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## Direct instruction in the writing process with an emphasis on planning: An action research project

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## Direct instruction in the writing process with an emphasis on planning: An action research project

### Abstract

Writing has become a major focus in classroom teaching. Writing calls for active participation from all students, thus encouraging learning. It focuses thought, makes thought available for inspection, and allows for more complex thought.

Direct Instruction in the Writing Process with an  
Emphasis on Planning: An Action Research Project

A Research Paper

Submitted to

the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

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University of Northern Iowa

By

Renee J. DeBerg

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AN EMPHASIS ON PLANNING: AN ACTION RESEARCH  
PROJECT

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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## Chapter I

### REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

Writing has become a major focus in classroom teaching. Writing calls for active participation from all students, thus encouraging learning. It focuses thought, makes thought available for inspection, and allows for more complex thought.

This chapter reviews the professional literature. First, the chapter explains two aims of instruction. Second, the chapter defines direct instruction and outlines a lesson design consisting of seven steps that might be utilized in teaching students how to learn independently. Third, the chapter reports the status of writing in classrooms as of 1980. The fourth topic of the chapter discusses process writing and explicitly describes the guided writing lesson.

The fifth topic viewed in Chapter 1 is the standards for basic writing programs. This section offers an operational definition of writing and describes the basic characteristics of an effective basic skills writing program. Sixth, the chapter states a rationale for teaching subject matter through writing. Three questions teachers of writing often ask are answered. The seventh section defines semantic mapping, a method for organizing information. Based on schema theory, semantic mapping is

an attempt to integrate information with a person's prior knowledge. The last section of the chapter discusses semantic webbing as a prewriting activity. It offers objectives for the prewriting activity that was studied during this project and outlines procedures to follow.

### Aims of Instruction

Instructing students in content area reading and writing involves two aims of instruction. First, schools are expected to impart a common body of knowledge to their students. Also, schools are to teach students how to acquire information on their own. Thus, content area literacy instruction has two primary aims: (a) to guide students to information about the world and (b) to teach students how to learn about the world independently.

Content area instruction focusing on teaching students about the world should assist students in gaining the maximum amount of information they can through reading and writing. For instance, instead of a teacher saying, "Read the next five pages," the effective teacher might say, "Read the next five pages about two children, Wana and Bogana. They live on the continent of South America in the Amazon Region. Read in order to find out how they live."

The other aim of content area instruction, the how-to lessons, focuses on teaching students how to learn

on their own. Strategies for independent learning can be taught to students through direct instruction. Such strategies might include locating information, organizing it, and writing a report about the information. These strategies require direct instruction because most students do not pick them up automatically. Students must be taught how to locate information, how to organize the information, and how to report the information gathered (Moore, Moore, Cunningham, & Cunningham, 1986).

Lesson designs and teacher decisions differ depending upon the aim of the instruction. In guiding students to information, the teacher will

- (a) establish background information and motivate students,
- (b) set a purpose for reading/listening to a given selection,
- (c) check the purpose upon completion of reading/listening to the selection, and
- (d) may or may not extend the comprehension activity.

Conversely, while teaching students how to learn independently, the teacher might employ an instructional technique based on models of direct instruction.

In the past decade, much research has been conducted concerning direct instruction. The following section explains direct instruction and its relationship to teaching students independent learning from text strategies.

### Direct Instruction

Direct instruction is a systematic step-by-step form of teaching. The method was derived primarily from reading and mathematics research conducted in elementary and junior high schools. However, direct instruction is applicable to any well-structured discipline where the objective is to teach performance skills or mastery of a body of knowledge.

Rosenshine (1986) reports that researchers have found when effective teachers teach concepts and skills/strategies directly they:

1. Begin a lesson with a short statement of goals,
2. Begin a lesson with a short review of previous, prerequisite learning,
3. Present new material in small steps, with student practice after each step,
4. Give clear and detailed instructions and explanations,
5. Provide active practice for all students,
6. Ask many questions, check for student understanding, and obtain responses from all students,
7. Guide students during initial practice,
8. Provide systematic feedback and corrections,

9. Provide explicit instruction and practice for seatwork exercises and, where necessary, monitor students during seatwork, and
10. Continue practice until students are independent and confident. (p. 61-62)

Russell and Hunter (1981) detailed a lesson design used in planning effective direct instruction. They assumed, though, that before a teacher begins to plan a particular sequence of lessons he or she (a) determines the strand for immediate diagnosis and teaching, (b) identifies a major target objective in that strand and locates students' educational position in relation to that objective, and (c) on the basis of the diagnosis, be it formal or informal, selects the specific objective for a particular group's instruction.

Having worked through the three steps mentioned above, the teacher is now ready to plan for instruction. Russell and Hunter (1981) believed that a systematic consideration of seven elements should be deliberately included or excluded in planning for instruction. For each instructional session, the teacher must consider the following seven steps separately to determine whether or not it is appropriate for the particular objective for these students, and whether it should be included,

excluded, or combined with a subsequent step. The seven steps are summarized as follows:

### 1. Anticipatory Set

The anticipatory set occurs during the time students are physically arriving or mentally shifting gears from one activity to another. The teacher is consciously eliciting attending behavior, providing a deliberate focus, and anticipating a mental readiness or set for the content of the instruction. Planning an effective activity to develop anticipatory set will (a) focus the students attention, (b) provide a brief practice on previously achieved and related learnings, or (c) develop readiness for instruction that will follow. The anticipatory set continues only long enough to get students ready so that the major portion of instructional time is available for the accomplishment of current objectives.

### 2. The Objective and Its Purpose

This step involves the teacher communicating to the students what they will be able to do by the end of instruction and why it is important, useful, and relevant to present and future life situations.

### 3. Instructional Input

In planning this step, the teacher must determine what information is needed by the student in order to accomplish the present objective. Often students are

expected to master an objective without having been taught the necessary information in order to do so.

Once the necessary information has been identified, the teacher must select the means for teaching the information to his or her students. The possibilities are many: the teacher explains, the teacher provides a demonstration, a film is shown, or students use library resources.

#### 4. Modeling

It is helpful for students to not only know about, but to see examples of an acceptable finished product or a process. It is important that the visual input of modeling be accompanied by the verbal input of labeling the critical elements of what is happening or has happened. This verbal labeling is often referred to as "think talk." The teacher explains to the students what he or she is thinking while modeling the process or product.

#### 5. Checking for Understanding

The teacher needs to check in with students in order to find out whether or not they possess the essential information to achieve the instructional objective. Also, the teacher needs to observe students' performance to make sure it is acceptable. The teacher can choose to check student understanding by (a) sampling: posing questions to the total group and then getting answers

from representative members of the group; (b) signaling: the total group responds by showing the teacher a predetermined signal, be it holding up fingers, displaying thumbs up or thumbs down, or using sign language; or (c) individual private responses: questions are asked and the responses are written down or whispered to the teacher.

#### 6. Guided Practice

The beginning stages of learning are critical in determining future success for students. The students' initial attempts in new learning should be carefully guided to ensure accuracy and success. During guided practice, the teacher circulates among the students to make sure the instruction has taken before releasing students to practice independently.

#### 7. Independent Practice

Once a student demonstrates he or she can perform a given task without major errors or confusion, this student is ready to develop fluency by practicing without the availability of the teacher. Only then can students be given a written or verbal assignment to practice independently.

### The Status of Writing

Research by James Britton and his colleagues at the University of London (cited in Fulwiler, 1980) suggested that writing taught in schools was narrowly conceived.

Britton described writing according to three categories: (a) transactional, language to get things done by informing, instructing or persuading; (b) poetic, language as an art medium such as poetry and fiction; and (c) expressive, language written for oneself for thinking and speculating on paper. In viewing 2,000 pieces of writing from 65 secondary schools, Britton found that 84% of the writing done by high school seniors was transactional. Poetic writing accounted for less than 7% of school writing and expressive less than 4%.

Since transactional writing is most widely used in classrooms, one focus needs to be on developing improved transactional writing tasks. This can be accomplished through guided writing lessons, which are based on the stages of the writing processes.

#### The Writing Process

According to Moore, Moore, Cunningham, and Cunningham (1986) the writing process consists of three stages: planning, drafting, and revising. Each stage of the writing process calls for a different type of decision. The composition process is not linear (going along in a straight line, one step following another without repetition) but recursive (doubling back on itself until the task is finished).

### Planning

Planning occurs before you begin to write. Writers who make plans before writing generally produce better writing than those who begin haphazardly. They may call up information they already know about the topic. They might make a list of words and then organize their thoughts by constructing an outline, list, or web. Sometimes they discuss the topic with others in order to clarify their own thinking. Frequently, writers engaging in the planning stage go off to work on other tasks and let their ideas incubate.

### Drafting

The terms first draft, rough draft, and final draft may come to mind when the drafting stage is mentioned. Drafting is, in this case, when the pencil hits the paper and ideas from the planning stage begin to take shape. During drafting, writers may return to the planning stage to change the organization of the paper or to produce new ideas. Also, during the drafting stage, writers may move into the third stage, revising, as they correct spelling errors, change words, or rearrange sentences. Mainly, though, writers in the drafting stage focus on stating ideas regardless of form.

### Revising

In the revision stage, the ideas and language used to convey those ideas may be changed or modified.

Writers look at their output in order to examine strengths and weaknesses of their draft. The revising writer sets various goals or reasons for examining their output. It may be to focus on spelling, punctuation, word choice, grammar, content, or some other aspect of the work. The beginning writer should attend to no more than one or two aspects of writing at one time during the revising stage. It can be overwhelming for the beginning writer to consider all possibilities at once.

#### Guiding the Planning Process

The intent of the research paper reported here was to focus on the planning stage of the writing process. The researcher believed that her students needed instruction in order to perform the writing process successfully. Therefore, the planning stage of the writing process is explained in detail here.

In the planning stage of the writing process, a topic is isolated and information about that topic is generated and organized in some fashion. Activities in guiding the planning process can be grouped into four categories: designing the task, building background and motivation, modeling the process, and generating and organizing information. Each topic is explained below.

#### Designing the Task

When designing a composition task, three elements need to be considered: purpose, form, and audience.

Each can be discussed separately; however, in designing a writing task, all three aspects interact and cannot exist apart from one another.

Purpose. Setting a purpose for writing provides students with direction. A purpose defines the information one wants to convey and the topic of the composition. For example, a teacher might set the following purpose: "Now that we have finished studying about the Amazon Region and the Zaire Region, write about how the two regions are similar and how they are different." With this statement, a topic has been clearly defined, and students can focus their attention on that topic. Isolating a topic is the first step in designing composition tasks for students.

Besides isolating a clearly defined topic, a second aspect needs to be considered in designing a writing task. That is the intent, or reason, for writing. The intent typically falls into one of four functional categories of literacy: 1) writing to experience, 2) writing to learn, 3) writing to do, or 4) writing to persuade.

A student writing to experience engages in personal writing where one explores feelings and motivations, as in a diary or a journal. While writing to experience, one may be trying to escape from reality by creating. Typically a student would be writing creatively while

writing to experience. In writing to learn, one is attempting to clarify information. One's intent might be to synthesize or make connections concerning a given topic. The learning may be for oneself, for others, or both. Writing a research report is an example of writing to learn. The writer is gaining insights, and he or she may or may not share those insights with others.

Everyone, at one time or another, has written to do. Writing to do accomplishes utilitarian tasks such as filling out job applications, writing memos, completing worksheets, writing grocery lists, or recording recipes. The last purpose, writing to persuade, might include writing a letter to the editor, writing to a department store to state a complaint, or writing a note to your family convincing them to let you go to the dance on Saturday night. In writing to persuade, one's intent is to sway someone's way of thinking.

Thus, in designing a writing task, a good teacher will first define the purpose for writing. Purposes define both the topic and the intent of the composition. The topic depends upon what is being studied in class, and the intent depends upon whether the teacher wants his or her students to write in order to experience, to learn, to do, or to persuade. Regardless of the topic or intent, by setting a clear purpose a teacher will help students to produce clear compositions.

Form. The form of a composition is the medium through which information is presented. While designing the writing task, the teacher needs to make the decision as to the form the student will use while writing. Is the content of the paper to be presented as a poem, a letter, an essay, a play, a list, a request, or a will? Many written forms are possible (See Appendix A).

Specifying the form of a passage includes setting its length. Teachers need to tell students the approximate length of a composition. This helps students understand how much information to include. Assigning a 2-page paper tells students one thing, while assigning a 10-page paper tells them another. Assigning approximate lengths for writing helps writers understand the depth of discussion they need.

In closing, return to the sample purpose of the rain forest regions. The teacher of such a unit might set the Amazon Region as the topic of composition. The intent of the piece would be to learn. With that purpose, a teacher might choose a two-page summary as the composition form. However, the composition could also take the form of a one-page illustrated pamphlet, or of a letter to the students' parents. Much writing done in schools is limited in form; actual writing contains a large number of forms. People write letters, lists, and journal entries; they fill out applications and write

speeches. Teachers need to introduce students to many varied forms in order to prepare them for all the demands of life outside the classroom.

Audience. The audience of a composition is the individual or group the writer conceives as the listener or reader. The audience is not necessarily those who actually listen to or read a piece of material. Think of television commercials. The writers of Saturday morning commercials have young children in mind as an audience while planning the ads. Thus, the content of the commercials is aimed toward a young audience. In contrast, the content of commercials written for a Sunday afternoon football game is aimed toward an adult male audience. Helping students to specify an audience for their writing is crucial for effective communication. In the majority of classrooms, the students perceive the teacher as being their audience. More meaningful audiences might include pen pals, parents, peers, school personnel, or agencies that provide free materials. Many audiences are possible (See Appendix-B).

As can be seen, many purposes, forms, and audiences are possible for composition tasks. Below are three examples of possible composition tasks based on the same topic. Once a teacher has chosen an appropriate purpose, he or she can design various composition starters by altering the purpose, form, and audience.

1. Write a letter to your parents telling them what you learned this week about the Amazon Region.

2. Write a letter to the future fourth graders telling them what they will learn next year about the Amazon Region.

3. Design a brochure for a tourist showing what they will expect to see while visiting the Amazon Region.

As shown in the examples, you can see the topic remained the same for each composition starter, while the intent changed. The form remained the same, a letter, for two of the three examples. However, each composition starter was aimed to a different audience. By designing composition tasks well, students can be assured of what to do, how to do it, and for whom they are doing it.

#### Building Background and Motivation

Before students can write, they need to have something to write about. Therefore, before engaging in a content area writing task, the students need adequate background knowledge. Teachers of writing must engage students in concept development activities prior to assigning writing tasks. This can be accomplished by showing movies, photographs, and illustrations. It can also be accomplished through purposeful reading and discussion.

In addition to being assured students possess appropriate background knowledge, the teacher must decide how to motivate students' interest. Since motivation is the intent to learn, students who are motivated to learn do learn more.

### Modeling the Writing Process

Students need specific models that demonstrate how to implement their ideas through writing. Teachers frequently model the process of writing by showing the students finished compositions completed by professionals, by the teacher, or by previous students. For instance, if you were asking students to design a brochure for tourists visiting the Amazon Region, it would be appropriate to gather several brochures to show to students. You could point out important features of the brochure to guide your students in designing their own brochure.

For large-scale projects, such as an animal research report, the teacher frequently walks students through the processes one step at a time. The teacher might first help students to generate appropriate questions about their topic, then to locate suitable references, then to organize the information, and finally to report it.

### Generating and Organizing Information

The final step in the planning stage of the writing process is when students call up and organize the

information they want to include in their drafts. Word gathering is an excellent way to generate information. Students who are gathering words for the Amazon Region might call up and list 20 to 50 different words ranging from jungle to machete to rainy season. The words are recorded somewhere, both to remind students of possible content and to help with spelling. Students can work individually, in small groups, or as a class to generate words.

In addition to gathering words, students might organize words in a List, Group, and Label lesson. In this type of lesson, words are grouped into subcategories which then are labeled. For instance, after generating words for the Amazon Region, students might categorize the words blowgun and machete under the heading weapons.

The teacher's main role during this stage is to show students what to do. Some students require a great deal of help generating information, while others might generate so much information that they can not organize it neatly. Generally, make sure that your students understand what they are supposed to produce and how they are to go about doing it.

In summary, activities in guiding the planning process can be grouped into four distinct categories: 1) designing the task, 2) building background and motivation, 3) modeling the process and 4) generating and

organizing information. Each category serves a distinct role in guiding the planning process.

#### Standards for Basic Writing Programs

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (1979) developed the following standards for basic writing programs to help states and school districts assure that they were establishing comprehensive literacy plans. If effective writing instruction is to be achieved, the standards listed below need to be studied and implemented.

Planners of writing programs must begin with an adequate conception of what writing is. Therefore, the NCTE (1979) offers the following:

#### Operational Definition of Writing

Writing is the process of selecting, combining, arranging, and developing ideas in effective sentences, paragraphs, and often, longer units of discourse. The process requires the writer to cope with a number of variables: method of development (narrating, explaining, describing, reporting and persuading); tone (from very personal to quite formal); form (from a limerick to a formal letter to a long research report); purpose (from discovering and expressing personal feelings and values to conducting the impersonal "business" of

everyday life); possible audiences (oneself, classmates, a teacher, "the world").

Learning to write and to write increasingly well involves developing increasing skill and sensitivity in selecting from and combining these variables to shape particular messages. It also involves learning to conform to conventions of the printed language, appropriate to the age of the writer and to the form, purpose, and tone of the message.

Beyond the pragmatic purpose of shaping messages to others, writing can be a means of self-discovery, of finding out what we believe, know, and cannot find words or circumstances to say to others. Writing can be a deeply personal act of shaping our perception of the world and our relationships to people and things in that world. Thus, writing serves both public and personal needs of students, and warrants the full, generous, and continuing effort of all teachers. (p. 221)

In addition to providing an operational definition of writing, the NCTE (1979) described characteristics of an effective basic skills program in writing in three categories. The characteristics of such a program are stated below:

1. There is evidence that knowledge of current theory and research in writing has been sought and applied in developing the writing program.
2. Writing instruction is a substantial and clearly identified part of an integrated English language arts curriculum.
3. Writing is called for in other subject matters across the curriculum.
4. The subject matter of writing has its richest source in the students' personal, social, and academic interests and experiences.
5. Students write in many forms (e.g., essays, notes, summaries, poems, letters, stories, reports, scripts, journals).
6. Students write for a variety of audiences (e.g., self, classmates, the community, the teacher) to learn that approaches vary as audiences vary.
7. Students write for a wide range of purposes (e.g., to inform, to persuade, to express the self, to explore, to clarify thinking).
8. Class time is devoted to all aspects of the writing process: generating ideas, drafting, revising, and editing.
9. All students receive instruction in both (a) developing and expressing ideas and (b)

using the conventions of edited American English.

10. Control of the conventions of edited American English (supporting skills such as spelling, handwriting, punctuation, and grammatical usage) is developed primarily during the writing process and secondarily through related exercises.
11. Students receive constructive responses--from the teacher and from others--at various stages in the writing process.
12. Evaluation of individual writing growth (a) is based on complete pieces of writing; (b) reflects informed judgments first about clarity and content and then about conventions of spelling, mechanics, and usage; (c) includes regular responses to individual pieces of student writing as well as periodic assessment measuring growth over a period of time.
13. Teachers with major responsibility for writing instruction receive continuing education reflecting current knowledge about the teaching of writing.
14. Teachers of other subjects receive information and training in ways to make use of and respond to writing in their classes.

15. Parent and community groups are informed about the writing program and about ways in which they can support it.
16. School and class schedules provide sufficient time to assure that the writing process is thoroughly pursued.
17. Teachers and students have access to and make use of a wide range of resources (e.g., library services, media, teaching materials, duplicating facilities, supplies) for support of the writing program.
18. Evaluation of the writing program focuses on pre- and post-program sampling of complete pieces of writing, utilizing a recognized procedure (e.g., ETS holistic rating, the Diederich scale, primary trait scoring) to arrive at reliable judgments about the quality of the program.
19. Evaluation of the program might also include assessment of a sample of student attitudes; gathering of pertinent quantitative data (e.g., frequency of student writing, time devoted to writing activities); and observational data (evidence of prewriting activities, class anthologies, writing folders, and student writing displays). (pp. 221-222)

### Rationale for Teaching Subject Matter Through Writing

Although most teachers agree that writing in all subject areas sounds like a good idea, not all teachers are sure what writing can contribute. Shirley Haley-James (1982) offered answers to three questions often asked by teachers concerning writing in the content area, or writing across the curriculum. The questions and answers are as follows:

#### Why Does Writing Encourage Learning?

1. Writing focuses thought.
2. Writing makes thought available for inspection.
3. Writing allows more complex thought.
4. Writing translates mental images.
5. Writing is multisensory.
6. Writing motivates communication.

#### When Is Writing Most Likely to Encourage Learning?

1. When students decide what to write about.
2. When students talk as part of writing.
3. When students view writing as a process.
4. When students have their own reasons for writing.
5. When students write frequently.

How can Teachers Link Writing to Learning  
Subject Matter?

1. Writing to gain access to what is known.
2. Writing to preserve and express ideas and experiences.
3. Writing to inform others.
4. Writing to persuade others.
5. Writing to transact business.
6. Writing to entertain. (p. 728-731)

In summary, writing calls for active participation from all students. For this reason, writing encourages learning. For writing to be more than meaningless paperwork, the mind must lead the hand. The writer must listen to what his or her mind is saying and record and reflect upon what is heard. Writing that encourages learning is interactive: information comes out of the head and onto the page, what appears on the page is processed again by the mind, and the writer continues to shuttle back and forth from writing to reading, shaping thought all the time.

Semantic Mapping: A Method for Organizing Information

Semantic mapping, a categorical structuring of information in graphic form, has been used with success in a variety of classroom applications. The classroom applications might include: general vocabulary development, prereading activities, postreading

activities, study skills, prewriting activities, or combinations thereof.

The idea of structuring information graphically is not new: it has been in existence for years under the labels "semantic webbing," "semantic networking," or "plot maps." The value of semantic mapping, though, has been promoted lately due to an increased understanding of the important role that prior knowledge plays in the reading/writing process.

Semantic mapping is based on schema theory. Schema theory is an attempt to explain how information becomes integrated with a person's prior knowledge. According to schema theorists, anything that is experienced and learned is stored in the brain in networks or categories called schemata. These schemata are incomplete and are constantly being developed and fine-tuned. As new information is received, the schemata are restructured or altered. Schema are like little file folders in the brain. For example, as a student reads about, sees pictures of, or visits the Amazon Region, each experience is filed in the mental schema for Amazon Region. Each piece of new information expands or fine-tunes the existing schema.

#### Using Semantic Webbing as a Prewriting Activity

As stated previously, in order for children to write, they need to have something to write about. In

other words, if a teacher expects a child to write about the Amazon Region, that child requires a schema for the Amazon Region. This is generally accomplished through reading about the topic, seeing pictures of the topic, or by viewing the actual real thing (including objects related to the topic of study.)

Helmlich and Pittelman (1986) detail the objectives and procedures used in combining semantic mapping with the language experience approach. The procedures were implemented in a sixth-grade remedial language arts program because the students were experiencing difficulty in reading comprehension and in writing basic paragraphs.

#### Objectives

The semantic mapping process is used to meet the following objectives:

1. Identify information regarding a topic of interest.
2. Identify main ideas and supporting details of the topic.
3. Organize prior knowledge onto a semantic map.
4. Write paragraphs from the completed map.

#### Procedure

1. Explain to the student that this is a special activity to make it easier to write a story.
2. Ask the student to think of a topic he is interested in and would like to write about.

3. Write the word for the topic chosen in the center of a sheet of large paper and circle it.
4. Ask what the student knows about the topic. Through discussion elicit main ideas and supporting details. Record these on the map using the main ideas as category headings and the supporting details as the information listed under the categories. Use colored pens so that each major category and its details are written in a different color. This helps the student to associate the supporting details with the main idea and facilitates paragraph writing later.
5. Review the information on the map. Then for each major category, discuss the information listed in terms of a main idea and supporting details. Have the student rewrite the information in complete sentences. For each category, the student should first write the topic sentence of the paragraph and then the supporting sentences. Write each of the paragraphs in the color corresponding to the color used to record the information on the map.
6. Give the student an opportunity to share the map and story with other students in the language arts program. (pp. 34-37)

## CHAPTER II

## IMPLEMENTING WRITING IN A FOURTH-GRADE CLASSROOM

About 2 years ago, the researcher began to critically view the types of writing assignments her students were completing. She discovered that the majority of writing tasks students completed were worksheets, workbook activities, answers in complete sentences, and copying exercises. Rarely were students asked to compose on their own. On the few occasions when students were asked to compose on their own, the researcher observed students focusing mainly on getting the task done, which resulted in haphazard, disorganized papers.

The researcher became convinced that if this situation were going to change, she would need to employ her knowledge of the writing process coupled with semantic webbing and her knowledge of direct instruction. She set out to answer this research question: What is the effect of directly teaching students the stages of the writing process with an emphasis on planning?

Class Background

This investigation was conducted in a fourth-grade classroom consisting of 24 students. The subjects consisted of 12 girls and 12 boys. Twenty-one of the

students were Caucasian, 2 were Black, and 1 was Vietnamese/American.

All of the students lived in the school attendance area. Seven of the students rode the bus to school, while the others lived within walking distance.

Of the 24 students, 11 lived with their nuclear family, 9 lived in a single-parent situation with their mother, 1 lived in a single-parent situation with his father, and 3 lived in step-family situations.

The class average for the complete composite of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills administered in September 1987 was at the 73rd percentile. The range of the percentile test scores was 20 to 95. Three of the students attended the Expanded Learning Program for gifted students. Three of the students attended the Chapter 1 Remedial Reading Program. The class schedule was arranged in order for all the students to be in attendance during the study.

#### The Writing Program

Prior to implementing the writing program, the researcher made several decisions. First, decisions about the writing tasks were made. The researcher chose to use expository writing as the form. In order to control for the diversity of writing topics, the researcher decided to have students write about the social studies topics they had studied in class dating back to the beginning of the school year. For each

topic, the students had engaged in directed reading and thinking activities; vocabulary for each topic had been taught either through verbal explanations, visual representations (pictures, film, videos), or artifacts. Each topic was taught to the students in a way that elicited active participation on the students' part, rather than simply telling students to read on their own and learn.

A second decision involved scheduling the writing program. The researcher chose to implement the program over a 5-week period, 4 days per week (Tuesday through Friday), for 45-minute sessions. Each class period began at 2:45 and ended at 3:30, which was school dismissal time.

A third decision made by the researcher was to videotape each session in order to observe students' behavior during the 5-week program. Since the researcher was training a student teacher at the time of the study, the student teacher served as camera person focusing on the students.

Again, the researcher was seeking an answer to this question: What is the effect of directly teaching students the stages of the writing process with an emphasis on planning? The week-by-week procedures and results are presented below. The results include students' reactions to the procedures as they were

presented as well as students' performance with a writing task assigned at the culmination of the intervention.

### Week One

#### Description

Week 1 was set aside as a teacher demonstration of the writing process. On the first day, the researcher directly taught students the terms plan, draft, and revise. The students were then instructed to design the cover of a writing folder they would be using to keep their papers for the course of the project. The students could design the folder any way they wanted; however, they were to include the words plan, draft, and revise somewhere on their cover.

The second day began with a review of the stages in the writing process. Then the students were asked if they could ever remember being pulled in a wagon by someone. The majority of the students related well to that idea. The researcher explained that for the rest of the week she would be pulling them through the writing process by showing them how to work through the planning, drafting, and revising stages. They were instructed to sit back, relax, watch, and listen.

Then, on the same day, the researcher told the students that during the week she would be writing a summary about the Amazon Region for them. She stated she would begin with the planning stage. That meant, she

would start by thinking about the Amazon Region, and would list all the words or ideas she could think of concerning the topic. The students were reminded that they had read about the region in their textbooks; they had viewed films, videos, and pictures on the topic; and they had generated a list of words that were placed on the wall in the classroom. After presenting the words related to the Amazon Region, the researcher organized the words on a web. This involved categorizing the words that seemed to go together and placing headings above the categories. The researcher also color-coded the words on the web. The big categories were written in all one color, while the ideas supporting the categories were written in a different color. Again, the researcher reminded the students that this was the planning stage of the writing process. She was thinking, listing, and organizing words and ideas concerning the Amazon Region. The researcher repeatedly stressed that this is done before writing ever begins, and that it would aid students in organizing their own paragraphs during the drafting stage.

The next day, Day 3, the researcher began by reviewing the previous day's lesson. Then the new objective was stated for Day 3's lesson. The students were told that after the planning stage is completed, the drafting stage begins. The researcher stressed with her

students that during drafting writers were concerned with getting ideas down on paper and were not overly concerned with the mechanics of the writing. Students were told that the main goal of the drafting stage was to write. They were also told that the organized web would aid them in writing a more organized paper. With this idea in mind, the researcher set out to draft a paper with an audience of 24 students. To facilitate the drafting process, the researcher used a computer, a word processing program, and a hook-up for a television set for student viewing. While the researcher was drafting, she employed the "think aloud" method of explaining what she was doing while she was doing it, showing students how to use the categories on the web to form paragraphs. She followed this procedure for each topic on the web, until all the categories were included. Upon completion, the researcher made a computer printout of the draft, and the session ended.

Since time became a factor, the revision stage was completed by the researcher outside of class. She did this by marking, crossing out, and rewriting on the computer printout. She then rewrote the summary outside of class, made copies of the web, the draft showing the revisions, and the final copy. On Day 4 the students were given copies of all the papers stapled together in a

packet. The researcher reviewed the writing process, and shared the final draft with her students.

Again, Week 1 was a teacher demonstration. The researcher's main goal for doing the demonstration was to show students how to work through the three stages of the writing process.

### Outcomes

The outcomes of Week 1 may be viewed in three areas: (1) student behavior, (2) student acquisition of general knowledge and recall of the writing process, and (3) student interest.

In viewing student behavior, a moderate amount of off-task behavior was noted. The researcher was apprehensive about conducting the project during the last 45 minutes of the day because the students were generally more restless during that time. However, due to scheduling conflicts, this was the only time slot available to include all students in the program. In addition, the video camera posed a problem during the first 3 days of the project because the students were observed waving at the camera. The researcher found it necessary to remind the students that their every move would be viewed by her on the videotape. By Day 3, the camera waving had subsided greatly. Throughout the remainder of the study the researcher viewed an

occasional wave at the camera, as opposed to 45% of the students waving during the first 3 days.

A second outcome of the week was that the students' general knowledge of the writing process was apparent. On the fourth day of the first week, the researcher asked the students to respond in their Journals by stating what they had learned in language class during the week. Twenty-one students responded by stating they had learned about the writing process. Many of the students included the three stages: plan, draft, and revise along with pictures. Some drew webs or a semantic map similar to the web the researcher made in class. However, 3 students responded in their Journal entry stating that they had learned about the Amazon Region during the week. The 3 students responding in this fashion were characterized academically as functioning at the lower quartile according to the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

Student interest in the use of the computer and word processor was a third outcome of the week. Even though the researcher discovered the word processing program did not work well on a large-screen television because the students were unable to read the text from a distance, the students appeared to be highly interested in what the researcher was doing while she was doing it. One student's interest peaked high enough for him to stop

after school and ask about the word processing program and inquire about learning how to run the program.

In summary, the first week of the project worked well. The researcher accomplished the objective of directly instructing the stages of the writing process through a teacher demonstration. Overall, the students seemed to have acquired a general understanding of the writing process.

### Week 2

#### Description

The second week of the project was a large-group guided practice session of the writing process. On the first day, the researcher began with a review of Week 1. The researcher elicited from the students the stages of the writing process, and elicited from the students what was done during the stages of the writing process. As students reported the information to the researcher, she outlined it on an overhead.

Upon completion of the review, the researcher stated the composition task for the week and then the objective for the day. The composition task was to write a summary for future fourth graders about the Zaire Region. The objective for the day was to work solely with the planning stage of the writing process. The students and the researcher worked together generating words or phrases in a list, group, and label session. The

researcher served as secretary by listing the words on the chalkboard as the students were called on for a response. After generating a list of approximately 40 words, the words were grouped and labeled on a web. As the students used the words on the chalkboard, the researcher crossed out the word on the board, and wrote the word in a semantic web format on the overhead. At the same time, the students were given a piece of typing paper and were asked to write the web along with the researcher. When all of the words on the chalkboard were categorized, the session ended.

On Day 2, the researcher and the students worked together again in a large-group situation. The objective of the session was to teach the students how to use the web in generating paragraphs. The researcher reminded the students that the web would help them to form paragraphs and to organize their ideas. The students were asked to choose a category from the web they would like to write about first. They chose to write about the location of the Zaire Region. With location in mind, the class generated a paragraph dealing with that topic, while the researcher wrote the sentences on the chalkboard. Again, students were asked to raise their hand in order to state a sentence. In addition to the researcher writing the sentences on the chalkboard, she chose 1 student to write the sentences on a piece of

paper. She did this so at a later date she could make a typewritten copy of the paragraphs to distribute to the class.

Time allowed the class to generate three paragraphs as a large group (see Appendix C). One paragraph dealt with location of the Zaire Region, one dealt with climate of the region, and one dealt with people. Upon completion of the third paragraph the session ended.

On the third day of Week 2, the researcher began the session by distributing a typewritten copy of the three paragraphs the group had generated. The researcher read the paragraphs aloud to the class and again pointed out how the web had aided them in forming the paragraphs.

The objective of the day was for the students to become comfortable writing paragraphs on their own. Prior to completing that task, the class needed to choose a topic from the web to write about next. The class chose the category on the web dealing with how the people of the Zaire Region live. They were instructed to write for 7-10 minutes and they were to include only the ideas under the category on the web that they had chosen to write about. They were told that when they were finished they could share their writing on a voluntary basis in order to compare their writing with the others in the class. They were able to write, share, and compare two paragraphs during the allotted time period.

On the last day of the second week, we finished the last paragraph of the summary and shared and compared the students' writing. They were instructed to reread the whole summary; staple together the web, the typewritten paragraphs, and their individual writings; and place the papers in their writing folders. No attention was given to the revision stage during the second week.

Again, Week 2 was a large-group guided practice session. The main goal of the week was to provide students practice in the planning and drafting stages of the writing process. Also, lessons were designed for the students to see the connection between the two stages and to see how planning before writing helped with paragraphing and overall organization.

### Outcomes

The outcomes of Week 2 may be viewed in two areas: (1) student behavior, and (2) student attitude toward writing.

In viewing student behavior during the list, group, and label lesson, all students waited their turn, listened, and shared well. Also, while the students were generating paragraphs as a large group, they took turns courteously and listened well. However, on Day 3 during the sustained silent writing time, it became necessary for the researcher to stress the importance of silent independent work. Thus, the researcher found it

necessary to introduce an independent spelling strategy. The students were instructed to use the invented method of spelling, or spelling the word as best they could in response to the sounds they heard. Along with the strategy, it became necessary to remind students of the purpose of the drafting stage: that their main focus was to get the ideas written and not to worry too much about the mechanics.

Another observed outcome of Week 2 was the students' attitude toward writing. The majority of the class demonstrated, through a show of hands, that they did not realize that they knew so much information nor that they could write so much about the Zaire Region.

### Week 3

#### Description

During Week 3 the students were assigned to small groups in order to complete a composition task. The task was to write a two-paragraph group summary for an alien describing how the Amazon Region and the Zaire Region were similar and how they were different.

Prior to assigning the students to groups, the researcher considered the following six points outlined by Moore, Moore, Cunningham, and Cunningham (1986) as guidelines for promoting better group interaction:

1. Keep group size at 3 to 5 members.
  2. Assign members to fixed groups with a balance of individuals.
  3. Have assigned places where each group always meets.
  4. Assign a leader and a recorder for each group.
  5. Have a specific task for the group to accomplish.
  6. Give each group a limited time and stick to it.
- (pp. 169-171)

Considering the six points, the researcher chose to group the students into eight groups of 3. She carefully assigned a balance of individuals to the fixed groups. The groups were assigned to work at the learning center stations around the perimeter of the classroom. Each group had a leader, a recorder or secretary, and a reporter. The researcher explained the responsibility and the importance of each group member prior to dismissing students to the work stations. Each day the students were given a specific task to complete as a group with a time limit ranging from 10 to 15 minutes.

On the first day the students were instructed to construct a web as a small group. Since the writing task was different from the two previous weeks' composition tasks, we discussed as a large group what the web for this writing task might look like. The class decided to

place Amazon and Zaire in the center of the web, with the words how alike and how different connected to the center. While constructing the web, the students were encouraged to use the webs we had made previously for the Amazon Region and the Zaire Region instead of generating a word list.

With a clear task in mind, the students were dismissed to their work stations. The recorder was given a piece of typing paper to record the web and the groups began working with a 12-minute time limit.

When the time limit ended, the class resumed in large group. At that time, the reporter shared the contents of the groups' webs with the large group. The researcher collected the webs in order to make a copy of each group's web for each member of the groups and the session ended.

In viewing the webs, the researcher noted many misspelled words. Therefore, on the second day the students were instructed to revise their webs for spelling errors prior to beginning the drafting stage. When that task was accomplished, they were to begin drafting as a small group. Again, as a large group, we discussed the idea of using a topic sentence prior to drafting. As a large group, the class decided on the topic sentences for the two paragraphs they would be writing. The researcher wrote the sentences on the

chalkboard for the students' benefit. The students were given 15 minutes to work on the task.

On Day 3, the groups that had completed drafting were instructed to revise their writing. This meant they were to (a) look at their ideas first to be certain they were clear and (b) look at the mechanics of the composition to be certain it was grammatically correct. The groups that had not completed the drafting stage were first to complete drafting and then to work on revisions. At the end of the third day, the researcher collected the drafts and made a copy for each member of the group for the following day.

On the fourth day, the researcher distributed copies of the draft to each group member. The reporters shared the draft orally with the large group. Then the students stapled the web and the draft together and placed the papers in their writing folders.

In summary, Week 3 included small-group summary writing. The overall intent of the lessons was to begin fading instruction. The researcher circulated the room to monitor the groups; however, she wanted students to be less dependent on her while completing the composition task.

### Outcomes

The outcomes for Week 3 are viewed in two areas:

(1) the ability of students to work cooperatively in a small group setting, and (2) the ability of the students to cooperatively revise a finished draft.

In viewing students' ability to cooperatively work in a small-group setting, it should be noted that even though the researcher structured the groups, the students needed to practice getting to their assigned work areas quickly and quietly. This was accomplished through two practice sessions on Day 1 and reviewed on Day 2. The researcher made it clear to the students that this was what was expected.

On Day 1, all groups worked cooperatively accomplishing the assigned task of constructing a web. However, on Days 2 and 3, the researcher observed only six of the eight groups of students working cooperatively. Students in two of the groups were observed arguing and tattling on each other. They were unable to share responsibilities in the group in order to complete the writing task cooperatively. As a result, the researcher observed 1 child take on the responsibility of completing the task. When placed in small groups, the students seemed to produce webs better than paragraphs. However, as a whole, the small-group writing sessions were successful.

The second outcome was that these students were unable to cooperatively revise the draft to the point of being 100% grammatically correct. When the students were asked to share their final copies with the large group, the researcher observed students inserting proper wording and making comments that they had left out a word. As a whole, the groups' final copies contained clearly stated ideas; however, the mechanics lacked in accuracy.

#### Week 4

##### Description

During Week 4, the students were given an individual composition task to complete. They were instructed to work by themselves while the researcher circulated about the classroom aiding students as needed.

On Day 1, each student was given a packet of three papers. The first sheet of the packet contained the composition task, the second sheet was provided for students to generate a list of words, and the third sheet was provided for students to organize their word list on a web (see Appendices D-F). The students were told they could use their textbooks and the word wall in the classroom as spelling aids.

After the composition task and the instructions were explained, the students began working individually on the planning stage by generating a word list and then

organizing the words on the web. They had approximately 20 minutes to complete the task before the session ended.

On Day 2, the researcher explained to the students that they were to use their completed webs to draft their composition. She reviewed the idea of forming paragraphs by using the different categories on the web. The students that had not completed the planning stage on Day 1 were instructed to do so prior to the drafting stage. Students were given about 20 minutes to work individually as the researcher circulated about the classroom.

On Day 3 the students were instructed to begin revising their draft if the drafting stage was completed. The researcher provided students with a checklist to follow during the revision stage (see Appendix G). She generated the checklist while she circulated through the classroom viewing common errors in the students' compositions. The class was given approximately 20 minutes to complete the day's task.

On the last day of Week 4 the students were instructed to continue the revising stage and then they were to recopy their corrected draft in their neatest handwriting. As they completed all the tasks, they were to staple all of the papers together and place them in their writing folders. No time was allotted for sharing.

The overall purpose of Week 4's composition task lessons was to guide students individually through the

writing process with a special focus on the planning stage. The researcher consciously made the decision to guide students individually through the writing process by providing guidelines for students to follow.

### Outcomes

The outcomes of Week 4 may be viewed in three areas: 1) the number of students engaging in the planning stage prior to drafting, 2) the number of categories on the students' webs, and 3) the number of students capable of completing the three stages of the writing process in 4 days. In reporting the outcomes, the researcher noted that 3 of the 24 students were absent 3 of the 4 days during Week 4. Therefore, the outcomes were based on 21 students.

In viewing the students' papers, the researcher found that all 21 students engaged in the planning stage prior to drafting. All of the students generated a word list and then placed the words in categories on a semantic map. Seven of the students' papers indicated the use of a strategy of checking or crossing out a word on the list while placing it on the web. Fourteen of the students did not employ that strategy as modeled by the researcher during Weeks 1 and 2.

Since the writing task stated to write five paragraphs, the researcher anticipated students would generate at least five categories on their individual

webs. The amount of categories generated by students ranged from 3 to 12 with 5 being the mode. Seven of the 21 students, or one-third, generated five categories on their web to match the five paragraphs.

Finally, even though the researcher introduced a new task each day of Week 4, all students were not able to complete all three stages of the writing process during the week. Eleven students completed the three stages of the writing process: planning, drafting, and revising. Nine students completed the planning and drafting stages only. One student completed only the planning stage of the writing process; that student indicated that she had lost her paper.

Overall, the writing task was successful during Week 4. The students seemed eager to engage in the writing process.

#### Week 5

##### Description

During Week 5 the researcher planned for students to engage in the writing process independently. This meant that students were to work solely on their own with no teacher guidance.

On the first day of the week, the students were given one sheet of paper containing directions, a writing task, a reminder, and a sentence informing them to do what they had learned to do (see Appendix H). The

researcher did not specifically tell the students to plan, draft, and revise. After the sheet was given to the students, they began working on the writing task.

Each day during the week, the researcher simply directed the students to continue writing. No directions were given.

### Outcomes

The outcomes of Week 5 were viewed in five areas: 1) the ability of students to work independently, 2) the number of students who planned independently prior to drafting, 3) the number of categories the students generated on their individual webs, 4) the relationship of the students' webs to the paragraphs, and 5) the rate of task completion. In noting the outcomes for Week 5, 3 of the 24 students were absent throughout the week. Therefore, the outcomes again are based on 21 students.

The first outcome of Week 5 was the ability of the students to work independently on a writing task. The researcher observed the students having a great deal of difficulty working on the writing task independently. The students sought researcher assistance regularly. Because of this, on the first day of Week 5, the researcher found it necessary to enforce a rule of silence. This meant no one had permission to talk. The researcher stressed how important silence was in order for writers to think. Students shared with the group how

their older brothers and sisters go to their rooms at home in order to write and study where it is quiet.

The researcher then explained to the students that working independently meant with no help from anyone. Each time a student raised a hand or approached the researcher, she consistently signaled to the students either to be seated or to put his/her hand down.

The second outcome related to this question: Would students plan independently after being instructed directly in a planning strategy? Fourteen students, or two-thirds, generated a word list and a web or simply a web prior to drafting. Seven students, or one-third, did not produce such a plan before drafting.

A third outcome of Week 5 was the amount of categories on the student webs. Of the 14 students' papers the researcher viewed, there was a range of 4 to 10 categories. Six categories were the mode. Overall, the information on the students' webs was accurate and categorized properly.

The researcher then compared the categories on the web with the students' paragraphs to see if there was a relationship between the webs and the paragraphs. She discovered that 10 of the 14 students' papers showed a direct relationship to paragraph formation. These students starred or checked the categories as they wrote about them. Four students' webs showed no direct

relationship to paragraph formation. Two students' papers were a list of disorganized facts with no paragraphs. One student had generated a list of 38 words and had begun to organize the words on her web, but she had not finished.

The last outcome, the rate of task completion, was as follows. The researcher observed the 7 students who did not engage in the planning process to be completed with the writing task by the end of Day 2. That meant there were 2 days left during the week for these students to work. Since they finished early, the researcher allowed these students to engage in sustained silent reading. They could read library books silently for those 2 days. The remaining students completed the entire writing task on the fourth day.

#### Summary

In summary, the 5 weeks of instruction were as follows: 1) Week 1 was a teacher demonstration of the writing process, 2) Week 2 was a large-group guided practice session of the writing process, 3) during the third week, the fading process began as the researcher instructed students to work through the writing process in small groups, 4) Week 4 was an individual guided practice session with students working on a writing task individually while the researcher circulated about the classroom assisting as needed, and 5) the last week of

the project the students were to complete a writing task independently, with no assistance from the researcher. The behavior, attitude, and interest outcomes for each week's instruction were based on observation.

The outcome categories for each week's instruction were:

Week 1

1. Student behavior
2. Student acquisition of general knowledge and recall of the writing process
3. Student Interest

Week 2

1. Student behavior
2. Student attitude toward writing

Week 3

1. Student ability to work cooperatively in a small group setting
2. Student ability to cooperatively revise a finished draft

Week 4

1. Number of students engaging in the planning stage prior to drafting
2. Number of categories on the students' webs
3. Number of students capable of completing the three stages of the writing process in 4 days

## Week 5

1. Student Independence
2. Number of students who planned independently prior to drafting
3. Number of categories generated on the students' webs
4. The relationship of the students' webs to the paragraphs
5. Rate of task completion

## Chapter III

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter contains three sections. First, it summarizes the results of the study. Second, the results are discussed. Last, the researcher states implications for practice and for further research.

Summary of Results

The study addressed the following question: What is the effect of directly teaching students the stages of the writing process with an emphasis on planning? The project took place over a 5-week period, 4 days per week. The first week consisted of a teacher demonstration of the writing process. The researcher modeled the writing process for the students. The next 3 weeks consisted of various guided practice sessions: large group, small group, and individual. The last week was the test. The researcher instructed students to write on a given topic. They were instructed to do what had been presented.

Data were collected and observations were made during the entire 5-week period. During Week 1, the main outcome was to directly teach the students the stages of the writing process through a teacher demonstration. Overall, the students seemed to have acquired a general understanding of the writing process. There appeared to be two problems during Week 1. First, having a video

camera in the classroom posed a problem for the first 3 days of the project. Students were observed waving at the camera. After 3 days the camera waving subsided greatly. Second, the word processing program the researcher chose to present on the large-screen television did not work well because the students were unable to read the text from a distance. However, students appeared to be highly interested in what the researcher was doing while she was doing it.

Week 2 outcomes were viewed in terms of student behavior and student attitude toward writing. During the large group list, group, and label lesson, all of the students' behavior was appropriate. They waited their turn, listened, and shared well. However, the students had difficulty remaining silent during the sustained silent writing time. They needed to be reminded of the importance of quiet time for writing. A rule of silence was enforced with consistency. Through a show of hands, the students demonstrated a positive attitude toward writing.

The Week 3 small-group guided practice session outcomes were viewed in terms of student behavior and in terms of student ability to cooperatively revise a finished draft. Despite the fact that there was careful consideration for grouping students, the researcher observed the students having difficulty moving to their

work stations quickly and quietly. Practice and setting expectations solved the problem. Throughout the week, students worked together designing a web and drafting two paragraphs. They were able to work cooperatively in designing the web; however, the researcher observed students having difficulty drafting and revising the paragraphs cooperatively.

The outcomes categories for Week 4 were to view the number of students engaging in the planning process prior to drafting, to view the number of categories on the students' webs, and to view the number of students completing the three stages of the writing process in 4 days.

First, with guidance all students engaged in the planning stage of the writing process prior to drafting. They used the sheets provided in order to generate a word list and design a semantic web. Second, there was a range of 5-12 categories on the students' webs. Five categories were the mode with one-third, or 7, students generating a web with five categories to match the assignment of writing a five-paragraph summary of the Baffin Island Eskimos. Last, approximately one-half of the students were able to complete the three stages of the writing process in 4 days.

Week 5 outcomes were to view students' ability to work independently, the number of students who planned

independently prior to drafting, the number of categories generated on their individual webs, the relationship of the students' webs to their paragraphs, and the rate of task completion. Again, these outcomes were based on observation.

First, the students had difficulty working independently. They sought assistance regularly. However, by setting expectations and by being consistent, the students learned the meaning of independent practice: to work individually with no assistance.

The second outcome addressed the question of whether fourth graders who were taught a prewriting strategy through direct instructional techniques would plan before they began to write. Of the 21 students present during the final week, 14 students demonstrated their knowledge of the prewriting strategy by planning before drafting. They generated a word list and/or a semantic web. Seven students did not employ the prewriting strategy. They wrote a draft with no plans.

Again, the researcher analyzed the students' webs during Week 5 in order to find out the number of categories generated by students. Of the 14 students' papers the researcher viewed, there was a range of 4 to 10 categories on the webs. Six categories were the mode. Since the writing task called for students to write a four-paragraph summary of the Sahara Desert, the

researcher anticipated that the mode of categories on the webs would have been four.

Next, during Week 5, the researcher compared the categories on the webs with the students' paragraphs to see if there was a relationship between the webs and the paragraphs. Ten of the 14 students' papers showed a direct relationship to paragraph formation. These students starred or checked the categories on their webs as they wrote about them. Four students' webs showed no direct relationship to paragraph formation.

Last, the researcher observed the 7 students not engaging in the planning process to be completed with the writing task by the end of Day 2. They were allowed to read library books silently for the remainder of the week. The other 14 students complete the writing task on the fourth day.

### Discussion

This piece of action research, like all research, should be interpreted with caution with its limitations in mind. First, the study was conducted with a single group and the same teacher. There was no control group for comparison. One goal of teaching a prewriting strategy is to aid students in writing more organized papers. The researcher did not ask control-group students to write on content topics. Perhaps the final drafts would have been of the same quality whether or not

students had been trained in the prewriting strategy. Second, there were a small number of students involved in the study. Third, the study was conducted over a short period of time.

In reflecting on the weeks' instruction, the researcher felt the teacher demonstration during Week 1 was necessary for three reasons. First, the students needed to be directly taught the terms plan, draft, and revise in order to understand that writing is a process. Second, there was a need for all students to possess a common vocabulary. Third, by demonstrating the writing process the researcher built in a referent point for students. For example, the researcher stated to students, "Remember during Week 1 when I wrote about the Amazon Region for you? What did I do first?"

The second week's instruction allowed for students to engage in guided practice of the writing process as a large group. One problem presented here was that the list, group, and label session for this week was a cooperative group effort. During Week 4 and Week 5, the list, group, and label sessions were to be completed individually. Since students can generate more ideas and words as a large group, the researcher provided a word wall during Weeks 4 and 5. This was done to aid students having difficulty calling up words associated with a given topic.

Week 3's guided practice session with fading was effective in respect to webbing and not effective in respect to paragraph writing and revision. Reflecting on student behavior during the group webbing, the researcher felt the lesson went well because the students were able to remain focused and cooperative. However, the researcher would change the group paragraph writing to individual paragraph writing because the students had difficulty composing paragraphs cooperatively.

Week 4's lessons seemed effective in that they provided the students with a packet with specific directions to guide them individually through the prewriting process. All students completed the planning process before drafting. The researcher felt this was necessary in order for students to internalize the prewriting strategy. Perhaps more practice of this nature would have yielded better results for the overall study. Students may need more guided practice as was provided for in Week 4 in order to internalize the prewriting strategy to the point of automaticity.

The results of Week 5 indicated that in five 4-day sessions many students can be directly taught a planning strategy to use independently. Two-thirds, or 14 students, engaged in the planning process prior to drafting during Week 5. As stated previously, perhaps more practice would have yielded improved results.

### Implications

The findings of this study imply that fourth graders can independently employ a directly taught prewriting strategy. The study yields implications for practice and implications for further research.

First, for practice, the researcher realized the value of directly teaching prewriting through expository writing topics. By using social studies topics, the diversity of the writing topics was controlled. Not only were students learning the writing process focusing on prewriting, but they were employing thinking strategies. They were calling up information they had learned, they were organizing the information on the semantic map, they were making connections between and among concepts, they were reviewing concepts, and they were evaluating lifestyles.

Even though the process took a great deal of time, the researcher would continue teaching prewriting with social studies topics. The study implies that the teaching of writing need not be left solely to the language arts teacher.

Further research is needed in this area. More fine-grained analyses need to be conducted in several areas. First, research needs to be conducted in comparing the number of words on students' lists to the number of categories on the webs. Second, the paragraphs

and the webs should be analyzed in order to view coherence. Third, long-term retention of the strategy needs to be tested. Fourth, student word lists should be analyzed in order to compare the word wall with the concepts on the lists to find out if the lists are the same as the word wall or different. Last, a more controlled study could analyze student overall learning of social studies concepts. A new research question could be designed: Do students who are directly taught prewriting strategies score better on social studies tests as compared to students who do not receive prewriting training?

Overall, the value of prewriting is apparent. Students can be directly taught to employ the prewriting strategy independently. This will help lead to one aim of instruction: student independence.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

## Selected Writing Forms

|                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| ads                   | magazines            |
| announcements         | menus                |
| autobiographies       | mysteries            |
| awards                | myths                |
| bedtime stories       | newscasts            |
| billboards            | newspapers           |
| biographies           | obituaries           |
| book jackets          | observational notes  |
| book reviews          | outlines             |
| brochures             | pamphlets            |
| bumper stickers       | parodies             |
| captions              | persuasive letters   |
| cartoons              | plays                |
| certificates          | poems                |
| character sketches    | posters              |
| comic strips          | product descriptions |
| conversations         | propaganda           |
| critiques             | puppet shows         |
| definitions           | questionnaires       |
| diaries               | questions            |
| directions            | quizzes              |
| directories           | quotations           |
| dramas                | recipes              |
| editorials            | reports              |
| encyclopedia entries  | requests             |
| epitaphs              | resumes              |
| essays                | reviews              |
| fables                | riddles              |
| filmstrips            | sales pitches        |
| game rules            | self-descriptions    |
| good news-bad news    | serialized stories   |
| graffiti              | slogans              |
| greeting cards        | stories              |
| headlines             | tall tales           |
| how-to-do-it speeches | telegrams            |
| impromptu speeches    | thank-you notes      |
| interviews            | training manuals     |
| invitations           | travel folders       |
| job applications      | want ads             |
| journals              | wanted posters       |
| laboratory notes      | wills                |
| letters               |                      |
| lists                 |                      |
| lyrics                |                      |

## Appendix B

## Selected Writing Audiences

alien  
animals  
author  
baby-sitter  
blind person  
camp counselor  
classmates  
clergyman  
columnist  
community personnel (e.g., mayor, fireman)  
dolls or stuffed animals  
enemy  
famous person  
fictitious characters  
friend  
guest speakers  
heroes  
inanimate objects  
local merchants  
manufacturers  
movie producers  
neighbors  
parents  
patient/nursing home resident/prisoner (shut-in)  
pen pal  
pets  
prospective tourists  
relatives (grandparents, uncles)  
school personnel (e.g., custodian, principal, other teacher)  
secret pal  
self  
senior citizens  
sports team members  
student teacher  
teacher  
younger/older children

## Appendix C

### The Zaire Region

The Zaire Region is located on the continent of Africa near the equator. Most of the Zaire River is in Zaire. The mouth of the Zaire River flows into the Atlantic Ocean. The source of the Zaire River is located in central Africa.

The climate of the Zaire Region is hot and wet. There is a rain forest or jungle. The Zaire Region has two seasons, a rainy season and a dry season. The weather is humid. In the rainy season it rains quite a lot. In the dry season it doesn't rain as much. Because people live in this type of climate they need less clothing.

The people in Zaire are black, have dark hair, and are called Negroes. Besides the blacks, there is another tribe of people called Pygmies. They are short people who hunt and trade with the villagers.

## Appendix D

## Writing Task

Write a five-paragraph summary for your classmates telling them about the Eskimos who live on the Baffin Islands.

## Appendix E

## Brainstormed Word List

## The Eskimos of the Baffin Islands

## Appendix F

Organize the Words in A Web

## Appendix G

## Revision Checklist

1. Look at your ideas:
  - (a) Are they clear and easy to understand?
  - (b) Do they make sense?
2. Look for spelling errors:
  - (a) Underline words you are not sure of.
3. Look for capital letters:
  - (a) Proper nouns (names of people, places, or things)
  - (b) The first word in a sentence
4. Look for correct punctuation:
  - (a) At the end of sentences
  - (b) Apostrophes - possessive nouns
  - (c) Commas if you are listing things
5. Look for correct usage:
  - (a) Especially the words - there, their, and they're
6. Look at your paragraphs:
  - (a) Do they have a topic sentence?
  - (b) Are all the sentences about the same topic?
  - (c) Are your paragraphs indented?
7. Recopy your paper as neatly as you can.
8. Staple all the papers together and place them in your file folder.

## Appendix H

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: You will have four days in class to write independently. That means by yourself. Use your own paper for the writing task.

Writing Task

Write a four-paragraph summary for your secret friend telling him or her about the Sahara Desert.

Remember: You read about the Sahara Desert in your social studies book, you saw films about the deserts, and we have a word wall in our room. You may use your book to help you with spelling and ideas.

Do what you have learned to do!