TOP RESEARCH-BASED WRITING STRATEGIES FOR MOTIVATING EARLY ELEMENTARY AUTHORS

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Submitted to
Northern Michigan University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Graduate Studies Office

November 16, 2013

APPROVED BY:

DATE:
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Chapter I: Introduction

In 2001, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act or NCLB. The intent of this act is to “close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind.” In the fall of 2010, the Michigan Educational Assessment Program or MEAP test will modify the writing assessment section. Currently, third and eighth grade students take the writing portion of the MEAP. New lengthened and more comprehensive assessment will be given to students in fourth and seventh grade. MEAP scores are used for each individual Michigan schools to make sure they meet the adequate yearly progress goals outlined in the federal No Child Left Behind law. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires public school educators to set high standards and to hold students and schools accountable for student learning.

Chapter 1 of this research paper includes the background, statement of problem, research question, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 continues with a review of literature pertaining writing strategies; writing process, independent writing, spelling, and technology. Chapter 3 examines the results and data analysis. Chapter 4 includes the summary and conclusions.

Background

Writing is a form of expression, communication, and exploration. With writing, students can create, describe, report, influence, and impress. Writing helps to illustrate thoughts, put emotion into words, express attitudes, and find answers. Writing takes time, patience, and love of the written word. Experience suggests those who love writing will become successful learners.

A large focus in early elementary is on the teaching of reading. Writing is viewed as less important to early elementary teachers. Oral reading scores and leveled readers become a priority. Current writing strategies in early elementary education need to be improved. Teaching
strategies can promote development of early elementary authors. A teacher’s responsibility is to lead students to the love of writing through purposeful strategies. With reading, listening, speaking, and viewing, teachers can integrate the skills of writing.

As stated in the Common Core State Standards Initiative, “The following standards for K–5 offer a focus for instruction each year to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications. Each year in their writing, students should demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, from vocabulary and syntax to the development and organization of ideas, and they should address increasingly demanding content and sources. Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year’s grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades (www.corestandards.org).”

The Common Core focuses on the following three headings for kindergarten through second grade students; text types and purposes, production and distribution of writing, research to build and present knowledge. The text types and purposes are to write opinion pieces, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives. The production and distribution of writing includes focusing on a topic, peer conferencing, adding details, and publishing with guidance and support from adults. Lastly, research to build and present knowledge includes researching and writing projects (“how-to” books) and recalling and gathering information with guidance and support from adults (www.corestandards.org).”

**Statement of Problem**

Standards for K–5 offer a focus for instruction each year to help ensure students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications. Each year in their writing, students should
demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, from vocabulary and syntax to the development and organization of ideas, and they should address increasingly demanding content and sources. Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year’s grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.

Michigan English Language Arts Kindergarten Content Expectations state students should “develop originality” and by third grade, “exhibit personal style and voice to enhance the written message.” A blank piece of paper can be terrifying to an elementary student because writing is complex and challenging. Motivating young writers can be difficult through traditional instruction. To help students become life-long writers, teachers can learn strategies to help promote writing. Educational research suggests that writing needs to be taught, not assigned. Good writing has voice. Using differentiated instruction allows students to write at their ability level.

Two popular writing methods educators use are writing workshop and six traits, which are both designed for grades three through eight. In this research paper I want to research writing methods that work for grades K-2. Writing workshop is method of writing instruction. It involves students working through the writing process. The teacher uses mini-lessons to introduce a concept. Each writing workshop ends with student sharing. The six traits are common good characteristics used in writing. Teachers may use the traits for evaluation through a rubric.

**Research Question**

The research question that guided this study is:

What teaching strategies promote development of early elementary authors?
Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this research paper.

Writing instruction. Writing instruction is "prescriptive and product-centered," stressing correct usage and mechanics while emphasizing "the traditional modes of discourse (Smith, 2000, p. 2)."

Writing process. The writing process includes the following stages: prewriting, writing, revising, editing, and publishing.

Writing convention. One of the six traits of writing (ideas, organization, convention, voice, sentence fluency and word choice), the conventions are spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and paragraphing. Conventions are important part of the editing portion of the writing process (Hourcade, Parette, & Peterson, 2008, p. 14).

Voice. The six traits of writing are ideas, organization, convention, voice, sentence fluency and word choice. The voice is distinctive to its author. “Genuine writing — the kind we read for entertainment and edification in the ‘better’ magazines and books — appeals to us largely because it has voice (Chapman, 2002, p. 16).”

Differentiated instruction. A philosophy of one size does not fit all. “Teaching that is based on the premise that students learn best when their teachers accommodate the differences…of every student’s ability to learn (Subban, 2006, p. 940).”

Independent writing. “Independent writing is described as a time when students accomplish their own writing through the employment of knowledge and skills that have been the focus for previous instruction. Previous instruction is said to consist of modeling and guided activity where knowledge and skills required for independent writing are taught through social interaction with the teacher (Davidson, 2007, p. 11).”
Interactive writing. “Interactive writing is an approach to beginning writing instruction that teaches young children what it means ‘to write’ and how they can go about it (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012, p. 145).”


Writing workshop. A method of writing instruction developed by Lucy Calkins and educators involved in the Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University in New York City, New York. (Calkins, L (2006). A Guide to The Writing Workshop, Grades 3-5. Portsmouth, NH: First Hand). This method of instruction focuses on the goal of fostering lifelong writers. It is based upon four principles; students will write about their own lives, they will use a consistent writing process, they will work in authentic ways and it will foster independence.

Teacher scaffolding. A learning process designed to promote a deeper level of learning. Scaffolding is the support given during the learning process, which is tailored to the needs of the student with the intention of helping the student achieve his/her learning goals (Sawyer, 2006).

Phoneme. A sound or a group of different sounds perceived to have the same function by speakers of the language or dialect in question.

Grapheme. The smallest semantically distinguishing unit in a written language, analogous to the phonemes of spoken languages.
Summary

The next chapter will introduce peer-reviewed, high quality research articles based on writing strategies for promoting early elementary authors. The No Child Left Behind Act has created pressure on teachers to use best writing practices. Several of the strategies include the writing process, independent writing, spelling development, and technology.
Chapter II: Review of Literature

A review of literature examines the research on writing strategies for early elementary students. The concepts for this review include writing traits, independent writing, spelling development and technology. Chapter two is organized into the following heading: writing process, independent writing, spelling, and technology.

Writing Process

The writing process is comprised of five stages: planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Planning is the first stage where the topic, audience, and purpose are chosen. Drafting is when the first draft is written and the ideas are written into sentences. Revising is when improvements are made to the writing and beginning to edit happen. During the editing stage the final proofreading takes place, checking for errors and polishing the work. Publishing is the final stage when the author decides how to present or share their work. Within the process stages the 6 + 1 Writing Traits ® model can be addressed to each stage. Example in the revising stage the writer may add, delete, develop, and/or adjust: ideas, organization, voice, sentence fluency, and/or word choice. In this section of the review of literature it will focus on the writing traits and teacher perceptions of the writing process.

6 + 1 Writing Traits ®

The 6 + 1 Writing Traits ® is an approach to writing designed in the 1980s (Bellamy & Kozlow, 2004). The model was designed to aid teachers in analytically assessing student’s writing. Seven traits illustrate quality writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation. “Writing along with students – teachers taking the risk share their ‘works in progress’ with students and asking them for revising feedback. Reading aloud printed material of all kinds to illustrate strengths and weaknesses of writing (e.g., using
picture books as a teaching tool in writing) (Bellamy & Koslow, 2004).” The 6 + 1 Writing Traits ® are intended for grades three through six. A first grade category assessment piece is only convention (e.g., capitalization). Convention alone is not enough to evaluate written work.

**Modeling Writing**

Modeling writing to students is a form of teacher instruction. It allows a teacher to use a think-aloud method. While a teacher writes he or she talks as if they were thinking. This allows a student an inside perspective for proper writing. The think-aloud may include brainstorming, writing, editing, conferring and publishing. Throughout the brainstorming process the teacher may shares ideas and voice. During an editing stage think-aloud word choice and conventions may be modeled. At the end of the modeling (think-aloud) is the time when the student, as author, may ask questions and confer with the teacher. Think-alouds may be performed with small or whole class group (Davey, 1983).

**Perceptions of The Writing Process**

A mixed method survey studied the perceptions of the process of writing with K-6 teachers. Quantitative data was collected and analyzed. The study surveyed a random sample of 177 public school kindergarten-sixth grade teachers. The setting was eight suburban and rural school districts in Utah. The instrument used was a 55 item Likert-scale. “Statistical analyses were used to look for significant differences among demographic groups in terms of their responses to survey items (Simmerman, Harward & Pierce, 2012, p.296).”

The quantitative results for the value and use of writing aspects scores were high. On a scale of 1 to 5 teachers reported valuing writing instruction more than implementing it. Older teachers surveyed valued and used spelling instruction more than younger teachers. English language conventions were also taught more by older teachers than younger teachers ($p = .037$).
Depending on what grade level taught, then higher the more teachers valued \((p < .001)\) and used \((p < .001)\) writing evaluation and assessment. The items with the highest value scores were instruction in response to student needs (4.68), daily writing (4.64), student sharing (4.59), and writing as a process (4.58). The lowest scores were for commercial writing programs (2.74), dictation (2.74), worksheets (3.03), and technology-based genres (3.00) (Simmerman, Harward & Pierce, 2012, p. 296).

The qualitative results were limited. Those who did answer the open-ended prompts answered how often rather than writing comments. “In response to the how often question, answers ranged from daily, weekly, and monthly to quarterly, yearly, and never. Items that teachers reported using daily were daily writing \((n = 46)\), spelling instruction \((n = 28)\), DOL \((n = 26)\), grammar instruction \((n = 25)\), usage and punctuation instruction \((n = 22)\), word walls \((n = 21)\), and classroom writing centers \((n = 20)\) (Simmerman, Harward & Pierce, 2012, p. 299).”

Recommendations for future research were to analyze the quality and content of aspects of writing, for example; mini-lessons, student sharing, and teacher conferences.

**Independent Writing**

Independent writing takes place after the teacher’s instruction. Students write about a given topic. This may be done through journaling and/or using a writer’s notebook. Students may answer a given question or responding to a given topic. This study examined an independent writing lesson in a Prep/ Grade One classroom in Victoria, Australia. It examined the relationship between independent writing and social interactions focused on a grade one student and his peers. Qualitative research used ethnomethodology (study of social structure of interactions) and Conversation Analysis. The study suggests social interactions, such as casual conversations, among students during independent writing will affect writing. The research
briefly describes the use of teacher modeling during writing instruction. Previous to student independent writing, knowledge skills are taught through modeling and guided instruction. During modeling, teacher scaffolding is considered to be working within students’ zones of proximal development (Davidson, 2007). Research did not go into detail on how the teacher’s modeling was performed or how student’s achievement was effected. The design lacked a description of the teacher’s role before and during the independent writing process. Results suggest accountability of social interactions between students during independent writing.

**Journal Writing**

Journal writing is a learning tool used in classrooms. Journals are used to record personal experiences, explore reactions and interpretations to readings and videos, and record, analyze, or enhance information about literature or other subject areas (Fahsl & McAndrews, 2011, p. 235). Teaching journaling to students supports the new Common Core Standards for English Language Arts.

Fahsl and McAndrews examine scaffold journal writing that focused on students with learning disabilities and students who many have difficulties in writing. Scaffold journaling differs from journaling. The teacher uses scaffolding to help the writer to actively build and construct new knowledge. The classroom vignette posed in the study is fictional and based on authentic classroom experiences observed by the authors.

Listed below are five characteristics of instruction for successful writing strategies.

1. Provide explicit and extensive instruction on writing strategies, self-regulation, and content knowledge
2. Encourage interactive learning and active collaboration with other students
3. Individualize instruction based on students’ needs and abilities while providing specific feedback and support

4. Allow students to be self-paced; however, be sure students meet certain criteria before moving to the next stage of instruction

5. Continue to introduce new strategies by making connections to previously introduced strategies (Fahsl & McAndrews, 2011, p. 235)

To make the journaling experience successful it needs to be broken down into phases. A diagnostic teaching cycle that includes: (a) establishing learning outcomes, (b) planning assessment, (c) planning instruction, (d) implementing instruction, and (e) analyzing student learning. When teachers plan a lesson the objectives should direct student growth and skill achievement. Rubrics contain criteria and are used to evaluate student learning. While students use the writing process they should refer to the rubric to help assess their writing. Feedback and student involvement will help improve writing. Students with learning disabilities should be given accommodations (support and more time) that can be provided through the use of technology.

Journal writing instructions should be differentiated to meet the students’ needs. The teacher’s reflection is important for the next stages of planning. To analyze the student learning there should be a portfolio with samples of the student’s writing that include the entire steps in the writing process.

**Interactive to Independent Writing**

“Interactive writing is an approach to beginning writing instruction that teaches young children what it means “to write” and how they can go about it (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012, p. 145).” Interactive writing comes before students begin to write independently. Vygotsky’s
principle of zone of proximal development supports the child’s transition from assisted performance to unassisted and self-regulated performance.

Williams and Pilonieta (2012) implemented a writing lesson with first grade ELL (English Language Learning) students. The teacher started with a picture read-aloud to engage the students and familiarize the children with story structure, grammar and discourse forms. Throughout the reading the teacher checked for understanding and comprehension with discussion of the story’s events. This discussion supported the ELL children’s oral language development. Reading and sharing stories provided background knowledge that students brought to the interactive writing lesson. The next phase of the lesson was to plan the text to be written. The teacher asked open-ended questions; “What was your favorite part and why did you like it the best (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012, p. 146)?” Scaffolding, sharing the pen and think alouds were strategies the teacher used for the whole group discussion. Guided spellings were scaffolds made by the teacher. “Took reminds me of a word you know. Kirby, if you know look, you can spell took. (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012, p. 147).” The teacher teaches specific letter-sound correspondences and models phonemic segmentation skills, which demonstrates the importance of spelling. The teacher answers questions that directly engage the children in the writing process.

Early writing instruction focuses on the fundamentals. Rereading leads to editing and revisions. This stage of the writing process monitors the comprehensibility of the text. “Writers often revise their work. They reread their stories and add interesting details (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012, p. 148).” At the end of the lesson the teacher discusses the concepts and strategies taught in the lesson. In this study it was discovered that journal writing should follow interactive writing so children have opportunities to try-out what they have learned.
Genre Choice

Connecting personal interest is important for engaging readers and writers. Views on literature play an important role on a child’s literacy development. A case study on a middle class eight-year-old boy addresses a family’s role in their son’s literacy development through an investigation of the socio-cultural practices that support his literacy acquisition. The participants and the setting were a mother, father and two sons (eight and five years-old) in their home in central Canada. The design of the study was Rogoff’s (1995) socio-cultural framework, which is built on Vygotsky’s conception of apprenticeship. Data sources included observation, videos, skits (written and performed), interviews, and artifacts of writings and drawings over a two-month period.

The element of choice came into play during the family’s ritual bedtime story. The father would engage his son through his own passion for reading. The father would read aloud a novel from his own childhood. As a result the boy would then bring these novels to school to read and share with fellow classmates. The family also offered their son an assortment of literacy tools. A computer was a tool the boy would use to write plays and stories. The use of the computer as a literacy tool is where the boy has moved from peripheral participation to taking on greater responsibility for managing the activity (Rogoff, 1995, p. 157) because his own expressed interests mediated it. The stories written on the computer integrated his father’s novel as a mentor text, incorporating the author’s voice, characters and setting.

Extending genres of choice played an important role into personal writing. The parents’ philosophy on what constituted good reading materials translated into their willingness to read books such as Adventures of Captain Underpants (Pilkey, 1997) with their sons (Lenters, 2007, p.121). This openness to books led to an active participation with peer writing activities.
Bookmaking, play scripts, cartooning, and song writing are a few of the boy’s interests that evolved.

**Spelling**

This next section of the review of literature will concentrate on spelling and how it relates to writing. The importance in elementary education is knowledge of the stages of spelling development and the relationship between spelling achievement and handwriting fluency with writing. The acquisition of spelling rules is viewed as a complex developmental process. There are five stages of spelling. Teacher understanding of the stages can help plan instruction. While students use knowledge of spelling while writing will support spelling competency. Teachers must relate spelling to purposeful writing rather than to rule-based instruction or on memorization.

**Stages of Spelling Development**

Awareness of spelling development aids teacher’s instruction. Teaching students the appropriate age phonemes and graphemes (spelling rules) will aid in writing attitudes. It will make for stronger and more confident writers. Five stages of spelling development are pre-communicative, semi-phonetic, phonetic, transitional, and correct. Stage one, pre-communicative, consists of a child using a writing utensil to scribble. Stage two, semi-phonetic, a child begins to name and form letters. Stage three, phonetic, includes letter awareness and sound correspondence. Stage four, transitional, concentrates on sight and high frequency words. The fifth and final stage, correct, the child is aware of phoneme/grapheme relationships (Bourne & Whiting, 2004).

A quantitative study involving eighty-one second grade children in a denominational school in Sydney, Australia was conducted on graphemic and phonological interventions.
Students’ age range was six years to eight years and five months including 37 boys and 44 girls. The study implies teaching of spelling comprises of blended sounds in words into phonemes and finally to graphemes (Bourne & Whiting, 2004).

Knowing the stages of spelling will help teacher instruction. Setting spelling expectations for early elementary students using the stages will assist in communication with the students, parents and others teacher support. A writing rubric may include spelling under the category of grammar and mechanics. A rubric score will use the child’s age/grade and give a value according to the stage development. A child using proper invented spelling (appropriate sound correspondence) may be given full credit for that rubric.

A proven method to teach to early elementary students the mechanics of spelling is to know and understand the stages of spelling; setting appropriate expectations and being aware of the student’s developmental growth. Writing rubrics will weigh heavily on the ideas versus mechanics (Bellamy & Kozlow, 2004).

**Spelling Achievement and Handwriting Fluency**

A study on second grade writers (n = 195) in a central Florida district researched the following two questions: “(1) What are the effects of writing prompts on the compositional fluency of second-grade students? (2) Are these effects different for students who vary on spelling achievement and handwriting fluency? (Hudson, Lane, & Mercer, 2005, p. 478).” The participants were tested in a whole-group setting.

The _Developmental Spelling Analysis_ (DSA; Ganske, 1999, 200) was used as a screening inventory for the spelling achievement. This determined the student’s stage of orthographic development. Twenty dictated words in sets of five were given. Each set of words focused on different developmental spelling stages (letter name, within-word pattern, syllable juncture, and
derivational constancy). After a student missed four or more words they were told to stop. The DSA gives a point for each word spelled correctly. The reliability coefficient was 0.973, \( n = 113 \).

The study on handwriting fluency consisted of pencils without erasers and primary-lined paper. The students were given 60 seconds and asked to write neatly the lowercase letters of the alphabet. If a mistake was made the students were asked to cross out the letter(s). A number score was given by the letters correctly formed. The reliability coefficient was 0.973, \( n = 112 \).

Berninger (1999) and Graham (1999) believe that handwriting and spelling are exceptionally imperative to young writers. “It is clear that students who write slowly or spell poorly experience differences in topic presentation more than their average or high-achieving peers. It is also clear that these students compose more slowly and spell more poorly than their peers. (Hudson, Lane, & Mercer, 2005, p. 492).” Instruction intended to improve handwriting and spelling is basic for struggling writers in compositional fluency and spelling accuracy. Concentrated instruction in spelling and handwriting fluency transmits to the writing process in struggling writers. Giving students the tools to be proficient writers will allow for more skillful writers. Laying a foundation for early elementary writers with the skills of handwriting and spelling is important for later writing success.

**Technology**

The last section of this review of literature concentrates on using technology for writing in the elementary classroom. Today’s students have different learning needs and styles. Technology is part of their everyday lives. Finding ways to incorporate technology into the writing curriculum can be beneficial, whether it be laptops or computer software.

**Laptop Program**
Use of technology can be used as a strategy to support writing. Schools throughout the country are integrating technology into instruction (Grimes, 2010, p.4). A student using a word processor could be more motivated to write versus using the mundane form of pencil and paper. One study focused on the effects of a one-to-one laptop program on students’ achievement in English Language Arts (ELA). Research was conducted from two middle schools and two elementary schools from Estrella School District in California. The study suggests students who use a one-to-one laptop program would have improved ELA test scores. Research describes the use of laptops as improving the transition from reading to reading-to-learn that is referred to as the fourth-grade slump. Results suggest that the laptop one-to-one program does significantly improve ELA test scores.

The research was a quantitative study that used a pre-test and post-test. The study investigated whether a one-to-one laptop program could improve English language arts (ELA) test scores. The study used an experimental group and control group. The experimental group consisted of 54 students in fourth grade in the first year of the study and in fifth grade in the second year of the study using the laptop program. The control group consisted of 54 fourth grade students placed in non-laptop classes. A quasi-experimental research design was used to analyze the effect of the one-to-one laptop program. Quasi-experimental designs are “of intermediate value for exploring cause and effect” (Pattern, 2007, p. 97). Research tools used were analyses of variance (ANOVA) and multiple analyses of variance (MANOVA). Results of the ANOVA and MANOVA analyses showed that after two years, laptop students significantly outperformed non-laptop students in their change scores for literary response and analysis (p < .01) and writing strategies (p < .05).

**Computer Integration**
A Canadian study on technology integration in the classroom focused on the effectiveness of computer-assisted software programs as teaching resources for reading and writing instruction. The increasing importance on computer technology and literacy in classroom relates to the growing importance of technology and literacy in society. Computer software is used to enhance or assess reading and writing skills. Some software programs have been designed to educate the writing process and scaffold writing development.

The authors, Lovell and Phillips, compiled a list of 47 programs authorized for use by the ministries of education in the provinces and territories of Canada. The following four questions guided the research:

1. What authorized software programs are available?
2. What are manufacturers’ claims about their software programs, and are the claims supported?
3. Are reading and writing prerequisite skills for using the software programs?
4. Are these software programs appropriate and useful to supplement classroom reading and writing instruction (Lovell & Phillips, 2005, p. 201)?

A list of 47 programs represented the total. Out of the 47 only 13 (28%) were available for purchase, which were analyzed for this research. The researchers assessed two phases of the programs. The first phase concentrated on the perspective of the child (student). The quality of instruction was a consideration, were the instructions clear, repeatable, and presentable both orally and visually?

Phase two consisted of the perspective of the teacher. The researchers read the manual and examined the educational claims. The types of feedback were assessed and determined the educational value. A Likert-scale with values from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)
determined the percentages for each category. The writing programs, 51% of the programs, were then divided into 3 categories: concept-mapping software (15%), word-processing software (19%), and desktop publishing software (17%).

Obstacles hinder technology integration in the classroom. The results of the study found two serious problems. The two limitations were the outdated programs that were not tools for computer technology integration and most of the programs were non-instructional and did not track student progress.
Chapter III: Synthesis

Researchers have identified several major factors influencing teaching strategies to promote development of early elementary authors. Several of the factors include the writing process, independent writing, spelling development, and technology. Research in these areas provides understanding as to the impact writing strategies can have on early elementary authors. Introducing and teaching students the strategies listed above, teachers will see improvements in early elementary authors’ writing.

Writing Process

The research trends for the writing process revolve around the writing traits, modeling writing, and perceptions. Modeling writing was used to teach the seven traits; ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation. Teachers used the think-aloud method to help brainstorm, write, edit, confer, and publish. During each stage of the process the traits were intertwined to assist the writing. The importance of using the traits to improve writing skills is exemplified by national writing assessments (Bellamy & Kozlow, 2004). Research shows that combining the traits and teacher modeling can be successful. It was found that the 6+1 Writing Traits ® were written for grades three through six. There is still a need for early elementary writing curriculum support for grades K-2.

A study on the perception of teachers’ instruction on the writing process reports many inconsistencies amongst teachers and how they teach writing. A frequent comment on the survey from teachers was a lack of time for writing. Some teachers were only giving students 15 minutes of writing instruction and not allowing time for revisions or editing. Some teachers explained an ambition to teach writing but felt they were not prepared and noted that they wanted more preparation through education. Possible answers are teachers may not feel confident in
their own writing abilities or they may feel unprepared to teach writing. A large emphasis on today’s testing plays into ‘reading and math,’ putting writing in the “not-so-important” category as perceived by classroom teachers.

Research shows that some teachers may not feel prepared to teach the necessary writing skills and as a result are not allowing opportunities for students to write. “Almost two-thirds of the teachers in Gilbert and Graham’s (2010) study reported that their university teacher preparation courses did little to prepare them to teach writing effectively (Simmerman, Harward & Pierce, 2012, p. 293).” A lack of teacher confidence reflects upon teacher instruction. More time goes into teaching conventions; such as spelling and punctuation.

**Independent Writing**

Another strategy researched was something that takes place after a teacher’s instruction; independent writing. Giving students an opportunity to write every day is a starting place for successful early elementary authors. Using a journal and/or a writer’s notebook provides a venue for daily writing to take place. This strategy has been successful and it is supported by the new Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

A research article about student with learning disabilities examined a useful strategy, journal writing. Characteristics of instruction for successful writing strategies are; provide explicit and extensive instruction, encourage collaboration individualize needs, allow self-pace, and to continue new strategy introduction (Fahsl & McAndrews, 2011). Journaling should be a successful experience. To do so, breaking it down into phases will allow for student growth and skill achievement. The teaching cycle should include: (a) establishing learning outcomes, (b) planning assessment, (c) planning instruction, (d) implementing instruction, and (e) analyzing
While a teacher plans a writing lesson the writing process will help aid in the planning process and help develop a rubric. Considering each stage (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) while developing will help improve rubric scores. Students may use a rubric as a tool while they write. Differentiated instruction for students’ need is a strategy and an accommodation. Differentiated instruction allows all students to access the same classroom curriculum by providing entry points, learning tasks, and outcomes that are tailored to students' needs (Hall, Strangman, & Meyer, 2003). Differentiated instruction is not a single strategy but an approach to instruction that incorporates a variety of strategies.

Other important criteria for journal writing instruction are the importance of teacher reflection for the future planning stage and analyzing student learning. A teacher should be aware of a student’s readiness, interest and/or learning style. Analyzing can be done through a collection of student work in a portfolio.

Prior to independent writing there is interactive writing, which teaches young children what it means, “to write” and how they can go about it (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012, p. 145). Some interactive writing prompts are to make an ABC book, rewrite poems, write a recipe and write a thank you note. It was discovered that journal writing should come after the interactive so children have the opportunity to try-out what they learned. Using different strategies like scaffolding, sharing the pen, and think-alouds are strategies found to be successful during interactive writing. It is important to directly engage the students through open-ended questions during interactive writing. Focusing in on the fundamentals during early writing instruction will lay a solid foundation.

Engaging writers with genre choice is important. Early elementary authors want to write
about what they love and what they are interested in. Getting students excited about writing can simply be done with allowed them with choice. Given freedom to choose what students are allowed to read allowing for the same with writing will excite a young writer. This was proven with a case study on an eight-year-old boy and his literacy development. The element of choice began with the boy’s bedtime ritual. Different writing genres evolved through the element of choice.

**Spelling**

Research patterns on spelling in the early elementary classroom revolve around the stages of spelling development, spelling achievement, and handwriting fluency. Teacher awareness of the stages of spelling is important for instruction. The five stages of spelling development are pre-communicative, semi-phonetic, phonetic, transitional, and correct. Setting appropriate convention expectations for a writing rubric will depend of the stage of spelling development. Most writing rubrics view more of an importance with ideas versus mechanics (Bellamy & Kozlow, 2004).

A study done with second grade students examined spelling achievement and handwriting fluency. It was found that students who wrote slower were students that also spelled more poorly than their peers. Quality instruction on spelling and handwriting fluency will help the struggling writers throughout the writing process. Berninger (1999) and Graham (1999) state that handwriting and spelling are imperative to young writers.

Instruction around spelling and handwriting will lay a foundation for early elementary authors. Teaching handwriting skills at an early age is crucial for writing successes. Students that have been taught the necessary skills will better be able to confidently write. Poor penmanship will not slow down an early elementary student. Awareness of the stages of spelling will assist in
the knowledge of what expectations are for particular ages. A *Developmental Spelling Analysis* (DSA; Ganske, 1999, p. 200) used a screening inventory to determine a student’s stage of orthographic development. Sets of words were focused on the developmental spelling stages. A precursor of using invented spelling in the early stages of spelling are appropriate and those skills will be used later in fifth spelling development stage; child awareness of phoneme/grapheme relationships (Bourne & Whiting, 2004).

**Technology**

Incorporating technology into a writing curriculum is beneficial for students’ learning needs. A study on using a one-to-one laptop program was found to motivate students. The study suggests significant improved English Language Arts scores (Grimes, 2010, p.4). Using a word processor is one strategy to use during the writing stages. Through the quasi-experimental study research found that laptop students drastically outperformed non-laptop students in their literacy response and analysis.

Technology integration with used of computer-assisted software programs used as teaching resources for writing instruction is growing in our society. The software is used as a strategy to enhance or assess writing skills. A study on appropriate software programs for writing instruction compiled a list of 47 programs (Lovell & Phillips, 2005). Only 13 of the 47 were analyzed for the research. Perspective of both student and teacher were considered. The programs were designed to educate the writing process and scaffold writing development. There were two limitations in this study; outdated programs and programs that were non-instructional and did not track progress.

The next chapter will give recommendations for further research in best practices and make concluding statements based on the research articles about writing strategies for promoting
early elementary authors. With pressure for the No Child Left Behind Act what more strategies are recommended for further research?
Chapter IV: Recommendations and Conclusions

Recommendations

The purpose of this paper was to determine what writing strategies would help promote early elementary authors. Research suggests implementing strategies for writing in the elementary classroom is beneficial for early elementary authors. A recommendation from the research is for teachers to plan how to use the strategies in their classrooms. Using the writing process, independent writing, spelling and technology are four topics for useful strategies. One important recommendation suggested from this literature review is the importance of understanding students’ skills when learning to write. Knowledge of the writing process, traits and stages of spelling development is key.

Teachers need time and professional development in the area of writing. It was found that teachers do not feel confident in their ability to teach writing because of the lack of professional development in the area of writing. Giving teacher time to work with their grade level may allow for reflection, planning and evaluation for students’ writing. Teachers should have knowledge of the writing process and the stages.

Giving students the opportunity to write is foremost the number one recommendation. Students should be given time to write interactively and independently. Teachers’ can teacher through think-alouds and whole class instruction. Writing together will enhance student independence and confidence. Using rubrics for communication for expectations will help students’ writing scores. Focusing on fundamentals will lay a solid foundation.

Research recommends awareness of the stages of spelling which will help facilitate teacher instruction. It will make for stronger and more confident writers. Age appropriate
phonemes and graphemes will aide in writing attitudes. A student may be given full credit on a rubric when using proper invented spelling (appropriate sound correspondence).

Lastly, research recommends using technology for writing in the classroom. It has been found that today’s students have different learning styles and needs. Technology has become part of our every day lives. Incorporating technology can be beneficial throughout the early elementary writing process.

Areas for Further Research

To further answer the research question: What teaching strategies promote development of early elementary authors? Additional studies in the area of (a) writing workshop, (b) small group versus whole group instruction, and (c) teacher conferences would be helpful. What are appropriate writing strategies for each age level? More research is needed in the area of small group versus whole group writing instruction. Which delivery method would be more effective? Future research on teacher conferencing and editing would be beneficial to see what best supports writing workshop.

Conclusion

With the increased expectation from the No Child Left Behind Act or NCLB, to “close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind,” public school educators are held responsible and accountable for student learning. A large focus in early elementary is on the teaching of reading. Writing has been viewed as less important. Current writing strategies in early elementary education need to be improved. Our responsibility is to lead students to love writing through purposeful writing strategies. The Common Core State Standards “help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications
(www.corestandards.org).” In order to be life-long writers and not fall behind, educators need to lay a solid foundation in grades K-2 through purposeful writing instruction.
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