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Incorporating Writer's Workshop in a Third-Grade Classroom: A Look into How Students Perceive Themselves as Writers

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Abstract

This study examined how students perceived themselves as writers and what happened when writer's workshop was implemented into a third-grade classroom. The researcher collected data through pre- and post-perception surveys, observations, artifacts, and student interviews. Findings showed that self-confidence played a role in how students perceive themselves as writers. An array of emotions was observed during the implementation process and the emotions impacted the students and their desire to write. Mentor texts, share time, graphic organizers, instrumental music, and choice were utilized during the writer's workshop to promote engagement in writing. Students verbalized how these practices assisted them in all aspects of writing, including brainstorming and grammar. Many students expressed how foundational writing skills directly impacted their perception of themselves as writers. However, when given more opportunities to write, the students began to take more ownership and pride in their writing while putting less stress on being grammatically correct.

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I could not have felt better about the lesson I had just finished. There was no doubt in my mind that the students were engaged and understood why it is important to add descriptive words into their sentences. I explained the writing assignment for independent work time and released them to start. I looked to the class expecting to see students eager to begin their writing pieces. Only a few students met my gaze with smiles or determined looks on their faces. Others let out long, dramatic sighs as if they had been asked to take a test or a quiz. Then I locked eyes with Matteo (all names are pseudonyms). This shared look only lasted a second before he quickly looked down to make it seem like he was starting his assignment. However, I saw the tears forming in his little brown eyes that he was trying to hide. I made sure to check in with other students as I slowly made my way over to talk to him. When I got to his desk, I asked how he was doing. He responded with nothing at first and then very quietly whispered, "I can't do this. I'm bad at writing. I can't think of anything." After a few moments of encouraging Matteo and brainstorming different ideas, he slowly began to work on his assignment.

This interaction stayed with me throughout the day. I was concerned that Matteo was visibly upset about a writing assignment. Then I thought of the other students who sighed in frustration at the thought of having to compose a writing piece by themselves. They enjoyed writing with me but writing by themselves was different. The classroom that I was student teaching in did not use a specific model for writing instruction. I had seen writer's workshop used in other classrooms and the benefits that it brings. I wondered if this model is exactly what my students needed to strengthen their writing skills and their confidence.

Purpose

Writer's workshop is a model that puts students first and allows them to take responsibility for their own learning (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). The workshop consists of four important parts that work to better the students as writers: mini lessons, independent writing time, student-teacher conferences, and share time (Gibney, 2012). Mentor texts are used during the workshop as a guide to show students how good authors write (Gericke & Salmon, 2013). I was able to participate in a writer's workshop during a college education course. I first observed a classroom teacher using this model and then was able to use it with a group of students I was tutoring. My time tutoring the students was short, but I was able to witness the deeper thinking that took place with the students. They were engaged and enjoyed writing during this model. My study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What happens when writer's workshop is introduced in a third-grade classroom?

2. What are students' perceptions of themselves as writers after participating in writer's workshop?

This action research study was conducted while I was a graduate student during my year-long clinical teaching placement. My placement was at Antler Elementary School in Whitetail, Texas. Antler Elementary School is a part of Whitetail Independent School District and consisted of 48.1% White, 36% Hispanic, 8.4% African American, 5.1% two or more races, 1.5% Asian, 0.6% American Indian, and 0.4% Pacific Islander. Over 38% of the students were considered at risk, 2.6% of students were in the bilingual/ESL program, 9.6% of students were in special education, and 7.7% of students were identified as Gifted and Talented.

Literature Review

Writing is a form of communication, a way to express one's ideas or beliefs (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). However, many elementary schools place more emphasis on teaching grammar and mechanics rather than allowing students the opportunity to write creatively (Mavrogenes & Bezruczko, 1993). Interest serves as an important factor when developing writing skills. Magnifico (2013) conducted a study and found that interest is a major influence of whether or not a student is motivated to write. Magnifico (2013) stated, "While these writers drew on different kinds of inspirations—from others' stories, from their own lives, or from techniques or ideas—writers in each setting described personal interests as key jump-starts for their writing work" (p. 38). One strategy that has proven to positively influence a student's interest in writing is the action of choice (Kissel & Miller, 2015). Choice allows students to freely express their experiences and ideas. They are not held within a specific writing topic and can decide what they want to share from their writing piece. Choice can come in the form of the writing genre, topic, or even where to write (Kissel & Miller, 2015).

Self-confidence is another aspect that inherently affects writing development. Seban and Tavsanli (2015) conducted a study to try and understand the differences between students who identified as struggling, average, or successful writers. They found that "personal abilities like being creative or intelligent were perceived as the primary sources of competence for writers especially for struggling students; however, the effect of personal abilities was decreased as a source of their own competence in writing" (p. 231). Seban and Tavsanli (2015) continued to explain that providing many different types of writing allows struggling writers to develop their writing identities in a positive way.

Many evidence-based practices for writing have been identified in recent years. Graham and Harris (2016) explained that the environment in which writing takes place needs to be "pleasant and motivating" (p. 361). Young writers need to be held to high expectations while also understanding that the teacher is there to help them become better writers (Graham & Harris, 2016). Building community is important when creating a motivating writing environment. Beschorner and Hall (2021) found that sharing writing pieces can be used to build community within a classroom and encourage students to understand viewpoints other than their own. The study explained that students felt encouraged to share their own stories, learn from different perspectives, and develop empathy for others using diverse mentor texts. The class learned specific writing strategies while also learning how to be encouraging and respectful of others' stories (Beschorner & Hall, 2021).

Community can also be fostered through the use of feedback, both verbal and nonverbal, during the writing process. Hawkins (2016) elaborates that "conferences provide a space for participants to recognize and articulate individual strengths and goals, as well as to try out new writing strategies in order to move toward greater independence as writers" (p. 8). However, it is important to know your students and how they may respond to feedback. Feedback can affect students in negative ways, whether it is meant to have positive intent or not. It is imperative for educators to be cautious of their delivery of feedback and to always encourage the students (Marrs et al., 2016). Most importantly, students need the opportunity to write. Graham and Harris (2016) state that when students are provided with opportunities to write, the quality of their writing improves.

Writer's workshop teaches writing through engaging lessons that are student centered (Denning, 2020). Writer's workshop consists of a mini lesson, independent writing time, teacher-

student conferences, and share time (Schrodt et al., 2019). The workshop will always follow the same format despite what writing skill is being taught. The workshop will begin with a mini lesson, approximately five to ten minutes long, where a skill or strategy is explicitly taught and practiced together using a mentor text. Then students will move to independent writing time, approximately 35-45 minutes long, where teacher conferences will take place. The workshop ends with 10-20 minutes to share thoughts, ideas, or work that was completed during the independent writing time (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Writer's workshop has been shown to provide many benefits for young writers. Gericke and Salmon (2013) found that mentor texts "provided the students with inspiration, as well as a structure, to help them explain their feelings" (p. 8). Students also come to understand how to listen intently to others and respect different viewpoints (Beschorner & Hall, 2021). The structured workshop assists in teaching the students how to be more confident in their writing and to rely less on the teacher (Denning, 2020).

There are many research studies regarding writer's workshop, the benefits it brings, and the different skills or strategies that can be taught through the model. However, there is limited research that focuses specifically on the students' perceptions about themselves as writers before, during, and after the implementation of writer's workshop. The lack of research relating to my topic emphasizes the need of understanding the internal effects writer's workshop has on students. Only one study addressed this need, Seban and Tavsanli (2015), and it focused on the construction of a writer's identity in a workshop model and how the identities differed from each other. My action research study explored the possible influence of writer's workshop on a student's confidence as a writer. The implications of this study could be imperative for writing

instruction in the elementary classroom which makes the study beneficial to the greater education community.

Methods

This action research study took place in a third-grade classroom. Data was collected through pre- and post-perception surveys, observations, artifacts, and student interviews. Qualitative data was analyzed using the constant comparative method (Hubbard & Power, 2003) and a hierarchy of codes were created based on the themes that emerged (Tracy, 2013). The surveys were analyzed using a Likert scale and shown through bar graphs.

Participant Selection

The participants in this study consisted of students in a third-grade classroom. The class contained twenty-one students total. Ten of the students were male and eleven were female. The demographics of the class were 61.9% White, 23.6% Hispanic, 9.5% two or more races, and 4.8% African American. Two of the students were diagnosed with dyslexia, two students were diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder, three students were receiving speech services, and one student had an Other Health Impairment. The students' participation was contingent on signed consent from a guardian and assent from the student. A parent letter, which included the consent form, was sent home with each student. If the student received consent, then they signed an assent form at school. Every student in the classroom received the intervention; however, data was only collected from the eleven students who received consent and gave assent. The participants consisted of six girls and five boys. The demographics of the participants were 54.5% White, 18.2% Hispanic, 9.1% two or more races, and 18.2% African American. One of the participants was diagnosed with dyslexia, two students were receiving speech services, and one student had an Other Health Impairment.

Data Collection

For this action research study, pre- and post-surveys, observations, artifacts, and interviews were used to collect data. The pre- and post-survey contained the exact same questions and were administered using Google forms (see Appendix A). The Google Form included five statements and two open-ended questions. The students were asked to answer statements using a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The survey asked the students to explain how they felt about themselves as writers before and after the writer's workshop intervention. The pre-survey was given the week before the intervention took place and the post-survey was given after the intervention took place. Every student in the class took the pre- and post-survey; however, data was only collected from the students who agreed to participate in this action research study.

Observations and headnotes were also used to collect data throughout the intervention. Writer's workshop took place twice a week for four weeks, which consisted of eight total observations. I only observed students during the intervention time, which occurred on Mondays and Wednesdays. Students took part in a mini lesson taught by the researcher, independent writing time, conferences, and share time (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). The entire workshop lasted approximately forty-five minutes long. The writer's workshop lessons aligned with the Whitetail ISD scope and sequence. After the observations, I used a journal and wrote headnotes of the observation. The headnotes included information such as phrases said by the participants or actions that I noticed during the intervention (Hendricks, 2017). On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, I took the time to flesh out the headnotes and documented any connections to the intervention that I observed outside of the allotted intervention time.

Student-generated artifacts were another form of data collected during this action

research project. Artifacts such as written assignments and artwork from the participants were

collected and analyzed (Hendricks, 2017). The written assignments collected throughout the

intervention may have been assigned a grade as part of the normal grading practices in the

classroom. However, the grade had no bearing on the research and will not be included in the

research in any way. The student-generated artifacts were used as additional data, potentially

revealing how students felt about themselves as writers.

I conducted individual interviews with three to six student participants who were chosen

with purposive sampling (Patton, 1990). Every student who gave assent participated in a pre- and

post-survey. I chose students to interview based on their responses to the survey to make sure I

had a wide variety of perspectives. The interviews took place after the intervention was

implemented for four weeks. Each student interview was at least ten minutes long. The interview

questions were semi-structured and open-ended (Hendricks, 2017). The questions were aimed

toward understanding how the students felt about the intervention and if they feel differently

about themselves as writers at the end compared to the beginning of the study. The interviews

were recorded and transcribed after they were completed.

Data Analysis

I analyzed qualitative data using the constant comparative method (Hubbard & Power,

2003). I initially looked for recurring themes within the data and then coded and indexed the

different themes that emerged. The coded data consisted of the short answers in the pre- and

post-surveys, headnotes, and the transcribed interviews. As I collected the data, I began to index

the information in hopes to narrow my focus before I began creating codes. I made notes and

highlighted my headnotes and interviews as I began to see themes emerge (Hubbard & Power,

2003). After I was done indexing, I began the process of creating level 1 codes from the first 20% of the data (Tracy, 2013). These codes described my initial understanding of what I was seeing in the data. I then generated 15 level 1 codes that I placed in a codebook (see Appendix B). The codebook organized the level 1 codes and included a definition and an example for each code. I used the level 1 codes to code the other 80% of the data. From the level 1 codes, I identified three to five level 2 codes. The level 2 codes contain more interpretive or analytic words that describe the data. I also added the level 2 codes to the codebook. I also wrote analytic memos throughout the analysis process to help me understand what I was seeing in the data and reflect on the connections between the different codes that were emerging. The memos served an important purpose in helping me to be more critical of the codes that I was creating.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the Likert scale questions on the surveys (Hubbard & Power, 2003). The results from the five statements on the pre- and post-perception surveys were presented using charts (see Appendix C) and a bar graph. Google forms grouped the data received from both surveys and created bar graphs to represent the data from each individual statement. The bar graphs were then compared to see if there was any change in perceptions from the pre to post-survey.

Findings

Three major themes emerged from the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data: self-confidence, motivational factors, and aspects of writing. The themes unfolded through the use of pre- and post-surveys, individual interviews, student artifacts, and observations. The analysis of the quantitative data depicted a positive change in most of the participants' perceptions of themselves as writers. Charts and a bar graph were used to present the information collected from the qualitative data.

Quantitative Data

"When I am asked to write, I feel… frustrated."

"When I am asked to write, I feel… happy."

Both of these statements were written by Vivian five weeks apart while she was answering a short answer question on the self-perceptions survey. Vivian was not the only student in my study who expressed negative feelings towards writing. She was also not the only student who showed a positive change in their perceptions of themselves as a writer. I analyzed the perceptions pre- and post-survey using the Likert Scale range 1-5; 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. There were five Likert questions on the survey, each ranging in a potential five points. I added up the points for each student to see what their individual score was out of 25. However, the "strongly agree" option for one out of the five questions actually related to a negative self-perception. This statement was, "I get upset when I make a mistake when writing." I had to take this into consideration when analyzing my data. The lowest possible score on the survey was a 5, and the highest possible score on the survey was a 25. Figure 1 represents the students' individual perception change, if any, on the pre- and post-survey. To find a further breakdown of the survey see Appendix C.

Figure 1.

Individual Student Pre- and Post-Survey Scores
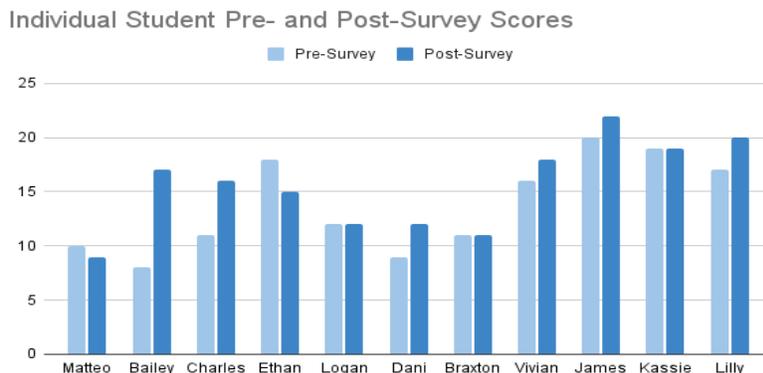
Note. This figure demonstrates the change in perceptions that students had from the pre-survey to the post-survey. Many students showed a change whether positive or negative and a few study showed no change at all.

Matteo and Ethan both decreased in score from the pre- to the post-survey. Logan, Braxton, and Kassie scored the same on both of their surveys. This could be because the students had a better understanding of their true feelings towards writing after consistently writing for four weeks. There was no consistency with writing instruction in this specific classroom before the intervention took place. Six out of the eleven participants showed a positive change from the pre- to the post-survey. The most notable difference was with Bailey. Bailey scored an 8 on the pre-survey and a 17 on the post-survey. Charles also showed significant positive growth on his surveys. He scored an 11 on his pre-survey and a 16 on his post-survey. Over half of the participants in my study showed positive growth in their individual self-perceptions towards writing.

Self-Confidence

"It's so bad. I feel like I am a bad writer." This was a statement shared by Matteo during a writer's workshop conference when asked how his story was coming along. The self-confidence of students in regards to writing was a major theme that developed throughout this study. I observed an array of emotions ranging from anger to giggling with excitement. There were even a few students that I refer to as my Switzerland Authors. They exhibited neutral feelings towards themselves as writers. Bailey explained what this means by stating, "While I'm writing, I feel in the middle of those two, and it's like I feel right in the middle of happy and normal. Mostly when I'm writing, I'm in the middle of normal and happy." These Swiss writers did not think super highly of themselves, but they also did not think that they were bad writers. The research

question for this study strongly emphasized understanding how students feel about themselves as writers. Many questions asked throughout observations and interviews allowed students the opportunity to express how they truly felt about writing and their ability to write.

Negative self-perceptions towards writing began to overwhelm my data. The pre- and post-survey included two short answer question stems. One of the question stems stated, "When I am asked to write, I feel…" There were four negative emotions that were repeated in both surveys: mad, frustrated, bad, and nervous. These emotions continued to be displayed not only in their self-talk but also in their body language. The students told me everything I needed to know without using a word. After the writing instruction was explained, sighs could be heard, shoulders would already be dropped, and I was met with blank stares from students. Many of the negative comments related to brainstorming in the writing process. Brainstorming requires careful planning and creativity which proved to be difficult for many of my students. "Sometimes, I'll just be like, I hate writing right now depending on how hard it is to write about it." Kassie made this statement during her interview when explaining what she did not like about writing. When Matteo was asked why he gets frustrated when writing, he answered, "because I don't know what to write." The struggles that students felt when brainstorming seemed to affect their self-confidence when writing.

Many students expressed moments of excitement and even positive phrases throughout the writer's workshop intervention. When answering the same question stem as mentioned above, students described feeling happy, good, and excited. These emotions were also shown through gestures such as clapping, jumping up and down in their seats, and smiling really big. During a conference with Dani, she kept her head down when I was asking her about her revisions. She did not lift her head until I had told her that she was working hard. She then met

my gaze with a big smile and immediately continued to work on her revisions. She did not have to tell me with words, but I knew that she was proud of herself. During the intervention we worked hard on referring to each other as authors or illustrators. Bailey explained, "It makes me feel happy when I'm writing a book and you say that we're all authors. And we... and I really liked it. How I feel- I feel really happy when you say we're all authors." She expressed her positive feelings towards herself as a writer because of a simple change in language. The encouragement given in conferences and the understanding that the students are not just writing, but that they are authors, appeared to improve their self-confidence in regards to writing.

I began to see a change in my data as time went on. Students began to show a decrease in negative feelings towards themselves and towards writing throughout the study. I used this knowledge to help formulate additional questions for each individual interview in hopes to understand this change in more depth. Students who continued to show a negative self-perception on their post-surveys answered their interview questions with a more positive outlook on writing. When asked why they scored themselves so low on their surveys, many answered with "I don't know." As it was shown in my pre- and post-survey bar graph, many students grew to have a more positive self-perception of themselves as writers. The collected data highlighted this trend as well. Many of the negative self-perception codes occurred during the pre-survey and the observations from the beginning of the implementation. The post-survey and the interviews illustrated a more positive view of the students and their self-perceptions. Ultimately, this confirms how many students shifted from having a negative self-perception to a positive self-perception throughout the writer's workshop intervention.

Motivational Factors

This code describes intentional strategies or practices that were used throughout writer's workshop to promote engagement in writing. There were many strategies and practices used throughout the implementation process, but five made a significant impact on the students. These practices include mentor texts, sharing time, graphic organizers, playing calming music, and allowing students the choice to write about their interests. All mentions of these practices were described in a positive way by the students. Many even explain how the practices helped them in their writing process.

"I like to write, and I'll use my imagination to write a story, and it would be kind of- it's kind of fun when you're thinking of a story instead of writing from another page." Bailey stated this when explaining why she likes to have a choice over what she writes about. Ethan echoed Bailey's feeling by stating, "Once I heard that we were writing stories of our own design, I was immediately shocked and then excited to write my own story." Many students were more willing to participate and try during the writer's workshop when they were given the choice to write about what they wanted to. Most of the prompts they received throughout the workshop were semi-structured, meaning that they could choose their topic as long as they were using the correct writing genre. Interests also seemed to motivate the students more when they were able to choose what they wanted to write about. When Ethan was asked why he thought choice and interests were important in the writing process, he stated, "Because it makes me able to write what I like to write instead of something I don't want to do." Many students shared similar feelings towards being able to choose what to write about during the workshop. When I asked Kassie why she does not like writing sometimes, she explained, "Sometimes it depends on what kind of writing it is or like what you have to write about. Sometimes, I am like- remember that one time when you asked us to write about a pet. I think it was… everyone's like, yeah, I'm going to write about all

the dogs." Students became more engaged with the writing task when they were able to have some sort of a say in what they were doing.

The playing of calming music was a surprising theme that arose throughout the data. Many students explained how the music calmed them down during independent writing time and helped them to focus. Instrumental music was played in every lesson during independent writing time. Originally, the music was supposed to act as a noise control so students would not distract each other. However, it became a motivational factor for the students when they began to write. Matteo expressed low self-perceptions of himself as a writer, but also reminded me to play the music during our writing time. During his interview, he explained, "When I write sometimes it's quiet, and then it kind of keeps me calm when we have the music on." I like to think of the music as a calming effect while students are exerting all their energy during the writing process. Logan mentioned the music in her interview by explaining, "How peaceful it is and that you get to be quiet while you're doing it and you don't have to be all that loud." The peacefulness of the music seemed to have a positive effect as they were working through their writing process.

The students enjoyed using graphic organizers and mentor texts throughout the workshop intervention. A book would be read and the student would be asked to model a specific skill that the author did really well in their own writing. Logan explained that mentor texts helped her understand how to brainstorm and write. Mentor books were set up around the room so that students could go look at them at any moment to help them with their writing. During one conference, Charles stated, "Books. Like there are so many books to choose from. We read a lot of them before we write and they help us." He understood the importance of looking at mentor books when writing his own story. Graphic organizers were a major motivation piece during the brainstorming and planning process. These were not brought in until the third implementation.

Matteo explained, "What I like about writing is when we do the fun activities. When we started to do the organizer, then I wanted to change it because it made me more interested in writing." The graphic organizers helped the students not feel so overwhelmed when they were brainstorming. "Yeah, I just need help from the hamburger page." This was said by Dani in reference to an opinion writing graphic organizer that was shaped like a hamburger. The coded data shows that the students were motivated to write when using mentor texts and graphic organizers because they were seen as helpful tools.

Through the coded data, I realized that students started to become more determined to write when they realized that they would have the opportunity to share their writing with someone other than the researcher and the classroom teacher. When Kassie was asked to share her writing with the class during share time, she responded with, "Oh yeah. I'm excited to see what the class thinks of it when it's on the board!" The students became really strong in their positive feedback towards each other's writing pieces. More students began to highlight the use of sentence structure and creativity rather than only commenting on how well the student read their story.

Understanding what the motivating factors were for the students throughout the implementation was very important in understanding my first research question. I wanted to look at what happens when writer's workshop is implemented into a third-grade classroom. The code, motivation factors, explains in depth that the students become more interested and motivated to write through the writer's workshop. The specific strategies and practices used throughout this model seem to have a positive impact on the students and their desire to write in an academic setting.

Aspects of Writing

This level 2 code was difficult to name based on the variety of themes that arose. However, the themes that emerged in this code relate to foundational writing skills and strategies that impact the writing process. Throughout this intervention, I did not focus on specific writing skills or practices as much as I did on the students' feelings towards writing. However, I did not realize how much data would refer to specific foundational writing skills and strategies until I began coding.

The other short answer question stemming from the surveys stated, "When I think of a good writer, I think of…" I was shocked by how many of the answers related to grammar. This was an overwhelming response on the pre-survey. Matteo explained in his interview, "I think I'm a good writer when all my sentences are right in my story." Many students have the idea that they can only be good writers if they use punctuation. When Braxton was asked what he did not like about writing, he stated, "Sometimes I can't spell a word right then I don't want to keep going in my story." Grammar seemed to have had a significant impact on the students and how they valued themselves as writers.

Purpose of writing and ownership of writing were two themes that I was not anticipating observing. Throughout their interviews, many students explained that they have a clear purpose for why they write. Kassie explained, "I like to share with people. Other people are shy and are like 'I don't want to show people this if it's a bad book they'll laugh.' But with me- I like doing stuff like that; I like telling stories." Many students want to write to entertain themselves and their peers. Ethan explained, "What I like about writing is that it's an opportunity to share what you're feeling." He wanted to share his thoughts and ideas with others. Students also began to take ownership of their writing. When Braxton was asked why his "how to" writing was his favorite, he responded, "I worked really hard on that one." Braxton realized the hard work that

he had put into his writing piece and took pride in the work that he had done. Kassie added, "It's more like, when I'm in class, and I'm a writer; I feel like I'm a real author, and I am actually sharing and like our classroom is our little world." Many students realized throughout this process that their writing was meaningful and that they should be proud of the pieces that they wrote.

Another aspect of writing that emerged through the data was providing time for the students to write. I cannot assume that writer's workshop was the reason for many of the improvements seen throughout the study. I believe that the simple act of allowing students to write regularly played a major role in the students' writing stamina and in developing their writing skills. Figure 2 shows the change in Dani's writing throughout the intervention. During Dani's interview, she explained why she thought taking time to write was important. She stated, "I was writing about my mom when I was little, and it took me about maybe a month or two. The thing is, it turned out good! Other writings I did, where it took me just like an hour, were never good because they never got their heart poured into it." Many of the students in my class were not consistently provided time to practice writing.

Figure 2.

Dani's Personal Writing Compositions
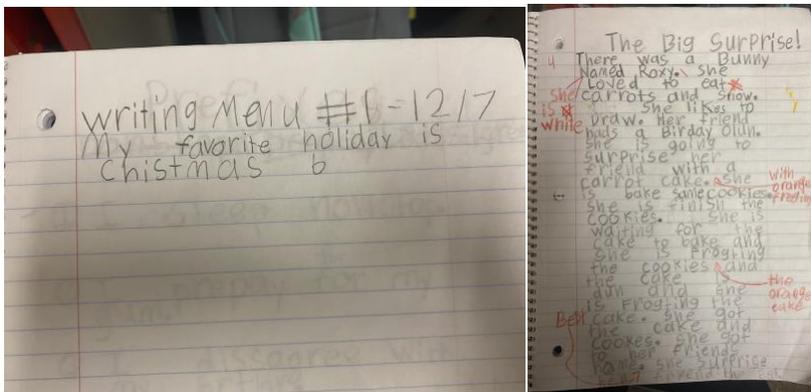
Note. This figure shows the comparison of Dani's writing from before the

intervention to after the intervention.

The themes that emerged provided insight on the different aspects of writing that

impacted my students as a result of implementing writer's workshop in the classroom. Students

began to take ownership of their writing and seemed to gain a better understanding of why they

write. Their stamina also seemed to grow since they were practicing writing consistently

throughout the week. Understanding how this study benefited students in ways that I did not

anticipate greatly impacted my understanding of what happens when writer's workshop is

implemented in the classroom.

Implications for Teachers

The purpose of this study was to explore what happens when writer's workshop is

implemented in a third-grade classroom. This study also looked at the students' perceptions of

themselves as writers and if writer's workshop impacted their perceptions in any way. I had

noticed that many of my students seemed frustrated when we would do activities that involved

writing more than a sentence. I decided to implement a structured writing workshop to see if

there was any change in feelings towards writing instruction. The writer's workshop consisted of

a mini lesson, independent writing time, student-teacher conferences, and share time.

Before the implementation process began, the students took a pre-survey where they

answered questions relating to their perceptions of themselves as writers. The information

gathered from the pre-survey provided insight on how I, as the researcher, should approach this

process. After the pre-surveys were administered, the students participated in writer's workshop

twice a week for four weeks. The first two weeks, the writing lessons focused on creative

writing. The last two weeks consisted of learning about persuasive writing. Students were

allowed to sit anywhere in the room when they were independently writing and had some

freedom in choosing what they were going to write about. Mentor texts and graphic organizers

were used in a majority of the lessons to help support students as they began the writing process.

A little less than half of the students displayed negative attitudes and feelings towards

writing at the beginning of the implementation process. These feelings resulted in the students

identifying themselves as bad writers even if the content of their writing was good. Their mindset

was fixed on the negative and many did not even want to try when it came to writing. After the

implementation of writer's workshop, many students became more engaged and excited to write

every Monday and Wednesday. When analyzing the interviews and the short answer questions of

the survey, students were able to explain in more depth that they were more interested in writing

when they were able to choose what they wanted to write about and when they were able to use

graphic organizers to help them brainstorm. This positive change in perception was shown in the

post-survey when eight out of eleven students expressed a positive perception of themselves as a

writer.

Students also showed a growth in writing stamina and length. Activities such as graphic

organizers, partner brainstorming, and mentor texts helped students plan out and draft their

writing pieces. Students started to understand that writing is not always intimidating and can

actually be enjoyable. I saw this reflected in the students writing pieces. Before the

implementation of the writer's workshop, many students struggled to write a complete sentence

without becoming frustrated with themselves. Towards the end of the workshop, students were

writing page long stories and asking if they could continue on the back of the page. The students

developed a sense of ownership and pride in the work that they were doing, and it was reflected

in their writing.

Throughout the study, I began to see my students transform from writers to authors. The students paid careful attention to the books that we read in class and had meaningful conversations with each other discussing how they could model their own writing after the authors. They listened intently to their peers during share time and focused on each other's craft rather than mentioning something non-related. There was a calmness that filled the room when the music turned on and every student dived into their writing. The structure of this workshop provided students with the opportunity to strengthen their writing skills as well as their perceptions. I was even able to learn more about my students' lives and interests outside of school. They loved to incorporate ideas that were personal and special to them. By allowing them to have choice in their writing, I feel as though I have a better understanding of who they are as authors and people outside of school.

My students learned that they are all authors and are capable of creating many different writing pieces. They understood that writing takes time and that there are many supports that can be used throughout the writing process to help benefit them as they create their own pieces. As students began to develop a sense of ownership and understanding their own purpose for writing, their perceptions started to change. The want to create something for others to read pushed the students as they developed their stories. I also believe that this study taught my students that their voice matters. They knew that I wanted to know their honest opinions on the surveys, during the observations, and interviews. The students felt comfortable expressing their concerns with me and their peers.

For teachers wanting to implement a writer's workshop into their classroom, I would suggest using a perceptions survey (see Appendix A) to better understand how your students currently feel about writing. I already knew the writing genres that would be covered throughout

the intervention, and I had a good list of mentor texts to use to teach different skills. However, I believe that the perception survey provided insight into each student and their own feelings towards writing. I was able to have a better understanding of which students might need more guidance during the writing process and which could be more independent. Another piece of advice that I would give to teachers wanting to implement writer's workshop is to go all in. If the students see that you are having fun reading different mentor texts, using graphic organizers, and creating silly stories then they will want to go all in too. The preparation for writer's workshop can take some time but the workshop is also flexible so mold it to best fit the needs of your students.

One limitation of the study was the short implementation period. Since the whole project was only four weeks long, I did not get to conference with each student in the way that I had planned. The workshop takes time to put into place and for the students to understand the routines and procedures. The last two weeks flowed smoother than the first; however, I do believe that I was able to observe everything that I needed to. Another limitation to this study was that this was my first time planning and conducting a writer's workshop in a third-grade classroom. Previously, I had observed and taught a writer's workshop lesson in a classroom setting that had been using the model all year.

Both of my questions for this study were answered by the collected data. However, I am wondering if adding growth mindset lessons to the writer's workshop would have impacted the students in an even more positive way? I also wonder about adding social emotional lessons and how students would be affected. Both of these would be easy to incorporate simply by choosing specific mentor texts that relate to those topics. My last question is how would the findings differ if I had incorporated more than two writing lessons a week?

My teaching practice was greatly impacted by this research. I was able to understand the value of allowing students the freedom to have choice in their assignments and where they decided to work. I also noticed how important it was to allow the students time to independently write. They were engaged and focused during my mini lesson and then immediately went to work on their own writing for 30-40 minutes at a time. I realized how beneficial the collaboration piece of writer's workshop was for the students. They respected each other and wanted feedback from their peers.

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Appendix A

Pre- and Post-Survey

I enjoy writing. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

I would be excited to write a story right now. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

I think I am a good writer. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

I get upset when I make a mistake when writing. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Writing is one of my favorite subjects. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

When I am asked to write, I feel... *

Your answer

When I think of a good writer, I think of... *

Your answer

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Appendix B

Codebook

Codes	Level	Definition	Example
Self-Confidence	2	How the students view themselves as writers.	"I think I'm a good writer because I come up with a lot of ideas."
"I'm a bad writer"	1	Negative feelings the students have towards themselves as writers or writing in general.	"It's so bad. I feel like I am a bad writer."
Ready to Write!	1	Excitement or positive feelings relating to self-perceptions and writing.	I then asked for her opinion on publishing her story. She responded, 'Oh yeah. I'm excited to see what the class thinks of it when it's on the board!"
Switzerland Authors	1	The neutral feelings felt toward writing. The participants do not love writing, but they also do not hate it.	"I feel like I just write it."
Telling me everything I need to know without a word.	1	Non-verbal gestures that show frustration, anger, and the rare excitement.	"I could see in her expression that she was frustrated."

Motivational Factors	2	Engaging strategies or practices that impacted students during the writing intervention.	"When we started to do the organizer, then I wanted to change it because it made me more interested in writing."
The calming effect	1	The students referencing the use of music during writer's workshop.	"When I write sometimes it's quiet, and then it kind of keeps me calm when we have the music on."
Interests	1	When the participants explained their interests and how the interests affected their writing experience	"You can kind of just write down whatever you want and then everybody can know what your interests are."
Choice	1	Participants' sense of choice during the writer's workshop intervention.	"I like to write, and I'll use my imagination to write a story and it would be kind of- it's kind of fun when you're thinking of a story instead of writing from another page."
Graphic Organizers	1	Graphic organizers and how students the students felt about them during writer's workshop.	"Yes, I just need help from the hamburger page."

Share Time	1	Feelings about sharing their writing pieces with the whole group, collaboration groups, or partner pairs.	"Once we finished writing our persuasive letter, Matteo asked, "can we read her our letter now?" He was even giggling when we invited Mrs. Smith into our classroom so we could read it to her."
Authors/Mentor Texts	1	Connections or feelings towards mentor texts and mentor authors.	"Books. Like there are so many books to choose from. We read a lot of them before we write, and they help us."
Aspects of Writing	2	Foundational writing skills or strategies.	When I think of a good writer, I think of putting punctuation."
Brainstorming	1	The act of brainstorming and the positives and negatives feelings that come with it.	"It's hard to come up with a story."
Purpose of writing	1	Statements made by the participants about their personal purpose for writing.	"What I like about writing is that it's an opportunity to share what you're feeling, and you can make a story of your own design"

Elements of Writing	1	Comments and ideas relating to sentence structure and story elements.	"I like to put more detail into it and make it more of a story than just a little poem or a paragraph."
Ownership in writing	1	When the students exhibit characteristics of taking ownership of their own writing.	"It's more like, when I'm in class and I'm a writer, I feel like I'm a real author and I am actually sharing and like our classroom is our little world. "
Time given to Write.	1	Time spent working on writing compositions.	"Other writings I did, where it took me just like an hour, they were never good because they never got their heart poured into it or they never got actual good stuff put into it."

Appendix C

Perceptions Survey Results

10 points or below	+ = growth in self-perception
11-14 points	- = decline in self-perception
15-22 points	• = no change

First Name:	I enjoy writing.	I would be excited to write a story right now.	I think I am a good writer.	I get upset when I make a mistake when writing.	Writing is one of my favorite subjects.	Total out of 25
Matteo	1	1	2	5	1	10
Bailey	2	1	2	1	2	8
Charles	3	2	3	1	2	11
Ethan	3	5	3	3	4	18
Logan	4	1	3	2	2	12
Dani	2	1	2	3	1	9
Braxton	3	2	2	2	2	11
Vivian	4	1	5	2	4	16
James	5	3	5	2	5	20
Kassie	5	5	4	1	4	19
Lilly	4	5	4	1	3	17
					Total	151 out of 275

First Name:	I enjoy writing.	I would be excited to write a story right now.	I think I am a good writer.	I get upset when I make a mistake when writing.	Writing is one of my favorite subjects.	Total out of 25	
Kassie	5	5	4	1	4	19	•
Vivian	5	3	5	1	4	18	+
Matteo	3	1	2	2	1	9	-
Dani	2	1	5	1	3	12	+
Bailey	3	5	5	1	3	17	+
Ethan	3	4	4	1	3	15	-
Logan	3	2	2	2	3	12	•
Braxton	2	1	3	1	4	11	•
James	5	4	5	3	5	22	+
Charles	4	3	5	1	3	16	+
lilly	5	5	5	1	4	20	+
					Total	171 out of 275	