

Spring 1998

Writing Across the Curriculum for Primary Grades

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WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM
FOR PRIMARY GRADES

by

Jenneifer L. Perri

April, 1998

Writing activities have been developed for the primary classroom to help in the teaching of science and social studies. Both research and observation have shown that writing is a thinking process which has a positive impact on all areas of the curriculum. The project included specific writing activities which can be taught during specific science and social studies themes. A list of writing prompts which can be used when using learning logs has been provided as a way to encourage reflection and interaction with curriculum content.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

In preparing children for future success, writing must be taught. "Writing is one of the most important skills students can acquire" (Evans, 1995, p. 59). It gives one the opportunity to think and rethink. It serves as a means of understanding the many kinds of knowledge introduced to students today. Writing within the various subject areas helps students clarify and extend their knowledge.

It is clear that people are expected to do writing at some point during their lifetime. Writing is used for a whole range of activities, and is a necessary skill for success. As educators, "we certainly want to open up for our pupils the full potential of writing. In this way they will be prepared for writing for life" (Collerson, 1988, p. 111). This curriculum project will emphasize the importance of writing in all areas of the curriculum.

Purpose of the Project

Writing is an effective tool to use in teaching the various subjects across the curriculum (Manning, 1996). This project includes writing activities which can be incorporated into the primary classroom which help in the teaching of science and social studies. The project includes specific writing activities which can be taught during specific themes. The author has also provided a list of writing prompts which can be of use when using learning logs as a way to encourage reflection and interaction with curriculum content. The author believes that the integration of writing into the social studies and science curriculum not only brings about improvement in students' writing abilities, but will also bring about an improvement in students'

thinking.

Writing is a thinking process which has a positive impact on all areas of the curriculum. The act of writing is not purely a tool for teaching writing. It is a tool for thinking. Lucy Calkins responds to the question, "What is essential about writing across the curriculum?"

All morning I had been writing across the curriculum. I had been writing to schedule, rank, plan, map, inquire, record, recall, organize, evaluate, assign, remember. I'd been writing to learn. I think with pencil in hand. Writing gives me awareness and control of my thoughts, it allows me to hold onto ideas long enough to scrutinize them, to think about my thinking. I do not care about neatness or word choice; I am not writing to produce but, instead, to think.
(Calkins, 1986 p. 262)

Significance of the Project

In 1992, the Washington State Commission on Student Learning began to develop student performance standards called essential academic learning requirements. These standards have been developed to help guide schools and parents in giving their students the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in society today. Students graduating from Washington schools will have to meet these requirements before graduating. In the area of writing, the Commission outlined four requirements of students. They are as follows:

1. The student writes clearly and effectively.
2. The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.
3. The student understands and uses the steps of the writing process.
4. The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work.

(Commission on Student Learning, 1997, p. 133)

The district in which the author teaches has determined that upon graduation, students will meet five student learning goals. One of the goals is that students will read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings. The district has also formed a committee to help guide teachers in developing a writing program for the entire school district. This program will help prepare students for these higher expectations in the area of writing. The district is one of many districts that volunteered to pilot a test given at the fourth grade level in the Spring of 1997. The desire to improve test results pushed the district to decide that writing needs to be emphasized more in the district.

The teaching of writing is taking on more emphasis for the state of Washington as well as the district in which the author teaches. The increasing emphasis, however, was not the sole purpose for which the author chose to research this area. During the 1996-1997 school year the author taught first grade. After observing first graders for one year, she observed four characteristics students bring to the classroom, which help in the area of writing. One, children had stories to tell. Two, they were creative in their story-telling. Three, students had an interest in writing and four, they had a desire to learn. The author believes that these characteristics are necessary for students to begin writing. This project grew from the author's opinion that writing is an effective tool for teaching the various subjects in the primary classroom.

Limitations of the Project

This project is for the primary classroom. It is a year long plan for second grade which integrates writing activities into the social studies and science curriculum. It also includes ideas for using a learning log in various subjects taught in the primary classroom, specifically math, social studies and science. This project includes only a portion of effective practices for teaching writing across the curriculum.

Definition of Terms

Essential Academic Learning Requirements: These are student performance standards developed for Washington state students by the Washington State Commission on Student Learning which was established by the Legislature in 1992.

Learning Log: A form of journal writing in which students respond in written form to information learned in all areas of the curriculum (McIntosh, 1991).

Writing Across the Curriculum: Using writing as a tool to teach the various subjects taught in the elementary classroom, specifically, science and social studies concepts (Calkins, 1986).

Writing Process: The procedure followed by writers as they compose original text. The following steps are usually included in the writing process: prewrite, rough draft, revise, edit, and publish (Atwell, 1990).

Overview of the Remainder of the Project

Chapter Two is a review of relevant literature pertaining to the importance of writing, writing across the curriculum, and learning logs. Chapter Three describes the procedures undertaken to develop the project. Chapter Four is the project itself: a year long plan for second grade which integrates writing activities into the social studies and science curriculum, and a list of writing prompts to be of use when using a learning log in various subjects taught in the primary classroom. Chapter Five consists of a summary, conclusions, and recommendations by the author.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to design writing activities which could be incorporated into the primary classroom which help in the teaching of science and social studies. In addition, the author researched the use of learning logs in the classroom as a way to interact with curriculum content. In support of this project, literature was reviewed which focuses on elements of writing across the curriculum. Research was taken from various resources covering the following topics: The importance of writing, writing as a thinking process, writing across the curriculum and learning logs.

The Importance of Writing

Writing is one of the most important skills students can acquire (Evans, 1995). UCLA experts tell Ted Koppel on ABC's Nightline, that there are six "musts" for young brains. Among the six is "debate". Children ask for and value the expression of opinion and learning, both oral and written. This will take the form of scribbling, drawing, and early writing, but it is still essential in the development of the child. Children go through stages of writing, from scribbling and picture drawing to pretend writing and using letters, and they will continue to grow in the areas of both writing and spelling (Calkins, 1986).

Robert Sylwester, Professor of Education at the University of Oregon, and Dr. Stanley Pogrow, University of Arizona, are two researchers who believe strongly in the findings of recent brain research. They have found that sustained reading, writing, and conversation about and discussion of concepts create interest and promote

understanding while building webs of connections known as brain mass. This added brain mass increases our capacity to master more complex skills and to understand and apply increasingly more difficult concepts (Sylwester, 1995).

Evans (1995) adds, "Effective writing can be a valuable and satisfying vehicle of self-expression. Learning to express oneself succinctly fosters the development of high-level cognitive skills" (p. 158). Writing can be used as a tool to make sense of, and to form new meaning from, the world around them, to raise new questions and seek new answers as circumstances change (Avery, 1987). "Literacy develops when students use language to unleash their imagination, discover meaning in all areas of the curriculum, and carry this process out of the classroom into all areas of their lives" (Avery, 1987, p. 618).

It is clear that all people are expected to do some writing at some point in their life. Certainly for their progress and future success in the education system and quite likely also for their employment later on (Collerson, 1988).

Besides the fairly predictable uses of writing, there is a whole range of possible uses: for personal pleasure, for learning, for recording and handling information and acquiring knowledge, for keeping in contact with people, for giving pleasure, entertainment, stimulation and even provocation through writing as verbal art, and even for therapeutic purposes. While not everyone will get involved in many of these uses of writing, we certainly want to open up for our pupils the full potential of writing. In this way they will be prepared for writing for life. (Collerson, 1988, p. 111)

Writing not only provides us with visible thought and a record of how we arrived at that thought; it also yields a document that enables us to see what we know. In other words, writing leaves a trail by which we can analyze how we came to build new meanings of significance, to develop generalizations, and invent or find new

relationships. The process of writing actually ends in a product which helps us refine our thinking and create new learning (Beyer, 1981).

In a report released by the New South Wales (Australia) Department of Education in 1987, titled "Writing K-12 materials", a concern which focuses on writing in the secondary schools is voiced. This report is concerned with setting out general principles and strategies for teachers to help students "learn to write" in the increasingly varied and complex types of writing that are required across the curriculum in secondary schools. This document also focuses on the principles of "writing to learn" - that is, using writing as an active means of understanding and truly assimilating the many kinds of knowledge required in the secondary curriculum.

Lawrence Mann, the Project Support Specialist in the Education & Technology Resources Center at Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, concluded that the cry for greater curriculum integration has prompted many schools to adopt an integrated language arts approach. "This shifts the instructional focus from gaining language proficiency to using language as a tool for learning desirable content" (Mann, 1993, p. 317).

In 1992, the Washington Commission on Student Learning began to develop statewide student performance standards called the Essential Academic Learning Requirements. The Essential Academic Learning Requirements were based on the Student Learning Goals of the Governor's Council on Education Reform and Funding. The Essential Learnings in Writing contain elements which are necessary for students to learn if they are to become confident, proficient writers and these learnings will soon become the required framework on which the teachers of Washington must build their writing curricula. The Essential Academic Learning Requirements in writing, as of February 22, 1997, are as follows:

1. The student writes clearly and effectively.

In order to meet this standard, the student will:

- develop a topic or theme; organize thoughts around a clear beginning, middle, and end; use transitional sentences and phrases to connect related ideas; write coherently and compellingly
- use voice, word choice, and sentence fluency for appropriate style
- know and apply correct spelling, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization

2. The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.

In order to meet this standard, the student will:

- recognize and write in a variety of forms including narratives, journals, poems, essays, stories, and technical writing
- identify, analyze, and write for the chosen audience
- write for a variety of purposes such as telling stories, presenting analytic responses to literature, conveying technical information, completing a team project, explaining concepts and procedures, and persuading

3. The student understands and uses the steps of the writing process.

In order to meet this standard, the student will:

- Prewrite - generate topics and develop ideas
- Draft - elaborate on topic and ideas
- Revise - consider changes in content, organization, or structure to better communicate ideas
- Edit - correct spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage
- Publish - use a variety of tools such as pen, pencil, and technology to share completed writing with chosen audience

4. The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work.

In order to meet this standard, the student will:

- assess individual strengths and needs for improvement as a writer
- seek and use feedback to improve writing; offer suggestions and comments to others, when appropriate (Commission on Student Learning, 1997, p. 133)

The Essential Academic Learning Requirements are there to help guide schools and parents in giving their students the knowledge and skills necessary to lead successful lives and contribute to their family and community.

Writing as a Thinking Process

Writing brings order to thoughts. Writing is a thinking process. According to Fulwiler (1982), “scientists, artists, mathematicians, lawyers, and engineers all ‘think’ with pen on paper, chalk on blackboard, hands on terminal keys” (p. 19). Calkins (1986) thinks by writing, and she wants her students to do the same. Avery (1987) agrees:

More personal writing is a direct route to more autonomous thinking. Writing before discussion is important. It gives writers opportunity to discover their thoughts before they speak; commits writers to a stand; and allows writers to arrive at their own thoughts without first being directed by others. (p. 611)

In a class of seven-year-olds, autonomous thinking is a quality many teachers are striving for. By increasing the amount of talking and writing, the child's knowledge and understanding are expanding. The development of good writing and thinking appear to be interdependent skills.

Though teachers are being asked to add much to their curriculum content, McIntosh (1991) explains that by using a writing-to-learn approach, writing strategies

can be incorporated into existing courses. Changing course content is not necessary. The task is not to insert more writing into subject area classrooms. As Calkins (1986) explains,

Students already spend 44% of their classroom time writing (Applebee, Lehr, and Auten, 1981). But they spend only 3% of their time on actual composing; the rest is devoted to filling in the blanks and so forth. In each of these instances, the purpose is not to learn but, instead, to reveal to teachers what the student knows and doesn't know. (Calkins, 1986, p. 262)

If a student knows something, that student can write (Hansen, 1987). Being able to write about a topic shows a deeper understanding of the topic. When learning about blood circulation, knowledge may be conveyed through a poem or another genre. The process is still the same. One must work with that knowledge until a decision is made about what information should be included and the best way to relay that information (Hansen, 1987). As Thaiss and Suhor (1984) point out:

The more children use language, the more they learn about language; and the more they learn about language, the more linguistic data they have to work with. With increasing amounts of linguistic data to use, and with experience in coordinating the data to produce new language, children become increasingly sophisticated language users. That is they experience (oral and written) language growth. (p. 131)

Writing Across the Curriculum

Manning (1995) believes that many educators do not realize the value of writing in the content areas. Writing is a powerful tool for thinking and learning. Manning discusses the importance of writing in all areas of the curriculum. He adds, "The more students write, the more they improve their writing; however, improving writing is not

the major purpose for incorporating writing in various curriculum areas. The major purpose is to help students clarify and extend their knowledge in specific content areas" (p. 84). The integration of writing into all content areas of instruction appears to improve student thinking.

As Lucy Calkins, a known expert and presenter in the area of teaching writing, was preparing to give a presentation on writing across the curriculum, she focused on the question, "What is essential about writing across the curriculum?"

The answer was clear. All morning I had been writing across the curriculum. I had been writing to schedule, rank, plan, map, inquire, record, recall, organize, evaluate, assign, remember. I'd been writing to learn. I think with pencil in hand. Writing gives me awareness and control of my thoughts, it allows me to hold onto ideas long enough to scrutinize them, to think about my thinking. I do not care about neatness or word choice; I am not writing to produce but, instead, to think. (Calkins, 1986 p. 262)

Teachers are pressed for time to teach all that they are required to cover in their curriculum. By integrating language arts instruction and incorporating as much content into unified units, the opportunities for learning are maximized (Mann, 1993).

Many topics for writing arise out of activities during all of the various subject areas. This leads to Turbill's (1984) question, "How can the class' half-hour a day of 'writing time' be kept in a separate pigeonhole? Writing regarded as a significant act of original thinking/self expression/communication, needs to be treated as part - and often the culminating part - of 'integrated learning'" (p. 47). "The traditional view has been that students learn to write in English classes and to compute in mathematics classes and 'never' the twain shall meet" (McIntosh, 1991, p. 423). McIntosh (1991) suggests that by learning and writing about related topics, by writing about problems which puzzle them, and by writing about their fears and feelings, students begin to see

math in more human terms.

Encouraging and developing sustained writing in a variety of genres across the curriculum will both increase the power and scope of subject learning and enhance students' writing skills (Collerson, 1988). As teachers incorporate more writing in these important content areas, teachers will see an improvement in students' thinking (Manning, 1996). The major purpose of writing in the content areas is to help students clarify and extend their knowledge in these subject areas. It will also bring about improvement in students' writing abilities (Manning, 1996).

Hansen (1987) explains that we need to shift away from an emphasis on mechanics to a primary concern for content. If a piece of writing has no information, help with language or correct spelling and punctuation will not make it a best seller. Writers must have something to say. Students elaborate their knowledge and clarify for themselves what they know as they express their thoughts through writing. Class discussion and sharing of writing builds interest, invites helpful feedback, and encourages revision. As mentioned in a curriculum resource handbook published by Kraus International Publications (1992), curriculum developers advocate that curriculum planning should transcend the traditional curricular boundaries. Thematic studies provide a means to achieve this kind of integration. Writing across the curriculum is a major concern at all educational levels. The writing process and the reading-writing link also offer means to combine language arts and the content areas. "Interestingly, the major textbooks on teaching gifted and talented students include detailed program descriptions on thematic or topical units (Gallegher 1985; VanTassell-Baska 1988). Perhaps all students could be taught this way" (p. 90).

One method of integrating the teaching of writing into content areas can be achieved through letter writing. All citizens must often respond to or question information contained in a letter. Evans (1995) believes that the social studies

classroom provides the perfect opportunity to teach and reinforce this process. A way to provide students with an enjoyable way to improve their reasoning and writing skills is an exchange of informed opinions through letters and editorials.

A writing activity which Manning suggests is titled "written conversations". Students can have the opportunity to respond to each other in writing through "written conversations" (Manning, 1995). One student writes a question or comment about something discussed in class or read in a text. The partner then responds in writing to the comment or question. This continues for a designated period of time.

Writing across the curriculum gives students the opportunity to write in a variety of genres. In many classrooms, non-fiction is a neglected genre. Manning (1996) believes that before students can write reports, they need to know something about the topic. Their curiosity will prompt them to ask questions and research enthusiastically and diligently to obtain the answers. Avery (1987) describes a teacher who instructs the children to look and read until they are "filled up", then to close their books and to write what seems important. Teachers can demonstrate various research and writing techniques, as well as provide the necessary research materials which help to guide these child researchers. Writing in the content areas gives the right context to develop children's competencies in this particular genre (Wilson, 1995). It provides children with the opportunity to explore the genre of non-fiction.

When using writing in various subject areas, teachers are able to observe students' writing and make an evaluation of students' thinking that may be useful for supporting future learning (Manning, 1996). Using a writing-to-learn approach is a means for teachers to help students learn and to assess whether their students are learning what they are trying to teach (McIntosh, 1991). When teachers read their students' writing, they may recognize misconceptions, thereby helping teachers identify areas that need reteaching. This writing is not only useful as a learning device

for the student, but also is used as a diagnostic tool for the teacher (McIntosh, 1991).

Learning Logs

A type of journal in which students respond in written form to information learned in all areas of the curriculum is called a learning log. The purpose of using learning logs is to aid students in organizing and clarifying terms and concepts learned in specific areas of the curriculum. For example, students may respond to passages from literature or provide a written explanation of a math concept. The use of journals or learning logs encourages writing development and fosters learning (McIntosh, 1991).

Learning logs can be used as a method to assist content learning. Walley (1991) discusses how, "Writing in learning logs encourages reflection and interaction with curriculum content, it can kindle academic achievement by providing opportunities for students to clarify thinking and record meaningful facts and events (p. 151). He mentions that by having kids start by making lists and writing simple responses to content topics, students become more willing to write. As the assignments become more extensive, the resistance to writing seems to melt away (Walley, 1991).

The purpose of having students write in learning logs is for students to be given the opportunity to reflect on what they are learning and to learn while they are reflecting on what they are learning" (McIntosh, 1991). In contrast to the copying of definitions from a science text, having students write their own definition in a learning log is more beneficial to the students. As McIntosh (1991) explains, "Though students' own definitions may lack in precision by using their own words, the definition has more meaning and is therefore more likely to be understood - not merely memorized" (p. 424). These logs provide a way for students to review or interpret information

discussed in class or read in a text (Manning, 1996).

Learning logs are meant to be informal and personal. When using a type of learning log or journal, Manning (1996) points out that carrying on a dialogue with students in their journals is time consuming, but it's well worth the effort. This activity provides another means for communication between the teacher and the student.

Burke, Harste, and Short (1988) remind us that, "the focus of students is on communicating ideas or problems with what they are learning rather than on correct spelling or grammar" (p. 286).

Atwell (1990) describes a teacher who instructed her third graders to write a final entry in their learning logs. She instructed them to think and write about what it was like to keep logs throughout the school year. The following are four of the telling excerpts which help to show the power of informal writing to help thinking:

I like writing. It helps you learn about things...I think a logwrite is to be able to remember things you normally wouldn't...It makes you think a little harder when you do the logwrite...When you write in your learning log it don't have to be perfect. (Atwell, 1990, p. 35)

The teacher can gain insight into how children react to her instruction. Learning logs can communicate a child's thoughts regarding the subject being taught" (Walley, 1991). Using learning logs is just one example of how students can have authentic writing practice as part of their learning process.

Summary

Students need the opportunity to write often and in a variety of ways. Frequent practice is necessary if writing is to improve. Providing time to write seems to be a key emphasis in today's primary classroom. As Walley (1991) points out, not all students will write with the same ability, but all students need to write.

Writing develops the thinking process and students need daily, meaningful writing practice in order to reach the goal of writing with skill. There is not only one method used for teaching writing successfully in the classroom. There is, however, research to support that integrating writing into the various subjects has its benefits. Writing in learning logs encourages interaction with the subject and can be used as a method to assist in content learning. Writing across the curriculum is a powerful tool for thinking and learning.

CHAPTER THREE

PROCEDURES

The project originated because of the author's love of writing and her emphasis on using writing in her classroom. After observing students at various grade levels, she recognized that students gain in their interest and understanding of various topics, as they write about them. Their writing also improves. Though students write in various forms and with varying abilities, most can write.

The author attended the National Writing Project in the summer of 1996 and began researching best practices in the area of teaching writing. Through the National Writing Project, she became part of a network of educators who had the same interest in writing and chose to see it as an emphasis in their own classrooms. The author was recognized by the National Writing Project as a participant willing to go out into the schools and area Educational Service Districts, and conduct workshops for other educators. She began teaching others strategies of teaching writing in the primary classroom. By visiting various schools and by talking with various educators, she was given the opportunity to share her own ideas, as well as gather new ideas from fellow educators. In December 1996, the author attended a conference where Lucy Calkins spoke. This ignited her desire to learn even more. In March 1997, the author made her final presentation for the school year at the National Convention for Teachers of English in Portland, Oregon.

Through district and building in-services the author began to see writing not only as a strategy to teach various subjects, but also as a necessity to help students succeed in the future. With the development of the state's Essential Academic Learning Requirements and the Test of the Early Years given to all Washington State fourth graders, writing has become an emphasis in the state as well as in the district in

which the author teaches.

Most recently, the author was chosen to be a member of a district team which will be responsible for teaching K-4 teachers in their district how to teach writing in their classroom. This has provided an avenue for the author to become more involved with the research available in the area of teaching writing.

Before delving into this project, current writings and research were examined by the author in the area of teaching writing. Writing activities were developed to provide opportunities for students to write as often as possible within the currently taught social studies and science curriculum. The author was given the opportunity to remain with her first grade class for the following year. This has given her the chance to incorporate these writing strategies within the already set themes for her second grade classroom.

The suggested writing activities, as well as the ideas on using learning logs in the classroom have been incorporated into her own classroom for the 1997-1998 school year.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE PROJECT

The project consists of two sections. The first section includes a description of writing activities which can be incorporated into four of the already set themes for social studies and science, for the school in which the author teaches. Two of these themes include forms which may be used during the teaching of these writing activities. Each writing activity includes a list of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements in Writing which are incorporated into these activities.

The second section includes writing prompts which can be used when using learning logs in the classroom. The following is a table of contents for the remainder of this chapter.

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Wild Things/Wolves (real versus imaginary)

Title of Writing Activity:

Wild Things Flip Book:

Description of Writing Activity:

Write a descriptive sentence. Teach students what a sentence must include to be a sentence. Each student makes one animal with 3 parts - head, body, tail. Underneath each drawn part is a part of a sentence. When each drawing and sentence are cut into three sections, the pages are put together into one class book. Students can flip through the pages to create new animals and new sentences.

EXAMPLE: My scary (adjective) spam (name) eats bugs (verb).

Essential Academic Learning Requirements:

1. The student writes clearly and effectively.
 - 1.3 The student will know and apply correct spelling, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization.

Title of Writing Activity:

Pop-up Book

Description of Writing Activity:

Students will write a complete sentence stating a wolf fact. This is a class book, using a pop-out form for each page. Students could focus on one of many topics such as "A Wolf Can't..." or "Wolf Facts..."

Essential Academic Learning Requirements:

1. The student writes clearly and effectively.
 - 1.2 The student will use voice, word choice, and sentence fluency for appropriate style.
 - 1.3 The student will know and apply correct spelling, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization.
2. The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.
 - 2.3 The student will write for a variety of purposes such as telling stories, presenting analytic responses to literature, conveying technical information, completing a team project, explaining concepts and procedures, and persuading.

Title of Writing Activity:

What's in the Den?

Description of Writing Activity:

(To teach the use of adjectives and verbs) A book is shaped as a wolf den, and is separated into three different sections. The first section reads, "Wolves are...". The second section includes a picture of a wolf. The third section reads, "Wolves...". In the first section, students complete the sentence by adding as many adjectives as possible. In the third section, students complete the sentence by adding as many verbs as possible.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements:

1. The student writes clearly and effectively.
 - 1.2 The student will use voice, word choice, and sentence fluency for appropriate style.
 - 1.3 The student will know and apply correct spelling, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization.

Title of Writing Activity:

There's a Nightmare in My Closet by Mercer Mayer

Description of Writing Activity:

Students first draw a picture of their bedroom with a door that opens and reveals a friendly monster in the closet. Students will tag their pictures, and the teacher will create a list of commonly used words, and create a blank picture dictionary. The next day students will create pictures for their picture dictionary. The teacher will focus on the parts of a story - beginning, middle, and end. Students will then write a story about the friendly monster in their closet.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements:

1. The student writes clearly and effectively.
 - 1.1 The student will develop a topic or theme; organize thoughts around a clear beginning, middle, and end; use transitional sentences and phrases to connect related ideas; write coherently and compellingly.
 - 1.2 The student will use voice, word choice, and sentence fluency for appropriate style.
 - 1.3 The student will know and apply correct spelling, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization.
2. The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.
 - 2.1 The student will recognize and write in a variety of forms including narratives, journals, poems, essays, stories, and technical writing.
 - 2.3 The student will write for a variety of purposes such as telling stories, presenting analytic responses to literature, conveying technical information, completing a team project, explaining concepts and procedures, and persuading.
3. The student understands and uses the steps of the writing process.
 - 3.1 The student will prewrite - generate topics and develop

- ideas.
 - 3.2 The student will draft - elaborate on topics and ideas.
 - 3.3 The student will revise - consider changes in content, organization, or structure to better communicate ideas.
 - 3.4 The student will edit - correct spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage.
 - 3.5 The student will publish - use a variety of tools such as pen, pencil, and technology to share completed writing with chosen audience.
4. The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work.
- 4.1 The student will assess individual strengths and needs for improvement as a writer.
 - 4.2 The student will seek and use feedback to improve writing; offer suggestions and comments to others, when appropriate.

Nocturnal Animals

Title of Writing Activity:

Nocturnal Animal Report

Description of Writing Activity:

Each student will be placed in a group of four students. Each group will be assigned one animal to research. Animal choices are bat, owl, opossum, mouse, or skunk. Each member of the group will be responsible to research one aspect of the animal. These aspects are description, habitat, eating habits, and interesting facts. A fold-out book will be made by each student containing all information learned. Each student will also be required to create a visual display on his or her aspect of the assigned animal. These displays vary from a clay model, poster, triarama, or shoe box diorama. An oral presentation given by each group will complete this project. All expectations are explained on the included form. These forms can be adapted.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements:

1. The student writes clearly and effectively.
 - 1.1 The student will develop a topic or theme; organize thoughts around a clear beginning, middle, and end; use transitional sentences and phrases to connect related ideas; write coherently and compellingly.
 - 1.3 The student will know and apply correct spelling, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization.
2. The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.
 - 2.3 The student will write for a variety of purposes such as telling stories, presenting analytic responses to literature, conveying technical information, completing a team project, explaining concepts and procedures, and persuading.

3. The student understands and uses the steps of the writing process.
 - 3.1 The student will prewrite - generate topics and develop ideas.
 - 3.2 The student will draft - elaborate on topics and ideas.
 - 3.3 The student will revise - consider changes in content, organization, or structure to better communicate ideas.
 - 3.4 The student will edit - correct spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage.
 - 3.5 The student will publish - use a variety of tools such as pen, pencil, and technology to share completed writing with chosen audience.
4. The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work.
 - 4.1 The student will assess individual strengths and needs for improvement as a writer.
 - 4.2 The student will seek and use feedback to improve writing; offer suggestions and comments to others, when appropriate.

Nocturnal Animal Project

Group Members:

Group Animal:

Nocturnal Animal Project

To successfully complete your Nocturnal Animal Project, you are responsible for the following:

(1) Written Report: This will be completed in class. Each group will be making a fold out book of their animal. Each person in the group is responsible for writing one paragraph about your animal. You need to complete a paragraph about _____.

Your paragraph needs to include the following items:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| _____ topic sentence (1) | _____ indented paragraph (5) |
| _____ at least 4 supporting sentences (4) | _____ punctuation (5) |
| _____ complete sentences (5) | _____ capitals (5) |
| _____ correct spelling (5) | |

In your fold out book, you must have the following:

- _____ quality penmanship on all group members' paragraphs (5)
- _____ quality illustrations depicting each page (5)

**Total points possible for written report - 40 points

=====

(2) Visual Display: (Requirements on included page)

**Total points possible for visual display - 30 points

=====

(3) Oral Presentation: During your oral presentation, you must include the following:

- _____ voice projection - are you loud enough? (5)
- _____ eye contact with audience (5)
- _____ enunciate clearly - don't mumble (5)
- _____ show and explain visual display (5)

**Total points possible for oral presentation - 20 points

=====

Project *** Outstanding!!! - 81-90 points

Grade: ** Great work!! - 72-80 points

 * Anchor! - up to 71 points

Nocturnal Animal Visual Display

Visual Display Project: _____

You may start working on your visual display project at home. Your parents may help you, but they may not do the whole project. This project will be due **Monday, November 3, 1997**. Listed below are details that should be included. You may add others, too! Visual displays which include all of the required information will receive 30 points (15 points for accurate depiction of topic and 15 points for quality of product).

**I will provide all of the supplies, so just let me know what you need, and I'll let you know if I can get it for you.

The following are the display projects which will be completed by each animal group:

Create the animal: You will need to create this animal. You could draw the animal, create a model, or be creative and think of another way!

Food: You need to make a shoebox diorama showing foods (more than one) that your animal mostly eats. If possible, show how your animal gets this food. (An example of how to make a diorama is included in this packet.)

Habitat: You need to make a triarama of the habitat which your animals lives. You may use any materials on this (grass, twigs, wood, cardboard, clay, etc...) The model should show different parts of the habitat, (For example the outside of a bear cave, and the inside of the bear cave.) An example of how to make a triarama is included in this packet.

Interesting Facts: You need to create a large poster displaying at least 4 interesting facts about your animal. These should be facts that you wrote about in your paragraph. The poster needs to include color, neat printing, and at least one picture.

HAVE FUN AND GOOD LUCK!

Name _____

Nocturnal Animal Project

Written Report:

Your paragraph needs to include the following items:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------|-------|
| 1) Indented paragraph | (5 points) | _____ |
| 2) Topic sentence | (1 points) | _____ |
| 3) At least 4 supporting sentences | (4 points) | _____ |
| 4) Capitals | (5 points) | _____ |
| 5) Punctuation | (5 points) | _____ |
| 6) Complete sentences | (5 points) | _____ |
| 7) Correct spelling | (5 points) | _____ |

In your fold out book, you must have the following:

- | | | |
|--|------------|-------|
| 8) Quality penmanship on all group members' paragraphs | (5 points) | _____ |
| 9) Quality illustrations depicting each page | (5 points) | _____ |

**Total points possible - 40 points _____

=====

Visual Display:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------|
| 1) Accurate depiction of topic | (15 points) | _____ |
| 2) Quality of product | (15 points) | _____ |

**Total points possible - 30 points _____

=====

Oral Presentation:

- | | | |
|---|------------|-------|
| 1) Voice projection -
are you loud enough? | (5 points) | _____ |
| 2) Eye contact with audience | (5 points) | _____ |
| 3) Enunciate clearly - don't mumble | (5 points) | _____ |
| 4) Show and explain visual display | (5 points) | _____ |

**Total points possible - 20 points _____

- =====
- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| *** Outstanding!!! | - 81-90 points |
| ** Great work!! | - 72-80 points |
| * Anchor! | - up to 71 points |

Solar System/Space

Title of Writing Activity:

Solar System Report

Description of Writing Activity:

- a) First create a class web of everything that is in the solar system. Have kids circle one thing that they would like to write a report about. For example: If a student chooses astronauts, she would then make a web of astronauts and everything she knows about them. The student would write a rough draft and partner edit. The final report would be one paragraph which is at least 5 sentences. The teacher should discuss scanning books, paraphrasing, and plagiarizing.
- b) Students will create a visual display of their chosen subject.
- c) Students will do an oral report by either reading the entire report or by choosing 2 facts to present on. They can use an index card and write the 2 facts and a picture on them to help them through the presentation. Use a speaking rubric to assess.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements:

1. The student writes clearly and effectively.
 - 1.1 The student will develop a topic or theme; organize thoughts around a clear beginning, middle, and end; use transitional sentences and phrases to connect related ideas; write coherently and compellingly.
 - 1.2 The student will use voice, word choice, and sentence fluency for appropriate style.
 - 1.3 The student will know and apply correct spelling, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization.
2. The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.
 - 2.3 The student will write for a variety of purposes such as telling stories, presenting analytic responses to literature,

conveying technical information, completing a team project, explaining concepts and procedures, and persuading.

3. The student understands and uses the steps of the writing process.
 - 3.1 The student will prewrite - generate topics and develop ideas.
 - 3.2 The student will draft - elaborate on topics and ideas.
 - 3.3 The student will revise - consider changes in content, organization, or structure to better communicate ideas.
 - 3.4 The student will edit - correct spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage.
 - 3.5 The student will publish - use a variety of tools such as pen, pencil, and technology to share completed writing with chosen audience.
4. The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work.
 - 4.1 The student will assess individual strengths and needs for improvement as a writer.
 - 4.2 The student will seek and use feedback to improve writing; offer suggestions and comments to others, when appropriate.

Solar System Project

We are currently beginning our theme on the solar system. Our class will be creating a class book on the solar system. Each student will be given a copy of this completed book. Each student will be responsible for writing one page about a specific topic related to the solar system. This activity will be completed in class. It is not meant to be an at-home project. There will be, however, a portion of this activity which will need to be completed at home. This will be the visual display.

The kids had so much fun doing at-home projects about nocturnal animals, and the results were terrific! The students would like to do something similar for their solar system projects.

Here is an example: If a student chooses astronauts, she will be writing at least one paragraph about astronauts in class. At home students will create some type of visual display of astronauts. This visual display could take the form of a shoebox diorama, poster, triarama, drawing, clay sculpture, or any other creative ways to display their topic. Students may receive help from adults, but they should be responsible for the majority of the project. The visual display should be completed and turned in by Friday, December 5th. They will then be available to be viewed at before or after the Christmas program on December the 8th. Good luck, have fun, and let me know if you need anything!

Happy Thanksgiving!

Name _____

Space Project

Written Report:

Conventions:	1	2	3	4	5
*no glaring errors					
*capital letters					
*punctuation					
*paragraphing					
*spelling					
Word Choice:	1	2	3	4	5
*strong, active verbs					
*colorful words					
*descriptive phrases					
*best word used					

Visual Display:

Accuracy depiction of topic	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of product	1	2	3	4	5

Oral Presentation:

Voice projection - are you loud enough?	1	2	3	4	5
Eye contact with audience	1	2	3	4	5
Enunciate clearly don't mumble!	1	2	3	4	5
Show and explain visual share at least 2 main points	1	2	3	4	5

**	Outstanding	-	36 - 40
*	Good Work	-	32 - 35
	Anchor	-	31 and below

Dinosaurs

Title of Writing Activity:

Dinosaur Report

Description of Writing Activity:

- 1) First, create a list of dinosaurs by having the class brainstorm as many dinosaur names as possible. The teacher will choose seven of those dinosaurs to discuss and read about in class. The teacher will hang a large chart in the room which displays certain information which the children will help to find. Headings would be the following: physical description of the dinosaur, size/weight/length of dinosaur, eating habits, nick-names for the dinosaur or how it got it's name, movement of dinosaur (how fast, or how it moves), similarities or differences to other dinosaurs. Each student will also have his or her own chart to fill in this information.
- 2) Students will then find information on their own about two additional dinosaurs of their choice.
- 3) Students will finally choose one dinosaur on which to write a report. Students can pick one which was discussed in class or any other dinosaur. Students will have to include the information given in the chart, but can and should add more interesting information. Reports will be evaluated using the 6 trait system.
- 4) Students will also create a clay model of their dinosaur.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements:

1. The student writes clearly and effectively.
 - 1.1 The student will develop a topic or theme; organize thoughts around a clear beginning, middle, and end; use transitional sentences and phrases to connect related ideas; write coherently and compellingly.
 - 1.2 The student will use voice, word choice, and sentence fluency for appropriate style.

- 1.3 The student will know and apply correct spelling, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization.
2. The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.
 - 2.1 The student will recognize and write in a variety of forms including narratives, journals, poems, essays, stories, and technical writing.
 - 2.2 The student will identify, analyze, and write for the chosen audience.
 - 2.3 The student will write for a variety of purposes such as telling stories, presenting analytic responses to literature, conveying technical information, completing a team project, explaining concepts and procedures, and persuading.
3. The student understands and uses the steps of the writing process.
 - 3.1 The student will prewrite - generate topics and develop ideas.
 - 3.2 The student will draft - elaborate on topics and ideas.
 - 3.3 The student will revise - consider changes in content, organization, or structure to better communicate ideas.
 - 3.4 The student will edit - correct spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage.
 - 3.5 The student will publish - use a variety of tools such as pen, pencil, and technology to share completed writing with chosen audience.
4. The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work.
 - 4.1 The student will assess individual strengths and needs for improvement as a writer.
 - 4.2 The student will seek and use feedback to improve writing; offer suggestions and comments to others, when appropriate.

Writing Prompts for the Content Areas

Animals in Living Communities/Habitats:

- * What is a habitat?
- * List as many habitats as you can.
- * Choose a habitat and draw it, including any living things found in it.
- * What habitats will you see outside when we take a walk around the school? What habitats did you see outside? Compare your two lists.
- * Think of a habitat. In three minutes, list all the animals you can that live in that habitat.

Community:

- * What do you think a community is?
- * List some things that are special about our community?
- * If you could change one thing about our community, what would it be?

Field Trips, Visitors, and Films:

- * Make a list of things you think you may see at _____
- * What kinds of things will you be looking for tomorrow? Make a list.
- * What do you think it will be like? (Before) What was it really like? (After)
- * Make a list of things you know about _____? (Before) What did you learn today about _____? (After)
- * What questions do you think will be answered by this film? (Before)
Cross off the questions that were answered by the film? (After)
- * What was most memorable or meaningful to you?
- * Write a poem about your experience yesterday.
- * Write a letter to a friend in another class, telling about our visitor and what you learned today.

Fire Prevention and Safety:

- * Your clothes have caught on fire. Tell what you must do to put the fire out and avoid making the burns worse.

- * Draw the floor plan of our school. Label as many fire exits as you can identify.
- * Draw the floor plan of your house. Put an X on your bedroom. Show two ways to escape a house fire from your room.
- * After talking to a friend, list as many home fire hazards as the two of you can think of.
- * What can you do to prevent a fire? List as many things as you can think of.
- * What would you do if there were a fire drill at our school? List your steps.

Geography and Maps:

- * What would you like to know about maps and making them?
- * What do we use maps for? List as many reasons as you can think of.
- * Draw a simple map with a key.
- * List all the water bodies/land forms that you can think of.

Holidays:

- * List all the safety rules you can think of for Halloween.
- * Write about or draw how you celebrated Thanksgiving.
- * What are you thankful for?
- * Write your Christmas wish list.
- * Tell me about something you did or something that happened to you over our vacation.

Magnets:

- * Tell how magnets and Crazy Glue are the same and different.
- * List ten things that will stick to a magnet and ten that won't.

Mathematics:

- * What is time?
- * What is money? Why do we use it?
- * Write a word problem.
- * Write the directions for playing a favorite math game.
- * Write down ten things you do every day and the times these things

happen.

- * Make a list of ten items in the room that are less than six centimeters in length. List each item and its length.

Oceans and Marine Animals:

- * If you could stand on the ocean floor, what do you think you'd see?
- * Brainstorm a list of foods from the sea?
- * If you lived in the ocean, what would you be and why? Where would you live? Draw yourself.
- * If I were a ...
- * The best part of the ocean is...
- * Compare land animals and sea animals.

Plants and trees:

- * What is a plant?
- * We all need trees. Why? List as many reasons as you can think of.
- * Pretend you're a tree in a forest and can see and talk. Tell me what is happening in the forest around you.
- * Draw a kind of tree you know well. Write and tell a friend all that you know about the tree you drew.
- * Why do you think that some of the plants in our room are closer to the window?
- * Why do you think the leaves change color in the fall?

Reading and Literature:

Authors and illustrators:

- * Who is your favorite author so far this school year?
- * What do you like about this author's writing?
- * Finish this sentence: I love the way the author...
- * Have you ever read any other books by the author of the book you're reading now?

Characters:

- * Who is the main character in your book? How do you know?
- * Tell me about your favorite character in the book you're reading. What kind of person is your character, and why is he/she your favorite?

* How did your main character change?

* Is your main character believable?

Extending a read-aloud:

* What do you think will happen next? What would you like to happen next?

* What book should I read aloud next? Why this one?

Genres:

* Write a story to me about the kind of story you like best. Why do you like this type?

* Make a list of fairy tales that you read or heard during the school year.

Open-ended:

* Respond in any way you'd like to the book you're reading now.

* Write a letter to me about the book you're reading now.

* Write a poem about your book.

* How would you advertise your book?

* Does your book remind you of other stories?

* How does this book make you feel?

* Did you ever feel like laughing or crying when you were reading this book?

* Finish the sentence: I was surprised...

* Finish the sentence: I wonder...

* Finish the sentence: I wish...

The reader's tastes:

* Write a letter to me telling me about a book you really liked.

* What was the best book you read this quarter? What made it best?

* What was your favorite part of this book/story/poem?

* Would you recommend your book to another? Why or why not?

The reader's writing:

* Is there anything about this book that you don't like? Tell how you would write it differently.

Reading habits:

* Why do you read?

* When do you read?

* Where do you read?

* Have you ever brought a book?

* How do you feel about being read to by me?

Reading strategies:

- * What do you do when you're reading and you come up against a word you don't know?
- * Try to predict what will happen next in your story.
- * How did you learn to read?

Setting:

- * Write a letter telling me about the setting of the book you're reading.

TITLES:

- * Do you think the title of your book is appropriate?
- * Did the title of your book "grab" you?
- * How do you think the author chose this title?

SCHOOL LIFE:

- * What did you think of your first day of school? What did you enjoy? What has you worried?
- * List five things that you did in school today.
- * What could we do to make our room better?
- * Where would you like to go on a school field trip this year?
- * What can you do, as an individual, to improve behavior in our classroom?
- * Now that you've heard a little about writing workshop, what are some questions that you have?
- * What happened in our classroom when the substitute was here this morning?
- * Pretend you're the teacher. Make up a quiz for our class about _____.
- * What's your favorite subject? Why? Your least favorite? Why?
- * Who was your favorite teacher ever? What made him/her the best?
- * What would you change about our school building?

SENSES:

- * Our classroom is silent, and I have just set this timer for five minutes. List as many sounds as you can hear during the five minutes.

THE SOLAR SYSTEM:

- * What do you know about our solar system?
- * Choose a planet that you'd like to live on. Write a letter to a friend inviting him/her to your planet. Tell about what you would see there.

- * List as many of the nine planets as you can remember. Which is your favorite?
- * Brainstorm as many reasons as you can for why we need the sun.
- * Make a list of everything you'd need to pack for a trip to the moon.

WEATHER:

- * What would you like to know about the weather?
- * How can you tell what the weather will be like? List as many ways as you think of.
- * If you could talk to a weather person, what questions would you have about how he/she does his/her job?
- * What do you know about ice?
- * Guess why parts of the earth are hot and other parts are cold.

Miscellaneous Writing Prompts

- Grandparents
- Take something out of your desk and write about it
- Holiday traditions
- Write about someone/something
- Describe your Favorite meal
- How do you like to spend your free-time?
- Favorite snack?
- Accident?
- What is art? (definition/picture)
- If I were something other than a person (I am a tree)
- Collection of jokes
- People I'll never forget
- Favorite books and movies
- Places I've been
- Unforgettable moments
- I get really mad when...
- I wonder how...
- My best day
- The first time I...
- My goals
- My most embarrassing moment...
- If I were a parent...
- If I had three wishes, I'd...
- Describe your room
- Write a song
- Write a letter
- I believe in...
- Rewrite a story with a different ending
- What is love?
- Create a menu for a restaurant you own
- Advertisement
- Think of a place you have visited that is so vivid in your mind you can almost feel what it is like to be there. It might be as large as a city or as tiny as a corner of one room. Describe this place so clearly that the

reader can experience it with you.

- A memorable place
- A memorable person
- Think of a time you felt frightened...frustrated...annoyed...nervous...embarrassed...surprised...Pick one and tell the story of what happened.
- (Students are presented with an old shoe-or a choice of several shoes.)
Think who this shoe might belong to and how it came to be found alongside the road in your neighborhood. Write the story of what happened.
- Think of a place that is special to you, a place you have been that you might like to return to. It might be a place indoors or out, a large place or a small one, somewhere near your home or far away. Think of the sights, sounds, and smells that make this place so memorable.
Describe it in a way that your reader will find it memorable, too.
- Think of a teacher who would be hard to forget...
- I remember...
- I want to know...
- I'm thankful for...
- What is honesty?
- When I grow up...
- I like...believe...think...love...hate...wonder...eat...play...dream...etc...

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Writing is a thinking process which has a positive impact on all areas of the curriculum. Both research and observations have shown this to be true. The State of Washington has determined that all Washington students should write with skill. The Washington Commission on Student Learning has established four Essential Academic Learning Requirements in Writing that students are expected to meet. By making writing an integral part of every subject area, students are able to practice the craft of writing, as well as further their knowledge of specific subjects.

This project was developed to provide writing activities to help in the teaching of science and social studies. Writing prompts which can be of use when using learning logs have also been provided as a way to encourage reflection and interaction with curriculum content.

Conclusions

This project was divided into two parts - writing activities which aid in the teaching of social studies and science, and writing prompts for use when using learning logs. The author has experienced varying degrees of success in both areas. For the author, success was determined by teacher observation, student enthusiasm, and the quality of student's writing.

Writing within the current social studies and science themes ended with good results. The author believes this was successful for three reasons. The first was that students had already experienced writing in many different forms. They had already been working on their basic writing skills, and this was an effective way to continue this

practice. Another reason for the success of these writing activities was the process of taking these children through each step of the writing process. The final reason for the success of this portion of the project was the great enthusiasm and interest the children showed when learning these specific topics. Children are more successful when they are personally engaged in a high interest topic. By the time these students were asked to participate in some type of writing activity, they were confident in their knowledge of the various subjects. Students with a wide range of writing abilities were able to express in varying degrees of detail what they had learned about the specific subjects. Every student was able to produce a piece of writing about the topic learned. They were willing to put forth more effort and spend more time working on these assignments which were of high interest to them.

The author's use of learning logs was not as successful in the classroom as the integration of writing activities within the social studies and science curriculum. The learning logs can be an excellent basis for making instructional decisions. Students are able to demonstrate to the teacher what they clearly understand and where further instruction is necessary. Learning logs are an important component of writing as a thinking process, but the author has not yet determined the best way to incorporate them into the daily classroom schedule. The author will continue to develop ways of making learning logs an integral part of the second grade classroom.

Recommendations

The success of any writing program is dependent on the teacher's enthusiasm towards the subject, the interest level of the students, and the amount of time allotted for the development of the program. Although the author's project was successful to a large degree, improvement is necessary in order to use learning logs more effectively.

I recommend that more time be spent researching the various methods of using

learning logs in the classroom. This can be done in two ways. One way is by reading new material in educational journals and magazines. Another is to discuss the subject with other teachers who find the use of learning logs to be effective and beneficial for both students and teacher. The author plans to do both, as well as continue working on writing activities which can be incorporated into the other curriculum topics for second grade.

This writing project meets many of the guidelines set forth by the state and the school district in the teaching of writing. Writing has become an integral part of the school day, and has been recognized as being an essential part in the student's thinking process. The integration of writing into the various social studies and science themes can only lead to great things - better writing and a deepening of one's knowledge of the subject being learned. This project has changed in its development since the first days it began, and will continue to evolve as the author learns more and more about the art of teaching writing and the various subjects to be taught in the classroom.

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