letter to Request Study in School

**Rand Family School
176 North Fullerton Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042**

**Joan H. Moriarty, EdS
Principal**

March 10, 2002

**Dr. Michael Chiles, Principal
Hillside School
32 Orange Road
Montclair, NJ 07042**

As a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctorate of Education at Seton Hall University, I am required to conduct and then write a dissertation study. Having completed my course work for the doctoral program at Seton Hall, I would like to have permission to use the work of students in Grades 3, 4 and 5 at Hillside School, Montclair, NJ, to analyze for my dissertatio

This project intends to analyze the use of mentors (writing coaches) and the impact of Writers' Workshop as a process for learning to write at the elementary level. The writing of each student is saved in the Writers' Room Program. The writing and all drafts are saved in a writing portfolio for each student, as designed by this writing program. This includes all drafts for a piece of writing from planning to final product. A Letter for Permission will be sent home to each participant's legal guardian in the Writers' Room and Signed Informed Consent Forms from the parents/guardians will be returned to the director of the Writers' Room at Hillside School. Signed Assent forms signed by the students will also be returned to the Director. When the director receives both forms, then the student will be considered a subject in this study. Copies of student work in their portfolios will be made by the researcher (Joan H. Moriarty) and placed in folders that do not identify the student. I will examine all work to ensure that there are no names written on any piece of student work.

The subjects will also be asked to complete a survey. This questionnaire is designed to determine the perceptions of the students about writing after taking part in the Writers' Room Program. The surveys will also be confidential and not identified by name for this study.

Attached please find copies of all letters that will be sent to children, parents and coaches of the Writers' Room involved in this study, as well as a copy of the survey.

Please do not hesitate to call me at 973-509-4255 if you have any questions regarding this study at Hillside School.

Sincerely,

Joan H. Moriarty

APPENDIX C
Letter of Introduction

HILLSIDE SCHOOL

Montclair Public Schools

54 Orange Road - Montclair NJ 07042

Phone (973) 509-4200



Michael J. Chiles
Principal

May 21, 2002

Dear Parents and Caregivers of Hillside:

Joan Moriarty is a fellow colleague and principal of Rand School. She is completing her doctorate and is analyzing the effects of mentoring and the Writers' Room. Your child's class has been selected to represent the growth in writing at their particular grade level. This information could be valuable to continue the funding for the Writers' Room program at the elementary level.

If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to call her at Rand School at 509-4255.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael J. Chiles".

Michael J. Chiles, Sr.

APPENDIX D
Informed Consent Form



SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

Parental Informed Consent Form:

I understand the researcher in this study, Joan H. Moriarty, is a doctoral candidate at Seton Hall University and the purpose of this study is to analyze the role of the coach/mentor in the Writers' Room Project. If my child agrees to participate in this study, I give permission for and acknowledge the following:

I understand the researcher will receive the signed Informed Consent Form and the Assent Script. The researcher then will make a copy my child's writing folder. The copied writing portfolio of my child will be placed in an unnamed folder. The researcher will examine each page in the writing folder to ensure there are no identifiable marks any place in the folder.

I understand the students with completed Informed Consent Forms and Assent Scripts will also be asked to complete a survey. This survey will be about their feelings about their writing. The students will be directed not to write their name anywhere on the survey.

I understand participation in this research is voluntary and my child may withdraw permission to use their portfolio or participate in the survey at anytime during this research. There will be no penalty to my child should they withdraw their portfolio/survey from the study. I have made it very clear to my child that they may withdraw their work from this study at any time this semester.

I understand the confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout this study. The portfolio of my child will be placed in an unnamed folder and all identifiable markings will be masked. I have made the confidentiality and anonymity very clear to my child.

I understand the work of my child will be analyzed for writing growth. Growth in writing is measured by the researcher looking for the development of sentence structure, paragraph development, use of more complex sentences and the student taking a risk with their writing with creative approaches.

I understand the writing portfolios and surveys of all subjects will be placed in a secured locked file cabinet by the researcher in order to protect confidentiality. The master list of students with Informed Consent Forms and Assent Forms will be destroyed.

I understand there is no more than minimal risk for participation in this study. This means that there is no risk of any harm or discomfort to any subject in this study. Participating in the study will be the same as a school day encountered in daily life during Writers' Room time. The researcher is working with data provided by the student and there will be no physical or psychological distress related to this research.

I understand there will be no direct benefits for participating in this study. If you have any questions, please contact Joan H. Moriarty at 973-509-4255.

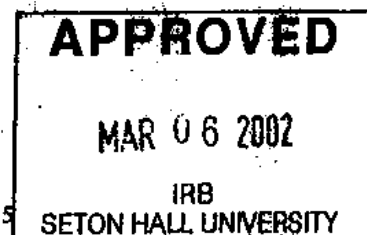
This project has been reviewed and approved by Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached at 973-275-2974.

I have read the material above, and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to have my child's writing portfolio be a part of this study.

If you agree, please sign the following Informed Consent Form and return to the researcher at 176 North Fullerton Avenue, Montclair, NJ 07042.

A copy of this form will be returned to you.

College of Education and Human Services
Department of Educational Administration and Supervision
Tel. 973.761.9397
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685



Parental Informed Consent Form:

If my child agrees to participate in this study then yes, my child _____
may have his/her writing portfolio examined to analyze writing growth.

Name of Child _____

Date _____

Print Name of Parent/Guardian _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____



APPENDIX E
Statement of Assurance

Please Read the Following Assent Script to your child:

Mrs. Moriarty is a student at Seton Hall University. She must complete a project for her Doctoral degree and has chosen to study the Writers' Room program at your school. The reason for the project is see if coaches working in the Writers' Room help to make students better writers.

If you say yes, the researcher would like to use your writing portfolio from the Writers' Room. Your folder will be placed in an unnamed file and the researcher will make sure your name is not anywhere on your papers. The researcher is going to look at your writing to measure the writing growth. There will be no grades assigned to your folder by the researcher and the researcher will not know your name or which folder belongs to you.

If you say yes, the researcher will give you a survey to complete. This will consist of six questions asking you how you feel about your writing and the format of Writers' Room. You may feel free to stop your survey at anytime during this study.

The researcher will keep all your folders and surveys in a locked file cabinet to maintain confidentiality. This means no one will know the name of any student involved in this study.

At no time during this study will you be at risk. This means you will not get hurt or bad things will not happen because you are part of this study. This means that participation in this study will not be any different than any other day at school.

If you say no, you do not have to participate in the study. You may say no ^{IF} you do not want to be in this study now, or at anytime during this semester.

If you have any questions during this study, please do not hesitate to ask your parent/guardian. They may forward any questions you have to the researcher and answers will be given to you as soon as possible.

Remember:

All student work is confidential (no one can talk about it using your name).

You may withdraw your writing folder and survey from this study at anytime.

You may ask any questions you may have about the research and your questions will be answered.

Yes, my parent/ guardian explained the study about the Writers' Room. I understand that this is voluntary and I agree to complete the student survey. I understand I may withdraw my work from this study at anytime this semester.

Name of student _____ Date _____

Signature of Student _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____



APPENDIX F
Adult Subject Letter of Introduction

Dear Writers' Room Coach:

Having completed my course work for the doctoral program at Seton Hall for Educational Administration and Supervision I am gathering data for my doctoral dissertation. This project intends to analyze the use of mentors (writing coaches) and the impact of Writers' Workshop as a process for learning to write at the elementary level.

The mentor/coach role is an integral part of the Writers' Room Project. As part of my study, I would like to run a Focus Group with mentor/coaches which were trained and worked at Hillside School in Grades 3, 4, and 5 during the Spring semester of 2001 and/or Fall 2001. As a mentor/coach, I invite you to participate in a Focus Group.

The confidentiality of all participants will be a priority in this study. The focus group will be audio taped and at no time will any names of persons be identified. The audio-tape will be transcribed, and should a name inadvertently be mention on taped, it will not be transcribed in the written form. A member of the focus group will have the right to review the audiotape and ask for portions to be destroyed before having the tape transcribed.

This Focus Group is voluntary and the identities of all the participants will remain anonymous at all times. Please feel free to withdraw as a participant without prejudice.

The analysis of any data will be part of the qualitative assessment of this study and at no time will any of the identities of the participants be released. The audio - tape will be destroyed after transcription. The transcription will be kept on file in a secured cabinet and maintained for three years by the researcher.

Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions about participation in this group at Rand School 973-509-4255.

Please read and sign the attached Informed Consent Form. There are two forms. One is for you to maintain for your files and one is to be returned to the researcher. Return to Joan Moriarty, 176 North Fullerton Avenue, Montclair, NJ 07042

This project has been reviewed and approved by Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached at 973-275-2974.

Please sign the following form to participate in the Focus Group.

Sincerely,

Joan H. Moriarty

APPENDIX G
Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

Opening Question

What is the purpose of the Writers' Room?

Introductory Questions

What is the role of the coach/mentor within the Writers' Room Program?

What qualities/experience/background help make a good writing coach?

What part of the training provided by the program was important/helpful for you?

Transition Questions

How does students' writing change as they participate in the Writers' Room Program?

Key Questions

As a coach, do you feel a bond or a connection do you feel to student/students that you have worked with in the Writer's Room?

What have you experienced in the Writers' Room Program that supports the value of the coach/mentor relationship? Give specific examples?

What role does the coach play in this writing process?

How does the relationship between the coach/mentor and the student affect student performance in writing?

Ending Questions:

What do you identify as the strength of the design of Writer's Room? What would you change?

Is there any point you would like to add which was not highlighted in this discussion?

APPENDIX H
Student Survey

APPENDIX I
Focus Group Transcripts

MODERATOR: For the first question here today. What do you feel is the goal of the Writers' Room?

SPEAKER: Help the children recognize their potential as writers, in other words stand upon what they have to give in.

SPEAKER: Help from the inside maybe...more direction to answer some questions, or even just to be a cheerleader sometimes. Saying, "Good job," or "You can do it!" or "I like that!" sometimes helps the student's confidence. Reading back what they did helps them hear it and they will say, oh I didn't mean that. They recognize this just by having one on one feedback.

SPEAKER: I think it helps the kids see themselves as writers. It helps them connect writing to just what goes on in the world. What goes on is going to help them see that writing doesn't have to be something that is a task. It can just come and it can flow and it can give them the tools to work on it and structure it. Their ideas that are in their head are something that can be expressed with writing.

SPEAKER: I think it is also a mechanism for teaching strategies to get through writing assignments that they need to do for school, for tests, for whatever. It kind of gives them a neutral person, not their parent. Except of course I must confess I am in one of my daughter's classes. The coach or mentor is not their parent and not their teacher. The coach or mentor gives the student a non-judgmental opinion to give them some strategies to help them get through the assignments. So they can get to the point of being good readers and writers. They will not get stuck on, "How do we do this?"

SPEAKER: I think it often gives them one on one attention in public schools, considering there are so many teachers in the system. I think it is vital that writers

(inaudible) because it sort of personalizes the writing for the student. I think a lot of things can be overlooked if teachers request to do it on its own (inaudible) by themselves.

SPEAKER: One of the things that I like about working as a Writers' Room coach is watching the kids develop confidence. I think it extends to more than just their writing. I certainly would never have done this when I was a student. But even in middle school where kids maybe are feeling a little self-conscious, after they have been working with a coach, and they do some revisions, they are so excited to get up and read their writing to the class and sharing it with one another. I think that a couple would do that anyway because they probably right from the beginning, but I was working in the class yesterday and I saw some kids who weren't so proud of their initial draft become quite proud when they do the revision and then (inaudible). So, I think that that kind of confidence that you can develop by working one on one with the kids and by teaching them the structure of writing and revising does develop a sense of confidence that they can take with them in everything they do.

SPEAKER: I also really like the fact that it (Writers' Room) focuses on the content and not or at least initially on the content...because I think teachers tend to have a very hard time not editing basically doing all the corrections when they look at papers. They really just have to look at the spelling and the structure of the sentences and that kind of thing. Which I know is important and especially in middle school at the end of the writing but I think its...I really like being able to talk to the kids about their ideas and how they are getting their ideas down on paper and how they are working with their ideas. Just let them know that is what real writers do, they just get their ideas down on paper and much later in the process that they actually work on the spelling, the grammar and all that.

SPEAKER: Right. I agree. That is the most fun part is working on the content but then when you do go to work on organization. It makes organization almost more fun because it is in the context of making the content work clear.

SPEAKER: And there is something to work with. Sometimes if you don't let them get their ideas out...organized...and if they are so focused on their spelling and their...some children have problems with that. Sometimes you do have to ask them, "Would you read this to me?" They have not a clue of what some of the words are. But when they start elaborating, they have an idea and you can get them to expand.

SPEAKER: I heard from a number of responses too...you focused on what the Writers' Room does for the students who are involved in the program. But indirectly you have also in some way made reference to what it does for the teachers and the curriculum. Because I think it does give the teachers support for a writing workshop kind of atmosphere in the classroom. That is very difficult, not necessarily impossible but very difficult to do without that extra help, without other people there to respond to the student's writing.

MODERATOR: Okay. We move on. What is the role of the coach mentor in this writing process? What is your interpretation of the process? How it works and why it works?

SPEAKER: When I am dealing with the students I think my primary goal, my first goal, is inspiration. I read it and I try to...I love your workshop and how to define the positive...self esteem booster and so then I put the students, particularly with 5th grade students, I find they are more open and they are ready to go...where middle school I feel like it takes longer at least my experience with middle school, it takes a little longer. And

then after that you extend the role of more of what like the teacher's role is, to help the student organize their writing. But the first goal, I think, is inspiration.

SPEAKER: I don't agree with that. This is my first year doing it and I am in the 4th grade so a lot of what we see is that at the very early stages of anything. I mean some of the kids come over they have two lines written. And I take a little while to say...to get out of the mode of taking the whole essay and helping them, organizing and do all those things and you have to sort of come from a different perspective and say this kid just needs to get going and sometimes you know there are 20 of them and you are sitting at your desk and the teacher can't talk to each of them so you see some of these kids are just ...and they think that maybe they're bored to come see a coach and they come over and they don't really have much. So it is not really helping them with their writing, it is helping them just get moving and saying okay now go back and just do this piece of it and come back. I think that that helps and it goes back to the one on one and gives them a little confidence. It is all kind of connected.

SPEAKER: So what you are saying is that what you are doing is helping them pull out the ideas that are in their heads but haven't quite figured out how to get them on paper.

SPEAKER: Exactly. And again my experience at the moment is with 4th grade. They also don't really want to write them. Even my daughter, she has great ideas but taking a pencil to the paper and some of the boys, taking the pencil to the paper, the physical act of doing it, they don't really want to do. They see it as this massive task in front of them. So part of it is getting them to say...just giving them in bite size pieces to say, you know, do a quick little outline and then we take the next step. Just make a couple of notes and

then come back and we can talk about it. This strategy can't get from the teacher all the time because there are too many students and there is only one teacher.

SPEAKER: Which leads to another question because 4th graders just started Writers' Room this year. Is it too late to for doing some kind of learning because they are looking at this learning as a task?

SPEAKER: I am working with 3rd grade this year and I had done 5th grade, which was my favorite. I haven't been in (inaudible) school yet (inaudible). However, it is a dramatic difference from the 3rd to the 5th. With 5th grade being a little bit more involved in their writing...they would come to you with stuff that you can expand on. I see with the 3rd graders...you see some kids put their head down on the desk...it does free up the teacher to go work with them could you give a list of some names. Sometimes I find with the young ones you...what I did...and I asked the teacher...I wrote down there I guess, they told me. Wow! This is good and so it made them say look what I have here and then maybe you can put that in a letter or you are getting middle edge. You can make it less daunting to them because you can say, "Look you have something." So some kid who was just, head down on the desk, is now at least is sitting up writing over one thing, which was on the paper. But often they can elaborate and it gets them going.

SPEAKER: It is an interesting comment because actually the idea of composition writing from the very beginning, we have construed to mean that it should take place in the head and the beginning of writing takes place in head. So what you are talking about is your role of getting what maybe in their out in the form of ...

SPEAKER: Every 3rd or 4th grader...every child I have ever worked with had something to say. You practically never come in contact with someone who goes 'I have no ideas, I

have nothing to say'. Or if they do and you ask them a few questions they did have something to say but there is always especially the 3rd graders...but sometimes occasionally even with an older student that difficulty of putting it on paper. (Inaudible) you know I would write down and I'd say well tell me what you wanted to say and they would say and I would write it for them and we would two, three, four sentences like that and then I'd say okay read this back and they would say, "Oh that's great!" The students then get excited and then they would want to do more. This is for the younger grades. You can't really do that for an 8th grader.

SPEAKER: A lot of what you learned in 6 weeks of training you can't really do with some of the younger kids. Because they don't have anything yet, they don't have anything written so you can't really help them organize it.

SPEAKER: That is true. A lot of our training is focused on looking at completed pieces.

SPEAKER: Absolutely.

SPEAKER: And completing pieces and responding to it by an awful lot of what you actually do at every grade level and this happens even at the high school. Many times we need to sit down with a student who is just getting started. For example, when an assignment has just been handed out and they are looking to help them get those first ideas.

SPEAKER: There are a lot of times in class, before a writing assignment begins, the class will discuss it. If they present it as a topic in 7th or 8th grade, they will discuss what is the pro side that you could argue...what is the con side that you can argue...what side do you want to choose. And they talk it all out. But then it is time to start writing and there are always those who forget everything that was said or didn't like any of those

ideas or thought everyone else is going to use all those ideas and they will want to do something different so it is helpful at that point to sit down and have another conversation and then I say (inaudible) this. And they have their ideas. So to have somebody that they can do that with I think gets them started when otherwise they probably wouldn't have started.

SPEAKER: But you have also mentioned this idea of transcription is one of the reasons why this can...your mentoring coaching approach can work with Special Ed students and has frequent success and also bilingual students. This is because you are taking some of the burden out of putting those words on paper by transcribing the conversation.

SPEAKER: One of the things...you kind of asked two questions...one of them was about a role and one thing I have been using a lot is saying even with...both with the middle school and even with the 5th graders I have been working with...is saying this is how I am looking at your papers as a reader. Just getting the idea that it is not just that they have to write this down for an assignment but what we are trying to do is writing so somebody can read it and share your ideas or understand you ideas...so I see my role a lot as kind of taking them to that step and saying as a reader when I look at this you know this is a good idea I want to know more...can you tell me even more about this. Just kind of putting it through those eyes has the student understand their writing must be clear. Many times you hear them say, "Oh! Somebody is reading this." You know they make the connection between just what they have to do and having somebody translating their ideas to somebody else.

And the other question asks about...are we too late? We are never too late. But you know, I really feel like especially in elementary it is a little frustrating because I

would like to see not necessarily Writers' Room itself, but some of these ideas starting much earlier on. One problem I have had in the 5th grade is where the ideas come from for the writing topics. It seems like what we are doing a lot...what the teachers are doing a lot is assigning not just props but saying okay you write a descriptive paragraph about the otter or you will write a paragraph about this ...and a lot of the kids...it is just not what they want to write about. I would like the idea of starting out writing in writing journals, getting their own ideas. They can start a journal very young. If we start this strategy early on, by the time they got to 3rd, 4th, 5th grade they would have the idea already that they jot down things and get ideas to write. I would just like them not thinking of it as a chore, but seeing writing as something that they can express themselves. Then they are going to learn how to do description and how to do an opinion piece and all that. But I think the idea of starting their own writing journals very early on can have an impact on their writing.

SPEAKER: I think it is a great idea.

SPEAKER: The comments made earlier about the effects the Writers' Room has on teaching and curriculum. I think that this is a very good example. Our role officially is not to make decisions about what happens in the classroom. But what has happened in the middle schools and in the high school, where the program has been running the longest is that the teachers and the Writers' Room people start to work very collaboratively. So a teacher would often come in and talk to the Writers' Room folks and say, "You know I am really concerned, I think we need to get these kids started writing and in a less stressful kinds of conditions...what ideas do you have?" At that point I know that is something a Writers' Room director might say, "How about having them just keep

journals and they can do some real low stake stuff and not worry about being reiterated and having to revise but just for practice.” Teachers from the high school come in and ask gentlemen Sandy to back their assignments or help them plan how much time should be allowed for each stage, in order build the appropriate amount of time for revision and so on. So that does kind of develop more naturally out of the fact that the Writer’s Room is there even though the Writers’ Room isn’t officially a group that makes up assignments or decides what is going to be taught.

SPEAKER: I think that’s very important because I have seen some of the most successful writing assignments come out of the Writers’ Room person in the school’s idea. We are just finishing up at Glenfield in 6th grade right now where...it was Robert’s idea but it was really Jackson who wrote the story that has a very twisted ending. No it’s Charley. Which is perfect, it is suited to 6th graders of almost every reading level. And they took that story and she asked them to continue it. They did it in one class for one house, which was our class, and the kids loved it so much they took it to the other house and just did it in five classes there and the kids love it. So, that was something that was her idea and she thought as a teacher that I think the kids might enjoy it this, let’s just do it and they tested it and it was enormously successful and because it is so much fun to write endings to a story the kids have been very willing to take their revisions to quite some length. In terms of getting them to organize, it was actually a dialogue assignment where the purpose was to write dialogue so that they would learn where the quotation marks go and the fact that each one is a new student. So, there was a whole organizational content to it too, as well as a dramatical side. But the kids didn’t really

notice that in their deal to do the content. So I think that was a perfect example of the Writers' Room person bringing something that served all the purposes of writing.

MODERATOR: What type of training or professional development do you feel is needed to be a writing coach?

SPEAKER: I think you have to look at the different grade levels that we have talked about. I have gone to the training with Carol and I thought it was great, but I definitely would have addressed a little bit with the younger kids. We have actually come up with some strategies. For example, you know how you are not supposed to write on their paper, which, with the younger kids sometimes is really difficult because they don't want to write on their paper and it is hard to...you know...you don't want to take that little form and have this laundry list of items for them to check. So the director came up with this idea of using colored, like little tiny post-its but like the small ones. Some of these kids go away with 7 of them on their page but then they remember where to add that information, where to check information or something like that. And then they bring them back which is really...they take them off and bring them back. You can't believe it! But it is good because it shows that they took that and did something with that and brought it back as opposed to the sheets which it is hard to do that on those sheets...its writing that really isn't there yet. So, this kind of technique helps. I think if there is a way to adjust the training (it may not work for everybody) but if you are going to be working in the elementary school it is directed towards some of those strategies.

SPEAKER: One of the reasons we kept the amount of coaching training to a certain length is because we heard over and over again that if I thought it was going to be 10 weeks...I would have...

SPEAKER: I think you have had more people in the past but I don't know where the balance is.

SPEAKER: We have to do the analysis training and the paper training. We have always wanted to have a bona fide extension once you are actually in the classroom and that would be great because we could find out how you would suggest that further training could be done and how many people would be interested.

SPEAKER: First of all, I think the initial training was really important because it really works because it's within the structure. I think that the thing is that all the coaches are very competent, intelligent, professional people and would like to work with kids on writing. In fact, the training gave us this structure to coach or mentor writing. The consistency and working with the teachers and they know what they are doing. But I think it is very important to have that idea that first you get them the strength that they are doing and then you build from that in a certain way. We are really teaching them and coaching them in this end in a certain framework. That makes perfect sense. I also think that six weeks, I think it is good because it makes you feel like you are training and its not just like a one week thing that anybody can find time to do it and once you get to that you are more willing to....I think that it might be a good idea to have afterwards maybe within a school, I know it is always hard to get people together that a couple sessions, almost debriefing sessions because first I love ideally to get to talk to the director afterwards but that just doesn't happen a lot because she has to go on to another class or everybody has to run.

SPEAKER: Where people could offer things that like Ann about writing in with the little post-its or different things....

SPEAKER: All of the elementary schools when we were doing the pilot program because Carol is part of the pilot. At the end of every class or every day we were doing, she would always talk about the class experience. Going from school to school, the schools are different, but their approaches are similar. We would talk about what worked or didn't work within that school...if we utilized that process I think it would be great.

SPEAKER: I just find it great when I met with the director after I tried to meet with her after the class just quickly, we would talk on the front steps of the building or something like that.

SPEAKER: Or we would have to go into another classroom.

SPEAKER: I think we came up with some ideas after we were doing the pilot program because you were moving together and it's hard in that case to just stand in the hall outside of the school and talk about it. But I know that would have been very helpful to me when I was in School A. When I was in School B earlier on, where I came in to an already existing program and in the past we had once or twice a year, more recently within once a year...a retreat in which we would get together as many of the coaches as possible at the Van Vleck for usually a Saturday—all day. It's been in January—we have tried a number of different months. One problem is getting the time – getting the Van Vleck. The other problem is getting the money because the Van Vleck does not come free of charge. And no matter what date we choose, there are going to be people who can't make it. But it would be good maybe within the building maybe within each group of coaches.

SPEAKER: And you know what, I mean I know...a group like with just to talk...not a focus group but coaches talking about what's happening with Writers' Room.

SPEAKER: Yes. What we can do not even...in addition to the enormous questionnaire that the responses to the questionnaire were very helpful and they did modify some of the training especially the middle school/high school level in response to that questionnaire because...

SPEAKER: Maybe she would have them back next week or something...

SPEAKER: And then there are those who will ask me about the basic training too.

SPEAKER: One of the things that the training at least initially focused on the very first night was to say that we were going to be helpful to the kids because we are readers not because we are writers. I am, frankly, a horrible writer, but I love to read and I think that as Participant A was saying before, when we explain to the kids how the readers sees in their piece, they're a better reader understood from that sentence as opposed to what they thought they were conveying in that sentence. We bring a lot of value, because they are like oh! That is what I meant to say! And then they become aware of the fact that their writing has an impact on the reader.

SPEAKER: I would still think that the training for the teacher's is really key factor.

Because I don't know exactly what training they go through. I think they go through something but I find that connection between the coach and the teacher is really important and I think that maybe the teachers need more training than they have. I really don't know. They really need to understand what we are told to do, and what we expect to do and our goal is to allow this time...it doesn't work unless the teacher understands that understanding is part of it too and its is going to explain to the kids – I am not 100%. I should really come in when it starts because I am trying to take away from my job and

trying to just be there. So I should really come in right at 10 when it starts and one of the things I thought to myself every single week is I wonder what these kids were told.

SPEAKER: Make sure to have a coach check your paper. (Everyone speaking at once)

This is the first year to have the coach check your paper.

SPEAKER: Even in 4th grade I think they can understand... they need to understand what it is they are there for because I think what happens is a lot of these kids view this as an opportunity to write their name on the board and then have one of us call them which takes them up from their desk working on this paper and so they come to us with not very much which puts the coach in a kind of awkward position of...I don't want to not help them, ya know and just sort of send them back because that is not really going to help the situation. But you also don't want to do it for them and give them the idea that they are going to write down. So I think if the kids understand...

SPEAKER: Part of what it was about is...could they all just do the paper with the same story.

SPEAKER: This is kind of related to your question about what is your understanding in the writing process. Our experience has been what ideally the teachers in their professional development go through almost exactly the same training that you do to become a coach. We think it is important that they understand the base you're coming from and so that they have confidence in what you are doing, and you are speaking with the same language. Otherwise, you can manage the situations where the teacher's language is so different about writing from the coaches that the kids are getting really mixed messages. It has been hard to train all staff members because there has been a lot of turnover in staff, because we have taken on new schools, and because it costs money to

provide this for the teachers. Not only to pay whoever is going to do so much, but to pay the teachers. We have been very limited on how many teachers we can work with. It is actually less of a problem right now in the elementary schools because we did have some money last year than it is in the middle schools and the high school. But yes, I think you identified exactly why it's the staff development, now as we go into new districts tell people we have been working with that the first thing that has to happen is the professional development but without that not only do you get these mixed messages in the classroom, you get teachers who simply are...developed such an anxiety about having coaches in the classroom because of trust and confidence issues and all those other really important things but they will be resistant.

SPEAKER: I just have one term to add to what Participant B was talking about and others. The reason that we need the language of the reader is it based on an actual educational theory called Readers Response Mechanism or Readers Response Theory. And we use it because it works. And it also takes away the guess work.

SPEAKER: And the children will approach you. Are you a writer? A lot of children will challenge you. And you say no I am a reader.

SPEAKER: It is a good point to make for other coaches too because in fact we do have a number of coaches who are professional writers and sometimes people coming in get worried that they can't do the job because they are not writers but actually probably the majority of our coaches are not professional writers.

MODERATOR: What do you feel happens to the writing structure of students as they participate in the Writers' Room?

SPEAKER: You mean what the structure of what they write?

SPEAKER: Yes. The structure of what they write.

SPEAKER: They write more complex sentences. They do. Longer and more descriptive and they put more words into it. They are more willing to take a risk in writing more complicated thoughts and in using a higher level of vocabulary. Because they are not afraid to use the word...we can correct it.

SPEAKER: I think they also learn to kind of internalize the strategy so that as they are writing, they almost start to think about the things that we have said.

SPEAKER: They (inaudible) kind of strategies going.

SPEAKER: Right. But they start to realize I can't just write – I am thankful for my mother period. They start to think to themselves...I saw some kids do this last week when they had to write a paragraph about what they are thankful for. They said, "I know I didn't add enough to this yet"...they start to get a sense of what is going to make this...but it is an outsider saying it, not their mother or their teacher saying it, and I think that that is...

SPEAKER: I think they are internalizing it and that is what they really want.

SPEAKER: Right.

SPEAKER: They are doing it on their own. They can do it independently.

SPEAKER: I used to feel so bad when a kid comes up...(inaudible).

SPEAKER: Exactly.

SPEAKER: I can't speak for elementary school but the middle school and the high school I see kids not only elaborating and writing more but getting a better sense of organization and that is partly because they are writing more and the minute you have more on the page you have to start thinking about what constitutes a paragraph and how

is it organized and does it have a main idea and are all the rest of the sentences in that paragraph connected to the main idea and so on. So they start to develop some sense of not only paragraph organization but the organization of the whole piece of writing from one paragraph to another and I think that probably begins in 4th and 5th grade but I am not sure how much of it you're seeing.

SPEAKER: Someone made a comment participant ABC team (laughter). That some students you work with...I think many of them realize...begin to realize that the task or the work of writing is putting stuff down and you deal with it. You have to get some base line and then you revise. Revision is always the key. What you are talking about is the willingness that is sort of built in this of ...I have this now I change it, now I add to it.

SPEAKER: This could never have been done before the invention of the word processor...in elementary school and middle school. Now all the kids have access to computers at the school, or at home or both. They are unafraid now.

SPEAKER: Except in the lower grades here. I think they are still...they like to come home. I know my daughter would much prefer to go home and type it but I know in school that is a big part of their heads you know they don't want it...we wrote this thing.

SPEAKER: What about these kids who don't want...they just write it and they say I am done and they don't want to revise it. But you know I see part of writer's room as that is just expected...I mean that is just...we start from the beginning saying this is what writer's do...writer's put down ideas and then they revise. So there is not even a question that there going to revise and it is not a matter that is not being good so I have seen that change in kids in the structure that they are more used to the idea that revision is part of the process and it doesn't mean that they made a mistake so it is not good.

SPEAKER: So that is a bad thing.

SPEAKER: And the more that you do that, the better off you are.

SPEAKER: By the time they're in 7th grade they are so accustomed to doing this. One of the School C teachers told us a few weeks ago that when her 7th graders took the Terra Nova she didn't do any special preparation for it. They had been working on writing all along and there is an 8th grade test that the state gives. They were so excited that they were asked to write on the test, that they all wanted more paper. The test itself did not provide enough space for all they had to say and they just thought it was fun.

SPEAKER: Actually that happened on one of our student's ESPA test, they needed to add more.

MODERATOR: Key question: As a coach, do you feel a bond or a connection to the students that you have worked with in the Writers' Room?

SPEAKER: I haven't done this in the past but this year I made a commitment to coming out on Friday every week. And I really see the difference and the kids are... everyone is just growing...I am growing as a coach. I am formatting...I don't like those sheets either. I realize. I have a voice system which I didn't say anything about before. I think the more frequent...keep consistent about going into the same class weekly, I think that is much more beneficial for the coach and more importantly to the students.

SPEAKER: Oh! Definitely! And I think the kids get to know the coaches that they know in their class. But the kids know and they get a sense of which coach responds which way and it is funny because they have their names on the board and they can see who is next and some of them will sometimes...you know if they saw Dorothy last time they may wait until she is free. So I think that is definitely happening.

SPEAKER: I don't know whether its consistency I am counting with 3rd grade, which we rotate. So I am not being seen in the same class. And it's all (inaudible) for me.

Because different teachers have different thoughts and the kids are so different—3rd grade is so different and it's a little awkward but I do see there are some kids who are just...their personality is such as—I actually went to a dance class with my own child and one little girl said...she was going on about her writing with me she was saying I saw her in the writing room the other day...she was like my God, look!

SPEAKER: That happened to me in the 5th grade from last year and I was in there like twice and the kid came up to me and said you were in the writer's room two weeks ago. And I was like Wow!

SPEAKER: I think even though I started doing that too at random I'd come every week and it is a little harder to do in the middle schools somehow because schedules change with kids. But I found that even if we are with them once I think just that with kids on individual basis they really, really like it. You know at elementary school they really like it but when they are in middle school they like it. They are always looking for somebody to pay attention, because their parents don't pay enough attention (laughter). So, I think that it is really great to have the consistency, but even if you don't I think it is beneficial that you can bond with the kids even in those few minutes.

SPEAKER: So based on hearing these specific examples you are giving is the perks, the value of the coach in the Writers' Room program that will be so valued in the process.

SPEAKER: There are so many...I don't know what is happening at the high school is relevant to what you are looking at but an interesting thing has happened there. A few years ago I began training Juniors and Seniors to work with the 9th graders and most of

the kids, in fact I have to say, all of the kids who volunteered to become student coaches volunteered because they had a really good experience when they were in middle school and 9th grade working with coaches and it draws them back into the writer's room. They want to be there in the part of that community. And a lot of informal mentoring goes on and of course when it time for them to write the college essay's there they are and that becomes a really important part of their lives. They start to think of themselves as part of this community of writers and writing coaches.

SPEAKER: It is kind of like the Book Buddy Program)...a little bit. A totally different topic, but the same kind of thing that they really love being with the older kids and then the older ones they really love being with the younger students.

SPEAKER: I do think in the in the middle school I see this more...the teacher can actually...its important there too because it is the teacher...I have been to some classes where the kids are just not focused and I think part of that is the atmosphere that the teacher's have up. Because if the kids are not focused and they are talking among each other it is hard coming up and trying to talk to them...I am not getting that bonding, that individual. I think there is something that the classroom atmosphere that is important to that too and...

SPEAKER: The more structured the teacher the better it looks.

SPEAKER: Well, the more the teacher understands the bonding will end up happening.

SPEAKER: This goes back to the whole conversation of everybody having the same background to come here—meeting, whatever.

SPEAKER: Being on the same page, exactly.

SPEAKER: Many teachers, as they introduce the coaches to the students and telling them why these coaches are there and what they expect of the relationship of the coaches and the students. That is crucial. Really, the teacher's role is partly to legitimize the coaches and say, "You know you are not just going to sit here and wait for your teacher, I want you to work with the coach because this is important and I want to see what the coach does with you...It is not just about what I do with you".

SPEAKER: So the relationship of the coach and mentor with the student...how do you feel that relationship affects the process?

SPEAKER: I see. Even when the students don't know us that well, they are often willing to take our suggestions but you can go further than your suggestions can be...you just have more fun and you can go further once you know the student a little bit. Especially when doing things like poetry. I mean an essay anybody can do in a sense...when you get into writing things like poetry, if you know the student you really can really get them going. I had some great experiences with last year in the 5th grade working with students that I knew on poetry because...talk about writing poetry...I really can't blame them...I don't know anything about writing poetry but we came up with some things that just astounded us because there was a lot of trust and friendship.

MODERATOR: What would you identify as the strength of the design of the Writers' Room?

SPEAKER: I think it is the non-judgmental quality and the support quality. You don't write on there paper. You are not editing for them. You are trying to get them to edit themselves. You are not the critic, perhaps. Maybe the teacher perhaps is the viewed as the critic. You know, they are handing in their work that she is going to critique it and

grade it. You are just trying to help them by giving them ideas, or helping them to edit their writing. You are generally a cheerleader. Generally non-judgmental to their handwriting, to their grammar, to their spelling and you are just there to focus on their content. Trying to get a (inaudible) out of the end when they say...when you say to them like you know you really need to look at your...your teacher is going to look at this and say, "I can't read this because you have to spell (inaudible) because you have a lot to say here, so why don't you...."

SPEAKER: Things like this...and you can say it like that. You have a lot to say like, "Why don't you check your spelling?" But you generally do that later, you do it later in the process. It just taught me a personal thing to do on your own time. Judgmental—you know when your child is doing an assignment and she is like, "Mom, will you read this?" Initially, your first reaction would have been before I started...I can't read it, your work is sloppy, or your work is careless. Now I take a breath and sit back and read what she said and then say, "not bad you need to edit this" and you know maybe you want to get your dictionary out and take a look at something and you know that kind of thing. But it makes you put things in a different order, which I think it makes the child a lot more respected to it. When you put the critical things...put criticism at the bottom.

MODERATOR: May I ask each participant to summarize what the participant said earlier about program strengths?

SPEAKER: Oh, right. Well, the strengths I think the strength is working one on one with them and then we are only there to care about them as a writer. We are not looking just at this piece. We are not looking at this piece and saying is this piece an A or a B or

is does this piece cut it or not cut it. We are there to look at this child as a writer (end of side A).

SPEAKER: It is a wonderful day to listen to you all.

SPEAKER: Me too. I have had...

SPEAKER: I have to say that last year at School D, it was the beginning of the best time of the Writers' Room. I just think that it has worked here so much better than it had worked anywhere else. I have been a writer's coach and for a lot of reasons. Part of it is because all of the teachers really work for it, and they were focused and they knew what they wanted to do. When we came in it was so well organized. They are so used to having volunteers and they are very comfortable...Students are very comfortable.

SPEAKER: We were able to set up a definite day where you came in the same time every week. So it was weekly, working with the same students. When did it finally start? It began in the second half of the year. It was so extraordinary. And I think all of us just had a good time.

SPEAKER: Another big piece of that is to give credit where it is really due is the principal.

SPEAKER: Not just Principal A, but certainly your staff. But in other schools where I work, we are really successful based of a principal who led the way, and sends a very clear message to the teaching staff. That this is a program I support and I hope you all learn how to do this and I just think it is going to be an important part of the culture of our school.

MODERATOR: Is there any part of the design you would change to the Writers' Room project?

SPEAKER: I would change the correction sheets, I like the little stickies. I have one for the spelling and one for content and then I have another one for structure format.

SPEAKER: The sheets are a little open-ended, when you're in the training it seems very clear. You understand the writing and you all talk about writing the structure, very clear, but when the child is sitting across the table from you it is very, very different.

SPEAKER: Especially if you are not looking at it.

SPEAKER: Yeah. If you are looking at something...nothing really, it is very difficult.

SPEAKER: Yeah. You can't keep writing.

SPEAKER: Off to a great start, you know. It is not really giving them anything. It is like you know, when you create stuff that really isn't that good because it doesn't have any sense of what really is good. So, maybe just in the younger grades we need to adjust training. Maybe they are seeing it there because we are here.

SPEAKER: I have to say that I like having freedom. It doesn't have to be exactly like that but I like to start recovering the (inaudible). I think it is really important to have the copy. It is really, really crucial because for the program I think the director needs to be able to work with what the coaches are saying and make sure that everybody is kind of listed or not listed here. Not what they are saying but how they are saying it.

SPEAKER: Also, I just really haven't had problems with them because I like it being open ended. So, I am in a real habit and I will write sometimes when I am talking or even if I am finished with them, I will sit for a few more minutes and take two minutes write it out and then I'll always go over it with them to make sure they can read my

writing but I really like that they have something that they can look at. Sometimes I think it (inaudible) especially with the arrows where you...I don't know to me the open endedness of it gets to the point. Explains (inaudible) anything about, you know, I like this word that you used, I like, whatever. And then...I could put anything like here are some things we talked about how to get your ideas out. Just to remind them that you need to kind of lay your thing on and then go back and look at it. I also think the idea of having the coach writing is a model. So I think the stickies are good too I just think you need that copy.

SPEAKER: We need the record keeping. The last group came around and demonstrates before and after.

SPEAKER: I think that quality control thing is important too. The director side is to handle...

SPEAKER: Combination maybe when we use the Post-its you need to kind of transcribe what we put on the stickies onto the form as a record.

SPEAKER: What I am hearing is that there is some need at least at the elementary level and I think it is probably true for all levels to work on what...when you respond to papers in a training session it is very, very different from responding to a kid right there in the classroom and it is something that we actually goes into the training because we are not in the classroom but it should be part of that initial period in you classroom experience the first four weeks that we call an internship. Maybe we need to be paying more attention then and come up with some specific suggestions that we can with you for how to deal with conferencing and making a written record at the same time.

SPEAKER: Formatting.

SPEAKER: But the sheets are also used in the middle school. There are a lot of times the kids do their first draft and the coaches read them up front of the classroom. We read all first drafts and we comment on each one and put a copy in a folder. And then we go back afterwards to do the revisions with the students for their second draft and they'll have...any coach could have written it but when I work with the student I see what the other coach wrote. But I do sometimes say in paragraph 3 you know...How can I tell this kid what they need to do is here.

SPEAKER: I saw a 3rd grader ask all about instruction.

SPEAKER: You sometimes create a big reading problem.

SPEAKER: Exactly. They don't always know what to do with that yellow, you know, at the younger grades. Maybe it is a combination of some not keeping track of it, but somehow not.

SPEAKER: I have been in the 3rd grade the last few times I have worked with them.

SPEAKER: For record keeping and what not.

SPEAKER: Pictures that you can check which one.

SPEAKER: For that question, and this just comes back to what I said before. I find it a little bit frustrating to see that the assignment but the method of assigning of what they are going to write about. I think that is something I would like to see worked on somehow between the teachers and the...

SPEAKER: That has to happen.

SPEAKER: Some kind of professional development.

MODERATOR: Is there any other thing you would like to add about Writers' Room that you didn't add while talking?

SPEAKER: I have two comments. And again this may be more for 3rd grade I don't know. I think there is a real fine line between being writers in poetry and putting ideas in their head. I think that it is important to make sure coaches realize that because that is homework. It is really easy when you are helping a kid and it is like 8:00 and you had it and the kids are like fine whatever. In the Writers' Room sometimes there are kids that are unclear about topic and this is what I have the same issues about the topics and that is how this kind of came up but this is what they want to write and at some point teachers and parents and the coaches need to say okay. There is nothing wrong with it you know they just want to experiment with something to write but that is what that child is doing. And if we put five other ideas in their heads so that it expands that really doesn't tell anybody what they felt they were ready to hand in.

And the other comment is I am wondering if anybody has ever spoken to the children in any organized way about what they think. Because I know my daughter has...I don't work with her but...ya know we are not allowed to do that but I know that she has asked me several times, "do I have to do what the coach says?" or...I don't exactly know how I am going to look at it with her. I am not sure what the coach has suggested so I am just wondering how the kids feel about it. Maybe we are missing something that could make it a lot better.

SPEAKER: What some teachers say and I think this can be said what I think about that...is you don't have to do exactly what the coach suggests but if the coach asks a question or makes a suggestion that is because there is something that is not clear or something that you need to say more about...so you may not choose to add the thing that

the coach suggests but you need to probably to something with that sentence or that paragraph because you are not getting through to your reader.

SPEAKER: Just now about reading the writing and when they talk about concern with writer's, the first thing they do is ask the kids talk to me about your writing and that to piece (inaudible) and I don't know the different kinds of things we are doing, different goals. But I am just wondering if that maybe in the next phase of Writers' Room as Writers' Room grows and improves maybe that is something. Because I feel a little bit like I am coming in and I am looking at that paper and I am telling them. I feel that a little. So that is one of my questions about writer's room is do we want to teach the kids a little more to talk about their writing.

SPEAKER: Some of the teachers do that. There are varied communications school to school...About what happens in the writing workshop? But the teacher 6th grade on up who would ask the kids to reflect on either their individual piece or on in process and so you will get a paper that comes to you and a kid who has already indicated what the coach did or something on top of the page. This is what I don't get on this piece of writing, this is what I would like help with.

SPEAKER: What you are talking about is writer's class. The child writer being aware of their own class. It absolutely should be there but it needs to come...it has to be a negotiation between language of the teacher and the language of the coach on that issue.

SPEAKER: And actually it (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Because it would also make them like they are a part of the process and that would make them even like it more.

SPEAKER: An idea that may follow eventually, I think we need to go in with the (inaudible) to save a space for the writer's coach put away from the class so you can establish guidelines. Especially middle school because the kids don't talk about their writing and they don't (inaudible) and sometimes when you start talking then everybody else starts talking. It is really crucial to provide a space for a coach somewhere away from the class. Sometimes when you're working where their desks are like four desks together and your working with one. Everybody has a comment on exactly what is going on.

SPEAKER: Particularly with writing because right now with 3rd grade the (inaudible) putting the table with the child.

SPEAKER: Everyone speaking at once.

SPEAKER: Sometimes how it works can be important to the kid and we do get into discussions with the other kids about (inaudible).

SPEAKER: I have one comment that again one of the other groups mentioned it. We have a few what we call the 7th man, the 10th man, the 12th man, depending on how many (inaudible) training (laughter). And one was called, "look at what the writer means not what the paper means" and that is really what you have all been saying. It is a very key element. It is interesting also to hear that...my question would be how could you keep these suggestions going and create...add to the program...I mean we would have to think of some way to get...

SPEAKER: That is definitely a design question. That has to be built in someplace where exchange and review differences.

APPENDIX J
Student Writing

The Golden Ticket

One day I was born a rain drop. I had a younger brother named Stefan, a mom named Bridget, and a dad named Todd. I've always wished that I could come down from this cloud and see the earth below. I couldn't just go down there whenever I wanted to, I needed a Golden Ticket and it costs \$1,000.00.

I was 14 years old when I got a job at my dad's toy shop, "Mr. Smith's Toys", I got \$200.00 a month. I worked hard at that toy shop, because I helped my dad make those toys for 5 whole months. Finally, my last day at work came, so I locked up the shop and ran across the street. I opened the door to the ticket shop and there it was, just lying there in a case, the "Golden Ticket". I paid the man my \$1,000.000 and went home to spread the good news.

I woke up early the next morning, packed and said good bye. Right before I jumped, they gave me a parachute. I put it on and jumped off the cloud. I got to see many neat things, I even got to see giants.

I started to evaporate, but oh no, I was falling into some sort of opening. After I fell in, I looked around. "Hey this looks familiar from the science class, here is the stomach, the heart and the*AHHH!* I'm in the human body. Don't panic now Connor, now don't panic". I said to myself.

"AHHH! I'm panicking! Okay, Connor *THINK! THINK! THINK!* Don't panic, but *THINK!* What the heck do you do when you're trapped inside a human body?" I asked myself.

"Hum, hum, hum, him," I heard.

"What's that sound?" I asked.

"Hum, hum, hum," I heard again.

"Hello, hellooo, is any body in here?" I shouted at the top of my lungs.

"Yeah, yeah, over here. Thank you LORD someone's come to save me," he said, sounding like he just saw an angel.

Then I said, "it looks like I'm not alone!"

"My name is George, and I've been in here for about five years. Have you come to save me?" he asked.

No, sorry George, I'm just stuck like you are," I said.

"Wait! Since I've been trapped in here for five years, I think I know how to get out, but I need your help!"

George told me how to get out and we climbed up the spinal cord with each other's help and finally got to the nose. Once we got to the nose I looked down, and I was so scared because it was about a 500 foot drop! I then looked at George and said "Ah George, what do we do now?"

He then looked back at me and said "Buddy, hold your breath and hold on for dear life! We are going on the ride of our lives."

All of a sudden a startling sneeze came out of the giant human. **BANG!** I came flying out of that nose faster than a bullet! **BUMP. BUMP.** "Ahhhhh!" **BUMP. BUMP.** "Ahhhhh!" I was going so fast I almost disintegrated. I finally landed I hit the ground so hard I almost broke my neck! Lucky enough I survived the fall and was all right.

George and I went to go snag some pizza crumbs at Pizza Hut. Then we went to the park. We climbed the tallest tree in the park to help us evaporate back to our homes. We finally got home. Once home we ate dinner and shared our exciting stories with our loved ones. What an adventure!

Strengths

Creative story. You did a good job finishing the story - good description of how they got out of the body.

Suggestion for Revision

Final edit

Paragraphs

Spelling

Add a final sentence to sum up how he felt about the whole adventure - did he enjoy it? Have him tell the reader.

I was born as a rain drop. I had a younger brother named Stefan, a mom named Briget and and a dad named Todd. For many years I have been up in this cloud wishing I could go down to see the world. Well I couldent go down there when evar I wanted I needed a golden ticked and a golden ticket coast \$1,000.00 dolers.

When I was 14 years old I got a job at my dads toy shop I got \$200.00 dolers a month. I worked hard at that toy shop because I helped my dad make those toys for five

whole months. Finally the last day came so I locked up the shop and ran across the street. I opened the door to the ticket shop and there it was lying there in a case, the golden ticket. So I paid the man my \$1,000.00 dollars went home and spread the good news.

I woke up early the next morning, packed, and said good by. right before I jumped, they gave me a parachute. I put it on and jumped. I got to see many neat things, I even got to see giants.

I started to evaporate but oh no, I was falling in to some sort of opening of a human body. After I fell in, I looked around. "Hey this looks familiar from science class" "here's the stomach here's the heart and here's the.....Ahhhh!" "I'm in the human body" doesn't panic now Connor, dooone't panic I said to myself "I'm panicing!" "Oh kay Connor think, think, think doesn't panic but think what the heck! do you do when your trapped! in a human bodie!"

"Hum, hum, hum, hum," I heard. "What's that sound" hum, hum, hum, "Hello", "Hellooo" "Is any body in there! Another voice said "Yeah, Yeah im in here over here thank you lord someones come to save me!" Oh no it looks like I'm not alone.: Helloe is any bodie in there," Yes Yes I am in hear. My name is George, and I've been trapped in hear for about 5 years, have you come to save me." "NO sorry George I'm Connor and I'm just stuck like you are" Wate since I've been trapped in here for 5 years I know how to get out but I need your help!"

George told me how to get out and we climbed up the spinal cord with each others help and finally got to the nose. Once I got to the nose I looked down and I was so scared because it was about a 500 foot drop. I then looked at Gorge and said "Ah Gorge what do we do now" He looked back at me and said "buddy, hold your breath and hold on tight because you, my friend are going for the ride of your life! All of a sudden the giant human sneezed and I came flying out of his nose faster then a rocket. Bump, Bump, Ahhh! Bump, Bump, Ahhhhh! I finally hit the ground so hard I almost broke my neck. Lucky enof I survived the fall and was all right. Me and Gorge went to the pizza place to snag some pizza crows it was soggy but it was still good. After we ate the pizza crows we climbed to the tallest tree in the park so it would help us with our evaporating journey to our homes. We finally got back home ate dinner and shared our exciting storys we had. What an adventure!

The Time Machine

Chapter One

Once upon a time there was a boy, who's name was Alexander. He was magical because he lived in a magical forest and his mother was a fairy. When every child in the forest is old enough, right after their tenth birthday, they have to do a task to prove their magic. When Alexander was old enough to start his first task he was very excited. His first task was to find The Time Machine in the sky, that's where all of his dreams would come true.

He went to New York to start his journey. One day he was in the park when nobody else was there, so he decided to start his first task. He flew up to the clouds when suddenly Alexander heard someone say "BOO!". He looked around trembling and saw a cloud who had a face. He was scared until the cloud said "Hi". Then Alexander asked the cloud if he knew where The Great Fish was.

"Oh yeah, he's watching over the Bronx", the cloud said.

"Oh thanks. By th way, what's your name?"

"It's Cumulus, and your name?"

"Alexander. Thank you for the information Cumulus", Alexander replied.

They said "good bye" and Alexander started looking for The Great Fish. Suddenly he wasn't moving anymore. He looked down and noticed his shirt was stuck on the Empire State Building. He yelled to Cumulus "**CAN YOU HELP ME A LITTLE?**"

"Yea, okay", Cumulus said.

"Thanks", Alexander said in a funny voice. "By the way, can you pleeaaasseee give me a ride?"

"No prrroobbllleemm", Cumulus said imitating my funny voice.

Once Cumulus got my shirt off the Empire State Building, Cumulus said "You can hop on."

Chapter Two

Once he got the great, intelligent fish, he blew his horn, that he got when he was a baby as a gift and has worn around his neck ever since.

The noise woke up the fish and he angrily said

"WHO WOKE ME UP FROM MY SLUMBER?"

"Oh mighty fish, please answer my question. Will you tell me the way to **THE TIME MACHINE?**"

"Oh YES!" answered the fish.

Chapter Two

"Well, it's to the left and then straight on till morning", the intelligent fish said.

"Bye, thanks" Alexander replied.

"Wait child. On your way you will see some unusual visions that will appear in your head, they will not be familiar, just ignore them, don't listen, don't listen, don't listen, don't listen, don't listen."

Alexander began drifting into a very dizzy sleep, but his eyes were still open. He was seeing things, just like the fish had told him. He kept hearing voices, "You won't make it, You won't get to the time machine."

"No I'm not listening. No I'm not listening. I'm not listening." Alexander screamed.

There was a black out and suddenly he woke up. He had been set on a puffy cloud which was formed into a bed. The horizon was peeking through the clouds. There, in front of him swaying in the misty summer air stood the TIME MACHINE.

He went up to the time machine. He opened the door, there was a golden light. All the bad visions rushed out of his head and he said his dream. He heard a voice and it said "YOUR WISHES ARE GRANTED". The next thing he knew he was at the playground in New York where he had started.

Strengths

This is a very imaginative story! I like it when he meets the cloud named "Cumulus."

Suggestions for Revision

1. Why does he have a task to perform?
2. How does the story end? He needs to complete his task.

Once upon a time there was a boy whose name was Marlin. He was also magical because he was born in a magical forest and his mother was a fairy. When every child in the forest is old enough they have to do a task to prove their magic. Now he's old enough to start his first task. Now he was going to go to New York. His first task was to find the house in the sky. That's where all his dreams would come true. One day he was in the park when no boy else was there so he thought he'd start his task. So he started going up and flying until he was at the cloud. Suddenly he heard someone say "boo!" He looked around and suddenly he saw a cloud with a face. He was scared for a moment until the cloud said "hi" then he wasn't scared. He said "hi" too. Then Marlin asked the cloud if he knew where the great fish was and the cloud said "Oh yeah he's over to the left watching over the Bronx!" "Oh thanks, by the way what's your name cloud?" "Oh it's Cumulus what's your name?" "It's Marlin, well thanks for the info Cumulus?" I said "bye" and started looking for the great fish suddenly he wasn't moving anymore and he looked down and his shirt was stuck on the Empire State Building. He yelled "Cumulus can you help me a little" and Cumulus yelled "sure" Once Cumulus got his shirt off the Empire State Building, he said "can you give me a ride" and Cumulus said "sure." Once he got to the great fish

He was drifting into a dizzy sleep He was seeing visions just like the fish

Snow Boy

Hi, my name is Josh, Once I was a snowflake and I lived on top of Mount Everest. One day something weird happened. Someone was mountain climbing and stepped on me and tripped. The person fell and cut his head. I thought the blood was candy so I ate it. Then, I turned into a boy. I had no clue what to do so I climbed to the top of the mountain and jumped off. I was still thinking like a snowflake. I was falling and falling until I hit something hard and I fainted.

I woke up and saw something ahead. It was a tunnel. Then I realized that I was on top of a bus and getting closer to the tunnel. I jumped off of the bus because I was still thinking like a snowflake. I found myself on the sidewalk where a lot of people were walking

over me. I guess they thought I was a snowflake too.

Next, I walked into a shop that was being robbed. When the robber saw me he took his gun and shot me. Although, water came out of me instead of blood. Then the robber fainted, and the police came and took the robber away.

I walked out of the door and I saw a mental can with the poison sign on it, but I didn't know what it was, so I drank it. I didn't feel good because the poison polluted me and I threw up acid.

After that, a bat bit me and I turned into a vampire. Now I suck people's blood. That's my life. Finally I stopped thinking like a snowflake.

Strengths

Lots of great action in this story!

Suggestion for Revision

1. We completed the story in first person (the snowflake was "I").
2. We kept the idea of him being a snowflake throughout the story.

Good job!

Hi, my name is Joe. Once I was a snowflake and I lived on top of mount everest. One day something weird happend. Some one was mountain bliaming and staped on me and triped and fell then his brain fell out. I thought the brain was candy so I ate it. Then I turned into a boy. I had no clue what to do so I climed to the top of the mountain and jumped off. I was still thinking like a snowflake. I was falling and falling untill I hit something hard and I fainted. Then I woke up and saw something ahead. It was a tunnel. Then I saw I was on top of a bus and getting closer to the tunnel. I jumped off the bus because I was still thinking like a snowflake. I found myself on the sidewalk where a lot of people were walking over me because maybe they thought I was a snowflake. Then I walked into a shop that was beaing robbed. When the robber saw me he took his gun and shot me and water cam out of me instead of blood. Then the robber fainted and the

police came and took the robber away. I walked out the back door and saw a metal can with the poison sign on it but I didn't know what it was so I drank it. I didn't feel good because the poison polluted me and I through up. After that I walked outside and a bat bit me and I turned into a vampaire. Now I suck people's blood and that's my life. And finally stoped thinking like a snowflake.

The End.

The Snowflake Kid

I am a snowflake and I am falling to see my mom. I have not seen her in a week. I am really happy to see her. Some snowflake told me that I would not see her at all because she has fallen to the ground. I am 2,000 feet high, I should feel brave because I am only the third to jump off of the cloud, on my way to see my dad or mom. A snowflake is really cold, clean, and small. I have never seen the ground covered by snow before, but Snow King Bob told me about it. He's a crazy guy, but he's been a snowflake since the beginning of time. He lives in the Snow Kingdom, where all of the snowflakes live.

Right now, I am at 973 feet in the air. It is so cool falling. It's my first time, but mom was scared something bad would happen. Well, now I am at 600 feet. I am moving so fast that I am already at 100 feet and I can see my mom. We are so happy to see each other that we hut. To celebrate, we dance for days.

Being a snowflake, I have some advice for you. Do not eat us, or the snowflakes will get you with snow balls because we will keep coming. So don't eat us, we don't eat you. This is Snowflake News. Tune in for next time for a story about yellow snow.

Strengths

Great first sentence. I like the idea of him going to see his mom. You've got lots of creative ideas in your story.

Suggestion for Revision

Good work on revising with me to make the story clearer. Tell the reader more about what happened when you found your mom.- did you stay there?-did they go back up?

Don't forget to use periods!

I am a snowflake and am falling to see my mom. I have not seen her in a week. I am really happy to see her, but snow flakes said I would not see her at all. But they had said that my mom is snow and she only 31 I am at 2,000 feet I should feel brave I am only the 3rd to go to see thier dad or mom. I have not seen snow on the ground but I was told of it by the Snow King Bob. Hes a carzy guy but hes ben snow seince began time I live in the Kingdom of Snow and flakes. I am at 973 feet in the air it is cool falling its my first time but mom was scared someting bad would happen, well am on 600 feet a snow flak is really cold and clen and small to cool. I am at 100 feet and I can see my moma We dance for 1 day but if I were you do not eat snow because the snow flakes will get you with snowballs. So don't eat us we don't eat you, so why eat us This is snow flake news of now and snowflakes Tune in for next time for yellow snow

Wet Willy

Hi, my name is Wet Willy. I'm so bored, all I ever do is flow down the river flowing by my friends, who are evaporating very slowly. Why don't I evaporate? I'm a rain drop too. All I want to do is be part of the mud and let kids splash into me. But what I really what to do, is evaporate. I think it would be fun to evaporate because I could go into the clouds and see what' it's like to fall into the waterfalls..

Suddenly I cloned, there are 3 of me. What's happening? I begin to lift up. "I'm evaporating!" It feels great.

Then I fall into a waterfall. "Hi Gramps, it's me, Willy. I just evaporated!"

"Oh, you did, did you?"

"Yes, and it was great."

Now everyone's mad because I cloned 3 times and they only clowned 2 times. I am happy because I am finally able to become mud.

Strengths

Good idea to use a portal to get to the magic place.

Suggestion for Revision

You need to web to come up with ideas for your story.

Good start with the ideas we discussed.

How does the picture relate to weather?

Hi, my name is Wet Willy. I'm so bord, all I ever do is flowe bown the river flowing by my friends, who are evaporating very slowly. Why don't I evaporate I'm a rain drop too. All I won't too do is be in the mud and let kids splash into me, but what I realy want to do is evaporate. I think it will be fun to evaporate because I can go into the clouds & see what it's like, falling into the water falls. Suddenly I clonwed, there 3 of me, whats happening I lift up, "I'm Evaporating," it feels grate. Then I fall into a water fall, "Hi gramps it's me Willy I just evaporated "Oh you did did you, yes it was grate. Now I evaporate all the time, I gess I was too littel too evaporate thats why I clowned. Now evey ones gelles because I clowned 3 time & they clowned 2. Then finly I went int the mud.

Sector Seven

Chapter 1 - Y5K

Once upon a time there was a kid named Jason, he always believed in magic. Sometimes, while at a magic show he would say "Oh, that was really nice magic", but his friends would laugh and tease him.

One day he was walking by this magic show. The magician did a few magic tricks. Jason did not talk because he didn't want his friends to laugh and tease him. But near the end, the magician did an extraordinary trick and Jason shouted "Bravo that magic trick was awesome!" Then everybody started to laugh at him and call him names, Jason got very red. After the show the magician called Jason up to the stage. When Jason saw the magician up close, he looked older and wiser than he had thought.

The magician said "Keep believing in magic" and he gave Jason this tube. Then he said "When you are outside shake this and something good will happen." So Jason took the tube home and put it next to his bed and

forgot about it.

The next morning he had nothing to do because it was Saturday. So he reached for his book near his bed and he felt the tube. So he went outside with the tube and shook it. Suddenly, all the clouds in the sky started to come toward him. They started to form faces and hands. Jason looked wide eyed.

Chapter 2 - Cloud World

The clouds flew right next to Jason and said "Get on." Jason, not sure what to do, jumped on. Suddenly wind rushed against his face and he was flying up to the sky. After two hours of riding, the cloud said "I think we're lost, but I am pretty sure it's this way", and the cloud pointed west.

Then they saw a huge building, it said Sector Seven. "Oh no" said the cloud. Two battleships shot out and grabbed the cloud and Jason. The two evil clouds that were driving the battleships brought them in a big building and threw them in jail. About 30 minutes later, a big floating cloud came in. "Jason, that's the boss." said the nice cloud.

The boss said "What are you doing here?"

"We're just lost", said the nice cloud.

"To bad I will have to kill you tomorrow."

"Oh no", Jason thought "I'm gonna die."

On the day of the execution, Jason went into his pocked to rub his lucky coin and pulled out the tube by accident. He shook it and all of a sudden the room disappeared and he was in his yard. His mom came out and asked "Where were you?"

"Up in the sky", I said.

She laughed. Then we went inside for lunch.

Strengths

Very imaginative! Full of interesting details. The way you tell the story is very suspenseful. You take your time and keep the reader interested in what's happening.

Suggestions for Revision

1. Break it up into paragraphs. Make each scene a separate paragraph.
2. You might want to think up an explanation for why the thing said "Sector 7" and tell us what that thing is.

Sector 7

Once upon a time there was this kid called Jason he always delived in magic. Sometimes when he would say "oh that was really nice magic," if he was at a magic show his friends would laugh and tease him. One day he was walking to this magic show. The magison did a few magi tricks Jason did not talk. But near the end the magicon did an axtrodinary trick and Jason shouted "bravo that magic trick was awesom." Then ever body started to laugh at him and call him names Jason got very red. After the show when every body left the magicin called Jason up to the stage. When Jason saw the magicon up close he looked a lot older and wiser then he thought. He said keep beliving in magic and he gave Jason this tube. He said "when you are out side shake this and something good will hapen to you." So Jason took the tube. He went home and put the tube next to his bed.

In the morning he had forgotten all about his tube. It was Saturday and he had nothing to do. So he reached for his book near his bed and felt the tube. So he went outside with the tube douting that it would do anything. And shook it. Suddenly the clouds in the sky started to come toward him. They started to form faces and hands Jason looked wide eyed.

Chapter 2

The clouds went right next to Jason and said get on. Jason not sure what to do got on. Sudenly wind rushed against his face he was flying up to the sky. After two hours riding, the cloud said "I think where lost but I'm pretty sure its this way the cloud pointed. Then they saw a big thing it said Sector 7 oh no the cloud said. Two battle ships shot out and grabbed the cloud and Jason. The two evil clouds where driving the battle ships. They brought us in a big building and in jail with lasers garding the door. About 30 minutes later a big floating cloud came in my friend the cloud said thats the boss the boss said what are you doing here we just got lost said my friend. To bad said the boss I will have to kill you both tomorrow. Oh no I thought I'm gonna die.

On the day of the execution I went in my pocket to

shake my lucky coin and pulled out the tube I shook all of a sudden the room dispersed and I was in my yard my mom came out and said "where were you" up in the sky I said she left and I went inside for lunch.

I was a Child Raindrop

One day my fellow raindrops and I went to ask our parents if we could be released from the cloud. Of course they said no. But we went anyway. When we hit Earth, all of my friends hit a pond. I would have gotten them out but they wanted to stay there, so I let them stay.

As I lay there on the street, I started to pop out legs and arms. When I was done popping, I walked away to find a job. While I was walking I found out that I was in Las Vegas, Nevada. So when I got finished with getting used to my new surroundings, I started to interview for some jobs.

After days and days of searching for a job I finally found one! It was for testing video games. Then they found out that I was a raindrop, but they let me stay.

I met my worst enemy **FLAME BOY** testing the racing game next to me. He was always making me evaporate by getting too close. Then finally I got so mad I sprayed him with a garden hose, he got wet and cold and then went out. I wondered if he would come back, but he didn't.

Since I was starting work in two weeks I decided to evaporate and see my parents. One thing I forgot, my parents didn't want me to go to Earth in the first place. So once I got up on the cloud, the H₂O police were everywhere looking for me. As soon as they saw me they chased me back to Earth.

Luckily, I landed on a Corvette and they landed on a hatch back Volkswagen. After a while I lost them, but the car I was on went over the George Washington Bridge! I know that if raindrops fall into water it won't hurt because I am water. Suddenly the car lost control and fell off the bridge. While I was in the water I looked for some of my relatives. I couldn't find any, so I forgot about work and went home.

Strengths

Lots of good details. I like how you explain why or how some things happen - like the arms and legs, falling into the water doesn't hurt.

Suggestion for Revision

You've got lots of great ideas, but why don't you narrow your story to 1 or 2 main ideas otherwise the story gets too long and it seems like separate stories.

Remember paragraphs!

I was a child rain drop

One day me and my fellow rain drops and I went to ask are parent rain drops if we were old enoph to be relest from the cloud. So are parents said nnnnooooo!! So we went anyway but all mly frenid rain drops fell in a lake. They said they like dit so I left them there. Then I popped out legs and arms and I walked away. When I figured out how to walk good I found out I was in las vegas navada. So when I was finished geting use to my new surroundings I tryed to look for a job. After days of looking for a job I found one! It was called testing coceno games and arcade games! But then they found out that I was a rain drop. Then I met my worst night mare Flameboy. He was so mean he always madee me evaporate. Then finaly I got so mad I sprayed him with a garden hose so he got wet and cold then he went out. I wondderd if he would come back. But he didn't. Since I would start work in two weeks I didided to evaporate and see my parents but one thing I forgot my parents didn't want me to go to earth in the first place. So once I got up there the h2o police were evrey where looking for me. As soon as they saw me they cashed me back to earth. Luckily I landed on a corvvet and they landed on a hatch back. After a wile I lost them but the car I was on went of the Gorge Wasington brige!! but I know that if rain drops fall into water it won't hurt because I am water. Wile I was in the water I looked for some of my relatives

Alex and I as Raindrops

One day there was a storm, and we were in it because we are little raindrops. I was with my friend Alexandra, and we were having lots of fun, until we heard thunder. The storm felt swishy and swirly. It felt good, but sickening, I felt ok though.

We began falling from the cloud and hoped that we would land soon. Then we did, it felt great. We fell into a lake in Texas, but it was very cold. Then I plopped out of the lake to warm up. Right then, I started to, I started to, evaporate. Right behind me I saw Alex evaporating too. Boy did we go up high. We were floating, it was really fun.

Now I am starting the water cycle again. Who knows where I will land later today!

Strengths

Great start.

Suggestion for Revision

Part I - Introduction - Great start.

Part 2 - Will be 2 scary adventures - Texas Tornado & Florida Meat which turns into a pleasant evaporation to a new cloud.

Part 3 - Finally land in a safe place.

Me and Alex as a raindrop!

One day there was a storm and I was in it. I was a little rain drop and I was with my friend Alex Vest. We were having lots of fun until we heard thunder. We hoped that we would land soon and then all of a sudden we landed. It felt great We fell into a lake, the lake was very cold. I ploped out of the lake Then I found Alex I told her to get out of the water with me but she did not listen. So then I told her she - it fun ploping out of the water finally she got out. I asked Alex where are we? She said I think we are in....m....Texas!. I said Ya Texas. Howdie parner

Chan File 6.020

"Hi, my name is Chan, I was walking down the hallway of my school when I started to foat and water vapor began to come out of my coat. I was turning into a cloud! I felt really heavy, and rain fell out of my coat and boots. The weather kept on changing. I made all kinds of precipitation, like hale, snow, rain, and sleet. I floated so high that I hit the ceiling. It felt like there wasn't gravity in the room. So I swam to the bathroom. I tried to wash it off but it didn't come off."

"I asked my two friends, Mike and Change, to help. They were the only people who knew who knew paranormal things that were happening to me. So Mike called a cloud specialist and asked how to get rid of a cloud. He said let the cloud precipitates for a very long time. So they put me in water and I rained for hours and hours. Then, they put me in front of a fan and I snowed for hours. Finally, the cloud went away. I wonder what will happen next."

Strengths

Very imaginative story with a great ending. It follows the picture nicely.

Suggestion for Revision

1. Where did the fish at the end come from? (Maybe cross out that part.)
2. On the last page, you changed "I" to "he". Change it back to "I".
Don't forget periods! And capitals!

Chan files file 6.020

Hi my name is Chan I was walking I the hall way of my school when I started to flat and water vapor was coming out of my coat. I was turning into a cloud. I felt really heavy and rain fell out of my coat and boots. The weather kept on changing. I made hale, snow sleet all kinds of percipatation. I floated so high I hit the wall. It felt like there was no gravity in the room so I swam to the

bathroom. I tried to wash it off but it would not come off. So I asked my two friends to help me. Their names were Mike and Chang. They were the only people who knew the paranormal stuff that happens to me. So Mike called a cloud specialist. Mike asked how to get rid of a cloud he said you have to let it rain, snow and hail a lot before it will go away. They soaked me in water for an hour and I started to rain for hours. And then they put me in front of the fan and I snowed for hours. Then his coat deflated and he fell to the ground with a big clatter and I was back to normal.

Snow

One day I was in a cloud (because I was a snowflake). I just wanted to rest, when all of a sudden I fell and SPLAT! I landed on a car window, but since I had legs I jumped off the car and started to go to see some relatives in the city. On the way I saw a bunch of other snowflakes named Mr. Snow, Mrs. Snow, and Yellow Snow. I asked them if they wanted to come with me and they said yes. So on we went. ON the way we saw a monster! "Ahhhh!", we yelled and ran away. We never saw such an odd monster. It had whiskers and said "Meow".

We walked and walked until we saw a fork in the road and we took the wrong road which ended up in the forest of Pennsylvania! "Oh no!", we cried. Soon, we knew we would be lost for good! We were so scared, we thought we would die! We looked for a way out, but the more we looked, the more we got lost! After several days of looking for a way out, we stopped at a pond to have a drink. While we were drinking a fox came to have a drink with us. "Hello", he said "you look new around here. Are you lost?"

"Oh yes" we said.. "Do you know a way to the city?"

"Of course I do", said the fox. "Follow me." We followed him for one hundred miles until we got to New York City. "Is this the right city?", he asked.

We looked around for a few minutes. "You took us to the wrong city! I new you were a dummy!"

"Yeah!", said Mr. Snow.

Mrs. Snow replied "You're so stupid!"

"I am mad at you!", said Yellow Snow.

We got him so mad, that he ate us. So now you know why I'm telling you this story from inside a fox.

Strengths

Good start. I like how the snow flake fell splat!

Good description of the "monster."

Suggestion for Revision

Great start on the story - about the snow flake and find other snow flakes.

The 2nd part of the story is confusing. I'm not sure where the boy is, what he's driving or where he is going.

Why do you have the snowflakes go along?

Why not tell more about what happens to the snow flakes as they try to set out to the city.

Snow

One day I was in a cloud (because I was a snow flake). I just wanted to rest when all of a sudden I fell and splat! I landed on a car window but since I had legs I jumped of the car and started going to the city. On the way I saw a bunch of other snow flakes named Mr. snow, Mrs. Snow, and Yellow snow. I asked them if they wanted to come with me and they said "yes." So we went. On the way we saw a monster! "Ahhhhh!" We yelled and ran away. Yellow snow and the rest of us never saw such an odd monster. It had wiskers and said meow. We walked and walked intill we saw a fork in the road we took the wrong turn and ended up in the forest of Penselvainea "oh no!" we cried. We knew we would be trampeld soon!

Snow's Life

I'm a snowflake, I hate the summer but I love the winter. Sometimes when I fall to the ground, I get caught in a wind drift, it's not very fun because it is like a roller coaster. When I get home, I get to see my mom, dad, and brother.

Once, a terrible thing happened, out cloud house began to disappear. My family and I had to jump with all the other snowflakes, all 1,567,183 of us.

When we finally landed, we were made into a big ball by a kid. Then, when we finally heard the news from someone they said we were in a blizzard. Then I felt a lot more weight on me.

About three days after the blizzard ended, we finally turned into water and evaporated. We all made it home safe and sound.

I've now been in 3 or 4 blizzards with my family, but I'm not scared anymore. Now AI have my own cloud and my own kids, but they aren't as scared as I was when I was small.

Strengths

Great ideas.

This snowflake has a very active life!

Suggestion for Revision

Seeing that you have been in 4 blizzards, how do you get back home?

Organize your story by selecting one topic, for example, explain about falling from the clouds, a few sentences supporting the fall and start a new paragraph about the blizzard with a strong topic sentence, for example: "When I was eight, I was in a horrible blizzard."

Snow's Life

I'm a snow flake I hate the summer but love the winter. When I do fall to the grond I sometimes get caut in a wind drift but not very ofter. Then when I do go home I get to see my mom, dad & my brother. Once there was this teribul thing & our house disapeerd. My family hade to jump with all the other snowfakes. We fell all 1,567,183. When we landed we were made into a big ball. Then we fianly had the news they said we were in a blizerd! But we fianly made it home safe & sound. Now I've been in 3 or 4 blizerds. But I'm not scard any more. Now I live in my one house with my kids. We all live very happy & content.

The end

The Dream

Once upon a time there was a little boy named Shang. One day he wanted to get out of the house, so he walked outside and all of a sudden he heard "Boooooooooooooooooommmmmmmmmmm! Wiiiiiiisssssshhhhhh! Claaaaaaaaaaaaang!" Then a cloud came and whisked him away. "What's going on? What is that?" thought Shang.

After a while he saw this weird machine floating in space. Shang decided to get closer so he could get a better look. Then he noticed that clouds were coming out of big and little megaphones on the machine. It was very colorful and had beautiful little propellers. Then Shang figured out it was a cloud machine.

"Wow", thought Shang. "That's cool! Why is it there? That's weird. It looks so complicated." Big and beautiful clouds were coming out of it. "Wow", thought Shang. "It is so cool." Shang got off the cloud and waded through the door of the machine and then

Wiiiiiiisssssshhhhhh!
Boooooooooooooooooommmmmmmmmmm! Claaaaaaaaaaaaang!

Shang woke in his bed. "Oh man", thought Shang. "It was only a dream."

"Shaaaaaaaaaaaaang", his mother calls him. "Time to go to school." Shang went down stairs and tells his mother about his wonderful dream.

Strengths

You do a good job of bringing the reader into the story
I like the boom, wish sounds (sound effects).
I like how you tell the reader Shang's thoughts.

Suggestion for Revision

Tell the reader why Shang thinks the machine is so cool.
Check spelling: thought, machine, complicated, noticed.

Once upon a time there was a little boy named Shang. One day he wanted to get out of the house so he walked outside and all of a sudden boommmmmmm...wishhhhhhhhhh claaaaaang a cloud came

and wisped him away. Whats gowing on thought Shang. After a while he saw this weard machine floating in space. What is that thing thought Shang. He started to get closer. Then he noticed that clouds were comeing out of bag and little megaphones it was very colorful and have beuteful little prerpelers. Then Shang figured out it was a cloud machine Wow thought Shang thats cool. Why is it there thats weard thought Shang it looks so complicated. Out of it were coming bag and beaufeful clouds. Wow though Shang it is so cool. Shang got off of the cloud and walked throu the door of the machean Wishhhhhhhhhh boooooommmmmmm claaaaaang Shang awoke in his bed oh man thought Shang it was only a dream everythig wonderful that happend to me.

SHAAAAAAAANG! his mother calls h im, time to go do school. Shang goes down stars and tells his mother about his wonferful dream.

the end