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STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE WRITING OF ELEMENTARY
STUDENTS IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education: Reading

by

Robyn Eileen Bingham-Scott

June 1993

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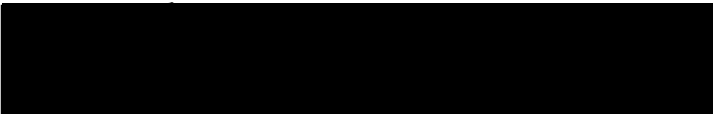
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to introduce parents of elementary school students, in the intermediate grades, to strategies they could use to help improve their children's writing.

The research done in support of this project focused on two main areas: effective parent involvement and effective writing instruction. The study of effective parent involvement revealed that parents want to help in their children's education. Studies also revealed that while parents want to help their children they seek guidance from teachers and other education professionals. Workshops were said to be crucial to the success of a parent involvement program because any suggestions that are given to the parents must be brought alive for them. It was further discovered that parent involvement is vital to the success of the educational process and programs. Not only was parent involvement found to be beneficial but, in situations where there was a severe lack of parent involvement delinquency was found to occur. In the area of effective writing instruction research showed that motivation is a large factor in writing. Many suggestions were provided for motivating students. The use of plays, literature, pen pals and the conversion of the classroom into a different place were all suggested as possible motivations for writing. The

use of the writing process was suggested as a way to build student confidence.

A resource guide was put together for parents to use. It is separated into five sections, each dealing with a different, specific type of writing strategy.

Along with the resource guide, a series of five workshops were designed to help the parents implement the ideas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Mom and Dad: For always being there to remind me that there was nothing I could not do and for your constant love and support of my education, from kindergarten to masters degree. I appreciate everything that you have done for me.

To, my husband, Art: For all of your support during the creation of this project. It would not have been possible without you. You kept me going. I love you.

To Stephen: For being a part of everything special in my life, I thank you.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The structure of the family in the United States has changed. In the 1950's most children lived in families with both biological parents in the home. The adult male was the primary wage earner while the female was the primary care provider and did not work outside the home. She saw the children off to school and was home when they got home to help them with their school work. By the 1990's things had changed. Now, many children live in single family homes or in homes with one biological and one step parent.

The "traditional family," comprised of a stable couple who are biological parents to the children, and where the father has a job and the mother is available in the home for the care of her children exists in very small households - one estimate is as low as 7% (Ascher, 1988, p.111).

Most of today's households are headed by a single parent, usually female. Of course, this female is forced to work, sometimes two or more jobs. Even in the cases where the family has two parents both are forced to work. It is said that 64% of all mothers of school age children are in the work force (Ascher, 1988). The implications of this are that children get themselves ready for school and return to an empty house at the end of the day. This information is important to consider because the time that an adult in the home can spend with the children has drastically lessened.

(Ascher, 1988).

One thing that has not changed over time is the fact that parents care about their children and want them to be successful. In no area is this more true than in education.

While parents want to help their children and "All parents can learn to foster children's literacy" (Mavrogenes, 1990, p.4), many do not know how. "Research indicates that most parents are willing to help their children with their education, but do not know how to go about it and are afraid of interfering" (Mavrogenes, 1990, p.4). However, because of their busy schedules, parents do not have the time to "figure out" or locate the resources that tell them how to help their children. Mavrogenes goes onto say that parents feel that they do much better when teachers guide them.

The purpose of this project is to provide these busy, concerned parents with a resource guide of practical suggestions which may be used to help their children with developing their writing skills. This resource guide is designed in five sections. Each section is intended to be given to parents after they have received explanation, during a workshop, of it's content and strategies. The workshops are a very important component of this project because it is necessary for the parents to experience what the teacher is asking them to do with their children. This

experience is important so that parents know that they understand and feel comfortable with the activities (Mavrogenes, 1990).

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF PROJECT

This project is based on the whole language philosophy of reading. "Whole language...is a philosophy of language learning rather than a specific teaching strategy. The philosophy has its roots in the study of psycholinguistics, a discipline that examines the natural human proclivity for learning language" (Houston, Goolrick, & Tate, 1991, p.40). The whole language philosophy intertwines the language components of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Individuals using this philosophy, instruct in such a manner that each form of language is seen as part of the whole. When whole language instruction is given in any area of language, students are able to naturally transfer it to others. The forms of language should not be separated because, according to whole language philosophy, each component works in conjunction with the others to create language.

Another very important aspect of the whole language philosophy is that it focuses on meaning. When students read they are encouraged to take an active role by making predictions, asking questions, making comparisons concerning what they thought would happen and what did, and relating what they read to their own life experiences (Goodman, 1986).

Language acquisition in a whole language program is

viewed as a natural process. It is believed that all aspects of language are learned from exposure. Henceforth, the more exposure to written and spoken language the better.

The strategy of cooperative learning is often suggested by whole language theorists because it encourages students to use language and be immersed in a language rich environment while working and learning.

The whole language philosophy suggests that reading and writing experiences should be real and meaningful. Students should read and write with a goal and purpose. Skill packets and fill-in-the-blank worksheets do not fit into a whole language program. "Language is practiced and refined through the use of 'whole' pieces of writing (i.e., stories, letters, and books), not through analyses of parts of speech and fill-in-the-blank worksheets" (Houston, Goolrick & Tate, 1991, p.40).

A whole language program has a strong literature base. It emphasizes that the complete texts should be used, not excerpts. Students are able to develop meaning from the text easier when entire texts are provided. As stated earlier, meaning is of great concern to whole language theorists. (May, 1990,).

Children are given many opportunities to write daily in a whole language program. The rationale behind this is that in order for children to continue to progress they must have

the opportunity to practice.

Writing opportunities in the whole language classroom are limitless. Students are given choices of topic, genre, character, events and all other aspects of writing. Writing is not seen as the end product. Writing is viewed as a process in which there are many changes made to each piece of writing, at the authors discretion.

"Basic to the whole language philosophy is a safe environment..." (Houston, Goolrick, & Tate, 1991, p.40). This safe environment is important because students have to take risks with their writing in order to improve. In order to take risks, students must feel comfortable and safe (Goodman, 1986). Students must feel that it is acceptable if their work is not perfect.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In reviewing the literature two areas emerged as significant: effective parent involvement and effective writing instruction.

EFFECTIVE PARENT INVOLVEMENT

To most educators the idea that parent involvement is beneficial and essential to student success and achievement is not new or disputed. "Educators recognize that... education succeeds when teachers and parents work in tandem" (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990, p.692). The problem has not been to convince teachers but to convince parents of their vital role in their children's education. "Parents are the first teachers children meet and they remain the most important teachers for a long time" (Strickland & Morrow, 1989, p.530). Parental involvement has an effect on more than just the children of the parents who are involved. It "...is seen as critical to the academic success of the school as a whole" (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1989, p.84). Even though this fact is realized, "...school people wait till they are desperate for help before starting to build a strong partnership between school and home" (Dulaney, 1987, p.49).

Walker, et al. (1991) studied the delinquency of boys. Their study was designed to find what factors contribute to delinquency. It was found that, "... (lack of) parental

discipline and parent involvement most strongly predicted delinquency" (Walker, et al., 1991, p.50). This, in itself, tells how important parental involvement can be and is.

Strickland and Morrow (1989) believe that "Children's literacy development depends to a great extent on the literacy environment at home" (p.530). In order to see what the factors were that contributed to a literacy rich environment a study was performed. They found that three major factors contributed to making the home literacy environment; home factors, teachers, and parents. In the area of home factors they mention that many children come to school able to read and write but have yet to have any formal instruction in either area. They wanted to know what factors went into making this occur. They found that parents of early readers and writers read to their children and were responsive to their children's early reading and writing attempts. They found that in the homes of these early readers and writers, there were pencils, crayons, books, and paper always accessible to the children. They further found that these homes were places where reading and writing were treasured and that the children were able to see the functions of reading and writing "...demonstrated daily by adults through functional and pleasurable use..." (Strickland & Morrow, 1991, p.530). Teachers, Strickland and Morrow suggest, must take notice of how the children

learned to read and write. They tell that classrooms should make materials very accessible to children and should encourage them to share their attempts at writing and reading, as well as, plays, drawing and talking. Strickland and Morrow continued by discussing what parents can do to continue to foster writing and reading in their children. They tell that teachers should encourage parents to read to their children regularly. The next suggestion that Strickland and Morrow offer is that parents need to be encouraged to be responsive, supportive, and respectful of their children's literacy activities. They tell that parents should always answer questions about their children's reading and writing and should share stories with their children about things that have happened in their life. They go on to say that visiting the library regularly with children can be a very beneficial activity. One very interesting suggestion that was provided by Strickland and Morrow was for parents to bring home and share print from their job site with their children. Lastly, they remind that parents should make writing and reading materials readily available for children.

Fredericks and Rasinski, in a May 1990 article, explain that

Evidence substantiating the impact of parents on education is mounting. For schools this means that integrating

parents into the designs of the educational system can maximize student growth. Additionally, the added support on the home front promotes positive student attitudes toward learning throughout the entire elementary curriculum. (p.692)

They go on to say that teachers and parents must begin to share the responsibility for the students' education. Because of the current emphasis on the whole language philosophy, which emphasizes meaning and functionality and a goal of making students lifelong reader, a strong home environment is more important than ever. According to Fredericks and Rasinski, the activities that parents can do at home with their children, that are in line with the whole language philosophy, are only limited by the imagination of teachers and parents. Fredericks and Rasinski next offered a list of suggestions of possible activities that parents and children can do together. Their first suggestion was journals. They suggest that parents encourage children to keep a journal that they write in regularly. They explained that having a family journal, where every member of the family is encouraged to contribute something regularly, is a wonderful way to get the entire family excited about writing. They go on to suggest types of journals that may be used. The first was dialogue. In a dialogue journal two people carry on a conversation with one another through writing. The next type suggested was a letter journal. In

a letter journal full letters are written to another person and then exchanged for the purpose of response. Another suggestion that they offered was the use of wordless picture books. They explain that parents can use these books as spring boards to writing for the entire family. These books can also be used to create original stories. A suggestion offered by Fredericks and Rasinski, for teachers, was to create a monthly calendar for parents that contains suggestions for daily reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities. They go on to say that these suggestions can be tied to several pieces of childrens literature. To aide the teacher in selecting books it was suggested that children be asked to share some of their favorite books with their teacher. Fredericks and Rasinski next offer the idea of book talks. A book talk is when a person, in this case the parent, shares a book, with a class of children, that they enjoyed when they were young. Fredericks and Rasinski next suggest that when reading a book together various family members assume roles of various characters to make the story come alive. After the reading, other family members can question the characters about what they did in the story and why. Creating games to play based on stories that they have read is the next suggestion offered. They explain that the games can be based on well-known board games (i.e., Monopoly).

Reutzel and Fawson (1990) explained that more and more educators are seeing that the effectiveness of their language arts programs depend on parental involvement. They developed a language arts programs for their students that required parent involvement. Reutzel and Fawson put together a "traveling tales backpack." In this backpack they enclosed writing and drawing materials as well as guidelines and suggestions for the parents to follow. The guidelines for the parents helped to take away the anxiety of not knowing what to do. The program idea was that each student in the class would get the opportunity to take the backpack home for a few days. The students were to work with their parents to create some writing. At the end of the time at home students and parents were asked to come to school and share what they had produced. "...sharing one's writing is perhaps the most significant motivation, if not the only reason, for learning to write" (Reutzel & Fawson, 1990, p.222). They found that most parents got involved and even came to school and shared the writing with their children and that all were very excited about what they had done.

Rasinski and Fredericks (1989) examined reasons for failures in parent involvement programs and lack of parent involvement programs. They explained that teachers often claim lack of time and other school obligations as reasons

for not starting parent involvement programs. Mutual mistrust between parents and school officials, as well as past failures are also cited as reasons for lack of parental involvement programs. These problems can all easily be ratified according to Rasinski and Fredericks. First, "... parental programs can be designed so that they actually help with their (teacher's) assigned classroom duties" (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1989, p.84-85). The issue of mistrust, would be diminished if parental involvement programs were in place because teachers and parents would not always be trying to second guess one another's actions and motives. The issue of past failures is easily dealt with by putting programs into places only after they have been thoroughly thought out and prepared for in every respect. One of the biggest ways to help combat problems with implementing a parent program is to have a plan. Rasinski and Fredericks (1989) offer these suggestions:

1. Involve parents in all aspects of the program from planning to implementing.
2. Have long term events (i.e., more than one meeting place and time; programs that are of length)
3. Involve other school personnel in the program to take the load off one person.

Dulaney (1987) presents ideas on implementing parent involvement programs. In establishing a parent involvement program she tells that there are several factors that must be considered before programs are put into place to help

ensure their success. According to Dulaney (1987), there are three things that must be done. First, lines of communication must be open between parents and school staff. Parents should feel welcome and useful. They should feel that they can come to the teacher or school with a problem or question about anything. Next, Dulaney explains that when doing workshops they should be on topics that are of interest to the parents as well as school personnel. Topics such as "How to raise test scores" may not attract as many parents as "Gang violence". Lastly, she suggests that parent volunteers be recruited to help in classes and during school functions.

Mavrogenes (1990) did research with the idea of helping teachers and principals realize that they are the link in helping parents become involved. Mavrogenes (1990) cautioned school staffs to be "...sensitive to parents' needs and priorities, scheduling meetings at times and places most convenient for them and dealing with topics important to them" (p.5). She found that single parents are just as willing, as their married counterparts, to help but tend to rely on more guidance from school staff. She goes on to say that low-income parents are especially nervous about dealing with schools and their programs because they are not sure how they can contribute because they may feel like they can not deal with the school work. The

suggestions that are provided by teachers and principals, according to Mavrogenes, must be very concrete and specific. She next discusses the importance of having workshops for parents so that the suggestions that are given to them "come alive." "...parents are not likely to do things they have never thought important just because the school says they should" (Mavrogenes, 1990, p.5). One key aspect of parental involvement programs is changing attitudes. Many parents, especially low-income parents, have a hard time overcoming the negative feelings that they have about communication with schools. They have negative feelings because most often communication from school to parent is "...about poor student performance" (Mavrogenes, 1990, p.4). Most often parent involvement programs begin with a seminar or a series of workshops. "To be successful, training workshops must include an affective component as well as theory, demonstration, practice and feedback" (Mavrogenes, 1990, p.5). Mavrogenes outlined suggestions about what can be done to address the affective or human/caring/feeling part of the participants. Parents should be greeted and name tags passed out as people arrive so that each person feels welcome and the participants are able to communicate easier with one another. The next suggestion that she offers is to do a few group games or activities to help unify the group. Once people feel comfortable and the informational section

of the workshop has begun the presenter needs to explain to the parents how important they are to their children's literacy. These elements are very important to parental involvement because they effect how people feel about what is presented and what they will do with the information once they leave. If they feel comfortable and at ease as well as needed and appreciated they are more likely to use the knowledge they gained and return for more.

Fredericks and Rasinski, in a February 1990 article, offer suggestions on how to involve parents, in and out of workshops, and how to keep them involved. They suggest that parents be flooded with lots of written and visual information over an extended period of time so that they get many suggestions and are constantly reminded of the need to help their children. They further suggest that both parents and students get some sort of recognition for their work, which will encourage them to continue. Making the school and classroom a comfortable place to be is the next suggestion that is offered. If the teacher has made school a comfortable place to be it will be easy to convince the students to help recruit their parents to come to workshops, which is Fredericks and Rasinski's next suggestion. Lastly, they tell that setting up several times and places when and where the workshops will be held and providing necessities such as babysitting are good ways to get more parents to attend.

Goldys (1990) has run many workshops. She explains that the place and time of the workshop are critical to its success. She recommends choosing "...a date early in the year so that the kids will have plenty of opportunities to reap the benefit" (Goldys, 1990, p.52). She further recommends that invitations be sent home early so that parents can set aside time and plan to attend she continues by explaining that the invitations should be extended to invite other family members and even babysitters. Goldys tells that providing food for the participants is a good way to relax them. She is sure to tell that in order for workshops to be successful they must be fun. "Many parents are just as fearful of writing as their kids are. ... If you encourage parents and kids to write together...a common fear can become a common bond" (Goldys, 1990, p.58).

EFFECTIVE WRITING INSTRUCTION

"Over the past decade we have witnessed a profound change in writing instruction. Moving from a teacher-centered, skill-based curriculum, many teachers now employ the writing process based on student choice of topics and instruction based on individual needs" (Lewin, 1992, p.586).

One method that has been used recently, in many classrooms, to help writing instruction be more student-centered, is the writing process. The writing process has

been defined as a series of stages one uses to examine and improve ones writing, usually broken up into four or five stages. The first stage is that of planning. During this step authors decide what they will write about and what direction the writing will take. In the case of a story there are several areas that authors must consider such as; who the characters will be, what the characters will be (i.e., human, animal), genre, the events and the progression of them. In the case of a report or essay authors must consider a different set of issues. Authors must consider what information to include as well as where and how to include it. The next stage in the writing process is the actual writing of the piece. During this stage authors are only concerned with getting their thoughts down. They are not worried about misspellings, grammar or any of the conventional English norms. The next stage is that of rethinking and "cleaning up" the piece. In some cases this is broken up into two separate steps: revising and editing. In the revising stage authors decide what, if anything, should be added or subtracted from the writing. It is also decided if and what events or information should be repositioned in the text. In the editing stage, authors make all corrections necessary to their writing to make in conform with standard English norms. The last stage in the writing process, which is considered by some to be the most

important stage, is that of publishing or sharing. Simply put, this stage consists of authors having the opportunity to share their work with others (Bush, McCall & Thompson, 1992; Lewin, 1992). "...writers do not necessarily apply the stages in a linear step-by-step fashion, but rather tend to move back and forth through them" (Lewin, 1992, p.588).

Lewin (1992), a teacher, decided that he needed to change his writing program to go along with the current changes in the area of language arts making it more student-centered. Lewin began the school year with his sixth graders using an entirely student-centered writing program. After moving to this student-centered writing program he found that there was very little variety in the students' writing. He knew from past experience that a program which was entirely teacher directed was just as limiting for the students. Lewin decided to try alternating teacher-led and student-selected literacy activities. By alternating teacher-led and student-selected activities students were able to "...build expertise over the school year..." (Lewin, 1992, p.587) in applying what they learned in teacher-led activities to student-selected activities. Lewin found that "...both teacher-led and student selected classroom instructional patterns have benefits" (Lewin, 1992, p.587).

Roop (1990), a professional author turned teacher, wanted his students to learn to write and love it. He tells

that one factor in helping students develop a love for writing is having a balance between creativity and correctness. He goes on to say that in order to help students write they must be motivated. He believes that "One of (his) roles as a teacher of writing is to spark ideas for...students" (Roop, 1990, p.284). He does this by having students brainstorm ideas, talk about possible topics, even by providing topics for them, if necessary. His findings are summed up as follows: "By preparing children for a topic, allowing time to write, providing guidance when and where it is needed, and treating them as writers, children can and do become accomplished authors" (Roop, 1990, p.284).

Having pen pals is a strong and powerful motivation to many writers (Rankin, 1992; Flickinger, 1991). Rankin (1992) developed a program where special education elementary students were paired with university students, studying reading disabilities, for the purpose of pen pal writing. They wrote to each other weekly. This project was designed with three main purposes in mind. First, the special education teacher wanted to move away from traditional experiences that are offered in special education. Second, the special education teacher wanted the special education students to get the opportunity to experience holistic, interactive literacy. Lastly, the

university professor wanted his students to get the opportunity to see and experience the reading disabilities that they were learning about. Rankin found that the writing of the special education students improved dramatically. The university students also gained from the experience. They had the opportunity to actually see and work with the reading disabilities that were the focus of their class. A large benefit that the pen pal writing had was that the writing done was authentic. Writing is a means of communication. By writing letters to real people and getting a response students were able to determine whether they had successfully communicated. According to Rankin, pen pals can be any person. He offers these possibilities: senior citizens, retired teachers, armed forces personnel, and students of the same or different age in the same or different school. "Our ability to transmit and understand...knowledge through...written form increases when we have opportunities to use these behaviors in real communication activities and to receive feedback on their effectiveness" (Rankin, 1992, p.204).

Flickinger (1991) also studied the benefits of pen pal experiences. As with the Rankin (1992) study, elementary students were paired with university students. In the fall, the elementary students were third graders in a regular education classroom and the university students were

education majors. Letters were exchanged weekly. The teachers of the elementary students found that the students were very excited and enthusiastic about the experiences, and were very motivated to write. During the spring semester, education majors were paired with regular education first graders. During this experience the university students and elementary students wrote a book together. The university students were responsible for writing the text and the first graders were responsible for illustrating it. The teacher of the first graders found that the students learned to respect their artistic ability and loved getting letters from their university counterparts. Both the third and first grade teachers saw an increase in enthusiasm for writing as well as improvement in reading and writing.

Literature can be a powerful tool to aide children with their writing (Neal & Stanley, 1992). Neal and Stanley described an activity that incorporated literature and writing. They wanted to bring past knowledge and past occurrences in ones life to their students writing. Neal and Stanley began by reading a book to their students about an elderly lady who is losing her memory and a young boy who tries to help her regain it. Through the reading of this book students learned what memories are. Students then made a list of memories and chose one to write about. Neal and

Stanley found that the use of literature helped to motivate students to write.

There are many ways that literature can be used to bring out the author in children. Dever (1992) used a story that her entire class had read. She asked some of the students to act as characters from the book. The others were asked to be people from the press. The members of the press were asked to formulate questions to ask the characters in the story using the text as reference and going beyond the text. After the members of the press did their interview they wrote articles about the character for the "paper", which was published. Dever found that by doing this her students were able to see the benefits of the writing process.

Miletta (1992) tells of the benefit of wordless picture and picture books in helping and motivating students to write. "Wordless picture books can provide vivid imagery for students to write original stories suitable for younger children" (Miletta, 1992, p.555). Miletta tells that picture books are useful to help demonstrate to intermediate students elements such as plot, setting, character, style and theme.

Slattery (1993) used literature to spark students to experiment with words. Her class read a story about a boy that enters a magical land full of words. After reading the

book, she encouraged her students to change their classroom into a land of words. The class put together a program for each grade level that would be done for them when they came to visit the classroom. They played word and letter games with each grade level. Slattery explains that one strategy to get students writing is to have them experiment with words. She found, through this activity, that playing games such as Scrabble, letter bingo, Wheel of Fortune and Bobble were wonderful ways to get students interested in and experimenting with words.

Kathleen McCormack (1992) found that plays can prompt students to write. She begins each school year by doing a play and ends each year the same way. To begin she has her students read and discuss scripts of possible plays. During the production of the play students are asked to keep journals, where they write how they feel about the play, write summaries of the play, and rewrite the play, adding and deleting characters, adding new endings and changing scenes. She found that plays not only helped build the students' confidence but made them excited about and eager to read and write.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The project is a resource guide for parents of intermediate students that addresses strategies that parents can use to help improve their children's writing.

The resource guide is designed in five sections. Each section deals with different, and specific types of strategies that parents can use at home to help improve their children's writing. In order to receive the resource guide parents must attend workshops.

The first section gives suggestions on how parents can motivate their children to write.

The second section of the resource guide deals with the writing process. It gives a description of the process, as well as explanations and examples of each step in the process.

The third section describes authentic writing opportunities that occur frequently that children and parents can participate in.

The fourth section explains strategies for dealing with student's writing that has already been completed; ways to deal with misspellings, unclear text, and grammar and mechanical mistakes.

The last section of the handbook presents games and activities that parents and children can do together to help develop word knowledge, creativity and imagination.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT

In order to implement the ideas in the resource guide it is necessary to have a series of five workshops. The idea behind the workshops is to have the parents, and/or entire families, experience the strategies that the resource guide describes.

During each workshop a section of the resource guide will be handed out to the parents and the strategies contained within will be introduced and explained to the parents as well as experienced by the parents.

By having the parents experience the strategies in the resource guide, they will have a clear understanding of what is being asked of them and what, in turn, they will be asking of their children. They will more easily be able to see the benefit of each strategy as they experience it.

GOALS

1. Students will find a supportive atmosphere at school and home for their writing which will encourage them to take risks, which will, in turn, cause improvement and increased enthusiasm in writing.
2. Parent involvement will foster growth in the quality of students writing.
3. Parents and schools will develop a supportive, working relationship.
4. Parents will learn to find value in their childrens' writing attempts.
5. Parents will work with their children at home to help improve their child's writing by encouraging them to write in authentic situations, write each day, and by being a positive model for their children's writing development.

LIMITATIONS

1. Due to a lack of time, this project has not been field tested. It will be field tested during the 1993-1994 school year.
2. Parent involvement is critical to this project. It is impossible to predict how involved and committed the parents will be to suggestions and activities offered in the resource guide.
3. Because of the large spanish speaking population in Southern California schools, it is necessary to provide several interpreters at each workshop. Even with this service provided many spanish speaking parents may still be too uncomfortable to attend.

EVALUATION

When developing the evaluation for this project there were four factors to consider. First, what needed to be evaluated. Second, how to evaluate it. Third, how to administer the evaluation. Lastly, how to interpret the results.

When addressing the first question it was determined that parents using the resource guide needed to be the evaluators of the resource guide and workshops. When considering how best to evaluate the resource guide and workshops, yes/no questionnaires and short answer questions appeared to be the best way to evaluate. This was decided because if the evaluation is not easy to complete there is a slim likelihood that the parents will complete it. From the responses on the yes/no questionnaires and short answer questionnaire one will be able to determine what aspects of the resource guide and workshops are working and which are not.

All through the workshops informal evaluations will be administered in order to identify and remedy and problems that arise. These informal evaluations will be in the form of individual and group oral questions.

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Appendix A

PARENTS RESOURCE GUIDE FOR WRITING IMPROVEMENT

by

Robyn Eileen Bingham-Scott

M.A. Education: Reading

Appendix B

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

SESSION ONE

MOTIVATING YOUR CHILDREN TO WRITE

GOALS:

1. Parents will become acquainted with the design of the resource guide.
2. Parents will be presented with the basic beliefs of the whole language philosophy.
3. Parents will participate in many of the activities described in section one of the resource guide.

TIME:

Ninety to one hundred twenty minutes

MATERIALS:

1. Books suggested under literature section
2. Two journals for each participant
3. White drawing paper
4. Crayons and/or markers
5. Examples of how to display writings
6. Writing paper
7. Pens and/or pencils

PLAN OF ACTION:

- I. Getting to know you
 - A. Pass out name tags.
 - B. Introductions
 - C. Play a get acquainted game.
- II. The Resource Guide
 - A. Pass out introduction to resource guide.
 - B. Read over the introduction with the parents stopping for questions, clarification, examples and expansion.
 - C. Pass out section one of resource guide.
 - D. Discuss what motivation is and why it is important.
 - E. Discuss the use of reading as motivation for writing.
 1. Share books with the parents explaining how they can be used.
 - a. Give a brief summary of each book and the possible writing opportunities they contain.
 - F. Discuss speaking as a motivation of writing.
 1. Have parents get into groups.
 - a. Parents select suggestion 1, 2, or 3 under conversation in the resource guide and do that activity as a

group.

2. Have a parent come up with an issue. As an entire group we will talk about it and discuss it. Once this is done they will write about it.

G. Break (Snacks)

H. Discuss the use of writing as a motivation for writing.

1. Pass out journals

- a. Parents will write in their journals using all three suggested methods in the resource guide.

I. Discuss the use of listening as motivation for writing.

1. Ask parents to listen as you read something.

2. Have parents participate in a discussion about the reading.

3. Ask parents to write about it.

J. Discuss the extras

1. Have parents draw a picture and write a story for it on the back.

2. Show a model of a writing display book.

K. Questions

Appendix C

SESSION TWO

THE WRITING PROCESS

GOALS:

1. Parents will participate in the writing process.

TIME:

Ninety to one hundred and twenty minutes

MATERIALS:

1. Writing paper
2. Pens and/or pencils
3. Dictionaries

PLAN OF ACTION:

- I. Getting to Know You
 - A. Pass out name tags.
 - B. Introductions
 - C. Play a get acquainted game.
- II. The Resource Guide
 - A. Pass out section two of the resource guide.
 - B. Explain basic idea of the writing process
 - C. Explain step one of the writing process.
(Prewriting)

- D. Provide writing motivation for the parents.
- E. Have parents participate in step one of the writing process. (Prewriting)
- F. Discuss step two of the writing process. (Writing)
- G. Ask parents to participate in step two of the writing process (writing) using what they created in the prewriting activity.
- H. Explain step three of the writing process. (Revising)
- I. Have parents participate in step three of the writing process (revising) using what they created in the writing activity.
- J. Break (Snacks)
- K. Explain step four of the writing process. (Editing)
- L. Have parents participate in step four of the writing process (editing) using what they created in the revising activity.
- M. Explain step five of the writing process. (Publishing)
- N. Have parents participate in step five of the writing process (publishing) using what they created using the writing process.
- O. Questions

Appendix D

SESSION THREE

AUTHENTIC WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

GOALS:

1. Parents will gain an understanding of the authentic writing opportunities in their everyday life.
2. Parents will write several authentic writing opportunities that are appropriate and suitable for their children.

TIME:

Ninety to one hundred twenty minutes

MATERIALS:

1. Pens and/or pencils
2. Paper

PLAN OF ACTION:

- I. Getting to Know You
 - A. Pass out name tags.
 - B. Introductions
 - C. Play a get acquainted game.
- II. The Resource Guide
 - A. Pass out section three of resource guide

- B. Discuss messages
- C. Discuss classwork
- D. Discuss letters
- E. Discuss work
- F. Break (snacks)
- G. Break into small groups
 - 1. Brainstorm authentic writing opportunities that occur in their life
 - 2. Present to group - add to resource guide

Appendix E

SESSION FOUR

REACTIONS

GOALS:

1. Parents will gain a better understanding of what reactions are appropriate for their child's writing.

TIME:

Sixty to ninety minutes

MATERIALS:

Samples of student writing

PLAN OF ACTION:

- I. Getting to Know You
 - A. Pass out name tags.
 - B. Introductions
 - C. Play a get acquainted game.
- II. The Resource Guide
 - A. Pass out section four of the resource guide.
 - B. Discuss Misspellings
 1. Discuss - I know what my child is trying to say they just spelled it incorrectly.
 - a. Show examples

- b. Discuss possible reactions
 - c. Offer reactions in the resource guide
 - 1. Skip it
 - 2. Ask
 - 2. Discuss - I can not figure out what my child is trying to spell.
 - a. Show examples
 - b. Discuss possible reactions
 - c. Offer suggestions in the resource guide
- C. Break (Snacks)
- D. Discuss - I can not understand what is being said.
 - 1. Show examples
 - 2. Discuss possible reasons for the lack of clarity.
 - 3. Discuss possible reactions to each
- E. Discuss - Commenting
 - 1. Discuss compliments
 - a. What makes a good compliment?
 - b. What makes a good compliment bad?
 - c. Helpful guidelines for complimenting
- F. Practice session
 - 1. Use examples

G. Questions

Appendix F

SESSION FIVE

GAMES

GOALS:

1. Parents will become familiar with various words, language and spelling games that they can play with and teach to their children.

TIME:

One hundred and twenty minutes

MATERIALS:

1. Scrabble (3 games)
2. Boggle (3 games)
3. Word Yahtzee (3 games)
4. Pencils/pens
5. Writing paper
6. Drawing paper
7. Crossword puzzles (3 types, 1 copy of each for each person)

PLAN OF ACTION:

- I. Getting to Know You
 - A. Pass out name tags.

- B. Introductions
- C. Play a get acquainted game.

II. The Resource Guide

- A. Play time
 - 1. Set out purchased games.
 - a. Everybody find partner or group to play with.
 - b. Play
 - 2. Discuss benefit of each.
- B. Break (Snacks)
- C. Play time continued
 - 1. Set out pencil games.
 - a. Everybody find a group or partner to play with.
 - b. Play
 - 2. Discuss benefit of each.
- D. Break (Snacks)
- E. Play time continued
 - 1. Demonstrate driving games.
 - 2. Have each group create their own game.
- F. Questions
- G. Evaluation

Appendix G

INTRODUCTION

As a parent I know that you are concerned with seeing your children be successful. For many of you this is especially so in the area of school. You play a very important part in your children's academic success. Your attitudes, likes and dislikes about school and education are often picked up and shared by your children.

For many of you it is not a question of wanting to help your children or not, but simply a question of not knowing what to do to help them. I have put together this resource guide to help answer the "What am I supposed to do?" question.

WHOLE LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY

The suggestions that are offered to you in this resource guide are based on a philosophy of teaching (or belief of how it should be done) known as whole language.

Language is divided into four components or pieces; reading, listening, speaking and writing. Teachers who believe in the whole language philosophy believe that these components of language work with each other to make what we know as language. It is believed, by these teachers, that when instruction is given in one of the components or areas of language, children are able to see how it goes along with

and relates to the other pieces.

The whole language philosophy is also based on a view of how children learn language. It is believed, by whole language teachers, that children learn all areas or pieces of language the same way, through a natural progression. Think back to when your children were first learning to talk. They babbled. Then they used only one word to describe what they wanted (i.e., "Cookie"). They next used two words to get their point across; one to tell who and one to tell the object (i.e., "Da-Da cookie"). They continued to progress until they eventually were able to carry on conversations. The same is true of writing. Children go through a progression in order to learn to write. As teachers and parents the most that we can do is to help and encourage our children through the progression. We can not push them through it. As the saying goes, "We must walk before we can run." Children can not be forced to do something that they are not ready to do mentally, physically, and developmentally. Another important aspect of the natural progression idea is that the more children are exposed to language the better, because it can make the progression easier and faster for them.

Another feature of the whole language philosophy, that is important to understand, is that all language experiences should be real meaningful and with a purpose. What this

means is that when children sit down to write something they should know why they are doing it and the writing should be done for a real reason. Writing a letter to a relative to tell them about an upcoming family event is a whole language activity while writing a letter to "Sally Jones", just a name given that nobody knows, would not be.

Along with having real and meaningful language arts experiences, the whole language philosophy focuses on meaning. It is very important to whole language people that children understand what they have read not that they get every word correct.

Lastly, the whole language philosophy states that children should be given many chances to write each day.

ABOUT THE RESOURCE GUIDE

This resource guide has been divided into five sections. Each section deals with a specific aspect of improving your children's writing. As you attend each workshop on improving your children's writing you will receive another section of the resource guide. The suggestions given in each section will be explained and demonstrated at the workshops. As you read through the resource guide you will notice that all the suggestions given are explained and examples are given when needed.

Please understand that the suggestions presented to you

in this resource guide are just that, suggestions. It is my hope that you will take the ideas that I have presented you with and add to them to help develop a writing program that you believe suits both you and your children best.

Appendix H

SECTION ONE

MOTIVATING YOUR CHILDREN TO WRITE

BACKGROUND:

Motivation is a very important part of helping your children improve as writers. It is much easier for people to do things if they have some sort of inspiration or incentive behind the task; in this case writing. There are many ways to provide motivation for your children. Not all types of motivation work on all people. The type of motivation that a writer needs may change from day to day or even from activity to activity.

SUGGESTIONS:

Listed below are some suggestions for motivating your children to write. The suggestions are grouped by, divided into and classified according to the four areas of language: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

READING

A. **Literature:** The reading of a good book, poem, or short story can help to spark even the most timid writer. The piece of literature can be read to your children or by your children. Some books to consider are:

1. The Cay by Theodore Taylor
2. Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein
3. Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls
4. Charolette's Web by E.B. White
5. The Babysitter's Club series by Ann Martin
6. Books by Judy Blume
7. Books by Beverly Cleary

The key to selecting good literature for your children is to select a book that deals with a topic that is of interest to them. Try to pick something they will like.

Once the book or story has been read there are many types of writing that can be done using the literature as motivation. Here are some suggestions.

1. Write a story with the same theme or plot as the story that was just read.
2. Write a story using the same characters but have them in a different situation and/or doing different things.
3. Write a new ending to the story.
4. Write about what may have happened before the story that was read began.
5. Write about what may have happened next in the story.
6. Write about how what was read made you feel.

WRITING

A. **Provide a Topic:** Many times it is hard, even when a person really wants to write, to think of what to write about. Sometimes the only thing that a writer needs to get started is a suggestion or two of possible things to write about. The topics you suggest may be very simple (i.e., your favorite sport, the things you like to do, etc.) or complicated (i.e., If you were stranded on a mountain with no food or water how would you survive?). The important thing is not the topic but that your children write.

B. **JOURNALS:** Journals are a very easy tool to use to help ensure that your children write every day. Journals are simply a place to put a persons thoughts about anything. Journals are good to use because they are an activity that can involve the entire family. There are many different types of journals. Here are descriptions of a few that you may wish to try.

1. **Dialogue:** In this type of journal two people write back and forth to each other. One person begins by writing a statement or question to the other writer. The journal is then passed to the other writer who writes a response. The conversation that takes place in this journal can be about anything: a book, a movie, things that happened during the day, a problem, etc. The journal can be passed back and

forth as many times as is necessary to finish the conversation.

2. **Reader Response:** In this type of journal a reader responds to something that has been read. People can write about their feelings on what they read, what they liked about it, what it made them think about, etc. This type of journal is written by only one person.

3. **Personal:** In this type of journal people have the freedom to write about anything. They can write about feelings, thoughts about the day, what is happening in their life, etc.

SPEAKING

A. **CONVERSATIONS:** Talking to each other causes us to think. Thought is one of the most important parts of writing. People have to be able to think about what they are going to write before they write it. Talking to your children will help them practice organizing their thoughts. Here are some suggestions of things that you and your children can talk about.

1. Have your children tell you a story while you are driving or just sitting around.
2. Ask your children questions that cause them to think (i.e., What do you think we should do to solve the drug problem?).

3. Ask your children to explain how they do things (i.e., How do you play that Nintendo game?). Be sure to ask as many questions as are necessary to get them to add detail to their answer (i.e., Question: "How do you play that Nintendo game?" Answer: "Just kill the guys." Question: "How?").
4. Talk. Carry on conversations with your children. Talk to them about their day, television shows, hobbies, upcoming family event, etc.).

B. **Discuss:** Before people start to write they need to organize their thoughts. They need to plan and get a clear picture in their heads of what they are going to write about and how. One of the best ways for people to do this very important aspect of writing is to talk about it. Before your children sit down to write talk about: what type of piece they are going to write (story, report, etc.), what they are going to write about, what they might include, possible characters, places that the story might take place, etc. Make your children really think about what they are going to write about before they start. When they know what they are trying to say it is easier for them to say it.

LISTENING

A. **BE AN AUDIENCE FOR YOUR CHILDREN:** Many times when people

finish something they are proud of they want to share it with somebody. This is especially true of children. If your children bring a piece of writing to share with you, take the time to let them do it. The best way to have children share their work is to have them read it aloud to you. By having the opportunity to share their writing, children get the idea that what they have written is worthwhile and important to others and they are able to see if what they have written is understood by others. If your children do not come to you to share their work ask them to share something. Do not forget to be a good model and share some of your writing with them too.

EXTRAS

A. **BE A GOOD MODEL FOR YOUR CHILDREN:** Your children look up to you. Children look to their parents to learn just about everything. They learn what things you think are worthwhile. The phrase that comes to mind at this point is, "Do as I say, not as I do." In order to really get your children motivated you must "DO AS YOU SAY." If you ask your children to sit down and write in their journal, for example, you should sit down and write in yours as well. If you ask your children to tell what they thought about a story you read with them, you should tell them what you thought too. If you ask your children to sit down and read

a book you should too. Show your children that what you are asking them to do is important and worthwhile.

B. DRAW: Many times after children write something they are asked to draw a picture that goes along with what they have written. Having children draw a picture before they write can be very beneficial. When children draw there is often a story going on in their head. By being asked to draw, then write they are simply being asked to put down, on paper, what they have already been thinking about and have in their heads.

C. DISPLAY WRITING: It is very, very important for children to feel good about what they have done. One of the best ways to make them feel good about their writing is to display their work for everybody to see. Here are two suggestions of how to show off the hard work your children have done.

1. **Place of Honor:** Pick a place in your home to hang up pieces of writing that you and your children would like to share. Some possible places are the refrigerator or the back of a door.

2. **Book:** A notebook can be put together with your children's best writings in it. A three-ring binder, photo album, or even two pieces of cardboard or construction paper tied together with yarn can be used to make this notebook.

Appendix I

SECTION TWO

THE WRITING PROCESS

BACKGROUND:

The writing process may sound a bit intimidating at first. Simply put, the writing process is a series of steps that a person uses to improve their writing. The process is usually broken up into four or five steps. In our workshop and in this resource guide I will be explaining and encouraging you and your children to use the five step model. In each step the person is asked to do something that will improve their writing in some way. The process begins with a blank piece of paper and ends, hopefully, with a near perfect piece of writing. Each step must be taken slowly if the process is to work.

THE WRITING PROCESS:

Listed below are the five steps of the writing process.

A. **PREWRITING:** This step is for planning. No actual writing needs to take place in this step. This step is a thinking step. The people that are going to write should sit down and think about what they want to write about and how they are going to write it. They think about

characters, what they are going to be like, who they will be and even what they will be. The person writing also decides what form of writing they are going to use (i.e., report, short story, poem, etc.). The last thing that must be thought out in this planning step is what is going to happen and in what order or, in the case of a report, what information to include and how and where to include it. Having discussions about what they are going to write often helps children through this step. While your children are talking about what they are going to write you can be making a list of what they say to help them even more when they sit down and write.

B. WRITING: In this step your children should be most concerned with getting their thoughts down and not with correct punctuation or spelling. Your children should write and write until they are finished. The writing that is produced in this step is a draft. The corrections that the writing needs will be done in a later step.

C. REVISING: In this step your children are asked to go back and read what they have written. They are asked to ask themselves if anything needs to be added or taken out. They ask themselves if something they have written would sound better at another place in the writing. This is most often

the hardest step for children because it makes them really look at what they have done and decide how it can be better.

D. **EDITING:** Now is the time for all the corrections to be made. It is in this step when your children go back to the writing and correct their spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. Your children must be encouraged to find their own mistakes. Yes, it is very easy and tempting to spell a word for your children when they ask. It is however, better for them if you encourage them to use the dictionary to find the words they are having trouble with. You will be amazed at how many errors children are able to pick out of their own writing. Let them do as much as they can. It just leads to a greater sense of pride when the writing is finally complete.

E. **PUBLISHING:** This is a very important step. It is the one that many people overlook or ignore. In this step children are given the opportunity to share what they have written. This can be done in a number of ways.

1. Read it to another person.
2. Make a book of the writings that your children are most proud of to display.
3. Hang the writing up for everybody to see.

It is important that your children get a chance to

participate in this step because it gives them the opportunity to see if people can understand what they have written and to see that others appreciate and enjoy what they have written.

Appendix J

SECTION THREE

AUTHENTIC WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

BACKGROUND:

As we have talked about before, your children need to write everyday. Writing the same types of things day after day gets boring, especially for children. One important thing to realize is that people do not have to be writing a story in order for writing to be taking place. Many of us are unaware of how many times during the day we actually have a chance to write. The writing opportunities that we come in contact with everyday are known as authentic writing opportunities. They are called this because they are real and have a purpose. Many times the best type of writing for an unmotivated person to do is the type of writing that does not seem like writing, authentic writing.

SUGGESTIONS:

Listed below are some examples of authentic writing opportunities that exist in your home.

A. MESSAGES: There are many times that a message must be left for somebody in the family. Have your children write the note to be left.

B. CLASSWORK: Have your children make a list of the assignments that were given in class that day. As the assignments are completed your children can place a check next to them. This serves two purposes. First, your children practice writing and second, they have a list of what they have completed and what needs to be done.

C. LETTERS: Children love to get mail. Chances are if your children take the time to write somebody they will answer. Encourage your children to write to family members to tell them what is going on in their life, invite them to a family get together, etc.

D. WORK: Children are often interested in their parents jobs. Bring home some paper work from your job site to share with your children. Teach them to fill out an order sheet or how to read the computer print out. They will love it.

Appendix K

SECTION FOUR

REACTIONS

BACKGROUND:

The reaction that people get from their writing has a very large impact on how they view what they have done. They may begin by feeling that what they have written is wonderful but after sharing it with somebody begin to feel that it is not only less than wonderful but rotten. The words people use or the expressions on their face when they read a person's writings mean the world to the person who wrote it. Often times comments and faces are made before a person thinks. This section was designed with this idea in mind. It is hoped that you will understand how to react to certain problems that may arise in your childrens' writing and by understanding this the amount of inappropriate reactions will be minimized.

SUGGESTIONS:

A. MISSPELLINGS:

1. I know what they are trying to say. They just spelled it wrong.

If you take a moment to think back to the introduction of this resource guide you may remember that the whole

philosophy focuses on meaning. If you were to run across a sentence that was written, "The kat mowd." you can tell that it says "The cat meowed." Even though two-thirds of the words are incorrectly spelled you were able to understand it. In a case like this the misspellings should be ignored. No reaction should be given to them at all. Just read over them as if they don't exist.

2. I can not figure out what word my child is trying to spell.

If you run into a situation like this you have two options.

a. **Ask:** If you decide to ask your children what word they are trying to spell be very very careful. You need to keep in mind that your childrens' feelings get hurt easily. Saying something like: "What word is this supposed to be?" would hurt their feelings and make it so that they would not want to write or share what they had written with you anymore. A better way to ask would be: "Can you help me with this word?"

b. **Skip it:** If you come to a word that you are unable to figure out you may want to skip it. As you keep reading you may be able to figure out what word your children are trying to spell by the other words around it (i.e., The boy went to the store to buy some nilp. His mom was making cookies and he loved to have nilp and cookies.).

If you are not able to figure out what word is, chances are you will be able to figure it out by the end of the writing. Even if you are never able to figure it out what the word is chances are you will understand what your children are trying to write.

B. I CAN NOT (READ) UNDERSTAND WHAT IS WRITTEN: This problem may occur for a number of reasons. Maybe the penmanship is hard to read, or the writing itself just doesn't make any sense. The way to react to this problem is simple, ask your children to read what they have written to you. This often serves two purposes. First, it gets you off the hook. You will not have to try to struggle through something that is hard for you to read and you may not react well to. Second, if your children are forced to go back and look at what they have written often times they will say, "I have to go back and fix this before you read it." because they have been able to see that there are problems when they, the writer, can not read or understand what they have written.

C. COMMENTS: When commenting on your childrens' writing you must be careful. Many times it is easier to see and point out, to your children, things that are wrong with what they have done and ways that they can improve what they have

written. Make sure to point out the good things that you see in your childrens' writing. A good rule to follow when you are commenting on your childrens' work is to say one positive thing, then one area that can be improved on and then give one more positive comment (i.e., "I like the place that you picked for the story. It was exciting." "I had a hard time understanding what you meant in this section." "I really liked the characters. They were interesting."). This seems to work very well because you have started and ended on a positive note. The first thing your children hear is good and the last thing they hear is good. This is important because children tend to remember what they hear first and what they hear last.

Be careful not to give negative compliments. A negative compliment is a compliment that is followed by something that takes the compliment away (i.e., "Your character is funny too bad the rest of your story is a mess."). By making a negative compliment you have actually taken away the good that you have said.

The comments that you make about how the writing can be improved must be constructive. You should not only point out what is wrong but how it can be improved. In other words, tell them what is wrong and how to fix it (i.e., "I had a hard time figuring out who was talking in this section. If you put in some quotation marks it would make

it easier to understand.")

D. GRAMMAR AND MECHANICAL ERRORS: The mistakes that your children make with periods, commas, quotation marks, sentence endings, etc. are mechanical errors. Grammar errors are when the wrong word has been used (i.e., I told my mom if I could go to the store) or when the wrong tense has been used (i.e., They is going to school.) These errors can and should be handled like all others. Ignore them if you can. If the problem seems to be a reoccurring one (one that happens over and over), you should point it out to your children. Be careful to point out to them that there are good things that they have written in their paper and point them out.

SECTION FIVE

GAMES

BACKGROUND:

Children love games. Anything that they are asked to do can be made easier for them by making it into a game. Along the same idea children love to use big words, words that none of their friends know. They especially like to use these words in their writing to "show off."

There are many ways that children can be exposed to new words and word groups. The way that is most common is through talking and communicating with people older than they are. A second way that many children are exposed to new words is through spelling and vocabulary test in school. Games are commonly overlooked as ways to expose your children to new words.

SUGGESTIONS:

A. STORE PURCHASED GAMES:

1. **Scrabble:** In this game each player is given seven tiles. Each tile has a different letter on it. Every player, in turn, is asked to use their tiles to build a word. Each new word that is placed on the board must build on one of the words that is already on the board.

EXAMPLE:

GRAPES
E U
DOG N

2. **Boggle:** There are sixteen dice that contain letters. The dice are in a clear container. A person shakes them up and then everybody tries to make words out of the letters. The letters must be connected in some ways (side, top corner, etc.). You are given one minute to find as many words as you can. The person with the most words wins.

Example of possible roll: J E T L
 B O P R
 S M K D
 N A I C

Example of words that can be made: jet, bet, pet, pot, poet, aid, maid, said, kid, dim, mop, bop

3. **Word Yahtzee:** In this game there are five letter dice. A person roles the dice and is asked to fill in the categories on a sheet. With each role they are expected to fill in a category (i.e., a two letter word, all vowels, etc.).

B. Pencil Games:

1. **Hang-man:** In this game somebody thinks of a word and draws a line to represent each letter in the word. The other player takes guesses at the letters in the word. Each time a letter is guessed it is placed where it goes in the

word. If a letter is given that does not fit into the word a piece of a man being hung is drawn. If the entire man is drawn before all the letters are guessed then the player guessing loses.

Example:

Start of the game: _ _ _ _
 Letter "E" called: _ _ E _ _ _
 Letter "S" called: S _ E _ _ _
 Letter "k" called: S _ E _ _ _ (Man piece drawn)
 Letter "L" called: S _ E _ _ L
 Letter "G" called: S _ E _ _ L (Man piece drawn)

2. Crossword Puzzles: These can either be purchased in a book or can be made up by one person for another. There are clues given that describe a certain word. The clues are divided into down and across categories as well as being given numbers. The person reads the clue, decides what word is being talked about and adds it to the puzzle either across or down at the number specified.

Example of clues:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1. A vehicle used at sea. | 1. What a baby drinks from. |
| 2. An animal that gives milk. | 2. A furry animal that purrs. |

Example of solved puzzle:

```

                2
              2 C O W
            1   A
          1 B O A T
            O
            T
            T
            L
            E
  
```

C. DRIVING GAMES:

1. **Find the Letter to Spell the Word:** While driving a person in the car calls out a word to be spelled. After the word has been called out all the people in the car look on license plates, billboards, cars, signs, etc. to find the letters in the word that has been called out. When a letter is found, the person must call out the letter and where it is. (i.e., "P on the blue car's license plate."). The letters must be spelled out in order. The person who adds the last letter is the winner and gets to pick the word to be spelled for the next round.

Example of possible game:

Sally: "Spell bottle."
Joey: "I see a 'B' on that red car's license plate."
Sally: "'O' on the Magic Mountain billboard."
Joey: "Double 'T's' on the Little Caesars billboard."
Sally: "I see an 'E' on the Shell gasoline sign."
Sarah: "That is the wrong letter."
Sally: "'L' on the Volvo."
Sarah: "'E' on the Del Taco sign. I win. The next word is special."

2. **Story Telling:** As you are driving have one person begin to tell a story. They should tell only one section. Another person in the car then takes over and continues from that point. When that person is finished another person continues from that point. This continues until each person has gotten a chance and the story is finished.

Example:

John: Once there was a beautiful lady that worked in a

castle. She had always dreamed of being a queen or at least a princess. One day she was cleaning the floor when Prince Brent came walking up. He turned to her and said,"

Lester: You are so beautiful. Why are you cleaning this floor?" She answered,"...

D. **MAKE YOUR OWN:** Use the structure of your favorite game to make up one of your own. For example if you like monopoly make up a game where you land on letters and buy them with the idea of accumulating letters to spell words. The more words you can spell the higher score you have.

Appendix M

EVALUATION

In order to determine how helpful the workshops and resource guide are to you and in order to improve upon them it is necessary to get your input. Please take a moment to fill out the following questionnaires.

Appendix N

TELL ME ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS

PARENTS

Read each of the statements and circle "Y" for yes or "N" for no to show if that statement applies to you and/or your child.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| Y | N | 1. Most of the things I learned at the workshops were new to me. |
| Y | N | 2. It would have been much harder to use and understand the resource guide without having the workshops. |
| Y | N | 3. I have a different opinion about writing now, after going to the workshops. |
| Y | N | 4. I feel if I need help in order to help my child I can turn to the school and teachers. |
| Y | N | 5. The information that I learned in the workshops was useful to me. |
| Y | N | 6. I have used the ideas from the workshops to help my child with his/her writing. |

TELL ME ABOUT THE RESOURCE GUIDE

PARENTS

Read each of the statements and circle "Y" for yes or "N" for no to show if that statement applies to you and/or your child.

- Y N 1. I have, since getting my resource guide, used it as a reference to get help and/or ideas to help my child with his/her writing.
- Y N 2. I have used one or more of the ideas from the resource guide to help my child with his/her writing.
3. Since using the ideas in the resource guide...
- Y N a. My child's writing has improved.
- Y N b. My child seems more willing to write.
- Y N c. I have encouraged my child to write more often.
- Y N d. I have written more.
- Y N 4. Since getting the resource guide I better understand the problems that my child may have in his/her writing and what I can do to help.
- Y N 5. Since getting the resource guide I better understand the mistakes that my child makes in his/her writing and how I can help.

Y N 6. My child writes more regularly at home since I
received the resource guide.

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

1. What is the best thing about the resource guide?

2. Name one thing that can be done to make the resource guide better.

3. What was the best thing about the workshops?

4. Name one thing that could have been done to improve the workshops.

5. Do you think that the information in the resource guide and in the workshops will help you to help your child's writing improve? Why or why not?