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The Effect of Teaching Interventions to Grade School Teachers on the Writing Performance of Students in the Area of Persuasive Writing

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE EFFECT OF TEACHING INTERVENTIONS TO GRADE SCHOOL
TEACHERS ON THE WRITING PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS
IN THE AREA OF PERSUASIVE WRITING

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

NANCY J. MCCABE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY, 1997

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A great deal of concern and attention about students' writing performance highlights how important and crucial it is for all involved in educating young people to respond to the writing needs of students. Persuasive or argumentative writing is a type of writing that especially needs to be addressed in schools. Many teachers at the grade school level are searching for ways to more effectively teach and to meet the writing needs of students, particularly in the domain of persuasive writing. Although effective strategies have been identified in instruction as to narrative, determining the effectiveness of instructional strategies in other modes, specifically persuasive writing, have not been as successful.

Persuasive/argumentative writing should be an integral part of the curriculum as many teachers and students need experience, assistance, and encouragement with this type of discourse. Even though persuasive writing is thought to be more cognitively demanding for students, Crowhurst (1988) strongly suggested that this type of writing not be neglected at the elementary level or reserved until students are older. Before the state of Illinois began to assess students' writing, including persuasive writing, little

attention was given in elementary schools to this type of writing. The Illinois state goal for writing, as part of the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP, 1994) states: "As a result of their schooling students will be able to write in standard English in a grammatical, well-organized and coherent manner for a variety of purposes (p. 2)." The IGAP assesses students' abilities for grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 in the following areas of writing: persuasive, expository, and narrative. According to IGAP, persuasive writing is of two types: the position paper in which students take a position and develop an argument or the problem/solution position paper in which students develop both a problem and a solution. The Illinois state legislature does require that school districts establish learning objectives and assess whether these objectives are being met. Established under the 1985 reform legislation, IGAP's emphasis is on school improvement in areas other than writing as well including reading, mathematics, science, and social sciences. This is one example to show how the state of Illinois as well as others are stressing high importance on improving students' writing abilities, with persuasion being regarded as one of the three key types of writing. With this challenge to help students succeed and to show gains in writing performance, teachers are tooling up for the task of teaching writing and are in need of exploring new opportunities and ways to become better teachers of writing.

Characteristics of Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing is a type of writing that aims at bringing about some kind of action or change or to influence others. A salient characteristic of persuasive writing is the effect on the reader. This is an important distinction which must be held in view at all times while looking at persuasive writing. Students are not asked to merely add to their knowledge of a certain topic—they are asked to write in such a way so as to influence or to bring about change in the reader or audience. In expository writing tasks, for example, students are asked to

explain, interpret, or describe something based upon background experiences or information provided in the writing prompt. These assignments differ from the narrative in that the writer does not include personal reaction or feelings in describing or presenting information (IGAP, p. 65).

Whether the student is asked to take a position and develop one side of an argument or whether he or she is asked to develop both a problem and a solution, the effect on the reader is a major underpinning of the persuasive writing task. This feature of persuasive writing very often makes the task more challenging and complex than expository or narrative writing tasks.

An inherent characteristic of persuasive writing, therefore, is the influence or effect it has on the reader. To convince a reader of an idea, to persuade the reader to take an action, or to change the reader's mind are features of the writing task which must be borne in mind at all times

when addressing this kind of writing. Persuasive writing is appropriate for grade school students and needs to be addressed by both teachers and students, as well as incorporated as part of the writing curriculum in all schools, and at all levels. Understanding the goals of persuasion which are to convince, to persuade, to influence, and ultimately to have an effect on the reader is an essential step for teachers and students to take in order to progress in this challenging mode of discourse.

Characteristic to persuasion or argumentation are appeals. Tompkins (1994) describes how people are typically persuaded in three ways. The first appeal is reason in which writers persuade by giving the reader logical reasons to accept their point of view. Tompkins notes: "People seek logical generalizations and cause-and-effect conclusions, whether from absolute facts or from strong possibilities" (p. 253). The second appeal is emotion. This kind of appeal can be as strong as appeal to reason or intellect because people often have strong feelings and concern for themselves and others, especially in matters of what is fair or responsible. The third appeal is character. People and other peers are important and the persuader can utilize his or her character by being credible and trustworthy in reputation, knowledge, beliefs, or feelings relative to the argument.

Importance of Persuasive Writing

In the book, *The Origins of Writing*, Senner (1989) states: "Writing has been the foundation for the development of one's consciousness and intellect, one's comprehension of oneself and the world around one, and in the very widest sense possible, of one's critical spirit" (p. 5). Indeed, historians who have studied culture, view writing within a culture as an underlying factor in the development of modern thought. The act of writing facilitates a logical progression of ideas and makes written language more permanent and ideas more available than does talking, for example. Writing provides an appropriate context for thinking about ideas and for stressing higher order thinking skills. Persuasive writing helps students acquire critical thinking skills at a higher level and to think in concepts, connecting ideas through thesis statements and topic sentences as well as eliciting their own solutions and alternatives to issues (Burkhalter, 1993). Since Aristotle's time up to today's technological era, the development of logical thought has been deemed as integral to society. Persuasive writing and thinking skills, in particular, assist in the growth of effective communication and allow students to think, to judge, and to act in ways that have the potentiality of being responsible and value-laden. O'Shea and Egan (1980) state:

The argumentative or persuasive essay is the written counterpart of a debate. The democratic process is dependent upon a vocal society able to present facts, to defend views that will persuade leaders to listen, to meet the demands and needs of the common person.... Americans enjoy their rights fully insofar as they are able to express themselves clearly. The ability to cope with words in order to sharpen one's point of view has always been a volatile power. Students must be committed and shown how to use this power to promote good among the diversified factions in American society (p. 44).

Persuasion, therefore, has the capacity to influence the good or welfare of society, thus its impact on students cannot be diluted by either teachers or the curricula. If understood in its larger context, persuasive writing skills can aid in fostering values and convictions of students for the present as well as for the future. Since the individual is a social being, values are shared with others in a social context, and values are of central importance in persuading others to greater awareness or to action.

Kean and Glynn (1980) concur that "the production of persuasive documents is an essential part of modern communication" (p. 36). They cite the importance of lawyers, politicians, and professors, for example, needing to utilize persuasive skills to effectively perform in their roles to influence others. Crowhurst (1990) cites the importance of persuasive/argumentative writing for academic success and for general life purposes. She notes that historically it has held a basic place in western education. She asserts: "The literate, educated person is expected to be able to articulate a position on important matters so as

to persuade colleagues, fellow citizens, and governments" (p. 348). She maintains that students need to learn how to argue articulately and convincingly for everyday life purposes as well as for their future so as to become responsible citizens and adults. Rottenberg (1994) believes that argument or persuasion is being given new interest in light of the importance of critical thinking. Persuasive writing and thinking, furthermore, represent the highest level of thinking in Bloom's taxonomy as it requires the student to evaluate.

Although studies have shown that many teachers encourage expressive and narrative writing in the early years over that of non-narrative and persuasive writing, this has been attributed to their belief that children are not ready or able to handle the cognitive demands of tasks such as persuasive ones. Contrary to this, however, Crowhurst (1988) alluded to the fact that "influential voices are urging the importance of teaching argumentative writing" (p. 34). These included Dixon and Stratta, Kress, Martin and Rothery, and White. Tompkins (1994) viewed persuasion as part of everyday life, and found that children of all ages could state an opinion and provide more logical reasoning as they grew older. She held that topics for persuasion derive from everyday events or situations and that persuasion comes naturally for children of all ages. She said, "At home, children might try to persuade their

parents to let them go to bed later, play on a football team, go to a slumber party, buy new clothes or shoes..." (p. 310). Persuasion is a natural form of discourse for children and they do have opinions about many topics such as caring for the environment, saving the world from nuclear threats, and safer schools, to name a few. Teachers need to realize the value and power of persuasion and to tie real life issues to the subjects students are writing about. Bringing in editorials, articles, and other types of media that are part of daily life, furthermore, provide opportunities for students and teachers to think, to discuss, to act, and to write about in more reflective and articulate ways. Farrington (1996) stressed the effectiveness of being able to write and speak persuasively. She said:

If you are able to argue effectively for your opinion on an issue...for your solution to a problem...for your plan of action...then you have more of a voice in what in what happens in your family, school, town, and country (p. 6).

Crowhurst (1988) reinforced the belief that persuasive/argumentative writing ought to be encouraged and not overlooked in the middle school years as it is an important kind of writing. While research has shown that younger students write less effectively in the argumentative mode, Crowhurst claimed that this is not an indication that children cannot write persuasively. She suggested that students at the high school and college level are asked to

write persuasively, and that younger students ought to be taught how to write in the persuasive/argument form as well. Writing which argues a point or takes a position and is supported with logical and/or emotional appeals should be included as part of the writing experiences of students. Crowhurst provided some credible evidence to support the growing view that persuasive/argumentative writing should not be overlooked in the middle school years:

1. Persuasive uses of language appear early in spoken language.
2. Precursors of argument appear in the writing of very young children in the early years of schooling.
3. Even poor persuasive writing in the pre-teen years presents knowledge of an embryonic form of argument (p. 38).

In conclusion, persuasive writing is a kind of writing that is important as well as necessary. The role of persuasion and argument is central to the development of thought within a culture or society. For academic success, and for success in everyday life as a worker, a citizen, a family member, or a leader, the need for persuasive/argumentative skills is of vital importance for the individual and for the society of which he or she is a part. The ability to argue or to persuade so as to influence others is a valuable skill. Students need to think more critically and responsibly, to formulate opinions that matter to them, and to clearly support and defend them. To communicate their views effectively as well as to inculcate

values, students need opportunities in a classroom or writing center to learn and to strengthen their persuasive writing skills. Further studies, addressing the need for this type of discourse, are of critical concern for the future of education and the status of persuasive writing in schools nationwide.

Statement of the Problem

Persuasion or argumentation is a type of writing that needs to be given more attention in our schools. Teachers' needs to understand and to be more comfortable in writing and teaching in this mode of discourse is essential if students are to become more successful and improve in this area. Responding to the needs of teachers who are searching for strategies, methods, and support to more effectively and adequately help students' performance in persuasive writing cannot be overlooked.

That students generally do more poorly on persuasive tasks in comparison to narrative or descriptive ones has been confirmed by national studies such as NAEP. Graves (1983) supports the growing concern that teachers need more information on writing. Crowhurst (1990) noted that students are not typically encouraged to write argument, particularly at the elementary level.

Some controversy exists around the issue as to whether persuasive writing is or is not too difficult for young students. Proponents of the latter view hold the belief

that this form of writing is appropriate for younger students and should not be reserved until the secondary years. Certainly more research needs to be done in the area of persuasive writing at the grade school level: factors affecting language development, both oral and written, ascertaining teachers' needs and challenges in this type of writing and developing effective ways to assist teachers of writing. Teachers need to gain knowledge and understanding of how linguistic forms, syntactic complexity, sense of audience, organizational schema, and cognitive development, to name a few, do influence performance on persuasive tasks.

Students perform better on narrative tasks since it is not as cognitively demanding as argumentation, and also because this structure transfers more easily from speech to writing than does persuasion. Parents can attest to the fact that their youngsters can often present very appealing and powerful approaches in an attempt to persuade them on matters that are important to them. Teachers need to be more optimistic about students' abilities to improve in the written expression of a persuasive mode that often comes naturally in their oral expression.

Even though national studies and findings have all too often been regarded as "disappointing," there is growing evidence to believe that grade school students can succeed at writing persuasively. Teachers need knowledge and strategies of the writing process relative to persuasion.

Although several training models exist for teachers of writing, further studies need to be done to discern what types of inservice instruction are most needed. Indeed, in the past decade especially, wider attention has been given to the concern over writing in the schools. Of central importance, however, is the critical need to address in a particular way the challenge of teaching persuasive writing to students that will result in higher levels of success and achievement as well as a heightened sense of confidence in their writing growth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what effect short teaching interventions to grade school teachers would have on student achievement in the area of persuasive writing. The research further examined teachers' perceptions about teaching the persuasive mode and perceptions of their students' achievement in this area as a result of staff development workshops or training sessions. The primary focus, therefore, was to examine the relationship between inservice sessions provided to groups of teachers to assist them in the teaching of persuasive writing and the effects on students' writing performance as measured through a succession of writing prompts.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed:

1. Do short teaching interventions to grade school teachers in persuasive writing make a difference in students' achievement?
2. Are the short teaching interventions to grade school teachers more effective for older or for younger students?

Limitations of the Study

1. The return rate of writing prompts was satisfactory for the first three prompts, but not for the fourth one. The latter one was not included in the study.
2. Generalizability of results was limited to a multicultural, urban community.
3. The participants in the study voluntarily chose to be involved in the L.A. SPIN program and this may affect results.

Definition of Terms

Persuasive Writing: The position paper in which students develop one side of an argument or the problem/solution paper in which students develop both a problem and a solution (IGAP, 1994). Persuasive writing has specific purposes. Its purpose is to convince the reader of an idea, persuade the reader to take an action, or to change the reader's mind. In a persuasion or argumentation type of writing, the writer attempts to influence action, behavior,

or attitude, so that the writer will adopt the opinion of the writer.

Process Writing: An approach to writing which places emphasis on the process of making choices during composition. Writing processes include stages of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Emphasis is placed on the process of the writer's work, not just on the final product.

Holistic Scoring: Evaluating a piece of writing based on its overall effectiveness. Validity is usually based on what experts in the field have decided are writing concerns worth emphasizing. According to IGAP (1994), Integration scoring or holistic scoring evaluates the essay based on the judgment of how effectively the composition as a whole uses the basic features to address the assignment: focus, support/elaboration, organization, and conventions.

Staff Development: Sometimes referred to as inservice, staff development refers to professional growth opportunities with focus on a particular area or topic. It often includes but is not limited to: presentation of theory, modeling or demonstration, practice, open-ended feedback, evaluation, and coaching for application.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter a review of relevant professional literature is presented as it relates to persuasive writing. The chapter reviews the literature in relation to factors which influence student achievement in this mode including literacy, writing time and teaching, challenges of persuasive writing, audience awareness, and gender. The teacher's role and perceptions relative to persuasive writing are also included. The chapter further relates the literature which addresses effective ways, strategies, and methods to teach persuasive writing, values and persuasive writing, and concludes with reviewing efficacy of staff development and teacher training as it affects student growth and performance in the persuasive mode.

Factors Influencing Student Achievement in Persuasive Writing

Literacy

Mavrogenes and Bezruczko (1993) cited the National Assessment of Educational Progress in a recent report in the area of writing and stated that the "overall writing performance of students at all grade levels was poor and the achievement gaps between students from disadvantaged and

advantaged areas was substantial" (p. 237). The reports indicated that even though students showed some gains in reading performance between 1971 and 1984, and were writing better in 1984 after a decline in 1979, in general, literacy performance was poor. The improvements that took place in reading and writing were in the most basic skills areas; in activities that called for more thoughtful uses of language, students performed unsuccessfully. Langer (1987) cited the factors of curricula in schools and tests that accompany them as requiring simple tasks of students thus minimizing the value of attaining higher literacy thinking and writing levels.

Langer presented a sociocognitive perspective on literacy. She challenged the definition of literacy that is ingrained in most people and provided a framework in which to more accurately view factors influencing writing achievement. She stated:

Literacy is an activity, a way of thinking, not a set of skills. And it is a purposeful activity-people read, write, talk, and think about real ideas and information in order to ponder and extend what they know, to communicate with others, to present their points of view, and to understand and be understood...Vygotsky stresses the social origins of language and thinking and begins to conceptualize the mechanisms by which culture becomes a part of how each person thinks, learns, and relates to others and the environment...How people think and reason depends upon the uses for literacy in the culture and the ways in which those activities are transmitted to younger generations (Langer, 1987, pp. 4-7).

It is important, moreover, not to dichotomize issues of schooling with cultural, social, or political ones of which

literacy is a part. According to Langer, educators often do not consider literacy as a "culturally specific phenomenon" (p. 7). It is necessary to enlarge one's view of literacy to understand its cognitive and cultural foundations. Concurring with Vygotsky, Langer believed that children learn higher level skills as they partake in "socially meaningful literacy activities. Interactive social experiences are at the heart of literacy learning; they involve children as active learners" (p. 7). Higher levels of cognitive development are attained through these learning activities.

Langer (1987) contended that schools "are basing their instructional programs on a narrow definition of literacy as reading and writing rather than recognizing that literacy is also a way of thinking and doing" (p. 10). School curriculum and tests, all too often as a result, enhance neither higher level skills nor higher cognitive development in students. Langer (1987), in her studies on testing, concluded that "students are not being encouraged to think broadly and deeply about ideas and content" (p. 10). This factor, along with education that is curriculum driven, affect student progress in areas of writing, including persuasion, as well as literate behaviors that are important to the culture. In education that is curriculum driven, the teacher tests to see what students learned about skills or information, teaches the missing information, and retests to

see if it has been learned. This cycle of test, teach, and retest does not assist students in developing greater literacy skills or greater understanding about the aforesaid ideas and content. That teachers should allow time for students to critically think, to discuss, to write, and to present their views about ideas that are valuable to them and the culture is a crucial need in education. Indeed, students get shortchanged in education that is curriculum driven as the teacher, more than the student, does the thinking about the content and subject. Langer (1987) strongly stated: "Rather than doing something new and thoughtful, such instruction emphasizes whether the student has done something right" (p. 10). According to Langer:

When reading and writing are treated as purposeful activities that grow out of shared questions and issues within the classroom culture, broader and more varied uses of literacy will be learned. The choice of methods of instruction thus becomes more than a question of *how* to teach children to read and write; it is also a question of *what* children will learn (p. 11).

More than an act of reading and writing, literacy encompasses a way of thinking. Langer addressed a critical point in her sociocognitive view, and challenged educators to facilitate higher cognitive skills and thinking into the classroom. It is evident that strengthening literacy behaviors and providing opportunities for meaningful experiences in reading and writing could more positively affect student achievement and growth. Teachers need to allow students to think, write, and to discuss deeply about

content and ideas, and to empower them to present their point of view. As students are asked to write persuasively, moreover, they will have less trouble in this mode of discourse as a result of broader learning experiences. Schools that are curriculum driven and test driven need to reconceptualize attitudes and goals relative to teaching and learning.

Ogbu (1987) conducted research among the disproportionate number of minority members who do not acquire satisfactory levels of functional literacy in the United States. Functional literacy was regarded as reading, writing, and computing. These groups included: American Indians, Black Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Puerto Ricans. He contested the explanations that were often given for minority children's difficulties in reading and writing. According to Ogbu, these were comprised of the following: a different language/dialect, a different cognitive style, a different communication style, a different interaction style, and a different type of socialization. He attested that the underlying issue was twofold:

First, whether or not the children come from a segment of society where people have traditionally experienced unequal opportunity to use their literacy skills in a socially meaningful and rewarding manner; and second, whether or not the relationship between the minorities and the dominant-group members who control the education system has encouraged the minorities to perceive and define acquisition of literacy as an instrument of deculturation without true assimilation (p. 151).

Ogbu proposed, furthermore, that minorities had more difficulty in acquiring literacy than the dominant white group due to the limited opportunities open to them for jobs and other positions where literacy "pays off." He noted also that schools continued to treat the minorities differentially and this perpetuates the problem of equity in literacy-reading and writing-performance. Whereas Langer extended the meaning of literacy in school and the culture, Ogbu used the traditional view of literacy to contribute his understanding of factors which influence minority performance in reading and writing. This overview of literacy was necessitated to obtain an understanding of the broad, underlying influences which affect student progress in the area of writing, of which persuasion is a key part.

Writing Time and Teaching

Mavrogenes and Bezruczko (1993) cited the recent NAEP report in writing: "Black twelfth graders barely outperformed white fourth graders. Only half of all twelfth graders reported writing more than two papers in the previous six weeks, and most said their writing consisted of a few paragraphs" (p. 237). The report also showed that students who read and write more frequently, perform better in these activities than those who infrequently read and write. Other studies substantiated these findings as well. Little time was spent on writing. Mavrogenes and Bezruczko cited various studies which showed that Language Arts texts

emphasize grammar and mechanics, with only fragmented writing tasks. Many teachers do not feel prepared to teach writing, and have not been required to take courses in writing, and consequently feel unequipped to teach it.

Mavrogenes and Bezruczko (1993) studied influences on writing development in government-funded programs in Chicago Public Schools consisting of 1,255 low-income African-American children. Data had been continuously collected on these students from kindergarten through fourth grade, 1986 to 1990. Sources came from teacher, parent, and student questionnaires, computerized records, and teacher ratings. The results showed low writing performance, a dislike for writing, little opportunity to write, and emphasis on mechanics over content. Content correlated lower than mechanics. The emphasis on valuing mechanics rather than on meaningful content has been confirmed in studies done throughout the United States. Mavrogenes and Bezruczko found that factors such as teacher and student expectations, motivation, and self-confidence consistently correlated with writing ability. Affective characteristics might influence expectations and self-confidence, which, in turn, could influence motivation and attitude toward writing. Teachers need to be attentive to students' attitudes, thoughts, and feelings during the writing process as this affects writing performance, as well as to be positive and confident instructors, encouraging these same qualities in students.

Mavrogenes and Bezruczko recommended that writing be taught by teachers who know about writing and have had experience with it. Children need to understand that writing is communicating for a purpose and a certain audience. Mechanics is only one aspect of the writing process. A teacher who is short-sighted as to what writing is about can impede writing ability in students by dwelling more on capitals and punctuation, for example, than on ideas and content. Organization is important insofar as thoughts need to make sense to the reader, and mechanics, in the refining stage, become important insofar as they help to clarify-by themselves, mechanics do not constitute writing. A teacher who understands the writing process plays a key role in helping students to understand and progress in this process as well.

Mavrogenes and Bezruczko credit Walmsley (1980) who suggested that states and school districts require teachers to have training in writing. The authors made this notable point:

If teachers do not know how to teach writing and do not write themselves, their students will not like or do writing either...That the disadvantaged population studied in our research was able to profit from opportunity and instruction is evident in the progress the student in the case study made in kindergarten and Grade 4, when she wrote frequently and had teachers who understood the writing process...Any knowledgeable and sensitive teacher knows that composition is crucial to one's success in the world and that a caring attitude and high expectations for each child can go a long way in preparing children for the tasks ahead of them (p. 244).

Challenges of Persuasive Writing

Studies conducted in the United States and in various countries reported poorer performance in persuasive/argumentative writing than in narrative writing. Crowhurst (1990) challenged the view that persuasive writing was too difficult for children because it was cognitively demanding. She stated:

Recent interpretations challenge both this view and the associated view that persuasive/argumentative writing should not be assigned to young writers. Given the importance of persuasive/argumentative writing, differing views about its difficulty, and competing views about ways of teaching writing, it seems useful to examine the respective roles played by development, direct instruction, and experience in the development of skill in this kind of writing (p. 349).

Crowhurst noted that large-scale assessments and controlled research studies in persuasive writing resulted in useful information, but limitations of such studies should be considered when evaluating students' abilities since most of the information regarding poor performance comes from these studies. Assigning topics and make-believe audiences does not stimulate students' best efforts. Furthermore, recent studies have shown that context powerfully affects students' writing. Students' writing performance is better when they write for real audiences and on issues that matter to them.

Common areas of weakness found in students' persuasive writing pertained to content, structure, and language. Lack of support for reasons, lack of content, poor organization, and immature or inappropriate language have been frequently

cited as problematic in students' writing performance.

Crowhurst (1990) found that when asked to write persuasively, most 10- to 12-year olds wrote pieces that could be recognized as persuasion or arguments, but other kinds of responses were made also that were non-argument. Crowhurst and other studies found that students in grades 5, 6, and 7 generally did not elaborate on the topic, often did not include concluding statements, used a small number of transitions, and wrote less varied and shorter sentences.

Crowhurst (1988) noted that whereas effective narrative writing did not seem to require complex syntax, a positive relationship was found between "effective argumentative discourse and the ability to relate propositions syntactically, an ability that improves with age" (pp. 7-8). Because argument placed a demand on students' syntactic resources, she recommended the need for future research studies to control the mode of discourse in studies of syntactic development. Crowhurst (1987) concluded that older students incorporated more extensive vocabulary and elaborated ideas more than the younger ones. Whereas grade 6 students used few conjunctives, (e.g., but), grade 12 students used a wider variety in the development of an argument (e.g., therefore, finally, however, on the other hand). In her studies, Crowhurst found that although performance improves between grade school years and high school years, evidence shows that, in general, students have

more difficulty with this kind of writing.

Persuasive writing has not been a type of writing that has been typically assigned in elementary schools. Students generally do not read argumentative writing and, according to Crowhurst (1990), "therefore have little opportunity to acquire either the organizational structures or the linguistic forms that typify formal argumentation" (p. 357). Along with the fact that students at the grade school level have not usually been encouraged to write persuasion, it is not surprising that this mode of discourse has been more problematic for them. These factors have been significant in influencing student achievement in the area of persuasive writing.

Ferris' (1994) study analyzed 60 persuasive texts by university freshman composition students, half of whom were native speakers and half of whom were non-native speakers of English. Persuasive writing, though an essential type of writing, was found to be more difficult for the average student. In general, students at the university level need to be more competent at persuasive writing. Furthermore, results showed that persuasive writing was particularly problematic for non-native speakers. Ferris analyzed the effectiveness of the components of the argument, as well as rhetorical and linguistic features. Based on Toulmin's model of argument with the use of claim, data, and warrant (1958), Ferris analyzed reasoning in the student papers.

Native speakers wrote longer papers than non-native speakers. Since effective persuasive writing depends on suitable content, this finding was significant. Both basic and advanced native speaker groups had better Toulmin scores and were more proficient at counterarguments and informal reasoning than non-native groups. However, only advanced writers made more frequent use of counterarguments and incorporated effective conclusions and closings to the argument. In addition, Ferris stated a salient point regarding the importance of content and length in persuasive writing:

The longer an essay is, the more likely it is that the writer has done an adequate job of presenting his or her claim, of supporting that claim with relevant and appropriate data, of anticipating and dealing with counterarguments, and of using warrants to show how the data support the claim. In other words, a short essay may simply not be able to address all of these components of effective persuasion (p. 56).

ESL students' lack of exposure to the conventions of formal persuasion resulted in a lack of focus and cohesion in their papers. The study points to the need for further research in the area of persuasion and second language composition. Although most of the studies dealt with grade school, followed by secondary thus far, this study provided good insight relative to ESL students' needs in learning how to write in a persuasive mode of discourse and this can be utilized in working with younger ESL students who comprise a substantial number of students in grade schools throughout the United States.

Carrell and Connor (1991) reported that in ESL research no studies have addressed the influence of specific aims of reading texts and writing, for example, persuasive and descriptive texts. They conducted a study to ascertain the relationships of intermediate-level ESL students' reading and writing of both persuasive and descriptive texts. Carrell and Connor held that descriptive and persuasive writing tasks differed distinctly from one another. Because ESL programs in the United States are growing, they saw the importance to inquire if different reading-writing relationships existed between texts written for different purposes. The results of their study showed complex interactions of genre and language proficiency. Students with higher language proficiency performed better than those with lower language proficiency. Those with higher language proficiency recalled more of the difficult persuasive text than they did of the descriptive text, while those with lower language proficiency recalled more of the descriptive text than of the persuasive text. Descriptive essays produced higher scores than persuasive essays. This important study contributed to the need for investigation into reading-writing relationships in ESL by signaling genre and level of language proficiency as factors influencing students' performance.

It has been established that students come to school with more knowledge of narrative writing than of persuasive

writing. Moreover, younger students have more difficulty with persuasion than older students due to the complexity of this mode of discourse. However, younger students ought to have more opportunities to grow and improve in this type of discourse. It has been found that students' sense of audience presented another salient concern in looking at factors influencing achievement in persuasive writing.

Audience Awareness

A distinguishing characteristic of persuasion is the effect it has on the reader. It requires the student to bear in mind that he or she is writing to persuade or influence a certain type of audience thus increasing the complexity and challenge of the task. Aubry (1995) designed a study to ascertain if presenting students with audience options would help them to better understand the process of writing. Eight high school students with difficulties in writing had an opportunity to present their work to small student groups, a teacher, one student, and themselves on videotape. Students developed a greater sensitivity to various audiences, as a result, as well as enhanced confidence in their writing and presentation. Students found each of the formats helpful, but reported their favorite one was with one other student because they felt comfortable in presenting their views and receiving feedback from another student. Students presented a final persuasive essay on videotape. While students depended on each other

for help with clarity and organization, they relied more on the teacher in areas of content and editing. More sure of their writing and what they believed, watching themselves on video and seeing themselves as their own audience, positively affected students. They presented their persuasive essays confidently and coherently. They developed strong introductions and conclusion and supported their views with evidence and reasons.

If the purpose of the task is to successfully persuade, a student cannot ignore the audience. Audience awareness is an essential element in persuasive discourse. Teachers' awareness of audience as a significant component in the persuasive form must be incorporated into the instructional process and reinforced continually with students, especially the basic writers who need more guidance relative to audience awareness.

Looking at writing as an act of communication between writer and audience, Frank (1992) explored a study of 30 fifth grade students who wrote and revised their writing for two audiences, a third grade reader and an adult reader. The task was to write two convincing newspaper advertisements to try and sell something they owned. Fifth grade students wrote more successfully for a third grade than for an adult audience. A test of significance for proportional differences, however, showed that fifth graders successfully revised their advertisement tasks to address

both audiences. The test of significance for third graders' ability to identify correctly the audiences in fifth graders' writing was a result of $z = 3.33$; $p < .01$ and adult readers' ability resulted in $z = 2.0$; $p < .05$. The fifth grade students addressed adults more formally and third graders more informally; students used more sophisticated words and selling tactics for adults and more modified ones for third graders. The influence of selling tactics by the media and students' awareness of this played a role in students' revision. Students learned the responsibility they had as writers to adapt to various interests and expectations of their audiences. Frank concluded that "when young writers address real peer and adult audiences, they are able to target effectively both groups...students need opportunities to address audiences outside their classrooms" (p. 291). This notion of writing for real audiences has remained a salient point throughout various studies which emphasized the need for more authentic conditions in persuasive writing tasks. Frank's study demonstrated, in a commendable way, how students can communicate and effectively persuade by learning how to appeal to varying audiences.

A student needs to think about his or her audience before the conception of writing a persuasive form. Mancuso (1985), in her dissertation, noted the importance of a proper balance among the writer, the audience, and the

message in effective persuasive writing. She defined audience as "the individual or group for which written communication is intended" (p. 3). She undertook a study to investigate audience awareness of gifted and non-gifted fifth-graders. Thirty-nine gifted and thirty-nine non-gifted students wrote to a friend, a teacher, and an editor, persuading them to go to the park. Even though findings showed that gifted students used a wider range of appeals than non-gifted students, it was found, also, that fifth graders evidenced an awareness of audience. She stressed the importance of students' interests in topics and previous experiences when writing persuasion to encourage more effective writing and audience awareness.

Studies have verified that audience concern influences student performance in the persuasive mode of writing and that further research needs to be done in this area. Crowhurst and Piche (1979) undertook a study to investigate the effect of intended audience and mode of discourse on the syntactic complexity of compositions written by students in grades six and ten. The modes of discourse were narration, description, and argument. In analyzing the syntactic complexity of students' writing in descriptive, narrative, and persuasive forms, it was ascertained that audience differences were most evident in argument. Argument evoked more demands on students' syntactic resources and sense of audience than did narration or description.

In another study, Mullis (1985) investigated three grade levels, fourth, eighth, and eleventh relative to audience. Results showed that one third gave little or no evidence of recognizing the point of view of their audience, one third noted the concerns of their audience, and one third addressed the concerns of their audience. The student's were given someone's position and asked to change their mind. An example included "Radio Station: Change Mind of Station Manager So You Can Visit."

Tompkins (1994) stated that "the ability to tailor writing to fit the audience is perhaps most important in persuasive writing because the writer can judge how effective the persuasion is by readers' reactions" (p. 305). Research has shown that students' ability to adapt their writing to readers' interests and needs improves when they have a clear purpose and pertinent reason for writing persuasively. In Hill's (1988) study of an instructional program in expressive-narrative, informative, and persuasive writing of ninth-graders, a significant finding dealt with emergence of "voice." The persuasive topics facilitated students finding a "voice" in their writing more than the informative topics did. This "voice" sharpened one's point of view, as Langer also suggested, and allowed students to affirm their ideas, beliefs, and feelings in a written mode. Writing about topics that are of value to students accentuates their sense of audience and "voice" as well as

their skills to think and to question more critically and convincingly.

Gender and Persuasive Writing

Prater and Padia's study (1983) showed that girls performed better than boys in grades four and six across expressive, expository, and persuasive writing tasks. They reported that after age 10, females scored higher than males in verbal skills. A noteworthy result found in Knudson's (1991) study pertained to sex differences in writing. She found that girls wrote better than boys in persuasive writing immediately after the study, but not two weeks later. Burkhalter (1995) concluded that girls had greater verbal abilities than boys and this, in turn, facilitated greater performance by girls than boys at writing tasks, including persuasive ones. In a persuasive writing study conducted by Burkhalter, the results showed that all girls had higher pretest and posttest scores than boys. Other findings have shown, too, that girls perform better in areas such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Further studies related to gender and persuasive writing could provide more insight relative to this factor and its influence on students' performance in the mode of persuasive or argumentative writing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this section of the review of related literature focused on factors that influenced student achievement in the area of persuasive writing. Langer posited that curriculum driven schools and tests minimized students' potential to attain higher literacy skills and levels of cognitive development and proposed a sociocognitive view of learning. Studies showed that little time was spent on writing in schools and schools emphasized mechanics over content; in addition, many teachers did not feel prepared or confident to teach writing. Mavrogenes and Bezruczko recommended that states and school districts require teachers to have training in writing. Recent studies challenged the view that persuasive writing was too difficult for younger children and affirmed that this essential mode of discourse belonged in the elementary classroom. Crowhurst looked at challenging factors such as content, structure, language, and syntactic complexity in students' writing performance. Even though persuasive writing has been considered more cognitively demanding than other kinds of writing, students need more opportunity to read and to write persuasion and argumentation. This also held true for students and second language composition. Several studies verified the importance of audience awareness in composing persuasive texts. Persuasive writing places more intellectual demands on the student since its

purpose is to change or influence the thought or action of the reader/audience. Students tend to perform better at persuasive tasks when they write for real audiences and for relevant purposes. The role of gender in persuasive writing needs further examination, albeit a few studies have indicated that girls tend to write better than boys. Overall, a dearth of research on persuasive writing exists and further studies in the area of factors influencing achievement in this mode of discourse would be beneficial.

Views on Teaching Persuasive Writing

Writing instruction has been instituted in schools for a long time; however, research to understand the writing process was initiated only in the past two decades (Langer & Applebee, 1987). Early writing research centered on a more holistic view of writing, and not until the 1970s and 1980s did research examine the subprocesses in writing. Langer and Applebee (1987) concurred that:

Recent reforms in the teaching of writing offer more than a series of new activities to achieve more effectively teachers' current instructional goals; they also have the potential to transform our conceptions of the nature of teaching and the nature of learning in school contexts (p. 9).

They were concerned about the role of writing in learning and the nature of effective instruction. How writing shapes thinking and fosters academic learning remain central themes in their work.

Educators today have given more attention to theories that guide the teaching of writing. Traditional approaches

have been scrutinized as teachers realized that students' writing ability was not improving. This lack of progress ushered in an abundance of research on effective writing instruction. More difficult than being aware of what effective writing involves was the task of implementing new strategies. Progress has been ensued, however slowly, because change takes time and because traditional approaches have been operative in schools for so long. Traditional approaches to writing have focused on the writing product. The 1970s and 1980s brought a major shift, however, in looking at writing as process. The traditional approach emphasized rules of grammar, analyzing examples of good form, learning the rules of form and practicing them. Warriner's *Handbook of English Grammar and Composition* (1951) is a model of this approach and is still widely used today (Langer & Applebee, 1987).

Current research has attested to the limitations inherent in the traditional approach. The teaching of grammar has not necessarily resulted in improvement in writing. Applebee (1994) said, "Twenty years ago, one could teach writing without asking students to write" (p. 41). Proett and Gill (1986) said, "Neither a half-century of negative research nor much pragmatic negative classroom experience has laid this notion entirely to rest" (p. 1). Contrary to traditional approaches, process approaches maintained that parts of writing should be seen only as they

evolve from the whole.

The process approach to writing evoked widespread support among English teachers who taught writing. Tompkins (1994) defined the writing process as "a way of looking at writing instruction in which the emphasis is shifted from students' finished products to what students think and do as they write" (p. 7). This reinforced Langer's view of literacy as a way of thinking and doing and emphasizing thinking strategies during the writing process. Writing as process encourages students to think through and organize ideas before writing and to rethink and revise their first draft. According to Langer and Applebee (1987):

Activities typically associated with process approaches to writing instruction include brainstorming, journal writing, emphasizing students' ideas and experiences, small-group activities, teacher-student conferences, multiple drafts, postponing concern with editing skills until the final draft, and deferring or eliminating grades. Process activities are often subdivided into stages such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing (p. 6).

The California Bay Area Writing Project, in 1970, was credited for proposing the writing process model. Over the years teachers have utilized the original model or made adaptations to it. The Bay Area model, however, included an evaluation component following the revision stage. Revisions and corrections could be done with the teacher, with peers, or with a teacher-demonstration with the class. Evaluation could be made through peer audiences, teacher and self-evaluation. The Bay Area Writing Project was so

successful that it became the National Writing Project. The model consisted of prewriting, composing, assessment/revision/proofing, and evaluation.

Langer and Applebee (1987) found that process-oriented approaches, however, were not widely used in other subjects outside of English. While many English teachers may support the process approach, Langer and Applebee discovered that these teachers of other subjects have a scarcity of models to help them foster learning through writing. They concur that even though journal literature has been filled with suggestions as to how process writing approaches might be implemented, teachers need more training in and experience with the process approach so as to more effectively integrate it into their classrooms. Applebee and Langer found that often those teachers who were committed to having students write for deeper and more varied purposes, and who endeavored to learn the new strategies, had difficulty in carrying them out.

Proett and Gill (1986) stressed that all elements of the writing process should be worked on during class so that the teacher can coach and monitor progress. They attest that the process approach has fostered student growth in writing. Langer and Applebee upheld this approach to writing and suggested that it has the potential to foster thinking and learning. While embracing the belief that writing is related to thinking, and advocating writing

across the curriculum, they evidenced a dearth of research connecting writing to learning and instruction. They cited their reports from the NAEP assessment, and, while acknowledging that schools have satisfactorily taught lower-level skills, more complex reasoning skills have not shown much improvement. Students being deficient in higher order thinking skills needs to be a major concern of schools; moreover, this concern was addressed in 1983 in *A Nation at Risk*. Langer and Applebee (1986) further stated:

Students have difficulty performing adequately on analytic writing tasks, as well as on persuasive tasks that ask them to defend and support their opinions. Some of these problems may reflect a pervasive lack of instructional emphasis on developing higher order skills in all areas of the curriculum...Students need broadbased experiences in which reading and writing tasks are integrated with their work throughout the curriculum (p. 4).

Langer (1986) posited that if the teaching of writing was improved in schools, concomitantly so would the quality of thinking among students be improved. Langer said that "Good writing and careful thinking go hand in hand" (p. 3). The persuasive mode of discourse necessitates critical, clear, and careful thinking. Routman (1996) encourages teachers not to overlook the importance of conventions in writing and concurs with Graves' view that conventions should be taught more. Routman noted that "Conventions exist to allow for good, crisp thought. If they are missing, then the thinking can be sloppy. The writer needs them just as much as the reader" (p. 88).

Giroux (1988) viewed writing as an interdisciplinary process, helping students to think critically and rationally. Looking at writing as a process takes into consideration what happens when students write and, consequently, what learning takes place. He examined writing as "a series of relationships between the writer and the subject, between the writer and the reader, and between the subject matter and the reader" (p. 59). Giroux, similar to Langer and others, considered writing in its capacious relationship to the learning and communicating process. Unfortunately, a traditional approach to writing still persists due to the growth of the back-to-basics movement in education. Giroux believed that teachers should be active participants in planning curricula materials compatible with the social and cultural milieus in which they teach. In his book, *Teachers as Intellectuals* (1988), Giroux viewed teaching as an important human activity which integrated thinking and practice. To Giroux, teachers should be viewed as "free men and women with a special dedication to the values of the intellect and the enhancement of the critical powers of the young" (p. 125). Teachers should not be reduced to merely implementing prepackaged curricula and instructional procedures, but should take active roles relative to what and how they teach in light of the goals they espouse.

Traditional approaches to writing emphasized direct

instruction about good characteristics of writing with practice and correction. The focus was on "how to" and "what works" and was more technical in perspective. Teacher as transmitter of knowledge was aligned with this approach. Contrary to this, a second position upheld that teachers should not interpose very much with students' writing, yet they should provide a stimulating environment.

Mier (1984) pointed out that educators and theorists concur that students should be able to write clear and convincing arguments, providing evidence while adapting to their audience, however, they do not agree on approaches to achieve these goals. As a result, varying strategies and ideas exist on how persuasive writing should be taught. Mier noted that persuasive writing challenged a student to move from a writer-based to a reader-based prose, clarifying their ideas for an audience, and consequently could help improve critical thinking and writing skills. Furthermore, she noted five elements of persuasive writing instruction which students needed:

First, instruction must stimulate students' interest and ideas. Second, it must help them see persuasive writing as a means to clarify personal values. Third, it must encourage them to move toward reader-based prose, to address their opponents' concerns. Fourth, it must provide a means for evaluating arguments. Fifth, it must present concrete guidelines for organizing arguments (p. 173).

Mier's recommendations for persuasive or argumentation instruction, succinctly and forcefully delineate what cannot be left out or neglected in this mode of discourse.

Students ought to be encouraged to draw on their knowledge and experience of other subjects while composing a persuasive piece, whenever applicable. Not only does students' awareness of the interdisciplinary nature of learning increase, but critical as well as creative thinking skills sharpen also. Sharit (1983) described how her fifth graders developed original arguments. One student, for example, wrote about whale hunting. From science she linked the killing of whales with a break in the food chain; from American history she contrasted the consciousness of waste by Native Americans with wastefulness of whalers. To anticipate an opposing view, she retorted that "Everything the whalers take has a substitute." To stimulate interest in the topic, Sharit also encouraged students to pursue resources outside of school. These ranged from interviewing local police about dog leash laws to reading magazine articles about designer jeans. Moreover, teachers can enrich the writing experiences of their students through the use of word-processing, internet, and e-mail.

Crowhurst (1991) examined if students' writing of persuasion could be improved with instruction and if the effect of reading on writing and of writing on reading could improve students' writing. Three instructional groups and one control group made up the subjects of the study of 110 sixth graders. One reading and two writing posttests were given. Instruction took place twice a week for five weeks.

Examples of instruction for the writing group included (a) a model of persuasive discourse, and (b) a reading exemplifying the model. The model outlined the structure of the essay and consisted of a statement of belief, reasons, supporting ideas, and conclusion. Students also practiced writing and revising four persuasive pieces of writing. They brainstormed pro and con reasons for a topic such as, "Is it wrong to keep whales in captivity in an aquarium?" After pairs of students checked each other's first drafts, they wrote a revised paper. In the reading with instruction group, students identified statements of belief, reasons, and so on. Students were given persuasive readings, discussed each one, and elicited counterarguments. The reading with discussion group discussed persuasive readings, but were not given instruction. The control group received instruction and practice in group discussion skills.

The results of the study showed that persuasive writing of upper elementary students could be improved by instruction. Students with instruction in writing and reading performed better on the posttests than did the control group. The former used more elaborations, organizational structure, and concluding statements than did the latter. The improvement in the writing (30 percent) and reading group (23 percent) on writing quality significantly showed an increase from pretest to posttest. The effect of writing on reading showed no positive effect, although the

effect of reading on writing showed that students transferred knowledge more from reading to writing.

Even though the literature has revealed that students generally did poorly in persuasive writing at the elementary level, Crowhurst's study documented that students' persuasive or argumentative writing can be improved through instruction. Furthermore, most students did not slip into narrative writing in this study, though many compositions were characteristically short. Crowhurst concluded that students needed guidance and instruction to become better persuasive writers. Those students provided with instruction in the persuasive model developed more reasons, details, conclusions, and organizational schema than those without instruction. Moreover, less immature and inappropriate writing was evidenced in the experimental group. Two elements, for instance, that increased greatly for the reading and writing groups were the incorporation of transitional devices and conclusions. The use of conclusions increased almost by 100 percent from pretest to posttest. Most students did not include a form of closure on the pretest, and those who did, provided brief ones. Crowhurst affirmed that quality instruction was necessary for the persuasive form and that instructing students in structures and linguistic forms was insufficient. To write effectively in the persuasive mode, "A child must develop a persuasion schema for written discourse. Instruction may

not improve persuasive writing if it is poorly done because it is cognitively too difficult" (p. 156). This reinforced the point that teachers need to have knowledge of and experience with writing if they are to effectively teach it. Teachers should also be cautioned about assigning topics to students that elicit little meaning to them. Crowhurst suggested the following:

Topics should be important to students. Students should be encouraged to direct their persuasive writing to teachers, classmates, principals and others, and to select issues they feel strongly about. To clarify their thoughts, students should engage large- and small-group discussion of issues, and should do pre-writing in which they mull over the issue in question. Students should not only write—they should also read persuasive/argumentative writing (p. 357).

Knudson (1991) conducted a study of 159 fourth, sixth, and eighth-grade students. Seventy-two percent were Anglo, 22% were Hispanic, 5% were Black, and 1% was Oriental. They were instructed in persuasive writing with one of four strategies. The first treatment consisted of utilizing model pieces of writing and provided students with opportunities to write. The second treatment consisted of scales and questions intended to guide writing and revision. The third treatment consisted of a combination of the first and second treatments. The fourth treatment consisted of students writing about a picture that was shown to them, without instruction in persuasion to this control group. For 14 days, 20 minutes per day, students were instructed in writing. Writing samples were collected from students both

at the end of the experiment and two weeks later. For both writing samples, results showed that eighth-grade students wrote better than fourth and sixth-grade students. Also, eighth grade students performed as well after treatment and two weeks, whereas the other two groups did not. This reaffirms the research that older children write better in persuasion than younger ones. Knudson noted also that a student's sense of audience can influence his or her ability to write persuasively also.

Knudson presented some recommendations for teaching. Similar to Crowhurst, she proposed that teachers provide model pieces of persuasive writing followed by students writing in this mode. Questions and scales to guide writing were helpful in the revision process. Since writing should be viewed as both a developmental and instructional process, students should develop oral discourse structures before written ones. Oral activities expand students' resources for writing. Knudson viewed role-playing as an effective activity for students in applying what they have learned.

Wagner (1987) also found a positive effect of role-playing on persuasive letter writing of 84 fourth and 70 eighth-grade students. Students wrote better letters after role-playing. Students who role-played adapted their persuasion to their audience more effectively than students who did not. Role-playing prior to writing the rough draft resulted in better letters. Role-playing in partners was

significantly more effective for fourth-graders than a lecture and examples, and more effective for eighth-graders than no instruction. Consequently, integrating oral and dramatic activities into the process of writing improved persuasive writing and students' enjoyment of it.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) described three teacher models for teaching reading and writing. Model A teacher represents the status quo which has long dominated American education. Writing assignments are given with minimal preparation, and when they are turned in, this teacher grades them on the criteria of content and language, providing suggestions for improvement. However, most of the time, no revision of the papers are requested. Teacher B follows a knowledge-based approach. In this model, teachers encourage students to write about what they know. Before writing on a topic, students have opportunity to discuss, read, and take part in various activities to strengthen their knowledge. Second drafts of writing are requested. The Teacher C model is an intentional learning model. The teacher incorporates the development of learning and thinking skills. Teacher C, for example, provides writing tasks that present special challenges so students can learn problem solving skills. According to Bereiter and Scardamalia, "Teacher A represents how written composition are commonly handled in schools and...Teacher B and Teacher C represent significant improvements over this norm" (p.

11). Though all three have merit, the Teacher C model focuses on higher-order skills and its "potential to make high literacy an attainable goal for students who do not already come from environments of high literacy" (p. 12). Since much of persuasive writing involves problem solving strategies and challenging students to higher levels of thinking, the Teacher C model enriches students thinking and writing abilities simultaneously.

Students need to be taught the organizational schema for persuasive writing. A persuasive essay needs to be well-organized. According to Tompkins (1994), it has a beginning, middle, and end. The student states a position, thesis, or opinion clearly at the beginning. In the middle, the student tries to persuade or convince others that the opinion is worth considering by presenting three or more reasons; moreover, a student may appeal to reason, emotions, or character. A student orders the reasons in a logical way, such as most to least important, and includes concrete examples where appropriate. Transitional words signal the order of the essay. Younger students typically use simpler ones such as "first, secondly, also," while older students, in general, include such words as "therefore, in conclusion." In the end, a student concludes by stating an attitude or action he or she wants the reader to take. Usually a student provides a personal statement, makes a prediction, or summarizes the major points. A student

should be provided with some type of checklist to evaluate the organization of the essay. Tompkins proposed the following: "At the beginning, did you state your position or opinion clearly? In the middle, did you present three pieces of evidence (or reasons) to support your position? At the end, did you lead your readers to the conclusion" (p. 266)? An example of a well-organized essay is offered by Tompkins in *Teaching Writing*. A sixth grade student wrote an essay about drinking soft drinks in class:

I think we, the students of Deer Creek School, should be allowed to drink refreshments during class. One reason is that it seems to speed the passing of the day. Secondly, I feel it is unfair and rude for teachers to drink coffee and soft drinks in front of the students. Finally, I think if the students were not worried about making trips to the water fountain, they would concentrate more on school work. Being allowed to drink refreshments would be a wonderful addition to the school day (1994, p. 258).

In a process approach to writing, even younger students can develop a variety of strategies which include finding and organizing ideas about a topic, developing introductions, critically reading a rough draft, making revisions, and identifying mechanical errors. While older students often write a five-paragraph essay, younger students often write shorter ones, such as in the above-mentioned example. Tompkins formulated five steps to facilitate persuasive instruction using a process approach: "Examine how persuasion is used in everyday life; identify a topic and develop a list of reasons to support the position; write the rough draft; revise and edit the essay; and, share

the essay" (pp. 261-265).

It is beneficial if students have some type of plan or organizational scheme in the prewriting stage of a persuasive task. This enables students to visualize order and direction to their writing. Furthermore, it can strengthen that part of the argument students often are weakest in-providing evidence or support for their viewpoint. A graphic schema, cluster, web, list, and map exemplify some of these prewriting strategies. In a mapping technique, for instance, students use a wheel-shaped blank outline and fill in the hub of the wheel with main ideas and the spokes with supporting information. Any visual such as a wheel or a house helps students to internalize the persuasive or argument form more successfully than does verbal expression alone.

Tompkins (1994) explained that teachers and children need to discuss persuasion as it used in everyday life, in positions taken by various people on issues, and in literature. Young students' experience, knowledge, or observation of persuasion can stimulate their knowledge in this type of discourse. In social interaction, Devenney (1988) said, "People make requests, assert rights, ask for extensions of rights, apologize, role-play authority, clarify, apologize, request action, describe, protest, call attention to problems, and express personal opinions" (pp. 52-53). Students need to realize that persuasion is a

common and often potent form of discourse. Bringing this type of discourse closer to their lives, perhaps will foster in students a greater appreciation and understanding of persuasion and argument. Furthermore, persuasive writing has more value and appeal to students if they know it will be shared with a real audience. Presenting to classmates, for instance, can increase students' sense of audience as well as provide a forum to receive feedback on the effectiveness of the argument.

Prater and Padia's (1983) study of 140 fourth and sixth grade students across three modes of discourse-expressive, explanatory, persuasive-confirmed that students needed more guidance and instruction in persuasive tasks. They undertook a study to look at this type of comparison. Seventy fourth grade students and 70 sixth grade students from six schools in California from urban and suburban areas were drawn for this study. All students wrote papers on each of three types of writing within a one week period. They were given a writing prompt for expressive, explanatory, and persuasive writing. The essays were scored using a four-point holistic scale and the readers were twelve elementary teachers who were trained in this kind of procedure. The results of the ANOVA showed three significant main effects and one interaction effect. The main effect due to type of discourse, grade, and sex were significant at $p < .01$, and the interaction between grade

and sex and topic was significant at $p < .05$. Girls performed better than boys on each kind of writing. Whereas expressive skills can be attained through general instruction, persuasive skills need more focused instruction. Students' skills persuasion need to be addressed at the onset of elementary school so as to foster in students an increased ability to handle this more complex kind of writing. If persuasive and argumentative tasks were presented to students earlier on in school, furthermore, they would have less difficulty with these later on in high school and college. Studies have verified that gains in quality of written composition take place between nine and 13 years of age, but that little gains take place between 13 and 17 years of age.

Atwell's (1987) work with middle school students in her writer's workshop has inspired and challenged teachers across the country to learn how to be better writing teachers. She changed from a using a presentational approach to a process approach by observing how students learned. She saw that students wrote to please the teacher when she assigned papers of dubious interest to them. Atwell quoted Bissex who said that, "The logic by which we teach is not always the logic by which we learn" (p. 3). Moving out from behind her desk to learn and to collaborate with students in their writing, Atwell discovered that she became a more effective teacher. By working with students

as in a workshop, students perceived themselves as writers and began to develop more responsibility and self-sufficiency in their writing, and more of a spirit of cooperation with others. She used mini-lessons to help students understand the skills and stages of process writing, organized a classroom conducive to writing, encouraged students to make decisions about writing, to take risks, and to confer with one another.

Atwell noted that a writing conference with a student stimulated a young writer's thinking about a topic; gradually, students applied these thinking and questioning skills on their own. Students also learned not to get bogged down with editing concerns during the process of writing their drafts. Attention was given to conventions and mechanics after they were satisfied with a persuasive piece they had written, for example. Because the paper is written to be read, editing was important so meaning was clear to the reader. After editing, students submitted their paper to Atwell for final editing. She dealt with only a few skills per editing conference so students could better absorb this new learning. The editing stage was integral to successful persuasive writing because students had written on issues and to audiences that they cared about and hoped to affect. Students also maintained a portfolio of their finished pieces of writing and assessed their writing growth. In *Workshop 3*, Atwell noted the value of

teachers connecting with parents and community. Parents volunteered their help by publishing children's writing, assisting with small groups and special programs.

Williams (1993) supported student collaboration in persuasive writing tasks as an effective method in learning how to write. Williams saw students grow in written and interpersonal skills in his classroom. He contended that writing was learned more than taught, and that a process approach allowed students to be closer to the writing activity from beginning to end. Upper elementary students benefitted from interaction within student groups and teacher conferences. Students helped one another by clarifying topics, generating ideas, giving feedback, and revising and editing; moreover, students gained a more positive attitude toward persuasive writing. Unlike traditional approaches to writing which were teacher-directed with little student interaction, a group approach elicited more involvement and interest in the persuasive task. This social context reinforced Langer's concern that students developed higher literacy behaviors and skills in activities that were socially meaningful.

Burkhalter (1995) offered new insights into how persuasive writing can be done in elementary schools by espousing a Vygotsky-based curriculum. Her study affirmed that children had the capacity to write successfully in the persuasive mode. She hypothesized that preformal children

(younger than age 11) could increase their ability to write persuasive essays at an earlier age than Piaget's developmental stages would predict. She reported that elementary children have been given little exposure to persuasive writing because it has been considered too difficult and involved formal-operational skills such as analyzing and synthesizing. A Vygotsky social-interactionist approach was employed in this study to determine if fourth and sixth graders improved in persuasive writing ability with the help of adults and peers. She hypothesized that young students, in other words, can learn new skills through interaction with teachers, parents, or peers in persuasive writing tasks that would be too hard to learn alone.

Vygotsky believed that a child should be challenged to attain higher levels of thinking and should have opportunities to read and to write persuasive genre. Persuasive writing cognitively challenges students: it requires them to take a stand on a topic and to support it, to organize their ideas in an argumentation schema, and to influence an audience. This has not been an easy task for any age group, and all the more reason why it needs to be given more emphasis in elementary classrooms. Vygotsky believed that learning preceded development and that persuasive writing should not be delayed until later years.

In Burkhalter's (1995) study, 153 fourth and sixth-

grade students in New Hampshire wrote two persuasive essays, with three weeks of instruction, 45 minutes daily for the experimental group. A comparison group was not instructed in persuasive writing. The following provide examples of objectives and kinds of instruction used.

Objective #1: To help students recognize a persuasive essay. Using local newspapers, the teacher and students have a class discussion to identify differences between factual articles and persuasion.

Objective #2: To help students develop arguments and anticipate a reader's objection. The teacher asks students to brainstorm reasons why they should have a gerbil in the classroom; conversely, she asks for a reason why she might object. Students need to address objections in their essays along with solutions to a problem. Students practice this by writing a persuasive letter.

Objective #3: To motivate students to write persuasive essays. Knowing that their letters actually will be sent to their principal, a TV station or school newspaper motivates young writers. In a weekly children's news show, students are asked to submit essays supporting their viewpoint on a current issue designated by the show. Two weeks later the survey results are televised and excerpts from letters are read.

Objective #4: To transfer oral argumentation skills into written ones. Students need to feel comfortable with their ideas before putting pen to paper. A debate can help by giving them a live audience and by providing them with a source of arguments they may not have considered. Students hold a debate on the television topic: "Should families be allowed to choose the school their children attend"?

Objective #5: To identify strong and weak arguments. A good argument is one that is judged stronger and more convincing than another. An argument is weak if it does not support the claim. In groups of four, students made a list of possible pets for the classroom and gave reasons why each would be good and bad. Students reported why they decided on a certain pet. Students wrote on the topic and evaluated each other's essays by marking E for effective and I for

Ineffective and suggested how the ineffective papers could be made stronger.

Objective #6: To support their viewpoint. An argument is more believable and persuasive if the writer can justify it with enough evidence. During editing conferences, partners helped each other to elaborate on their arguments by supplying more information to convince the reader (pp. 194-195).

In Burkhalter's study, students wrote a total of five essays including the pretest and posttests. Findings showed that all students in the experimental group performed better than those in the comparison group. Regarding claims, the control group girls ($M=4.56$, $sd=12.41$) scored higher on the pre- and posttests than boys ($M=1.98$, $sd=1.79$). The experimental group girls ($M=3.18$, $sd= 1.89$) also scored higher than boys ($M=2.82$, $sd= 1.97$). The significant finding evidenced that even younger children improved their ability to write persuasively, regardless of the challenge. Students were weakest in the area of warrants or elaborating on details to make the point convincing to the reader. That sixth graders performed better in this area reinforced the literature that younger students tended to write shorter essays than older students. Fourth grade males scored lower on the posttest ($M=.72$, $sd=1.11$) on warrants than on the pretest ($M=.93$, $sd=1.40$). All other groups scored higher on the posttest. All girls scored higher on the pre- and posttests than boys. From adult and peer interaction, students, however, successfully applied the new learning of persuasive writing skills to their writing. Overall, these

positive findings should encourage elementary teachers to tap students' potentiality for writing in the persuasive genre. Students responded effectively and creatively to persuasive tasks when teachers instructed them at their level. As Burkhalter stated: "If children are given the chance to read and write persuasive essays, they may very well advance beyond our expectations and set the stage for subsequent gains in learning" (p. 193).

Values and Persuasive Writing

Finally, values and moral attitudes of students hold a central place in persuasive writing. These cannot be separated when students write on issues and topics that truly are important to them. Because students' value systems influence their viewpoint, teachers need to stimulate an awareness of this during the process of persuasive or argumentative writing. Students need a safe and trusting classroom environment in which to discuss, clarify, and affirm values and moral attitudes. Whether students are at the preconventional, conventional, or postconventional level of Kohlberg's stages of moral development, they need to be cognizant of their value orientation and how this affects their persuasive tasks. Certainly, a writer can generate a stronger, and more convincing argument if he or she presents it with both knowledge and conviction.

Barnsley and Wilkinson (1981) examined moral attitudes

on a persuasive task involving 30 children, ages 7-13. The writing prompt was: "Would it work if children came to school when they liked and did what they liked there?" Over half the seven-year-olds expressed how it would affect them personally, and were not aware of other implications. A typical response at this stage of development pertained to the student being able to stay at home and watch TV. Eighty-eight percent of the 10-year-olds responded at the conventional level of moral development. Most realized that not going to school would affect others such as parents, teachers, bus drivers, and other children. While most thirteen-year-olds argued at the conventional level, they considered how options about school would affect those in the school system and in society. The students' varied levels of moral development were largely reflected by their age group and corroborated Kohlberg's theory. It is important that teachers have understanding of students' moral stages of development and offer students the opportunity to better understand them as well during the process of persuasive writing.

Finally, persuasive writing allows students to express and affirm what they truly think and believe about a topic of concern to them. Roberts (1991) observed that students do better at persuasive tasks if they believe their opinions matter or could influence others. Often, students think they have to take extreme stands on a controversial issue;

however, Roberts cited Habermas' idea that argument does not always have to be posed in binary or opposed ways. "For or against gun control," for example, might be too unwieldy for some students to handle; students can take some aspect of gun control to write on, such as, "banning handguns would reduce domestic violence." This idea can be applied to other topics as well and is beneficial for students who especially find it difficult to voice their opinion or take a stand on a major controversial issue. Providing time and opportunity for students to reflect on and to discuss values and moral attitudes in the prewriting stage of persuasive discourse is time well spent. Integrating these with knowledge and experience strengthens the writer in his or her goal to persuade more convincingly:

Efficacy of Staff Development

More attention has been given to the importance of teaching writing in American schools. Historically, teachers were not trained to teach writing, and consequently, little writing was taking place in schools. Today, even though more teachers are seeking help and training in writing instruction, most English teachers have never had a course in the teaching of writing. Writing is still a major issue and concern in education. Moreover, greater emphasis needs to be given to the complex process of persuasive writing in elementary schools if students are going to write more successfully in this essential mode of

discourse. Teachers of writing should have knowledge of and experience with writing. Teachers who do not know how to teach writing and do not write themselves can negatively affect students' attitudes towards writing. In order for students to grow in their writing potential, teachers must gain knowledge about writing and evaluate their attitudes toward it.

In another dissertation, Metz (1993) examined the effects of teacher apprehension about writing of a teacher training model designed to help implement a process approach to teaching writing. Metz wondered if teachers do a better job at writing instruction if they are comfortable with it. A three week summer institute based on Emig's teacher training model became known as the New Jersey Writing Project (NJWP). More than 3,000 teachers in Texas between 1974 and 1984 have received training based on this model. Metz said that those who are involved with teacher training maintain that teachers of writing should write themselves. Metz concluded from her study that teacher apprehension about writing was significantly decreased through attending the NJWP summer institute in 1991. Teachers spent a great deal of time writing and sharing writing with other teachers. It is essential that teachers understand the writing process so as to better inculcate this in their students.

O'Shea and Egan (1980) asserted that schools must

expand the fullness of students' potential and help them critically and logically think and articulate confidently and persuasively. Students need to be shown how to use their point of view to enhance individual and societal goals. Teachers, consequently, have a responsibility to foster in students the ability to express themselves clearly; moreover, persuasive writing is essential to this expression.

The New Jersey Writing Project is based on Emig's idea that a teacher of writing must write. Linett and White, as co-directors of the NJWP, support writing workshops and begin each one by having teachers write for an hour. Linett (1994) said that following this, she forms teachers into groups of four and asks them to share what they wrote; fellow peers respond to each other's writing. Everybody's contributions are valued. The small group provides a small, comfortable, and engaging milieu for teachers. A large group in the afternoon brings common problems and issues in writing to the fore. They are imbued in writing, theory, and practice for three weeks. Linett found that writing workshops empowered teachers greatly to become better learners and teachers of writing and many shifted to using workshops in their own classes.

The Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP), begun in 1974 by James Gray, became known also as the National Writing Project (NWP) in 1983 and has produced the most widespread

and successful plan for curriculum change in recent years. (The NJWP is similar to BAWP's staff development model.) Most of the sites in the United States are associated with universities, where secondary and elementary teachers work to develop approaches to the teaching of writing. It provides an exemplary model of staff development in the teaching of writing. Flinn (1982) said, "The NWP's greatest strength is in its power to help individual teachers change and grow" (p. 52). She reported that graduates of the summer institute, called teacher-consultants, lead inservice programs for fellow teachers in the schools. Teachers teaching other teachers and collaborating, sharing ideas, experience, and methods about writing are just a few components that resulted in teachers feeling "revitalized" in teaching/writing strategies. Teachers teaching other teachers is key to the success of this project. That teachers of writing must write themselves is another salient feature of BAWP and NJWP. In a summer institute, teachers write, critique, revise their drafts in small groups, and their best work is published in-house. They often model their own classrooms in the workshop approach. Students do a great deal of writing and respond to each other's papers. Sometimes students publish their writing to share at "young authors" conferences. True effectiveness of the program results when teachers from all grade levels and content areas are involved. Staff development is most effective

when it is ongoing. Different from earlier national projects which were based on research in university labs, the NWP or BAWP affirms both research and teachers' classroom practices. Flinn reiterated that the focus is on teachers and that teachers come to the institute to develop curriculum, to grow as teachers, not to receive a packaged program. Teachers also share strategies for writing and discuss recent literature on writing and teaching. Flinn noted that the summer institutes are "designed to transform their approaches to the teaching of writing" (p. 51). Three essential characteristics of the program include research, writing, and teaching methods.

Marsh, Knudsen and Knudsen (1987) studied the effect of three kinds of staff development on the implementation of different components of the Bay Area Writing Program for secondary and elementary teachers. The first kind of staff development, called the Summer Institute, met for five days a week for three weeks and was comprised of teachers from grades K-13. The second kind, referred to as the Open Program, was held during the school year and led by teachers who graduated from the summer program. This consisted of teachers of varied grade and subject areas, and involved 30 class hours during a one to three month period. Due to time limitations, participants presented and wrote less than those in the summer program. The third kind of staff development was a one-day orientation workshop which was led

by graduates of the summer program. These inservice days were organized around the needs and the desires of the teachers who had concerns about student writing, writing across the curriculum, and student writing response groups.

The study took place in Germany within the Department of Defense Dependents School System which provides American education to children of U.S. military and civilian personnel. Forty teachers participated in the study. Each teacher was interviewed to share perceptions about the implementation process, and the authors utilized the Concerns-Based Adoption Model called Levels of Use (Loucks, Newlove, & Hall, 1975). Results showed that teachers' implementation of the components of BAWP were connected to the intensity of the mode of staff development.

Participants were interviewed with a tape recorder and data analysis using chi-square and the Friedman two-way analysis of variance were used, furthermore, to determine the extent of the implementation. Institute teachers also expressed that they felt less isolated in teaching as they were part of a larger project group drawn from all over Germany.

Marsh, Knudsen and Knudsen said the teachers believed that a "revitalization had taken place in their teaching strategies as a result of the Writing Project," and while teachers in the Open Program and Inservice reported a "reawakening of their enthusiasm, Institute participants exhibited a longer lasting revitalization" (p. 38). A majority from all staff

developments thought they had created new methods for teaching writing and valued the teachers teaching teachers approach. All teachers valued the clarity, practicality, and quality of BAWP. The inservice teachers felt motivated to try new writing strategies due to the enthusiastic presentations of other teachers. The authors noted the following factors as hindering implementation at the elementary level: teaming, scheduling, and need for commitment schoolwide. Administrative support, parental feedback, and open classrooms enabled the implementation of new writing strategies, on the other hand.

Marsh, Knudsen and Knudsen looked at the success of staff development of BAWP in light of staff development literature. They presented Sparks' (1983) and Joyce and Showers' (1982) similar models of staff development.

Sparks describes an effective sequence of staff development activities as including: (a) diagnosing and prescribing, (b) giving information and demonstrating, (c) discussing application, (d) practicing and giving feedback, and (e) coaching. Joyce and Showers describe a similar set of steps including: (a) presenting theory/information, (b) demonstrating/modeling, (c) practicing, (d) obtaining feedback, and (e) coaching for application (p. 39).

Marsh, Knudsen and Knudsen compared BAWP Summer Institute with these two staff development models. Sparks',

Joyce and Showers' are more of a training model than the Institute's, which has a set of learners teach each other and is facilitated by leaders. Although all three models are collegial, more emphasis on this is provided in the Institute model. The Institute provides the four components of the other two models--theory, modeling, practice, and feedback--but in different form. All three connect the practical to a conceptual understanding. All three stress the importance of follow-up including peer assistance and coaching. The BAWP model shows how features from the two other staff development models can be adapted to result in successful writing instructional programs for teachers as well.

Staff development is essential in order to meet the instructional writing needs of teachers. Silberman (1989) said that "Writing is America's orphan from kindergarten through high school and beyond...the quality of student writing has become a national embarrassment" (p. 29). Teachers need to understand the process of writing so as to do a more effective job of teaching it, especially in the persuasive mode of discourse. Silberman contends that teachers need to have students prewrite, write, and revise writing. Furthermore, language arts should not be taught in piecemeal fashion as it so often is in elementary schools. Studies have shown that when writing and communication are viewed as high priorities, mechanics, conventions, and

grammar will be learned not as separate entities, but as part of the writing process.

Since few colleges and universities offer courses on how to teach writing in teacher education programs and most state licensing agencies overlook it, the need for professional growth is crucial. Students need the skills of persuasive writing for various situations throughout their lives, and teachers have a responsibility to give this form of writing attention and time in their classrooms. American schools need to make a commitment to foster the writing growth of students and to provide teachers with professional growth opportunities in writing instruction.

Silberman reinforced the idea that teachers need inservice programs in writing instruction. She used the example of Santa Clara's writing reform movement. They found a new way to approach writing instruction as a result of a teacher's experience in the Bay Area Writing Project. The school board agreed to support a staff development program that consisted of 15 weeks of three hours after school sessions. Two Bay Area Writing Project specialists led teachers through the steps of writing for the first ten weeks. Teachers came to realize how important it was to go through the process of writing drafts, having conferences, revising, with grading being the last step. The last five weeks leaders from the school's staff facilitated the writing techniques for teachers. Teachers were paid \$500 to

participate in the sessions, and the BAWP received \$3,000. Sixty take the course each year, with 200 on a waiting list. The National Writing Project prepared 3,000 teacher-consultants in 46 states in 1988. Silberman reported that this program is accessible to teachers outside of the Berkeley Bay area to provide leadership and help to any school district; in addition, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Iowa also offer quality writing programs for teachers.

With more and more states requesting demonstration of students' writing skills, resultant expectations and standards are increasing for students. The Illinois Goals Assessment Program, for example, expects that students will learn how to write in a variety of modes, including persuasion. It is essential that teachers receive some type of quality staff development in writing instruction, and if the aforementioned type is too extensive or expensive, some form of inservice experience should be provided.

Goldberg (1985), an administrator, brought the NWP to his school district in Long Island, New York, along with the help of Perl and Sterling from Lehman College. He said that it was a four year effort to train teachers in the National Writing Project approach and that writing became a priority in the schools. The National Institute of Education acclaimed their efforts. Goldberg also took a sabbatical in 1983 to look at exemplary writing programs across the country. He offered five insights which can serve as

guidelines for school districts espousing writing programs for their teachers:

Step One: Seed the Idea.

Step Two: Accept Skepticism and Doubt.

Step Three: Train Staff.

Step Four: Continue the Training.

Step Five: Train for Independence (pp.35-37).

Goldberg found that the first two steps take from six months to a year. It is important to get teachers and administrators interested and to choose the first few people who can take the lead, preferably those who are respected by colleagues. He said to answer questions about cost, time, type of training, and so on, honestly, and to expect that some will fear the change. In training staff, the first group trained is of critical importance since they will most likely assist in training other staff members. In his visits around the country, he saw a close relationship between the quality of the trainers and the success of the program. The most effective approach used was giving teachers concrete materials within a theory and reinforcing this throughout the whole of instruction. Also, having teachers write was key to an efficacious program. Goldberg believed that inservice programs should range from thirty to ninety hours to be truly effective.

Goldberg maintained that support and continued training are essential after the program. Sometimes districts

request that the trainer return periodically throughout the school year to visit classrooms and to talk with teachers as follow up support. It is helpful for teachers to discuss how implementation is working out in their classes. For an inservice program to be complete, some of the more successful teachers should partake in some training. Examples of these might include: presenting at an inservice, facilitating a group of teachers who have recently been trained, talking with groups of parents, talking at faculty meetings, and attending conferences. Ideally, the program should be evaluated. Student writing samples may be collected, and/or a school may have a self-evaluation or one from outside the school. Goldberg concluded by encouraging educators to pursue inservice writing programs. In his travels he found that a great deal of willing people were open to change and wanted to grow in the learning and teaching of writing.

Another example of a school district that committed itself to improving writing instruction through staff development was Fayetteville-Manilus. The project began in 1982 and took seven years to develop in a suburban district of 3,800 students in grades K-12. Three crucial need areas were addressed through a staff development process. Authors Pisano and Tallerico (1990) stated:

The assumptions underlying this model were that teachers, to be willing and able to adopt innovative teaching strategies, must have: (a) knowledge of the new content, (b) trust in the resource person(s) with

whom they will work, and (c) time to practice and adapt the new methodology to their classrooms (p. 18).

The commitment to improve writing originated from the district in expectation of new state competency tests of writing. Teachers provided direction for the program, however. A respected teacher led the staff instruction and was referred to as the "writing resource teacher." The program was voluntary, was held after school in writing workshops, and inservice credit was received. The quality of the program drew almost 98% of K-6 teachers and a good percentage of the 7-12 teachers. Two series of workshops were offered each year and each one was made up of ten two-hour sessions. Four aspects of the sessions included a mini-lesson, teacher writing, response groups, and class notes on a chosen topic such as revision strategies. Similar to teachers in the Summer Institute of BAWP, these teachers aspired to implement the workshop approach in their classes. Atwell's approach is reiterated here as the workshop would include mini-lessons, writing, conferences, time, and sharing. The second series of training were provided for teachers who implemented the workshop model in their classes and wished to acquire more knowledge and practice of strategies.

Teachers have the support of the writing resource teacher in their classrooms who reinforces strategies of workshops, and is a peer coach giving analysis, follow-up, and feedback. Pisano and Tallerico believed that it was

important to distinguish the resource teacher as a helper to teachers rather than an evaluator. Administrators' interest and involvement in the program is also central to the program's success. Also, teachers' communication with parents has aided the program's effectiveness. The writing resource teacher holds monthly support meetings for the elementary and middle school teachers.

The authors reported that students' writing performance has improved. An increase in the percentage of students scoring at the highest range of the Elementary Writing Test continued from 12.4% in 1983-1986 to 19.5% in 1987-89. A decrease was seen, also, in the percentage of students scoring below the state-established minimum standard. Student portfolios evidenced improvement in the amount and quality of writing, as well as students enjoyment of it. Pisano and Tallerico noted that "Teachers now value writing as one of the most important components of the curriculum" (p. 20).

Joyce and Showers' model is incorporated throughout this school district's exemplary staff development program in writing. Combining theory with demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching strengthened the transfer of training to classrooms. The resource teacher holds a vital role and provides instruction, ongoing support, feedback, and follow-up.

Conclusion

Traditional approaches to writing have focused on the writing product. Since the 1970s a major shift has taken place in looking at writing as process. Teachers need more experience with this approach so as to more effectively implement it in their classrooms. Studies by Crowhurst, Knudson, Sharit, Prater and Padia, Burkhalter and others, have verified that persuasive writing can be improved through effective instruction. Various methods and strategies within the process approach to teaching persuasive writing can improve students' learning in the persuasive mode. Values have an integral role in the persuasive/argumentative writing process.

A paucity of research exists on evaluation of staff development programs in writing. However, the efficacy of staff development and inservice sessions cited in this section of the literature review reinforce the importance of exemplary programs, such as that of the Bay Area Writing Project. Further studies could contribute significant findings in the area of staff development and inservice sessions for teachers in the realm of persuasive writing. More needs to be known concerning the relationship between student achievement and teachers' participation in staff development experiences. The cost of staff development programs appears to a prohibitive feature for many schools, however, the writing needs of students and instructional

needs of teachers cannot be overlooked by any school nationwide. Schools must make a commitment to improve writing. A school needs to provide ongoing, quality staff development for its teachers to address the need and importance for students to write more effectively in the persuasive mode. A school that cannot afford an intensive inservice can draw on its resources and creativity to provide its teachers with some quality experiences to improve and to increase their repertoire of skills in this area. Teachers have a need and a right to grow in expertise as teachers of writing, and students have a need and a right to learn how to write more successfully in the challenging mode of persuasive writing.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether short teaching interventions provided through teacher inservice would have a positive effect on elementary students' achievement in the area of persuasive writing. This chapter presents the methodology used in this research. Background information relative to the design of the course of study is included, followed by the population and selection of the sample, the treatment, the procedure for collecting data, and statistical procedures.

Background Information

This research study was part of a larger project sponsored by Loyola University Chicago entitled L.A. SPIN. This educational staff development program was in its third year of funding from the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation at the time of this study. The L. A. SPIN Project was comprised of teachers grades 3-8 and undergraduate interns working at afterschool community centers. Its purpose was "to improve instruction, increase multicultural awareness and foster community building among students in the participating schools" (p. 6). Language Arts, integrated throughout the

curriculum, is a distinguishing feature of the project. Participants included 24 teachers from 14 public and private schools in the Loyola Lake Shore Campus Community and seven interns/education majors from Loyola University.

L.A. SPIN helped teachers to integrate language arts, fine arts and social studies in their schools and provided curriculum resources, materials, and instructional methods and strategies at inservice programs. The teachers gained knowledge, materials, and strategies to use in the classroom. An additional aim of the program was to improve interest and literacy of at-risk students. As viewed by teachers, the students' level of enthusiasm toward learning increased. These sessions were held at Loyola's Lake Shore Campus after the school day, once each month for one semester from 3:00 until 5:45. Faculty and staff from Loyola University directed the program.

L.A. SPIN stands for Language Arts: School Partnership in the Neighborhood. The university effectively works with schools surrounding the Lake Shore Campus. Collaborating in the schools in the neighborhood fosters community spirit between the university and the schools. Persuasive writing was included in the L.A. SPIN in-service to help meet the needs of teachers and schools involved in IGAP.

The Illinois Goal Assessment Program, established under the 1985 reform legislation, provided teachers with some information to understand the writing assessment such as the

Write On, Illinois book. The need for more assistance was evident among teachers, however. Students were expected to write for three purposes: persuasive, expository, and narrative. IGAP does not evaluate students on right or wrong answers, but on "credibility and logic and support and elaboration in regard to the assignment" (p. 6). The writing tasks do challenge students in higher-order thinking skills and taps their writing ability about background experience and general academic content.

The Illinois rating guide for persuasive writing in *Write On, Illinois* evaluates students' writing using a six-point rating system (six is the highest) for each of the following features:

1. Focus - the degree to which the main idea, point of view, theme, or unifying event is clear and maintained.
2. Support/Elaboration - the degree to which the main point is elaborated and explained by specific details and reasons.
3. Organization - the degree to which the logical flow of ideas and the explicitness of the text structure or plan are clear.
4. Integration - evaluation of the paper based on a focused, global judgment of how effectively the paper as a whole uses basic features to address the assignment (1994, p. 210).

IGAP currently assesses conventions, the degree to

which students use standard written English, with a + or - rating. Teachers also need assistance and practice with the scoring procedures so that accuracy and consistency takes place. IGAP targeted grades 3, 6, and 8 (public schools) to assess writing ability. The writing activities in L.A. SPIN included inservice sessions to assist teachers' instructional needs to better understand and carry out the state and local schools' writing goals.

Population and Selection of Sample

Fourteen teachers were selected for the study to determine if teaching interventions made a difference in students' persuasive writing. Because research has shown that persuasive writing tends to be more difficult for students than other types of writing, a persuasive writing intervention was considered to be of practical value at this time. The study utilized a Time-Series Design to ascertain if changes and improvement in students' writing achievement occurred over a two to three month time period. The dependent variable, students' achievement in the five areas of writing, was measured at periodic intervals. The study represents seven public and three private schools in Chicago. Eight teachers taught in third to fifth grade and six teachers taught in sixth to eighth grade.

The majority of teachers were women and most of them were experienced teachers. The schools represented a range of ability levels, from high to low, with most students of

average ability. The schools represented an ethnically, racially, and socio-economically diverse population of students surrounding the Chicago Lake Shore Campus Community in the county of Cook in Illinois. Most schools contained a mix of Anglo American, African American, Latino, Asian American, Native American and Other. The multiethnicity of the schools is an important component to L.A. SPIN as well as to the research study. Multicultural awareness was increased among the participants and their students.

Treatment

To see whether short teaching sessions given to teachers during the L.A. SPIN Project would make a difference in their students' performance in the persuasive mode of writing, the investigator conducted sessions within the program on two different occasions during the Fall of 1994. Teachers gave students writing prompts in persuasive writing and implemented activities and strategies from L.A. SPIN into their classroom. The topics for the writing prompts reflected the focus of L.A. SPIN sessions. L.A. SPIN teachers administered the first prompt on September 28, before the investigator held a training session and this served as Test 1 (see Appendix A). This prompt asked students to answer the question, "Is each student in the classroom important to the community? Convince your principal that you have the right answer." Prompt number two was given to students following a general writing

intervention at the L. A. SPIN session on October 19th. The second prompt or writing task asked students to choose an ethnic group the class has been studying, such as Africans, Hispanics, Asians, etc., and to convince a friend why it is true that this group has made the greatest contribution to the world of art or literature. This prompt served as Test 2 (see Appendix B). At the third session on November 9th, the investigator led a specific persuasive writing intervention with teachers. Following this, the third prompt asked students to persuade their school community to take certain steps to follow the example of the Native American Indian in learning how to take care of the environment/nature. This represented Test 3 (see Appendix C). On November 30, the investigator conducted the last inservice sessions with teachers in persuasive writing.

The return rate for writing prompts by teachers was very high for the first three prompts. Because of the low return rate for the fourth prompt, however, the data was insufficient to include in this study. It is characteristic in L.A. SPIN for teachers to have a very favorable return rate of materials, tasks, etc., while participating at the Loyola site, followed by a lower return rate when the program is completed and if asked to mail materials back. Loyola staff and the investigator developed the persuasive writing prompts. It is important to keep in mind that teachers were provided with curriculum resources and

materials on these various themes throughout the totality of the L.A. SPIN program as Loyola staff modeled and provided help as to how to implement integrated lessons in language arts, fine arts, and social studies.

The general or informal writing interventions were 15 to 20 minutes long for each small group rotation. L.A. SPIN staff members emphasized the importance of writing and reinforced how journal writing can be used across the curriculum. The strategies for Buddy Journals were taught. This type of journal emphasizes the connection between reading and writing in which pairs of students write back and forth to each other. Various poetic forms were also highlighted and teachers were provided with strategies of how to include poems in subjects such as English, reading, history, science, art, and mathematics. These more informal writing sessions were incidental to the writing prompts and occurred on September 28th and October 19th (see Appendices D and E).

The investigator incorporated features from Joyce and Showers' (1982) model of staff development. The levels were divided into small groups during the specialized in-service for persuasive writing, and rotated between L.A. Spin activities. Each of the activities or training sessions, including persuasive writing was 15 to 20 minutes. The other sessions pertained to storytelling, drama, science/technology. The theme for November 9th's L.A. SPIN's

session was "Beginnings...Celebrating Early Communities," with focus on the Native American (see Appendix F).

At the training session on November 9th, the importance of persuasive writing was discussed, features of persuasive writing were looked at as well as the challenges involved in instructing students in order to improve in this type of writing. Some current information/research on argumentative/persuasive writing was provided. Teachers discussed instructional concerns relative to persuasive writing and challenges and problems which students deal with in this mode of writing. Teachers were shown on an overhead a student sample of the prompt relating to community. They found it to be more highly representative than most of their students' writing tasks in persuasion in terms of focus, support/elaboration, organization, and conventions. A brief discussion followed regarding what elements contribute to an effective persuasive writing sample. The investigator gave the teachers a packet from the state of Illinois' rating scale describing in-depth how the persuasive writings are assessed. Teachers were asked to read this over for the next session.

Since most teachers agreed that they as well as students needed more assistance with the organizational scheme of persuasive writing, the investigator spent the last few minutes of the session presenting a visual handout of this scheme. Taken from the Illinois State Board of

Education's 1994 book, *Write On, Illinois*, this visual depicts a house in which students and teachers can image parts of the house as analogous to the parts of a persuasive essay (see Appendix G). The teachers practiced with the visual and coached each other and chose topics such as how technology makes life better for people as well as on the next prompt dealing with persuading the school community to take certain steps to follow the example of the Native American in caring for the environment. This creative and practical strategy provided a short, but yet effective tool to make persuasive writing more enjoyable and the organizational structure less difficult to learn and remember. Working together as a small group reinforced how important it is for students to collaborate and work together during certain phases of the writing process. Due to the time limitation of the inservice or training session, little time for teachers' feedback was able to take place, though all seemed grateful for the organizational visual.

The second specific persuasive writing session took place on November 30th. Each of the groups rotated again to other activities. These included inventors and technology. The time limit was 20 to 30 minutes for each group session, including persuasive writing. The theme of the activity was "Celebrating the Old and the New" and dealt with inventors/inventions (see Appendix H).

Teachers provided positive feedback pertaining to the

house visual and most implemented it in their classrooms for the third writing task. The investigator provided another visual to aid in the organization of the persuasive essay. As proposed by Tompkins (1994) and discussed in the review of literature section, her scheme clearly depicts how the beginning of the essay states a position or opinion, the middle states three reasons with details, and the conclusion states an ending, either a personal statement, a prediction, or a summary. Due to time constraints, no time was given for practice on this handout.

The idea of relating persuasive topics to students' lives and attempting to tie values into the writing process was deemed important by all. Brainstorming ways this could be achieved generated some excellent applications for the classroom, such as students and teachers bringing in current media (articles, tapes, photos, etc.) on issues in which taking a position was required. Role-playing, small group/large group pre-writing activities, morals and values within decision-making, drawing on real life experience were other ideas mentioned, just to name a few. The investigator also reinforced the importance of increasing audience awareness in students and suggested (if applicable) to provide students with the experience of writing to a real or live audience within or outside of the school community.

The packet from the state of Illinois' rating scale describing in-depth how the persuasive writing assignments

are assessed were reviewed. Each of the following features contain a one page description of what is included in scores 6 through 1: Focus, Support/Elaboration, Organization, Conventions, and Integration. Each feature was analyzed and this information provided more clarity and understanding as to how to assess student writing tasks in a more defined and uniform manner. Since students are tested by the state in the Spring, this analysis helped teachers to better prepare students for this writing assessment, as well benefit teachers' persuasive writing instruction and students' writing performance for academic and life purposes. Several samples from students' writing prompts were distributed, and teachers were given the opportunity to practice evaluating them based on the six features. Some samples were selected to represent low, middle, and high papers relative to these six assessment elements. For a few minutes teachers also practiced on a modified version of the state's assessment with a samples of writing prompts. Due to the brevity of time, feedback, discussions, comments, and questions were limited.

Following this, the investigator handed out a composition checklist form for teachers to use in their classes. This could be used by the student, pairs of students, and or by the teacher during the editing/revising stages of persuasive writing. Another checklist was given to teachers that a pair of students could work on together

during the proofreading stage that pertained to students' conventions. It was consensual among all participants that inservice and more assistance with persuasive writing instruction was needed.

Teachers were encouraged to implement these materials, methods, and ideas into their instructional repertoire of persuasive writing activities. The purpose of the treatment, in conclusion, was to determine if, with a group of committed teachers, short teacher training sessions would make a difference in students' writing achievement in the area of persuasive writing.

Collection of Data

Teachers collected the writing prompts which served as the tests for the research study and brought them to the L.A. SPIN sessions. The study utilized achievement data of students that was completed as part of the normal instruction of the school. The L.A. SPIN staff and the investigator collected the prompts and recorded the rate of return by the teacher/participants. In addition, a teacher survey, using a Likert scale, was sent to teachers at the end of the school year (see Appendix I). This was done to obtain some feedback from teachers regarding demographic and ability level of students, and to provide them with the opportunity to evaluate the writing sessions. Teachers responded to the effectiveness of the training sessions for themselves as well as how they perceived student improvement

in persuasive writing in the areas of Focus, Support/Elaboration, Organization, Conventions, and Integration. Space was provided for comments, questions, and concerns also. Information was obtained from the teachers by the Loyola University staff through a short-answer teacher questionnaire regarding the L. A. SPIN Project as a whole which included the writing activities. This qualitative data is described in Chapter IV.

Statistical Procedures

The writing prompts/papers were mixed and scored by the investigator using a six point scoring rubric. This rating scale was a modified version that was developed by the state of Illinois. It includes the text-level features of Focus, Support/Elaboration, and Organization, the sentence-level feature of Conventions, and the holistic feature of Integration. The researcher scored the prompts. Interrater reliability was conducted by a practitioner scholar not associated with L.A. SPIN, yet trained in scoring on this six point scale. Both the researcher and the practitioner scholar had extensive training and experience in evaluation of students' writing and assessment of writing prompts in school districts throughout the Chicago area and suburbs. Each of these areas, for each essay, was scored on a 1 (low) to 6 (high) scale. The writing sample assessment was adapted from IGAP and designed by three scholar practitioners (see Appendix J). The writer grader sheet

that was used for scoring was provided by an instructor at the university and one that the investigator had previous experience using (see Appendix K). The same criteria for writing assessment was used at each grade level. To assess student achievement gains as a result of short staff development interventions, several sources of data will be used. Frequencies, descriptive statistics, paired t-tests, and analysis of variance were used. Achievement will be analyzed using additional variables. These include type of school, race/ethnicity, grade, and ability level of students, also number of days a week teachers spend on writing, and teachers perceived responses to student writing improvement and to the inservice sessions. The paired t-tests compared the means of the five areas: focus, support/elaboration, organization, conventions, and integration. Teachers, schools, and students have been coded for analysis to eliminate any bias which might occur. To ensure triangulation, both qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted. Relevant feedback and responses from the teachers and investigator during the teacher training sessions were included in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Analysis of the Sample

This study sought to determine whether short teacher interventions in the area of persuasive writing influenced student achievement in this mode. Specific areas of writing achievement included focus, support, organization, conventions, and integration. This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the data collected through the course of the study.

Fourteen teachers in grades three through eight took part in the L.A. SPIN in-service projects. After the completion of the inservice, a teacher questionnaire was sent to these teachers to obtain information related to the study. Eleven teachers responded. Approximate percentages representing students' ethnicity/race are as follows: Caucasian 29%, Latino 28%, African American 22%, Asian American 19%, and Other 2%. Most reported that students' achievement level was average or of mixed ability levels; two, however, stated that their groups were of low ability. The average number of days per week spent on writing was 3.8 out of a five day week.

Using a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1 being least

effective, 5 being most effective) teachers rated the effectiveness of the writing interventions/short workshops on persuasive writing as 3.8. Additional ratings from 1 to 5 (1 being low, 5 being high) are also described. The topics for the prompts in terms of being well suited for the age group are as follows: Community 3.6, Contributions to the Culture 3.1, and Environment/Nature 4.1. In terms of the topics being relevant to the curriculum, the results are as indicated: Community 3.6, Contributions to the Culture 3.0, and Environment/Nature 3.3. The teachers evaluated the prompts as pertaining to the interest of the students in the following way: Community 3.2, Contributions to the Culture 3.0, and Environment/Nature 3.7 (see Appendix I).

Teachers' responses in light of seeing improvement in their students' writing skills in the five domains of focus, support, organization, conventions, and integration are also described: Focus 3.8, Support 3.8, Organization 3.9, Conventions 3.18, and Integration 3.2.

Grade levels and number of students are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Grade Level and Number of Students

Value	Grade Level	N
1	3	25
2	4	101
3	4 & 5 (Combined Class)	43
4	5	16
5	6	31
6	7	19
7	7 & 8 (Combined Class)	113
8	8	44

Note: Student grade levels are coded and given value labels, 1-8. The total number of students in the study was 392.

Statistics regarding the type of school students represented are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Type of School

Value	N
1	201
2	191

Note: School type is coded and given value labels 1-2. Value 1 represents Chicago public schools and value 2 represents private or parochial schools.

Mean scores and standard deviations for the three tests or writing prompts are presented in Table 3. Achieved gains

for each test and for each category were evidenced. Categories consisted of focus, support, organization, conventions, and integration. The area of Focus showed the highest score. Focus, furthermore, had the smallest range of scores with a standard deviation of .60. Conventions had the largest range of scores with a standard deviation of 1.01. To reiterate an important point regarding scoring-evaluation of the tests or prompts was based on a holistic grading scale with 1 being low and 6 being high.

Table 3

Mean Scores by Time

Areas of Writing	Test 1	SD	Test 2	SD	Test 3	SD
Focus	3.89	.93	4.30	.60	4.69	.93
Support	3.79	.94	4.09	.66	4.58	.93
Organization	3.85	.91	4.23	.70	4.60	.93
Conventions	3.69	1.00	4.11	.68	4.38	1.01
Integration	3.87	.93	4.24	.62	4.60	.95

Noteworthy is the point that students' achievement in all areas of writing increased over increments of time. On the grading scale, 4 is satisfactory or passing. As one can see, the mean scores of students went from relatively high 3's or barely passing to respectable and solid 4's (4.38-4.69) which indicates marked improvement and progress. For

example, in Conventions they performed satisfactorily by Test 3 (4.38), and in Focus students performed almost above average by Test 3 (4.69).

Analysis of t-tests for Paired Samples

A comparison of mean scores by time was determined by employing t-tests for Paired Samples. Paired samples for Focus, Support, Organization, Conventions, and Integration are presented in Tables 4 through 8. In each table, the mean scores and 2-tail significance scores are indicated. Forming pairs on the basis of the variable of student achievement in persuasive writing as a result of their teachers' short inservice or interventions presented very significant observations and data. The number on students represented in the following tables is 392.

Table 4
Comparison of Means in the Area of Focus

t-tests for Paired Samples	Mean	2-Tail Sig.
Focus 1	3.89	.000*
Focus 2	4.30	
Focus 2	4.30	.000*
Focus 3	4.69	
Focus 1	3.89	.000*
Focus 3	4.69	

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen in Table 4, significance at the .000 level was reported in student achievement in the area of focus in persuasive writing. A comparison of means in the area of Support in persuasive writing is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Comparison of Means in the Area of Support

t-test for Paired Samples	Mean	2-Tail Sig.
Support 1	3.79	.000*
Support 2	4.09	
Support 2	4.09	.000*
Support 3	4.58	
Support 1	3.79	.000*
Support 3	4.58	

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen from Table 5, significance at the .000 level was reported. Student achievement over time in the area of support show gains after each writing intervention. Students' progression from 3.7 to 4.5 is noteworthy since a score of 1-3 indicates that a feature in writing is absent or in the developing stages whereas a score of 4-6 indicates that the writing feature is basically or well-developed. A comparison of means in the area of organization is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Comparison of Means in the Area of Organization

t-test for Paired Samples	Mean	2-Tail Sig.
Organization 1	3.85	.000*
Organization 2	4.23	
Organization 2	4.23	.000*
Organization 3	4.60	
Organization 1	3.84	.000*
Organization 3	4.60	

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen in Table 6, significance at the .000 level was evidenced in student achievement in organization. Organization showed great gain achievement. Several teachers commented on the effectiveness of the organizational schema or visuals that were presented during the Loyola in-service by the researcher. These were simple but very helpful to students to learn and to understand the structure of a persuasive essay. A comparison of means in the area of Conventions is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Comparison of Means in the Area of Conventions

t-test of Paired Samples	Mean	2-Tail Sig.
Conventions 1	3.69	.000*
Conventions 2	4.11	
Conventions 2	4.11	.000*
Conventions 3	4.38	
Conventions 1	3.69	.000*
Conventions 3	4.38	

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen from Table 7, significance was reported at the .000 level in student gain in the area of Conventions. Though Conventions shows that students' gain was lowest in this category of persuasive writing, it was, moreover, still significant. Most teachers agreed that this area of writing is the most difficult to improve. Strategies introduced at the in-service to show how conventions can be improved as part of the writing, editing, and revision process brought about some positive results. Comparison of means in the area of integration are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Comparison of Means in the Area of Integration

t-tests of Paired Samples	Mean	2-Tail Sig.
Integration 1	3.87	.000*
Integration 2	4.24	
Integration 2	4.24	.000*
Integration 3	4.60	
Integration 1	3.87	.000*
Integration 3	4.60	

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen from Table 8, students achieved significant gains across the three writing tests or prompts in the area of Integration. Significance at the .000 level was evidenced. Students consistently progressed over time with mean scores rising in equal increments after each writing intervention. They improved from barely passing or unsatisfactory, 3.8., to a strong passing score of 4.6 on a six point scale. Since the Integration score is the overall and most telling score, the data from the statistical paired t-tests reflects the strong success of the teacher interventions on students' writing achievement in persuasive writing in the five respective areas of writing.

Analysis of ANOVA

Parametric statistics, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), was used to examine the variability in the study by type of school and by grade level. The data met the assumptions to use ANOVA. Tables 9 through 13 present statistics comparing means of student achievement by type of school. Group 1 represents public schools and group 2 represents parochial or private schools in the Chicago areas surrounding Loyola University's Lake Shore Campus. One-way ANOVA was done for each area of writing: Focus, Support, Organization, Conventions, and Integration. Table 9 presents a comparison of achievement by type of school.

Table 9

Comparison of Achievement by School Type in Focus

Area of Writing	Group	Mean	F prob.
Focus 1	1	3.63	.0000*
	2	4.15	
Focus 2	1	4.52	.0003*
	2	4.50	
Focus 3	1	4.12	.0000*
	2	4.86	

Note: Group 1 represents public schools. Group 2 represents private or parochial schools in the study. Focus refers to the clarity with which a paper presents and maintains a clear main idea, point of view, theme, or unifying event.

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen from Table 9, statistically significant differences took place between groups 1 and 2 on Focus 1, 2, and 3 scores, the public and parochial schools respectively. Table 10 presents the comparison of achievement by school type in the area of Support.

Table 10

Comparison of Achievement by School Type in Support

Area of Writing	Group	Mean	F prob.
Support 1	1	3.50	.0000*
	2	4.08	
Support 2	1	3.87	.0000*
	2	4.31	
Support 3	1	4.36	.0000*
	2	4.81	

Note: Support or elaboration refers to the degree to which the main point is elaborated and explained by specific details and reasons.

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen from Table 10, statistical significance at the .0000 level was evidenced. Statistically significant differences took place between group 1 and group 2 Support scores. Private or parochial school students show higher achievement scores than those students in the public school. A comparison of achievement by school type for Organization is presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Comparison of Achievement by School Type in Organization

Area of Writing	Group	Mean	F prob.
Organization 1	1	3.56	.0000*
	2	4.14	
Organization 2	1	4.04	.0000*
	2	4.42	
Organization 3	1	4.44	.0002*
	2	4.78	

Note: Organization refers to the clarity of the flow of ideas and the explicitness of the text structure or plan.

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen from Table 11, statistically significant differences were reported between groups 1 and 2. A comparison of achievement for Conventions are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Comparison of Achievement by School Type in Conventions

Area of Writing	Group	Mean	F prob.
Conventions 1	1	3.43	.0000*
	2	3.95	
Conventions 2	1	3.91	.0000*
	2	4.32	
Conventions 3	1	4.08	.0000*
	2	4.68	

Note: Conventions refers to the use of standard written English.

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen from Table 12, statistically significant differences between groups 1 and 2 were found. This may be partially due to the private or parochial teachers' efforts to integrate the teaching of the conventions of persuasive writing along with the other areas pertaining to the writing process. A comparison of achievement by school type for Integration is presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Comparison of Achievement by School Type in Integration

Area of Writing	Group	Mean	F prob.
Integration 1	1	3.62	.0000*
	2	4.12	
Integration 2	1	4.05	.0000*
	2	4.43	
Integration 3	1	4.40	.0000*
	2	4.81	

Note: Integration refers to the holistic feature of the paper. It is the evaluation of the paper based on a focused global judgment of how effectively the paper as a whole uses basic features to address the assignment.

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen from Table 13, statistical significance was evidenced at the .0000 level as well. In the questionnaire that teachers responded to, most teachers noted how they had implemented the strategies and ideas from the inservice into their persuasive writing lessons. Some of the parochial teachers, however, consistently demonstrated a high level of commitment to the persuasive writing process both during the in-service and in their classrooms. One teacher, for example, integrated the persuasive process into other subjects such as science,

religion, and math while another brought in pictures of students engaging in the writing process in a positive way, enjoying the experience.

The private/parochial school students attained higher mean scores in all three tests compared to the public school students who attained somewhat lower means. In general, the private/parochial increased their mean scores from the lower range of four's or satisfactory to the higher range of four's or satisfactory and above. The public school students increased their mean scores from the three range or unsatisfactory and barely passing to the lower range of four or satisfactory. After the first test, the only area that was not at the 3.5 or above pertained to Conventions which reported a 3.4. The public school achieved a 4.0 in this area after the third test. Similarly, Conventions was the lowest area for private/parochial students as well. This group had 4.0 after the first test and after the third test increased their scores to 4.7. The public school achieved a 4.0 in this area by the third test. Both groups attained gains in achievement in this more troublesome feature of writing. The public school students and private/parochial students had their highest mean scores in the area of Focus which were 4.4 and 4.8 respectively.

Whether or not the short teacher inservices or interventions affected students' performance by type of school is not very discernible. Though significant

differences could be seen between the two types of schools in their scores, both groups improved throughout the interventions. The public school students started out lower than the private/parochial students, however, both types of school students increased their scores consistently after each intervention. It is noteworthy that public school students emerged from a less than satisfactory and inadequate performance to a clearly satisfactory and adequate performance. Private/parochial students strengthened their persuasive writing skills from a low satisfactory performance to a high satisfactory one. With continued instruction and performance, it is very probable that both groups of students would continue to improve and to increase achievement in the persuasive form.

A comparison of achievement by level or grade is presented in Tables 14 through 18. Level 1 represents grades 3 through 5 and level 2 represents grades 6 through 8. One-way ANOVA was done for each of the areas of writing; Focus, Support, Organization, Conventions, and Integration.

Table 14

Comparison of Achievement by Level in Focus

Area of Writing	Group	Mean	F prob.
Focus 1	1	3.72	.0015*
	2	4.02	
Focus 2	1	4.26	.2366
	2	4.34	
Focus 3	1	4.48	.0000*
	2	4.86	

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen from Table 14, statistical significance was obtained for Focus 1 and 3 achievement scores, between grades 3 to 5 and grades 6 to 8. No statistical significance was reported for Focus 2 scores between these grades. These findings are not surprising since younger elementary students have less experience in the persuasive mode of writing than do older ones. Younger students, however, do show improvement, as noted in this study, when teachers are more comfortable and knowledgeable about ways to teach persuasive writing. Grades 3 to 5 students' scores increased from unsatisfactory, 3.72, to satisfactory, 4.48, and grades 6 to 8 students' scores increased to higher levels of satisfactory, from 4.02 to 4.86. A comparison of

achievement by level in the area of Support is presented in Table 15.

Table 15

Comparison of Achievement by Level in Support

Area of Writing	Group	Mean	F prob.
Support 1	1	3.58	.0000*
	2	3.96	
Support 2	1	4.07	.7231
	2	4.10	
Support 3	1	4.37	.0000*
	2	4.76	

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen in Table 15, statistical significance was observed between grades 3 to 5 and grades 6 to 8 on Support 1 and 3 scores. No statistical significance was obtained on Support 2 scores between these grades. The younger students showed increases in their writing achievement by progressing from unsatisfactory, 3.58, to satisfactory, 4.37. Older students in grade school increased markedly from 3.96 to 4.76. Older students possess more cognitive ability to elaborate with reasons and details than do younger ones, however, younger students have the ability to develop their ideas, also, albeit to a lesser

degree. A comparison of achievement by level in the area of Organization is presented in Table 16.

Table 16

Comparison of Achievement by Level in Organization

Area of Writing	Group	Mean	F prob.
Organization 1	1	3.69	.0028*
	2	3.98	
Organization 2	1	4.23	.4105
	2	4.20	
Organization 3	1	4.44	.0006*
	2	4.76	

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen from Table 16, statistical significance was noted in the Organization 3 scores between grades 3 to 5 and 6 to 8. All grades were in the barely passing range after test 1 and increased their achievement status in the area of organization to the four point range after the second intervention and test and even more so after the third intervention and test. Most teachers observed improvement in their students' persuasive writing prompts as a result of the inservice. Teachers were given organizational schema(s) or visuals for persuasive/argumentative writing. This effective strategy allowed

students to understand the structure and form involved in the mode of persuasive writing. The visual of the house, for example, guided them not only to better organize their ideas, but also to better focus and support them as well. The organizational strategies positively influenced the other areas of writing. All grades benefitted from this simple yet very instrumental method of instruction. A comparison in achievement in the area of Conventions is presented in Table 17.

Table 17

Comparison of Achievement by Level in Conventions

Area of Writing	Group	Mean	F prob.
Conventions 1	1	3.48	.0002*
	2	3.86	
Conventions 2	1	4.04	.0528
	2	4.18	
Conventions 3	1	4.21	.0016*
	2	4.53	

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen in Table 17, statistical significance was reported in Convention scores 1 and 3, not in Conventions 2, between grades 3 to 5 and grades 6 to 8. Similar to students' progression in Support and Organization

scores from the first test to the third one, students showed significant gains in the Conventions area. While older students have had more skill development in this area than younger ones, the teachers unanimously agreed that this area of writing needs work and improvement. Responding to the teacher questionnaire, teachers gave Conventions the lowest mark in terms of seeing their students' writing skills improved, 3.1, compared to other areas (Focus, Support, and Organization) which received 3.8's or 3.9's on a five-point Likert Scale. Although the older students had a higher mean score at the end, 4.53, compared to the younger ones, 4.21, both levels increased in achievement in the area of conventions in persuasive writing. This may be attributed to teachers learning or reinforcing strategies that integrates conventions into the writing process. A comparison of achievement by level in the area of Integration is presented in Table 18.

Table 18

Comparison of Achievement by Level in Integration

Area of Writing	Group	Mean	F prob.
Integration 1	1	3.68	.0001*
	2	4.03	
Integration 2	2	4.20	.3265
	3	4.26	
Integration 3	1	4.24	.0004*
	2	4.76	

*Significant at $p < .01$.

As can be seen from Table 18, statistical significance was evidenced at Integration scores 1 and 3, not at 2, between grades 3 to 5 and 6 to 8. In the one-way analysis of variance scores and in examining the comparison in achievement by levels, no statistical significance was reported in Focus 2, Support 2, Organization 2, Conventions 2, or Integration 2 scores between the grade levels, whereas significance was reported in the first and third scores in these areas of writing. In the mean scores at Integration 2, both group 1 and 2 were almost the same, 4.20, and 4.26 respectively. Whereas grades 3 to 5 made strong gains from tests 1 to 3, achieving satisfactory results (3.68 to 4.24), grades 6 to 8 showed significant development within

the satisfactory range (4.24 to 4.76). By observing the mean scores, both levels or groups grew in skill development in the persuasive mode to write an adequately formed persuasive paper. Teachers' perceptions relative to students' improvement in the area of Integration was 3.2 on the five-point Likert Scale. That Integration and Conventions' areas were ranked a bit lower than the three other writing areas is not surprising. Integration represents a general evaluation of how students use basic features of writing to achieve the assigned task. It provides a holistic look to the student's overall effectiveness in addressing the persuasive writing task. The general statistical significance of the data presented here highlight the fact that simple yet effective strategies in persuasive writing do assist teachers in teaching in this mode of writing, and resultingly have significant, positive results on students' achievement.

Analysis of Post Hoc Scheffe Test

The statistical significance of the ANOVA led to performing a post hoc test. A multiple range Scheffe test was selected to study the data further to determine what mean differences might have contributed to any significant effects, and to investigate comparisons among means.

A salient finding from the post hoc test is that significant differences were evidenced at the .05 level for the seventh and eighth grade combined class in every area of

writing and across all three writing tests. Also, the fourth grade showed significant differences between groups. Whereas the seventh and eighth grade continually showed strong scores with significance in every test in every feature of writing, the fourth grade showed significance and consistently good scores after the second test in every area of writing. The regular eighth grade class, on the other hand, did not perform as well as might have been expected. In several cases, the younger students scored higher than this grade and regular seventh grade.

The Scheffe test revealed that it was not only the younger students who started out with low mean scores in the three range on a six-point holistic scale, but also the older students, except for the seventh and eighth grade combined class who started out with solid four's and the fifth grade. Table 19 provides a fairly typical illustration of students' progression from the first to the last test. The area of Support was selected.

Table 19

Post Hoc Scheffe Test

Area of Writing Support	Test 1 M	Test 2 M	Test 3 M
Grade 3	3.0	3.6	4.3
Grade 4	3.5	4.1**	4.3
Grade 4 & 5 (Combined Class)	3.9*	4.1*	4.4
Grade 5	4.0	4.0*	4.0
Grade 6	3.9*	3.8	4.4
Grade 7	3.6	4.0*	4.0
Grade 7 & 8 (Combined Class)	4.2***	4.4***	5.2*****
Grade 8	3.5	3.4	4.2

*Significant at $p < .05$.

It is interesting to note how most students went up to a passing grade level after the second test. The fourth grade achievement scores are very noteworthy in terms of the strength of their progress. In every area of writing except for Focus they began with 3's, and after the second test and third tests, attained solid satisfactory grades of 4's. Younger students performed as well as older students in several areas. Given effective instruction and time to write, students in the lower elementary grades can learn how to write adequately and satisfactorily in this mode of discourse. The eighth grade performance was weaker than their seventh and seventh and eighth grade counterparts. The only grade that scored above average and wrote well-formed persuasive essays was the seventh and eighth grade

combined class. They started out with satisfactory writing skills and significantly raised their scores to the five-point level.

In summary, the data analysis presented in this chapter show that the short teaching interventions to grade school teachers had significant results on their students' performance in the persuasive area of writing. An inter-rater score of .74 was attained using a Cronbach's α on 20% of the writing prompts. The important findings resulting from the mean scores, comparing the mean scores through paired t-tests, comparing achievement by level and school type through the analysis of variance and examining the significant differences more closely through the post hoc Scheffe test were provided in this chapter.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, INTEGRATION WITH LITERATURE, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine what effect short teaching interventions to grade school teachers would have on student achievement in the area of persuasive writing. This chapter will summarize findings, offer possible explanations and implications for these findings, consider how the findings fit with past literature, and provide recommendations for future research. This section is organized around the research questions presented in Chapter I.

Research Question #1: Do short teaching interventions to grade school teachers make a difference in their students' achievement in persuasive writing?

The data analysis reveals that three short and effective teacher training sessions in the area of persuasive writing had a positive effect on grade school students' writing performance in this mode of writing. In the area of Focus, Support, Organization, Conventions, and Integration, grades three through eight did improve in these features of writing. As a whole, students' mean scores increased after each teacher intervention and after each writing test or prompt students addressed. Between Test 1

and Test 2 the mean scores show that students progressed from high 3's (on a six-point scale) to low 4's, and between Test 2 and Test 3 students progressed to middle and high 4's. This truly significant finding shows that all grades can improve in the persuasive mode of writing in all features of writing.

The comparison of mean scores shows statistical significance at the .01 level between each test score in all features of writing namely Focus, Support, Organization, Conventions, and Integration. Noteworthy is that students' scores increased sizably enough by the second intervention to produce passing or satisfactory results in their persuasive writing performance. The fact that student scores continued to improve after the third test or writing prompt suggests that with continued instruction and practice, students' scores would continue to increase. In addition, students' progress between each test showed consistent improvement in almost equal increments.

Most teachers in the study were very open to the persuasive writing inservice sessions and welcomed the opportunity to learn more strategies and methods in which to teach persuasive writing. The interest as well as the need existed to address this type of writing on the part of the teachers. Little emphasis was given to persuasive writing in the elementary schools prior to the initiation of IGAP and state assessment of writing. Given the challenge to

succeed and to effectively teach writing, most of the public school teachers in the study welcomed the three teacher inservice sessions conducted at Loyola University. These teachers, along with the parochial school teachers, agreed that persuasive writing is an important kind of writing and should not be under emphasized at the grade school level. Understanding the goals of persuasion for all teacher participants was key to the success of the inservice as it kept people focused. All teachers acknowledged the need for more support in this type of writing in order to more effectively teach and assist students who often struggle in this more complex mode of discourse. The inservice responded to the needs of the teachers who were searching for strategies and methods to more adequately help students' persuasive writing performance. Their diligent participation in the inservice and effective implementation of the various strategies and ideas shared at the inservice sessions offer some plausible explanations in regard to students' successful performance in this study. Though teachers varied in their degree of commitment to the continual reinforcement and practice of persuasive writing in their classes, unanimity in their efforts to help students be more successful in this type of writing was evidenced by all.

The topics for the writing prompts may have influenced students' achievement to a certain extent. Teachers'

responses were generally favorable toward the prompts being well suited for the age group, relevant to the curriculum, and interesting to students (high 3's on a five-point scale). However, in a discussion pertaining to the prompts and on the questionnaire, some teachers articulated that the prompts needed to be more relevant and practical for students. The writing prompts were not typical ones that teachers might use in a language arts class. Instead, they came out of an integrated curriculum model. Teachers were provided with materials and resources to enrich their curriculum. Teachers and students were academically engaged in the concepts related to the prompts and the topics required a higher level of thinking. Some teachers were able to make adjustments and fit the prompts into the curriculum more than others. This limitation to the study could be addressed by inviting teachers to generate ideas for writing prompts, ones that could be integrated into the curriculum. Students tend to write better persuasion if they write about issues that are real to them as well as write to real audiences. Even though most teachers believed the prompts to be satisfactory for the purposes at hand, perhaps if the prompts were more relevant to students and the curriculum, these may affect student achievement even more positively.

Many studies have found that students do not perform well on persuasive writing tasks. That persuasive writing

is a more difficult kind of writing, especially for younger students, has also been confirmed by various studies. The results of this present study provide optimism regarding the status of persuasive writing, however. After the first writing test, scores were low and in line with many of the national assessments in persuasive writing. Students' scores increased, however, from 3 to 4 on a six-point scale, from unsatisfactory and barely passing to respectably passing and satisfactory scores after the third writing test or prompt. An additional explanation for the significant effects of teacher training on student achievement is the fact that writing needs to be given more time and attention in classrooms and the teachers in the study gave it time and attention. A few teachers provided time each day for writing, five days a week, while most provided at least three, the average being 3.8. As teachers grew more competent and comfortable with implementing persuasive writing strategies into their classrooms, so concomitantly did many students gain more competence and confidence in their persuasive writing abilities. The time spent on writing was, furthermore, not all on the persuasive mode, but on other types as well such as buddy journals, poetry, and narrative. The teacher inservice time was spent also on writing in general with persuasion given a particular focus. Several teachers expressed that students' attitudes towards writing became more positive during this time as well. One

said that there was "more willingness to proceed with writing assignments and that there was no more moaning." Students in another class enthusiastically responded to a volunteer writing contest whereas previously they had not. One teacher read stories to her class and used it as a springboard for a writing activity while another put the prompt on the board and brainstormed with her class about the topic prior to writing a rough draft. The next day students continued to write and then shared the draft with a partner. Following this they would make revisions and then read the paper to the whole class. Another teacher commented how helpful it was to go through the features of writing (focus, support, organizations, conventions, and integration) so students would understand how their papers were graded. Finally, one teacher observed that her students enjoyed the persuasive writing activities.

Students need teachers who are confident and competent in teaching the writing process and who make it part of everyday classroom life. The importance of teaching persuasive writing is growing concern among teachers. Teacher training, inservice, and instructional support, moreover, provide opportunities for teachers to become better teachers of writing. Students' anxieties and inadequacies about persuasive writing can be lessened when encouraging teachers offer them a repertoire of strategies and ideas to succeed. These short but effectual teacher

interventions made a positive difference in students' persuasive writing performance.

Research Question #2: Are the short teacher interventions to grade school teachers more effective for younger or for older students?

In the analysis of variance test, grades 3 through 5 were labelled as Group 1 and grades 6 through 8 were labelled as Group 2. In comparing the mean in student achievement by level, statistical significance was evidenced between groups 1 and 2 in the areas of Focus, Support, Organization, Conventions, and Integration scores for the first and third tests or writing prompts but not for the second test. Overall, Group 2 or sixth through eighth grades' performance was higher than that of Group 1's or the third through sixth grade. Examining the scores by the two groups shows also that the third through sixth grade group were predominantly the ones that scored in the 3's or unsatisfactory range after Test 1 in contrast to the sixth to eighth grade group which scored in the 4's or satisfactory range after Test 1, except in the area of Conventions in which both groups scored in the 3's after the first test. After Test 3, Group 1 had the following mean scores: Focus 4.5, Support 4.4, Organization 4.4, Conventions 4.2, and Integration 4.2. After Test 3, Group 2 had the following mean scores: Focus 4.9, Support 4.8, Organization 4.8, Conventions 4.5, and Integration 4.8.

Both grade levels achieved levels of satisfactory, however the older grade school students scored in the higher 4 range and the younger ones in the lower 4 range. The third through sixth grade, it must be noted, made significant strides by moving from the 3 range of unsatisfactory, inadequate, or barely passing to the 4 range of satisfactory, adequate, and passing. Statistically significant differences were evidenced between grades 3 to 5 and 6 to 8 on Test 1 and 3 scores in all areas of writing.

Since the ANOVA showed statistical significance, a post hoc Scheffe test with significance level .05 was conducted. This test was used to determine or help to pinpoint where the statistical differences existed within the groups. The means were ranked by grades from the lowest to the highest score. Noteworthy is that across all features of writing and tests, Group 7 or seventh and eighth grade combined class, showed significant differences in Focus 1, 2, 3, Support 1, 2, 3, Organization 1, 2, 3, Conventions 1,2,3, and Integration 1, 2, 3 with the 7th and 8th grade combined class consistently scored the highest in every category of writing after each test. The Scheffe results reveal that significant differences took place between this group and all the other grade levels at some point throughout the various test results in the five areas of writing. In Support 3, seven stars represented significance difference between group 7 and groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8. Two

stars after Integration 1 represented the minimal amount of significance between groups. Group 2 representing fourth grade showed significant differences consistently in Focus 2, Support 2, Organization 2, Conventions 2, and Integration 2. Other groups that showed significance were group 5 representing sixth grade, group 3 representing fourth and fifth grade combined class, group 4 representing 5th grade, group 6 representing seventh grade. Groups 1 and 8 representing grades 3 and 8 respectively were the only groups that did not show significant differences.

A salient feature resulting from the Scheffe test is that the seventh and eighth grade combined class performed much higher than the eighth grade class. To answer this research question more fully, each area of writing needs to be addressed.

In the area of Focus, the seventh and eighth grade combined class scored highest. This group had the highest mean, 5.3, or above average, in the third writing test. The Scheffe test, in delineating the scores further, helped to reveal the real writing strength of the seventh and eighth grade combined class. The fourth grade class also performed well in this area of writing and significant differences were evidenced between this grade and grade 8 and 6. Overall, student achievement was highest in the writing area of Focus.

In the area of Support, the seventh and eighth grade

combined class scored highest with significant differences evidenced between all other grades. This class achieved a 5.2 mean in the third writing test. The fourth grade through seventh grades also showed significant differences. Support was ranked fourth in terms of student achievement in the five features of writing.

In the area of Organization, the seventh and eighth grade combined class scored highest with significant differences between other grades. Fourth grade also scored high in this area and showed significant differences as did the fourth and fifth grade combined classes and seventh grade in Organization 2. In Organization 3, the third and fourth grade's achievement was higher than the fifth through eighth grade achievement, except for the seventh and eighth combined class. Organization in the area of persuasive writing was ranked second in terms of student achievement.

In the area of Conventions, the seventh and eighth grade combined class scored highest with significant differences between other grades. Fourth grade also performed well with significant differences shown after the second test or writing prompt. The sixth and eighth tended to perform low in this area. Overall, student achievement in the writing features of Convention was fifth or lowest in this area.

In the area of Integration, the seventh and eighth grade combined class achieved the highest scores with

significant differences shown. Also, fourth grade did well and significant differences were evidenced in Integration 2. By the third test, the seventh and eighth grade improved to attain adequate scores of 4, however, the third and fourth grade scored higher than the junior high except for the seventh and eighth grade combined class. The area of Integration was ranked third relative to student achievement. Students demonstrated greatest achievement in the area of Focus, followed by Organization, Integration, Support, and Conventions. Teachers' perceptions about what writing areas students improved in the most were Organization, Focus, Support, Integration, and Conventions.

The short teacher interventions had the biggest effect on the seventh and eighth grade combined class and the fourth grade. Moreover, significant differences were seen in grades fourth and fifth combined, fifth, sixth, and seventh. Only grades three and eight showed no significant difference throughout the Scheffe results. It may be surmised that the treatment had the greatest effect on the seventh and eighth combined class and the fourth grade and the least effect on the third and eighth grade. The treatment did have an effect on all grades, however, and impacted some more than others. The ANOVA showed that there were statistically significant differences between Group 1's and Group 2's scores. Even though the older group of students showed higher means in achievement overall, the

younger students showed gain in achievement as well. The fact that Group 1 started out lower in achievement scores than Group 2 and progressed needs to be taken into account. It would be expected that older grade school students would perform higher on persuasive writing tasks than younger ones. Sixth through eighth grade students have had more experience in writing and in writing for different purposes. Their syntactic and cognitive skills are more developed as well as their skills in logical reasoning, style and language. Their capacity to develop theses and opinions and to elaborate with details and reasons to support their viewpoint is more enlarged also. However, younger students can learn to write in this more complex form of discourse. Teachers who are equipped with the instructional skills to teach persuasive writing can positively influence students' achievement and understanding in this mode. It is important that teachers address persuasive writing in grades three through five and continually reinforce it in grades six through eight. Illinois as well as a host of other states are assessing writing performance in schools and stressing its importance. Persuasive writing competency needs to be achieved for academic and life skills success.

The third and fourth grade students did better in the organizational area of persuasive writing than did their sixth, seventh, and eighth grade counterparts. During the teacher inservice, the organizational form of the persuasive

essay was stressed quite a bit. Teachers agreed that students' understanding of the organizational schema was key to learning how to write in the persuasive form. The visual organizational schema introduced at the inservice was helpful to grades three through eight teachers. Most replied that it positively influenced and facilitated student performance. One teacher commented that visualizing the organization helped students with focus and coherence of the paper. In addition, it meets the needs of the visual and auditory learner as well as the kinesthetic one. Once students have a grasp of the organizational skills of persuasive or argumentative writing, the other four writing features are easier to approach. Even younger students can learn how to develop more details to support an opinion with the aid of a visual organizational schema. Perhaps if this type of writing is addressed more regularly in grades three to five, students' success in grades six to eight will be more evident. The eighth grade more predominantly than the seventh grade tended to perform low in the writing features. In surmising, if persuasive writing was introduced and practiced more in the lower grades by schools, reinforcing the skill in the upper grades may also improve student achievement. All students in these grades, moreover, need continual reinforcement and skill work in the area of Conventions. Integrating conventions and the mechanics of writing within the writing process was a small but helpful

tool that was addressed at the inservice. Sharing ideas, information, strategies in relation to teachers' perceived needs in this and others areas of writing was also effective.

Persuasive writing places more of a demand on students than other types of writing. Writing to convince, persuade, or change someone's mind is a challenging task for any student. The state, in assessing students' persuasive writing abilities, gives more responsibility to the schools and teachers to insure that students achieve competency in this mode of discourse. Teachers need to be well-informed about ways to most effectively instruct students in persuasive writing. It should be included as an integral part of the elementary school curriculum and not excluded or delayed until junior high or high school. The skills necessitated for this type of writing should be started and formed in younger grades so that by junior high it will be a more familiar part of the students' writing experience. The skills of focus, support, organization, conventions in relation to persuasive writing need to be practiced regularly. The seventh and eighth grade that did so well in the study in contrast to the eighth grade that did not do so well exemplify how the same age level have either mastered skills in persuasion or have not. The former started out with better writing skills than did the latter. The teaching interventions allowed teachers to continue to

reinforce and practice strategies with their students. In turn, these students bolstered their scores and achieved increased success. The fact that the eighth grade, however, did improve enough to write an average paper points out that the quality of students' writing can be affected through writing instruction and time given to it. It would benefit students to learn and practice persuasive skills early on in school, so by junior high it is a reinforced skill rather than a newly taught one. Supporting teachers through short inservice experiences is one way that schools can give more priority and attention to the importance of writing instruction.

The younger as well as the older grade school students gained more success in persuasive writing tasks as a result of their teachers having short training and inservice sessions. Some benefitted more than others most likely, yet the positive results from the data evidence that even short teacher inservice opportunities can make a real difference in student achievement and success. The fourth grade illustrates that with effective instruction even younger students can perform well in persuasive writing across all five areas. Schools and teachers should not omit the formative opportunity to introduce persuasive writing to their younger age students. The successful performance by the seventh and eighth grade combined class may show that this may be an optimal time to teach persuasive and

argumentative writing and reinforce the critical thinking aspect of it. Offering junior-high students the experience to write persuasively can help them direct their opinions, thoughts, and beliefs in a positive and constructive format. Students at this age have a plethora of opinions about many diverse topics. Sharing their persuasive essays with the class can be an enriching experience for all. It is important that students attain persuasive writing skills in grade school. They will be better students and thinkers in high school as well as in life.

The inservice helped prepare teachers to teach writing so their students could be better prepared to learn in this mode of discourse. Fostering the development of this critical writing skill gives students and teachers a renewed sense of confidence and competence in their persuasive writing abilities. The teacher interventions in persuasive writing to grade school teachers can affect many grade levels. Both the younger and older students achieved greater success in the persuasive mode of discourse. The data analysis reveals that many students improved from inadequate and below average to adequate and average, while others improved from average and satisfactory to above average. Persuasive writing performance of students can increase as a result of teachers' inservice experience in writing instruction.

Summary of Important Findings

1. Four short inservice experiences have positive effect on students' achievement in persuasive writing. These do not have to be extensive periods of time to be efficacious.

2. Teachers are searching for practical and effective ways to help them teach the more difficult mode of persuasive writing.

3. Teachers' confidence and competence in persuasive writing instruction can positively affect students' confidence and abilities in this mode of discourse.

4. The area of writing students achieved in the most was Focus, followed by Organization, Integration, Support, and Conventions.

5. Students' scores increased after each of the three tests in all five area of writing.

6. Older students had higher mean scores than younger students, however, younger students started out with lower scores and made gains in achievement after each test.

7. The treatment proved to be effective for all grades, however, it was most effective for the fourth and seventh and eighth grade combined class.

8. Persuasive writing needs to be addressed in the early elementary years. It is an important type of writing and it is crucial that students attain competency in it. Younger students can learn to write adequately and above in

this kind of writing. As it is a more difficult mode of discourse, time needs to be provided for instruction, and practice and skills need to be continually reinforced in lower and upper levels of grade school.

9. The participant teachers gained knowledge, materials and strategies to use in the classroom. The four short inservice experiences proved to be effective, and resulted in students' improvement in the area of persuasive writing.

Integration with Literature

Langer (1987) presented a sociocognitive view of literacy and believed that students learned higher level skills in literacy activities that were socially meaningful. The present study reinforces Langer's views as persuasive writing activities challenge students to higher order thinking levels. Discussing issues relative to persuasion and argument ought to be encouraged within the social and learning milieu of the classroom.

This study tends to confirm Mancuso's (1985) findings that among 39 gifted and non-gifted fifth graders students were able to recognize a sense of audience. In this study, even though students were asked to write to a principal or community, for example, they evidenced that they were writing to a particular person or group of people for the most part. Students scored highest in the Focus area. One of the characteristics of this feature is that the audience

is recognized.

Proett and Gill (1986) emphasized the importance of students working on all elements of the writing process during class to enable teachers to monitor students progress and to coach them. Many of the teachers in this study support this and expressed that it was more helpful to students if they were present during the prewriting, writing, editing and revising, and final writing stages. Others said that the time factor did not always make this possible.

Crowhurst (1991) examined 110 sixth graders to see if students' writing of persuasion could be improved with instruction and if the effect of reading on writing and of writing on reading could improve students' instruction. She found that persuasive writing of upper elementary students could be improved by instruction. Although the effect of writing on reading showed no positive effect, the effect of reading on writing showed that students transferred knowledge more from reading to writing. She maintained that instruction needs to be well done since persuasive writing is a more cognitively difficult type of writing. This supports the present study's findings. Improving the quality of instruction in the persuasive mode enables teachers to become more effective teachers of writing. In addition, this study corroborates Crowhurst's findings that sixth graders persuasive writing could be improved through

instruction. Her experimental group developed more reasons, details, conclusions than those without instruction.

Although they improved, the sixth graders scored lower in the area of Support and Conventions than in other areas of writing. Crowhurst's suggestions that persuasive topics ought to be important to students and should involve real audiences were ones that teachers considered favorable for students' learning.

In another study of 159 fourth, sixth, and eighth grade students, Knudson (1991) found that eighth grade students wrote better than fourth and sixth grade students. Two weeks after treatment, eighth graders performed as well but the other two grades did not. The present study does not include a follow up evaluation after treatment, however, results across three writing tests showed somewhat contrary findings to Knudson's. First, similar to her findings, the study showed that a seventh and eighth grade combined class wrote better than grades three through eight. However, the results showed that grades four and six wrote better than the regular eighth grade class in this study. The combined junior high class exceeded all classes.

Tompkins (1994) highlighted the importance that students need to know the organizational schema for persuasive writing. Furthermore, while younger students typically use simpler transitional words to signal the transition of the essay, older students use more

sophisticated ones, such as "therefore, in conclusion." This study reinforces Tompkins view. Understanding the organizational form of persuasive writing is key to successful writing in this mode. Also, findings show that younger students tended to use simpler transitions than older ones or none at all.

Concurring with several other studies, Prater and Padia's (1983) study of 140 fourth and sixth grade students across three types of discourse-expressive, explanatory, and persuasive, confirmed that students need more instruction and guidance in persuasive type of writing. Results of their ANOVA showed, too, that girls performed better than boys in each kind of writing. Also, in congruence with the present study, persuasive skills need to be addressed in younger elementary grades so as to foster in students an increased ability to be successful in this more complex kind of writing. The present study is compatible with others who found that even though persuasive writing is a more difficult kind of writing, even younger students can learn to write satisfactorily in this mode.

Burkhalter (1995) hypothesized that children younger than age 11 could increase their ability to write persuasive essays. A Vygotsky social-interactionist approach was adapted in this study to determine if 153 fourth and sixth graders improved in persuasive writing ability with the aid of adults and peers. Findings showed that all students in

the experimental group performed better than those in the comparison group. The former had been given 45 minutes daily instruction for three weeks. This study reinforces the present study's findings and others that evidence that younger students can improve their writing in the persuasive area. The present study exhibited that while the fourth grade did better than the sixth grade in the area of Support after the second writing test, after the third writing test the sixth grade and fourth were almost at the same level, with the sixth grade scoring a little higher.

The National Writing Project provide an exemplary model of teacher inservice and staff development in the teaching of writing. Teachers teaching other teachers and collaborating, sharing ideas, experience, and methods are just a few features that lead to the success of this project. Teachers also discuss recent literature on writing. The emphasis on research, writing, and teaching methods is integral to the project. Teachers teaching other teachers proved to be effective in this present study. Teachers sharing current ideas and strategies also was beneficial.

Goldberg (1985) believed that inservice programs should range from 30 to 90 hours, that key teachers should be trained to lead inservices, and having teachers write was important to the program. The present study, however, showed that inservice does not have to extend over a long

period of time to be successful. An extensive inservice may be the ideal situation but shorter ones are perhaps the more realistic situation. A school can draw on its resources and creativity to offer teachers a quality experience in persuasive writing instruction as not all schools have the funds to support extensive inservice programs or to train teachers. There was not enough time for teachers to write in the inservice pertaining to the present study, though this is a meritorious idea. Teachers who write themselves have a better understanding and knowledge of the writing process.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further analysis to determine the effects of teacher interventions on students' persuasive writing achievement two to four weeks after treatment could be addressed in future research studies. Responses from students pertaining to their experience of the persuasive writing process would provide more understanding of student perceptions. Visiting the schools that participate in persuasive writing studies could prove useful in assessing how teachers and students participate in writing activities. More studies need to incorporate an assessment of the dependent variable of time following treatment to gain a more complete picture of how students transferred instructional skills into their writing. Also, long range studies of persuasive writing would contribute significantly to the literature in this

area. It would be interesting to see, for example, how the junior high students are performing in high school in regards to writing as well as to see how the younger students are performing in the middle and upper elementary grades.

Another direction for research is examining if students' scores improve in other types of writing as a result of improved scores in persuasive writing. Also, more studies could be conducted to examine whether there is a difference between boys and girls in persuasive writing ability. Furthermore, more high school and college studies need to be performed pertaining to students performance in persuasive writing. Studies comparing audience awareness across grade levels would prove useful in developing instructional strategies. Future research could also examine how persuasive writing can be used in an integrated curriculum and writing across the curriculum and what effect this would have on quality of instruction and student learning. Finally, different types of inservice experiences of teachers in the area of persuasive writing need to be studied further to determine what type(s) best influences student achievement in this area of writing. Further studies comparing short, cost effective interventions to longer and more costly ones would be beneficial.

In conclusion, this study shows that short teacher interventions to grade school teachers in the area of

persuasive writing do have significant effects on students' achievement. Inservice experiences do not have to be extensive or costly to provide teachers with strategies, skills, and materials to more effectively meet the needs of students in the important area of persuasive writing.

APPENDIX A
WRITING PROMPT NUMBER ONE

L.A. SPIN

Student Writing Prompt

Is each student in the classroom important to the community?

How would you answer this question?

Convince your principal that you have the right answer.

APPENDIX B
WRITING PROMPT NUMBER TWO

L.A. SPIN

Student Writing Prompt

Students should address the statement below in their writing. To fill the blank in the statement, choose an ethnic group the class has been studying. For example: Africans, Hispanics, Asians, Poles, Russians, etc.

_____ have made the greatest contribution to the world of art or literature.

Convince a friend that the above statement is true.

APPENDIX C
WRITING PROMPT NUMBER THREE

L.A. SPIN

Student Writing Prompt

We can learn to take care of our environment/nature through the example of the Native American Indian.

Persuade your school community to take certain steps to follow this example.

APPENDIX D

L.A. SPIN AGENDA FOR SEPTEMBER 28

L.A. SPIN
September 28, 1994

BEGINNINGS...BUILDING A COMMUNITY IN THE CLASSROOM

3:00-3:30	Refreshments			
3:30-3:40	Welcome Meet the L.A. SPIN team Theme Overview	Dr. Dorothy Giroux Project Director L.A. Spin		
3:40-4:15	Drama	Karen Erickson		
4:15-5:09	Language Arts Centers			
	<u>Writing</u>	<u>Science</u>	<u>Listening</u>	
4:15-4:33	Blue	Red	Green	
4:33-4:51	Green	Blue	Red	
4:51-5:09	Red	Green	Blue	
5:10-5:30	Booktalks			
5:30-5:45	Questions and Announcements			

APPENDIX E

L.A. SPIN AGENDA FOR OCTOBER 19

L.A. SPIN
October 19, 1994

BEGINNINGS...BUILDING A COMMUNITY WITH LITERATURE AND ART

3:00-3:30	Refreshments			
3:30-3:45	Sharing L.A. SPIN: Classroom Strategies and Implementation			
3:45-4:05	Literature Circles			
4:05-4:15	Building Community with Language Arts	Dr. Dorothy Giroux Project Director L.A. Spin		
4:15-5:30	Language Arts Centers			
	<u>Poetry</u> <u>Writing</u>	<u>Drama</u>	<u>Folk Art/</u> <u>Music</u>	<u>Literature</u>
4:15-4:33	Green	Yellow	Red	Blue
4:33-4:51	Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
4:51-5:09	Red	Blue	Green	Yellow
5:09-5:27	Yellow	Red	Blue	Green
5:30-5:45	Questions and Announcements			

APPENDIX F

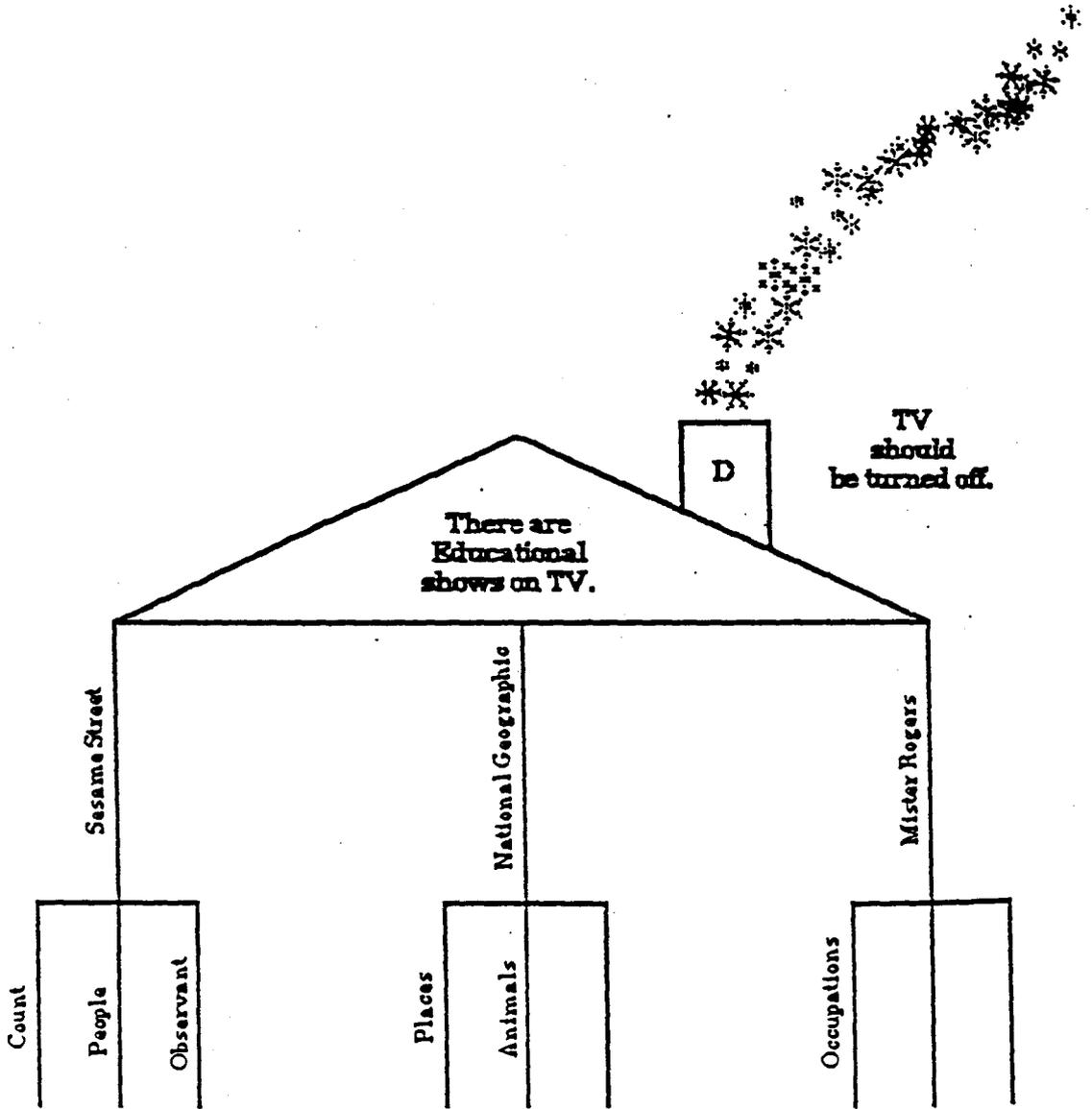
L.A. SPIN AGENDA FOR NOVEMBER 9

L.A. SPIN
November 9, 1994

BEGINNINGS...CELEBRATING EARLY COMMUNITIES

3:00-3:30	Refreshments			
3:30-3:45	Sharing L.A. SPIN: Classroom Strategies and Implementation			
3:45-4:15	Native American Art: Buffaloes, Bags, and Balance Presented By: Joan Visser L.A. Spin			
4:15-5:15	Language Arts Centers			
	<u>Story-</u> <u>telling</u>	<u>Drama</u>	<u>Science</u>	<u>Writing/</u> <u>Technology</u>
4:15-4:30	Yellow	Green	Red	Blue
4:30-4:45	Blue	Yellow	Green	Red
4:45-5:00	Red	Blue	Yellow	Green
5:00-5:15	Green	Red	Blue	Yellow
5:15-5:30	Literature Circle Discussion			
5:30	Questions and Announcements			

APPENDIX G
ORGANIZATIONAL SCHEMA



APPENDIX H

L.A. SPIN AGENDA FOR NOVEMBER 30

L.A. SPIN
November 30, 1994

BEGINNINGS...CELEBRATING THE OLD AND THE NEW

3:00-3:30	Refreshments			
3:30-3:45	Sharing L.A. SPIN: Classroom Strategies and Implementation			
3:50-4:10	L.A. SPIN Classroom Implementation/ Continuation Awards			
4:10-4:30	Language Arts Centers			
			<u>Old World</u> <u>Meets</u>	
	<u>Drama</u>	<u>Invention</u>	<u>New World</u>	<u>Writing/ Technology</u>
4:10-4:30	Yellow	Green	Red	Blue (Rm 307)
4:30-4:50	Blue	Yellow	Green	Red (Rm 307)
4:50-5:10	Red	Blue	Yellow	Green
5:10-5:30	Green	Red	Blue	Yellow
5:30	Questions and Announcements			

APPENDIX I
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX J
WRITING SAMPLE ASSESSMENT

Writing Sample Assessment

Rating Scale

- 6 - Exceptional sample meeting criteria
- 5 - Very clear representation of criteria
- 4 - Adequate sample of criteria
- 3 - Some criteria represented
- 2 - Very little criteria met
- 1 - Does not meet criteria

Length Analysis

- _____ Number of paragraphs
- _____ Number of sentences
- _____ Number of words

CRITERIA	SCORE
Focus Main idea clearly stated, audience recognized, and purpose obvious.	
Support/Elaboration Includes several supporting details and examples including appropriate vocabulary and concepts.	
Organization Ideas in logical sequence, make sense.	
Convention Uses standard grammar and mechanics of writing. Has expressive language and correct spelling.	
Integration Overall rating, summation.	

Loyola University Chicago - 1992

Dorothy Giroux
 Patricia Miller
 Joan Visser

APPENDIX K
WRITING GRADER SHEET

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Before pursuing doctoral study at Loyola University Chicago in Curriculum and Instruction, Nancy taught in Catholic high schools in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan. She was actively involved in curriculum planning and in the areas of writing and literature as well as religion. Nancy has special interests in interdisciplinary learning and writing across the curriculum. She also served as moderator of freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes and Student Council throughout her secondary teaching experience.

She has published articles in Peabody Journal of Education and High School Journal.

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

March 21, 1997
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