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An Examination of the Interaction Between Exemplary Teachers and Struggling Writers

Betty Ruth Sylvester

Cedarville University, bsylvester@cedarville.edu

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An Examination of the Interaction Between Exemplary Teachers and Struggling Writers

by

Betty Ruth Sylvester

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Childhood Education
College of Education
University of South Florida

Co-Major Professor: Kathryn Laframboise, Ph.D.
Co-Major Professor: Jenifer, Schneider, Ph.D.
Frank Breit, Ph.D.
James King, Ed.D.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my teachers: Mom, Dad, Chad, Matt, Chris, and Tim

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While reflecting on the many people who have contributed to the fulfillment of this dream, I am reminded of an old saying, “If you see a turtle on a fencepost, you know it didn’t get there by himself.” For these people, I am deeply grateful.

There are members of my family that deserve great thanks. Though my dad is no longer with me physically, his faith and pride is always present. My mom’s words of encouragement and promised prayers were as comforting as the meals she cooked for Tim, Chris, and me twice each week during the last year of this process. Barb helped me with the tab leads that I simply could not figure out. Chris willingly gave up the computer when I needed it. Tim was incredible. I can never thank him enough for selflessly taking on so many extra responsibilities during the last few years and reassuring me he’d much rather wash dishes or do laundry than write a dissertation. I am truly loved!!

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An Examination of the Interaction Between Exemplary Teachers and Struggling Writers

Betty Ruth Sylvester

ABSTRACT

This study examined the interactions between teachers of writing and struggling writers. There were two main research questions: (1) What is the nature of the interaction between exemplary teachers of writing and struggling writers? (2) What are the responses of struggling writers to exemplary teachers' scaffolding? To answer these questions, qualitative analysis was conducted on data. Two struggling writers were selected for the study based on their responses to the Writers Self-Perception Scale, writing samples, and teacher recommendation. Data collection included observation in two separate fourth grade classrooms during the writing block for 30 days. Data sources included audio-recording of writing instruction and teacher and student interviews, field notes, and writing samples.

Several areas of similarity across the participants emerged from the data. They included mediated action through teacher response, written response to mediated action, social positioning, and best practices? By examining the interactions the researcher was able to speculate on social consequences of the interactions between teacher and student as they relate to literacy learning.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction and Problem

Writing has intrigued scholars for thousands of years. Some modern day movies, such as *The Adventures of Indiana Jones: Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), are based on the deciphering of an ancient linguistic system in order to unearth a legendary artifact of history. Sophisticated meanings embedded within crude cave drawings, pictographs, and hieroglyphics have fascinated archeologists for centuries. Early forms of written communication were confined to those who were privileged to know how to inscribe the signs and who were able to understand the meaning of those signs (Patai, 2003). In later societies, scribes were given power and prestige within their culture because of their ability to write and interpret the symbols.

In contrast, writing is currently linked to basic literacy and viewed as a life skill. To effectively function in society, individuals must know how to communicating through writing. Letters, requests, thank you notes, cards, memos, directions, and instructions are a few examples of the nearly endless written forms of expressions found in today's literate society. In the school setting, skill in written communication is critical to the demonstration of what has been learned. Teachers may require students to demonstrate in writing their knowledge of specific concepts, such as writing a literary analysis of a specific poem or writing a reflection on an assigned text or activity.

Recently the high-stakes testing trend across the United States has placed an emphasis on writing instruction within the classroom (Florida Department of Education,

2003). Consequently, students may be required to frequently respond to a prompt in order to prepare for state-mandated writing assessment. Writing on demand is common in many public schools across the United States and advancing to the next grade or even graduating from high school often rests on satisfactory scores. When testing carries high stakes, it can dominate classroom life (Freedman, 1993) and influence teachers' instructional practices (Brindley & Schneider, 2002). When Brindley and Schneider (2002) surveyed fourth grade teachers in one district, they found that while teachers prepared students for high stakes testing, their instructional methods focused on short-sighted attention to "particular techniques to improve students' ability to score higher on the test" (p. 332) and teachers' instructional strategies were influenced by the state and the district-level training. Teachers reported feeling more skilled at teaching writing and supported this claim by their increased expectations of their students and the more frequent writing instruction during the day. Though teachers may feel more skilled at teaching writing, the focus of instruction in some fourth grade classrooms is on two writing genre, expository and narrative, and in narrowly defined forms. This shortsighted genre focus minimizes the importance of writing as a form of communication.

Being able to articulate one's thoughts through written communication is central to being literate. Yet, for the struggling writer, writing can be an overwhelming task. Murray (1984), an expert writer, sympathizes: writing is "one of the most complicated human activities" (p.6). The layers of complexity are different for each writer, but having an exemplary writing teacher may make a difference for the struggling writer.

Theoretical Frame

The importance of oral language in social settings is one of the foundational assumptions of the work of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), a Russian psychologist whose interest in child development and in theories of language and social interaction are useful in the field of education (Moll, 1990). Therefore, examining interactions between teachers and struggling writers seems best viewed through a socio-cultural lens.

Vygotsky's theory, often called the socio-cultural approach to learning (Wertsch, 1985), is concerned with how the surrounding social and cultural forces affect children's cognitive development. Vygotsky did not see thinking as individualized, but rather theorized that "the mind extends beyond the skin" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 90) and is irreversibly connected to other minds. Vygotsky, therefore, emphasized the social nature of cognition rather than its individual nature. Social experiences form the way one thinks about the world, thus social experiences authorize how reality is constructed. Vygotsky argued that "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later, on the individual level" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57).

Language is the primary means of social communication. Vygotsky placed a strong emphasis on oral language in the social setting for children's cognitive development and emphasized the role of adults and more capable peers in that development. Learning appears as an interpsychological category (between individuals), and then as intrapsychological category (within the individual) with the assistance of knowledgeable members of the culture. Children are exposed to and learn cognitive processes through social interaction, and as the external, social plane is internalized, children reorganize and reconstruct their social experiences into individual, psychological

processes. Thus for knowledge to be internalized it must be transformed from an interpersonal process, or knowledge that exists outside the child, to an intrapersonal one.

Vygotsky theorized that a child's cognitive ability can be defined in various ways depending on whether or not a child is receiving assistance in a particular task. He formulated a construct named the *zone of proximal development (ZPD)*, the difference between the potential level and the actual level of a child's learning. The potential level is the level at which a child can perform a task with the assistance of an adult or expert other. The actual level is the level that a child can function independently without any assistance. Vygotsky argued that the lower actual level ability is raised to the potential level ability through interaction with and assistance of expert others. The successful interaction is at the *ripening* rather than the *ripe* functions because the task is slightly beyond what the child can do independently (Vygotsky, 1978).

Sociocultural theory assumes social origins of knowledge and learning and focuses primarily on the need for educators to build on the cultural and sociolinguistic knowledge of learners. Thus sociocultural theorists view knowledge as a cultural phenomenon and learning as social as well as cognitive. The influence of sociocultural theory within the classroom is reflected in the following statement by Sulzby and Teale (1991):

Vygotsky's theory that cognition is internalized social interaction, explains how literacy is acquired through the social interaction that occurs between literate adults and young children. More specifically, children acquire their understandings about literacy, and they internalize structures for reading, writing, and speaking through conversations and supported, purposeful engagement in

literacy events with adults. Adults scaffold such events in moving toward the ultimate goal of increasingly greater autonomy for the child. Adults and peers facilitate routines where children operate through repetitions of tasks and the introduction of variations on those tasks so that the child internalizes not only the task but also the ability to engage in similar tasks independently. (p. 730)

The organization and structure of the social interaction in particular activities in a particular setting determines the structure and organization of consciousness and learning (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). This thinking and learning develop differently depending on the particular setting or context in which they occur. Learning viewed from a sociocultural perspective supports the research findings that classrooms of exemplary teachers create an environment or a classroom culture that develops a particular way of being a learner (Berliner, 1994; Collinson, 1994; Noddings, 1995). For one classroom, this way of being may be very different from a similar classroom just next door. From the socio-cultural perspective, a particular way of talking, acting, responding, knowing, doing, and being is constructed through the discursive and social practices of the classroom (Bloome, 1985; Gee, 1989).

Mediation is needed in order for higher mental processes such as voluntary attention and thinking to build on lower mental processes, such as involuntary attention. (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). Exemplary teachers view their role as mediating the child's learning activity as they share knowledge and meaning through social interaction (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Block, & Morrow, 1998). According to Vygotsky (1978), when students are learning within the

zone of proximal development, there is an interaction between the student and the more knowledgeable other.

The Purpose of the Study

Understanding the specific practices of exemplary teachers as they attempt to disrupt the writing difficulties of their fourth grade struggling writers may aid educators as they continually search for effective ways to facilitate learning. At the heart of the study is my belief, supported by research (Berliner, 1994; Collinson, 1994; Noddings, 1995), that there are teachers with ways of knowing that distinguish them from others. These teachers are often referred to as exemplary teachers by their colleagues and parents of students. Though they may be aware of the broad brushstrokes of their teaching repertoire such as management, strategies, and methodology, in contrast the smaller brushstrokes, nuances, and subtleties, though discernible, typically go unnoticed. These teachers hold a wealth of knowledge about teaching and learning that is infused in the daily lives of their students. Through analysis and interpretation, I endeavored to discover, identify, and develop a better understanding of how these teachers interact with struggling writers within their classrooms. My assumption was that because of the exemplary teachers' levels of expertise (Berliner, 1994), they may address the struggling writer in meaningful and productive ways.

Of the numerous studies regarding children's writing published in professional journals, specific populations, such as struggling writers are typically examined in articles found in journals that focus on learning disabilities (Christenson, Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & McVicar, 1989; Englert, 1990; Graham & Harris, 1997; Graham, Harris, MacArthur, & Schwartz, 1991). In addition, and with some exceptions, little has been

written about the practices of exemplary writing teachers, what they do, or how they implement and sustain the teaching of writing to struggling writers in their classrooms. Berliner (1994) strongly advocates the study of expert teachers in order to provide extremely useful case material from which to learn. Gallimore and Tharp (1990) further argue the need for an investigation of the interaction and experiences of struggling writers with expert teachers:

Teachers do not conduct instructional conversations because they do not know how. They do not know how, because they have never been taught. They almost never have opportunities to observe effective models or occasions for practicing and receiving feedback or for competent coaching by a skilled mentor. Like all learners, teachers themselves must have their own performance assisted if they are to acquire the ability to assist the performance of their students. (p. 198)

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the interaction between exemplary teachers and fourth grader struggling writers. Vygotsky (1978) states, “What a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow” (p. 87). Exemplary teachers can provide learners the scaffolding necessary to support and extend their learning. Through mediation, teachers provide instructional strategies so that learners can extend their skills thus allowing them to accomplish a task not otherwise possible. When social interactions in a classroom focus on content or strategies within a learner’s zone of proximal development, a teacher or more able peer supplies scaffolding for the novice learner. Such scaffolding provides the support or assistance that enables learners to develop understandings or use strategies they would not have been capable of independently (Meyer, 1993; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

Research Questions

Consistent with qualitative inquiry, the research questions identified by this study were broad in scope. Two research questions guided this investigation of exemplary writing teachers and struggling writers:

1. What is the nature of the interaction between exemplary teachers of writing and struggling writers?
2. What are the responses of struggling writers to the interaction?

The study's structure and research questions were intentionally left open-ended to encourage me to look beyond fixed categories to nuances and subtleties of thought.

Significance of the Study

Central to school reform and the quest for student achievement is the tacit understanding supported by research (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001; Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Duffy & Hoffman, 1999; Pressley, Rankin, and Yokoi, 1996) that improved teaching, certainly, exemplary teaching, is critical to the efforts. This study will add to the research that focuses on the interactions between writing teachers and their students who struggle with writing within the classroom. Much of the data identifying practices of exemplary language arts teachers has been obtained through large-scale surveys and limited classroom observations (Cantrell, 1999; Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999; Pressley et al., 2001; Pressley et al., 1998). Yet, very few studies have provided in-depth description of how exemplary teachers interact with struggling writers. This research study will help fill this gap by providing a holistic description and interpretation of the

many layers of teaching practices and knowledge that are expressed in literacy instruction.

Definition of Terms

- Effective teaching – For this study, the term effective teaching refers to teacher competencies or the technical skills of teaching as identified through process-product research that was most prevalent during the 1970s and 1980s.
- Exemplary teaching – The term is becoming more common in the literature to describe outstanding teaching. Collinson and Killeavy (1999) view an exemplary teacher as someone “whose professional accomplishments and results serve as a model for peers” (p. 353) and Shulman refers to this teacher as “a portrait of expertise” (1987, p.1). Berliner (1994) has contended that expert teachers function on an intuitive or automatic level and have difficulty explaining or defining their own or other expert’s traits that they observe. For the purposes of this study, the term exemplary refers to someone who is an exemplar of teaching excellence to which the profession can aspire.
- Struggling writers – Because the term “struggling writers” is most often used in research journals to describe individuals who have problems with written expression, the term will be retained in this study. The definition of a struggling writer is intentionally left to include a broad group of students who view themselves as struggling writers by their response to *Writer Self Perception Scale* (Bottomley, Henk, Melnick, 1998) and according to the classroom teacher’s comparison of the students’ writing with some standard that the s/he deems an appropriate benchmark. An example may be establishing a central idea, organization, elaboration and unity in

relation to purpose and audience. These writers may include high academic achievers who toil with writing ideas as well as those who simply appear to be unmotivated to write. Struggling writers may also include students who have difficulty processing cognitive expression into written expression.

- Shared Writing – “The teacher and students compose collaboratively, the teacher acting as expert and scribe for her apprentices as she demonstrated, guides, and negotiates the creation of meaningful text” (Routman, 2005, p. 83).
- Writing Skills and Strategies – This phrase will be used throughout chapters 4 and 5 when referencing the focus of the writing lesson. Writing skills are information processing techniques that writers use automatically such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and handwriting to name a few. Collins (1998) describes writing strategies as “deliberate thinking procedures writers use to solve problems that they encounter while writing, (p. vii). A few examples of strategies are adding details and sensory words to make writing more vivid, using organizers to organize and group ideas, or brainstorming to tap prior knowledge. Both teachers used several different terms to describe a writing skill or strategy such as technique, concept, or element, as well as, skill and strategy. However, to avoid confusion, the phrase writing skills and strategies will be used extensively.
- Writing Process - In the early eighties, writing pedagogy shifted from an emphasis on product to a focus on the process of writing thus making writing practical for children. Hallmarks of process writing pedagogy include student-composed text, teacher-student and peer-conferencing, revision of one’s text based on peer input, “publishing” the text, and publicly sharing the text. Enthroned in the Author’s Chair

with peers for the audience, children were able to find their “voice” to make writing meaningful (Graves, 1983). Children’s writing is cultivated by writing about topics of their choice to maintain control and ownership of their writing rather than depending on “writing welfare” (Graves, 1976). These writing activities are often collectively referred to as writing workshop (Calkins, 1994; Atwell, 1998).

- Writing events - Anderson, Teale, and Estrada (1980) define literacy events as action sequences involving people producing or comprehending print. For this study, writing events will be the action sequences that lead to the production of written text. These events may include whole group instruction, mini-lessons, teacher-student conferencing, peer conferencing, independent writing, shared writing, or guided writing.

Limitations of the Study

Five important limitations of the study need to be acknowledged. First I do not profess that my research is an objective description of the students and teachers though through thick rich description encapsulated in vignettes, I have attempted to present the data. I recognize that this study cannot be duplicated because the findings are situated within the spaces of two unique classrooms. The second limitation is that this study examined the classroom of only two fourth grade writing teachers who had been recommended by the language arts coordinators in the county where the study was conducted. The county is one of the largest in the state and undoubtedly, there are exemplary writing teachers who were unknown to the language arts coordinators at the time of recommendation. However, the intent of the study was not to select the BEST writing teachers because that would be very difficult to determine, but rather to examine

classrooms where teachers employed writing instruction that research has determined to be most effective. If two other writing teachers had been selected, it is possible that findings other than those presented in this study would emerge. While both teachers stated in the initial interview that they conferenced with students, this practice was only observed twice in Mrs. Ring's class during a conference with Kyle, though I observed her on several occasions referencing conferences she had with both Kyle and Ray. Mrs. Ring explained several weeks into the study that she did not conference during the writing block. No conferencing was observed during the writing block in Mrs. Mac's classroom either, because she chose to conference later during the day. Mrs. Mac recorded conferencing notes in students' writing folders and frequently referenced conferencing during the writing lesson thus substantiating that she did conference with her students.

While both teachers admitted constraint by the state-mandated writing assessment, many best practices associated with quality writing instruction were evident in these classrooms. Though it was not the intent of the study, data analysis revealed the teachers were not holistically exemplary.

The third limitation of this research is that a state-mandated writing assessment was slated for fourth grade, the level where the study was conducted. Narrative and expository writing, though narrowly defined by the state's department of education, were the focus of the assessment; however, I was present in the classrooms only during the instruction for narrative writing. Fortunately, narrative writing instruction in the two schools was not taught during the same quarter; therefore, I was able to observe during the first quarter of the semester at Cypress Grove Elementary and during the second quarter at Lakeview Elementary.

The fourth limitation is related to the grade level of the students. Primary grade students and students above fourth grade have different levels of writing competence and thus the way in which teachers interact with struggling writers may be different at other grades.

The final limitation is related to the time and duration of the study. Observation in Mrs. Ring's classroom was halted several times due to schools closing in her county as a result of hurricanes. Two of the interruptions lasted for a week at a time, thus the duration of my observation in Mrs. Ring's class was two weeks longer than the observation in Mrs. Mac's classroom.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to review the literature that is foundational to addressing the questions that have prompted this research: (1) What is the nature of the interaction between exemplary teachers of writing and struggling writers? and (2) What are the responses of struggling writers to the interaction? The review will build an argument that creates a space for the study as a contribution to and expansion of what is currently known and thought about the interaction between teachers and struggling writers. The review begins with a discussion of the literature that has informed my understanding of effective teaching. Research on expertise and the notion of teacher as an expert pedagogue will then be reviewed. Following this, strands from each of these bodies of research weave their way into the key findings of the research on the practices of exemplary literacy teachers. The next section of the review continues by considering the classroom research that has investigated effective writing pedagogy. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory frames the notion of social interaction and classroom talk as the all-pervasive element in children's learning; therefore an investigation of classroom talk that will inform this study will then be reviewed. Next, an examination of research relevant to struggling writers will be examined, specifically the characteristics of struggling writers, behaviors of these writers, and strategic instruction that has empirical evidence for consideration in writing instruction. Finally, because gender differences may influence

the writing behaviors and writing content as well as the evaluation due to perceived gender of the writer, a brief selection of gender research will be included.

Overview of Effective Teaching Research

Cooper and McIntyre (1996) give a brief summary of the history of the evolution of research into teaching. Until the 1950s, research tended to be of two kinds: experiments on the implementation of a method for teaching particular subjects or topics or for managing the classroom and explorations of the personal characteristics of “the good teacher.” By the 1960s, research was becoming increasingly clear that teaching was a very complex process and could not be confined to standardized methods. Therefore, in order to understand teaching, one needed to study what happens within classrooms. In the 1970s, there was a growing realization that observing within the classroom needed to be complemented by accessing the thinking and decision-making of the teacher. The process-product model was the dominant model of the 1970s that evaluated teaching effectiveness. Central to this model was the examination of correlations between product measures and process measures of classroom activities that were hypothesized to be conducive to desired outcomes. Studies were designed to look at an aspect of effective teaching in relationship to student academic achievement data. Effective teachers were identified as those whose students had made the greatest gain on achievement tests. Furthermore, the research tended to be linear and categorical so that effective characteristics and behaviors of teachers could be measured based on student learning achievement. By observing and recording instructional practices of expert teachers, researchers hoped to identify these behaviors. A number of researchers have attempted to review and synthesize the findings of this extensive area of research. The various reviews

prompted educators to generalize across studies, consider common principles of the studies, and to describe teaching practices more fully.

Characteristics and Practices of Effective Teaching

Characteristics

Rosenshine (1987) conducted a review of correlational process-product studies and found five teacher processes that consistently resulted in positive student outcomes. These include teachers' (a) clarity of presentation and ability to organize classroom activities, (b) task orientation of academic focus with structured routines, (c) enthusiasm, (d) flexibility, and (e) use of varied materials, media, and activities.

Instructional Practices

Walberg (1991) provides a summary of the effects of approximately 8,000 studies on teaching and instruction in elementary and secondary school. By comparing the effect size of various psychological elements of teaching, he found that the use of cues, student engagement, corrective feedback, and reinforcement to be the most effective practices. Cues show what is to be learned and explain how to learn it. Cues take on many forms such as advance organizers, adjunct questions, goal setting, learning hierarchies, and pretests. Effective teachers foster engagement of students who are active and purposeful participants in learning activities. Student engagement is increased by teachers' high expectations of standards of learning and performance, frequent tests, and questioning. By corrective feedback, teachers attempt to remedy difficulties, and through reinforcement, students are made aware of their progress.

A notable work of Brophy and Good (1986) provides a comprehensive review of process-product studies conducted from 1973-1983. According to their review most

reliable findings about effective teaching describe a classroom teacher who is well organized, efficient, task-oriented and businesslike. Coverage of academic content, clear feedback and remedial instruction when necessary leads to superior performance on tests of facts and skills. Control, efficiency, and objective measurement of learning outcomes are key descriptors of the process-product approach to effective teaching.

Classroom Management

Later research of effective teaching was often associated with classroom management and many terms were rooted in Kounin's (1970) principles of classroom management research. Terms used to describe effectiveness were "with-it-ness," "smoothness," "clarity," "alertness," "pacing," "momentum," "overlapping," and "student accountability."

Cognitive Processes of Effective Teachers

Another line of research of effective teaching shifted from the efficient behavior and management ability to the mental lives of teachers. Clark and Peterson (1986) concluded that their own and others' attempts to develop models of teachers' classroom decision-making "may have been premature. We would suggest, therefore, that before specifying a new model or revising the existing models of teacher interactive decision-making, researchers should first do more descriptive research on how teachers make interactive decisions" (p. 278). In 1975 Clark and Peterson began to study the cognitive processes of teachers in order to describe and understand the rationale underlying effective teaching. These cognitive processes were the planning, decision-making, beliefs and theories of teachers that guided and influenced teacher action.

Personality Traits

Research on personality traits and behaviors of teachers has produced few consistent findings, with the exception of studies finding a recurring positive relationship between student learning and teachers who are flexible, creative, and adaptable (Walberg & Waxman, 1983). The importance of flexibility is essential in meeting the needs of individual students. Successful teachers tend to be those who are able to use a range of teaching strategies and adjust their teaching to fit the needs of different students and the demands of different instructional goals, topics, and methods (Doyle, 1985). The use of different strategies occurs in the context of "active teaching" that is purposeful and diagnostic rather than random or laissez faire and that responds to students' needs as well as curriculum goals (Good, 1983).

Limitations of Studies on Effective Teaching

Although effective teaching research has shown that good teaching does make a difference, teacher effectiveness models, teacher competency lists, and research on teacher effects may narrow the vision so that other nuances of exemplary teaching are missed. Much of the research during the 1970s and 1980s overlooked the emotional, qualitative, and interpretive descriptions of classrooms. However, some studies conducted during the same period of time or as a result of effective teaching research provided specific contextual information that began to expand the understanding of exemplary teaching. For Greene (1986), good teaching and learning involved such intangibles as values, experiences, insights, and appreciation. Effective teachers have also been described as caring and flexible and able to create a good social/psychological and physical climate in the classroom (Noddings, 1995).

In summary, from the effective teaching research there appears to be a consensus of behaviors and fundamental characteristics that are typically demonstrated by effective teachers. These behaviors and characteristics are further striated into the areas of instructional strategies and classroom management or organization. The personal attributes of the teacher contribute to the effectiveness of his or her instructional strategies and classroom organization. Another important entity to explore is the thinking behind the action, or teachers' knowledge that is expressed through their teaching.

Teacher Knowledge

Teacher knowledge is made up subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Subject matter knowledge is knowledge and understanding of a particular content. The teacher's own background knowledge in a subject affects how well the nature of knowing is communicated to the students. Teachers who are weak in specific content are likely to relate the nature of knowing as rule-governed, fact-driven, and low level knowledge (Steinberg, Marks, & Haymore, 1985). Teachers' lack of content knowledge may cause the student to develop or reinforce misconceptions. Furthermore, teachers who have procedural knowledge, but lack conceptual knowledge may be limited in their effectiveness in explaining the content to students (Grossman, 1987). Doyle (1976) hypothesized that tasks that require problem-solving are typically more difficult to manage than the routine tasks associated with rote learning. The lack of knowledge about how to manage an active, inquiry-oriented classroom can lead teachers to turn to passive tactics that "dumb down" the curriculum, busying students with workbooks rather than with complex tasks that require more skill to orchestrate. Teaching effectively requires giving reasons, providing explanation, and constructing activities and representations to

facilitate children's understanding of the concepts which in turn rests on knowing the subject. Teachers with subject matter expertise knowledge typically ask high-level questions (Hashweh, 1987).

Effective teachers go beyond the understanding of a subject to effectively facilitate understanding of that particular subject to their students. Shulman (1986) called this specialized body of knowledge for teachers "pedagogical content knowledge" (p.4). "Teachers serve as mediators between the world of the discipline, on one side, and the world of the students, on the other" (Grossman, 1991, p. 209). Knowledge of subject must be supplemented with knowledge of students and learning and with the knowledge of curriculum and school context (Shulman, 1986). Shulman (1987) and his colleagues at Stanford University initiated a series of case studies of high school teachers' ability to transform their knowledge of subject knowledge in order to represent it to their students. From the study of these teachers, he noted seven components of teacher knowledge: (a) content knowledge, (b) general pedagogical knowledge, (c) curriculum knowledge, (d) pedagogical content knowledge, (e) knowledge of learners and their characteristics, (f) knowledge of educational contexts, and (g) knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values.

Collinson's (1994) research on exemplary teaching extends the elements of Shulman's model to include interpersonal knowledge and intrapersonal knowledge as well as professional knowledge. Collinson's (1994) study of exemplary teachers is based on the work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Taruel's (1986) "ways of knowing," that considers that there are many ways of knowing and many kinds of experiences that contribute to one's knowledge. Thus exemplary teachers' ways of knowing may provide

a wealth of insight into merging their knowledge of students and knowing how to merge professional knowledge and personal knowledge to help students learn. Collinson (1994) proffers a model that includes development of a triad of knowledge that is necessary for exemplary teaching. Although professional knowledge plays a foundational role in ensuring exemplary teaching, it is far more effective when it is balanced with interpersonal knowledge and intrapersonal knowledge within and beyond the classroom. Interpersonal knowledge and intrapersonal knowledge are two of the seven types of intelligences identified by Gardner (1983) in his theory of multiple intelligences. Interpersonal knowledge includes human relationships with students, within the educational community, and local community. Intrapersonal knowledge includes: (a) a disposition toward continuous learning, (b) increasingly refined use of reflection (good thinking and judgment), (c) development of an ethic of care, and (d) development of a work ethic.

Noddings (1984) contends that acts of teaching are special instances of moral and ethical relationships which she interprets as caring. She argues that education from the care perspective has four key components: modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation. By modeling care, educators are showing in their behavior what it means to care. As educators try to care, they are assisted in their efforts by the feedback received from the recipients of their care. To produce students who care, educators must give students practice in caring and reflecting on that practice. Finally, confirmation is affirming and encouraging the best in others (Noddings, 2007).

These caring acts are between the “carer” (teacher) and the “cared for” student. Noddings (1984) contends that, “When I care, I really hear, see, or feel what the other

tries to convey” (p.16). The ethic of care also binds the pair in a relationship of mutual responsibility. Further, the ethic of care requires each individual to recognize his or her frailty and to bring out the best in one another (Noddings, 2007). According to King (1998) while teachers may want to respond and help students, their focus is divided between mastery of skills and students’ needs. Caring may potentially be rewarding, while simultaneously the demands of the cared for may be exhausting. To confound the notion, what one individual may describe as a caring act may differ from another individual based on their own experiences of being the “carer” or “cared for.” “Care may also be invisible or have the appearance of not caring. And care may be absent in appearance and intention during a teacher’s constructions of interactions with students” (King, 1998, p.126).

Tronto (1994) suggests that caring is layered with four related practices including “care about,” “taking care of,” “caring for,” and “receiving care.” By its very nature, care is fraught with conflict because there are so many more care needs than can ever be met. "At the most personal level, caregivers have needs at the same time that they give care to others, and they need somehow to balance their needs and those of others" (Tronto, 1998, p. 17). Care also is infused with power. “Caring about,” and “taking care of” are associated with the more powerful while “caring for” and “receiving caring” are relegated to the less powerful. King (1998) describes these caring behaviors within the classroom. “Caring for” behaviors are associated with face-to-face endeavors such as tying shoes and talking with a child while “caring about” are behaviors related to that interaction such as advocating on behalf of a student caring endeavors in the classroom. Tronto (1994) argued for making "this devalued aspect of human life" (p. 157) and an ethic of care itself

more central in political discussion. "Only if we understand care as a political idea can we change its status and the status of those who do it" (Tronto, 1994, p. 78).

Care work is often demanding, inflexible, and not always productive, yet people who are engaged in care acts recognize its intrinsic value. However, a society who places a high premium on extrinsic values such as the accumulation of wealth and recognition does not hold the same view of care work. Therefore, equating teaching with caring may position teaching with a less valued status as a profession (Tronto, 1998).

Overview of Expert Pedagogues

Some of the more recent investigations of exemplary teaching is based on the theory of expertise. Glaser (1987, 1990) has reviewed the literature on expertise in different fields of endeavor such as chess, taxi driving, radiology, and physics. He believes there are over twenty propositions about the development of expertise. Berliner (1994) has paraphrased them and lists the most significant:

1. Expertise is specific to a domain, developed over hundreds and thousands of hours, and it continues to develop.
2. Development of expertise is not linear. Non-monotonicities and plateaus occur, indicating shifts in understanding and stabilization of automaticity.
3. Expert knowledge is structured better for use in performances than is novice knowledge.
4. Experts represent problems in qualitatively different ways than do novices. Their representations are deeper and richer.
5. Experts recognize meaningful patterns faster than novices.

6. Experts are more flexible, are more opportunistic planners, and can change representations faster when it is appropriate to so do. Novices are more rigid in their conceptions.
7. Experts impose meaning on ambiguous stimuli. They are much more “top down processors.” Novices are misled by ambiguity and are more likely to be “bottom up” processors.
8. Experts may start to solve a problem slower than a novice, but overall they are faster problem solvers.
9. Experts are usually more constrained by the task requirements and the social constraints of the situation than are novices.
10. Experts develop automaticity in their behavior to allow conscious processing of ongoing information.

From his research on classroom processes, Berliner (1994) believed that expert pedagogues needed to be investigated. Using the data collected on the acquisition of pedagogical expertise, Berliner adapted Dreyfus and Dreyfus's (1986) heuristic developmental model to specify five stages an individual moves through from novice to expert. The stages are: (a) Novice Level, (b) Advanced Beginner Level, (c) Competent level, (d) Proficient Level, and (e) Expert Level.

Student teachers and many first-year teachers are considered novices. Their instruction and interaction is typically rule governed, such as allowing six seconds of wait time or identifying student interest through surveys. They are very dependent on their methods courses in college and stay within those perimeters. Advanced beginner level is made up of second- and third-year teachers. Typically they are able to recognize and

classify context, but are not yet actively determining through personal agency what is happening or willfully choosing what to do. They know when to adhere or break the global rules they were taught in college courses. Only with further experience and motivation do teachers reach the competent level. Competent teachers are characterized by their ability to consciously choose what they are going to do and determine what is and what is not important in areas of curriculum and instruction and mastery. Teachers who reach the proficient level may attain it by the fifth year. This is the stage at which teaching becomes automatic, and teachers' wealth of experience creates a holistic way of viewing any situation that occurs. Teachers at the expert level show fluid, effortless performance and have an intuitive grasp of situations.

Berliner (1994) reviewed the literature on pedagogical expertise, and based on the consistency across the studies, he was able to create propositions about expertise in pedagogy that seem to be robust. Some overlap the propositions created by Glaser (1987, 1990) and some are specific to the domain of teaching.

1. Experts excel mainly in their own domain and in particular contexts (Berliner, et al., 1988; Chi, Glaser, and Farr, 1988; Glaser, 1987;)
2. Experts often develop automaticity for the repetitive operations that are needed to accomplish their goals (Carter et al., 1987; Greene, 1986; Glaser, 1987; Krabbe & Tullgren, 1989).
3. Experts are more sensitive to the task demands and social situation when solving problems (Cushing, Sabers, & Berliner, 1989; Glaser, 1987; Housner & Griffey, 1985).

4. Experts are more opportunistic and flexible in their teaching than are novices (Borko, 1992; Glaser, 1987).
5. Experts represent problems in qualitatively different ways than do novices (Chi, Glaser & Farr, 1988).
6. Experts have fast and accurate pattern recognition capabilities. Novices cannot always make sense of what they experience (Cushing, Sabers & Berliner, 1989; Sabers, Cushing, & Berliner, 1991).
7. Experts perceive meaningful patterns in the domain in which they are experienced (Carter et al., 1988; Chi, Glaser & Farr, 1988; Pinheiro, 1992).
8. Experts may begin to solve problems slower, but they bring richer and more personal sources of information to bear on the problem that they are trying to solve (Peterson & Comeaux, 1987).

Berliner's propositions of expertise in pedagogy serve to facilitate a description of an expert pedagogue. Extrapolating from the research of the process of novice to expert, unlikely will all teachers be considered experts, but for the teachers who truly are, researchers should learn from their practice. Over the last few years, several researchers have undertaken this endeavor that examines literacy practices of exemplary teachers, or in light of Berliner's work, expert pedagogues.

Exemplary Teachers of Literacy

A series of studies have shown that effective teachers are more efficacious than curricular materials, pedagogical approaches, or programs (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Duffy & Hoffman, 1999; Pressley,

Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001; Pressley et al., 1996).

Following is a review of some of the major studies of exemplary literacy instruction.

Pressley et al. (1996) surveyed 83 primary teachers who had been nominated by their supervisors as effective in educating their students to be readers and writers.

Information about these teachers' literacy practices was obtained through two questionnaires. The first questionnaire asked each respondent to list ten practices that they believed to be essential in their literacy instruction. Each teacher generated a list for good readers, one for average readers, and one for weaker readers. The 300 practices that were cited in response to the questionnaire were categorized and used to develop a final questionnaire. This questionnaire requested 436 responses and was 27 pages long.

Analysis of the survey indicated shifts in reported practices between kindergarten and grade two. Yet, all teachers claimed commitment to (a) qualitatively similar instruction for students of all abilities, (b) literate classroom environments, (c) modeling and teaching of both decoding and comprehending skills, (d) extensive and diverse types of reading by students, (e) teaching students to plan, draft, and revise as part of writing, (f) engaging literacy instruction, and (g) monitoring of students' progress in literacy.

In a comparative study, Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Block, & Morrow (1998) expanded the earlier research with the goal of determining teaching practices that distinguish outstanding primary-level teachers of literacy from typical teachers of literacy. Five schools from five different American states were selected for the study. Each school supported students from a diversity of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. At each site, school officials nominated teachers for the study. The participants were observed and interviewed for selection. Then through

prolonged study, the researchers were able to construct case descriptions of each school's most outstanding teacher. Pressley et al. (1998) found nine characteristics that distinguished the successful classrooms in the study:

1. high academic engagement and competence
2. excellent classroom management
3. positive, reinforcing, cooperative environment
4. explicit teaching of skills
5. literature emphasis
6. much reading and writing
7. match of accelerating demands to student competence and scaffolding
8. strong connections across the curriculum

These teachers did not confine themselves to one teaching model but selected practices that worked well. "There is no single magic bullet that develops effective literacy, but rather that learning strategies and skills, metacognition, content knowledge and motivation work in interaction" (Pressley et al, 1998, p. 19).

Another study was conducted to examine the characteristics of exemplary first grade literacy instruction and to capture as many dimensions as possible of expert performance (Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999). The purpose was to learn from the modeling of exemplary teachers and to study exemplary teachers' practices and beliefs. As such, the research might provide insight from experts regarding concerns of constructivist, explicit, and balanced instructional approaches that have been disputed for decades. Participant selection and data collection were similar to other exemplary teaching studies.

Teacher interviews showed that exemplary teachers believed in holistic practices, with literacy programs designed around themes and integrated with other content areas. Teachers advocated strong programs for skill development and well-designed instruction as well as spontaneous skill development. Explicit skill development was taught within the context of authentic literature and content areas and the social collaboration and problem solving associated with an integrated language arts approach. Teachers took responsibility for meeting individual student's needs and providing instruction within small, flexible groups based on specific needs. Partnering with the home in students' literacy development was seen as important as was a positive, supportive classroom climate that was motivating to students.

The presence of thematic studies and interdisciplinary studies was an outstanding characteristic of the exemplary literacy instruction. Teachers felt comfortable articulating their philosophies of how children learn and consciously based their classrooms on their philosophies. Their teaching repertoire included traditional direct instruction as well as constructivist models of learning.

In their efforts to improve teaching and to reform schools, school jurisdictions, school boards, or entire states may mandate particular strategies or approaches to teaching and learning that are believed to improve student achievement results. Such is the case in Kentucky, where literacy instruction has shifted from traditional skills-based instruction to an integrated curriculum that emphasizes a meaning-centered, integrated approach to teaching reading and writing. A review of Cantrell's study (1999) merges with the study by Morrow et al (1999) as Cantrell's work investigated schools within a district where characteristics of exemplary teaching were infused within the academic

program. The purpose of Cantrell's study was to address the concerns that many teachers had in regards to replacing the "basics" for recommended practices for primary students' literacy learning. Its specific purpose was to ascertain whether practices such as providing developmentally appropriate instruction, creating an integrated curriculum, and teaching reading and writing through a meaning-centered approach were effective. Eight teachers were chosen from a sample of 72 teachers. Four were selected based on their high implementation of recommended practices. Four were selected based on their low implementation of recommended practices and use of a skills-based approach to teaching reading and writing.

Cantrell (1998) found that all of the teachers in the study who were considered to be successful used a wide range of children's literature and structured their classrooms so that students were engaged in reading and writing activities for extended periods of times. Students were grouped for instruction as needed with flexible, within-class, mixed-ability groups that changed according to student needs. Explicit skill instruction was provided as needed within the flexible groupings.

Open-ended writing activities that involved students in higher-level writing skills were an important feature of the teachers' literacy instruction. Journal writing and interdisciplinary writing allowed students to increase their writing proficiency. Skills were taught within the context of reading and writing instruction. Achievement test results indicated that the four teachers who had high implementation of the recommended practices for primary programs helped their students become capable readers and writers rather than regress due to the limiting of traditional skills-based instruction.

Another comparative study was conducted by Wray, Medwell, Fox, and Poulson

(2000). This study investigated the characteristics of 228 primary teachers who were identified by an advisory staff as effective in the teaching of literacy and 71 primary teachers who were less effective. All teachers completed a questionnaire designed to inquire about their teaching beliefs and techniques and professional development. The pool was narrowed to 26 effective teachers and 10 less effective teachers. Teachers were observed twice and interviewed about the teaching episodes. Exemplary teachers differed from the less effective teachers in their ability to develop skills through a wider range of teaching activities and through their use of whole texts. Skill development was embedded within the context of reading rather than through worksheets. Grammar instruction was taught within writing activities. Lessons were focused and fast-paced and typically contained more than two tasks. Time on task was monitored and expectations were clearly in place for what was to be accomplished at each stage of the lesson and during work periods. Attention to students' thought-processes was evident in the kinds of questions that teachers asked the class, small groups of students, and individuals.

Two key findings distinguished exemplary literacy teaching. First, they taught a range of literacy skills and knowledge by actively assisting their students in making connections between the text, sentence and word levels of literacy work. Second, they utilized modeling, demonstration, explanations, and exemplifications in order to make the purposes and processes explicit for their students, thus encouraging a “mindful” approach to literacy learning for their students.

Much of the research on exemplary language arts instruction investigated the teaching practices of primary grade teachers. A qualitative study by Allington, Johnston, and Day (2002) examined the key features of exemplary fourth grade teachers. Thirty

teachers from five states were nominated using a snowball procedure from multiple sources in each locale. They were observed ten full instructional days over the course of a year. Data were collected through field notes, audiotapes, videotapes, and structured and unstructured interviews with the teachers and some students. Members of the research team used these various data sources to prepare case studies for 12 of these exemplary teachers. By performing a content analysis of the features identified in each case analysis, five focal elements emerged: the nature of classroom talk, the curriculum materials, the nature of instruction, the work students completed, and the nature of evaluation.

First, the students in these classes routinely read and wrote for as much as half of the school day typically with a 50/50 ratio of reading to writing. In addition, exemplary teachers created multi-leveled, multi-sourced curricula that met the needs of the diverse range of readers in their classrooms. Moreover, text selection was based on the reading level of individual students so that they would experience success in their reading. Also, teaching was typified by crafting direct and explicit demonstrations of the cognitive strategies used by good readers when they read. Exemplary teachers modeled and supported lots of purposeful talk, teacher-student and student-student, across the school day. The classroom talk was more often a conversational nature discussing ideas, concepts, hypotheses, strategies, and responses with others. In addition, assignments were often interdisciplinary and extended over several days. Assignments were typically based on student choice. Finally, evaluation of student work was based on effort and improvement more than achievement, thereby creating an instructional environment where the playing field is more even for high-achieving students as well as lower-achieving students.

Key findings from this study show that students of exemplary teachers show superior educational gains as measured on standardized tests, although their instructional style omitted the drill and practice of test preparation. A finding that left the deepest impression on the researchers was the complexity of classroom conversations. These students demonstrated dramatic improvements in their literate conversation, evidence of internalizing the thinking that was routinely demonstrated.

Themes emerge from the research regarding the nature of exemplary practice in teaching reading and writing and the implicit theories that seem to underlie the approach of the teachers. The exemplary practice of language arts teachers appears to be distinguished by the following characteristics: (a) the classroom is noted for its literacy rich learning environment, (b) class management and organization is apparent, (c) teachers have expectations and hold students accountable for learning as well as behavior, (d) teachers meet individual needs and engage students in learning, (e) excellent instructional strategies are used, (f) skills are taught explicitly within meaningful and contextualized activities, and (g) a meaning centered approach is employed.

The large sample size for each of these studies as well as data collection primarily through surveys, interviews, and observations served to validate the findings. However, the longest period of observation was 10 times over the course of a year. Yet, findings from current research into the practice of exemplary language arts teaching will be useful in identifying exemplary teachers to observe for my study as well as practices that characterize the exemplary teacher's instructional repertoire. Therefore, a synthesis of the

Characteristics and traits illustrative of exemplary teachers will be compiled to frame the criteria selection for prospective participants for the study.

The review of the research on effective teaching and expert literacy pedagogy affirms that teaching expertise rather than programs is crucial to the improvement and facilitation of literacy instruction. Next an examination of Hillocks' (1984) meta-analysis of 60 writing studies and a follow up to his study by Sadoski, Willson, and Norton (1997) will be reviewed.

Writing Pedagogy and Quality Writing

Hillocks (1984) examined how pedagogical approach and specific instructional activities affect the quality of students' writing. Four researchers narrowed the pool of 500 published studies between 1962 and 1982 to 60 studies that met minimal criteria: involvement of a treatment, use of a scale of writing quality applied to samples of writing, the exercise of minimal control for teacher bias, control for differences among groups of students, and scoring under conditions that help to assure validity and reliability. The researchers categorized the teaching methodology into four modes of instruction: environmental, presentational, natural process, and individualized.

Studies reflecting the natural process mode positioned teachers as facilitators for students' discoveries and development. The natural process mode is described as offering (a) generalized objectives, (b) student choice in topic selection usually composed in journals, (c) writing for audiences of peers precipitated by generally positive feedback from peers, and (d) high levels of interaction among students. Studies reflecting the presentational mode situated teachers as the dispenser of knowledge about writing and were found to have the least significant gains in posttest writing scores. This mode is

characterized by (a) relatively clear and specific objectives, (b) lecture and teacher-centered presentation dealing with concepts to be learned and applied, (c) the study of models that illustrate the concept, (d) specific assignments which generally involved imitating a pattern that have been previously discussed, and (e) teacher feedback following the writing.

The environmental mode combined the factors from the presentational and natural process modes and is named suitably to reflect that learning is the result of the interaction of all aspects of the classroom: teacher, peers, materials, and ideas. Studies reflecting the environmental mode showed teachers leading students in understanding the criteria used to judge writing and engaging them in activities whereby they learned to apply strategies that helped them achieve the criteria. The environmental mode of instruction is characterized by (a) clear and specific objectives, (b) materials and problems selected to engage students with each other in specifiable processes important to some particular aspect of writing, and (c) activities, such as small group problem-centered discussions, conducive to high levels of peer interaction. Studies employing this approach produced an effect 22 times greater than the presentational mode. This was the largest, and the only significant, effect for mode of instruction in the meta-analysis. Hillocks' study showed the environmental mode of instruction had an average effect size of .44, compared to the presentational mode, natural process mode, and the individualized mode, which had average effect sizes of .02, .19, and .17 respectively.

Beside the mode of instruction, he coded each study for its instruction associated with writing: grammar and mechanics, sentence combining, models, scales, freewriting, and inquiry. Most of these activities or foci had a positive average effect size with the

exclusion of grammar and mechanics that had an average effect size of $-.29$. The negative effect of exercises in declarative knowledge, such as grammar and mechanics, was due to their displacement of opportunities to actually engage in writing. Of the six instructional variables, Hillocks found the strongest relationships to gains in pretest-posttest writing quality demonstrated by those that addressed procedural knowledge: (a) the use of scales, (b) sentence combining, and (c) inquiry.

Hillocks grouped as post-writing treatments five other variables that addressed aspects of feedback and revision and reported the associated effectiveness of each. Negative feedback had an effect size of $-.20$, feedback on operationally clear objectives for improvement, $.74$, and positive feedback, $.43$. Treatments in which feedback came from both peers and teachers produced slightly greater effects than did those in which feedback came from teacher alone. Treatments that focused on what writers had done well produced far greater effects than treatments that focused on what was wrong with the writing.

Hillocks clearly demonstrated through his meta-analysis that a teacher's mode and focus of writing instruction "has a significant impact on changing the quality of student writing" (p. 217). Hillocks found that effective writing instruction had clear and specific objectives and prepared students to write about specific topics. Brainstorming activities that helped students organize information prior to writing was common in effective writing instruction. Less effective were methods in which students merely wrote lots of text with minimal teacher guidance or interaction. Utilizing models to emulate features of good writing or isolated skills, such as parts of speech, to teach declarative knowledge is

inconsequential if students do not have the procedural knowledge to compose quality writing, because treatments emphasizing procedural knowledge have very strong effects.

Sadoski et al. (1997) attempted to further investigate the interpretations of Hillocks by investigating the relationships of 17 instructional variables to the improvement of writing quality and quantity. Their study included 16 classroom teachers from grades 1, 3-6, and 8 and their 275 students. All 16 teachers had attended a three-week summer writing workshop. Their students were given the same writing prompt in September and again in November although the teacher did not know the prompt was the same. Eight graduate students scored the writing prompt compositions. Interrater scoring reliability was established for writing quality, degree of prewriting, and handwriting quality. Writing quality was quantified using the holistic scoring system developed by Spandel and Stiggins (1990). Quantity was determined by word count. Every week the teacher-participants responded to a 17-item questionnaire in the form of numerical rating scales. The 17 items were instructional variables that were based on research and had been explicitly taught in the writing workshop.

Results from this study showed large gains between the two writing samples in quality and quantity in the lower grade writers and smaller gains in the middle grade writers. Factor analysis was used to determine the related sets of teaching activities that occurred in the classrooms studied. Only one combination of activities was associated with large gains in writing quality, and the researchers interpreted it as closely resembling Hillocks' environmental mode. Teachers who represented this approach emphasized inquiry activities, prewriting strategies, writing about literature, and the use of evaluative scales. Regardless of socio-economic status, residence, or primary language spoken,

lower grades made gains in writing quality and quantity over the ten weeks, indicating that teachers in the lower grades can produce substantial gains in writing quality and quantity in a relatively short amount of time. Amount of physical prewriting preceding the final draft had no relationship to quality.

Results indicated that middle grades (5, 6, and 8) made minor gains in writing quality and quantity in the 10 weeks (effect size of .22). Time spent composing was the only variable that had high loading and was noted almost exclusively among poorer writers. Sadoski et al. (1997) confirms some of the major findings of Hillocks' (1984) review and meta-analysis.

Though the research by Sadoski et al. (1997) was consistent with Hillocks' research, several factors may have affected the validity and generalizability of the findings. First, the findings reflected the instructional practices of only a small group of teachers. Only seven of the sixteen participants were elementary grade teachers, but not as imbalanced as the grade levels represented in Hillocks' study. Next, gains in writing quality were measured by administering the same prompt in the posttest as they had administered in the pretest. Familiarity with the prompt could have enhanced students' writing performance on the posttest, thereby inflating the gains reported in the findings. Finally, researchers did not include any measure to verify teachers' responses to the weekly surveys such as follow-up interviews or observations.

Because the majority of the groups represented in the meta-analysis were secondary students, Hillocks' (1986) considered his pedagogical recommendations predominantly to grades six and higher. The major findings from these two studies had major implications for teacher selection for my study of exemplary teachers' interaction

with struggling writers. In this vein, teachers selected for this study were described as emphasizing instructional practices and foci of instruction that have been identified as influencing the quality of writing. These include instruction that has clear and specific objectives, activities conducive to high levels of peer interaction with a specific task, prewriting activities, the use of literature in their writing instruction, the use of evaluative scales, and instruction in specific strategies that actively engage student in controlling their own writing skills and writing processes.

Though conferencing is employed in many elementary classrooms today, it was not included in Hillock's (1986) meta-analysis as an isolated treatment for effective writing instruction. I view conferencing as a mode of instruction that engages teacher and student in a personalized scaffolded instruction, thereby providing the teacher the opportunity to note first hand why a student is struggling and to provide support in order to avoid or minimize possible frustration. In addition, conferencing may be associated with written and oral feedback, a treatment that was included in the meta-analysis. The research reported by Hillocks suggests that feedback has very little effect on enhancing the quality of student writing. He cautioned, however, that feedback in his review did not examine all the possible variables systematically. These variables associated with feedback include the character of the feedback, the source of feedback (teacher, peer, or a combination), when feedback appearance in the instructional sequence, and the combination of other features of writing instruction with feedback. As a result of the effects of unknown variables associated with feedback, feedback should not be dismissed as an ineffective feature of writing instruction. Stein (in Hillocks, 1986,) suggests that "the success of the environmental approach may be the frequent opportunities for

feedback through the interaction of all aspects of the classroom: teachers, peers, materials, and ideas” (p. 241). In addition, Hillocks recommends that “observational and experimental studies should be extremely useful in adding to knowledge about the nature and effects of feedback of this kind” (p. 241).

The benchmark study by Hillocks (1984) and a follow up study Sadoski et al (1997) examined pedagogical approaches and instructional activities that are most effective in the teaching of writing. The focus of my study resides not only in the writing event but also in the social context. Therefore, the following section will focus on some of the research on talk within the classroom that is relevant to the study. Because talk is a form of scaffolding, a review of the research on scaffolded instruction will follow. Finally, for the purpose of the study, conferencing will be viewed in the context of talk rather than a mode of writing instruction, therefore it will be included in the review associated with classroom talk rather than writing instruction.

Classroom Talk in Knowledge Construction

Classrooms have practices and particular ways of structuring interactions and discourse depending on the literacy events in which children participate (Cazden, 1988), and many researchers assert that classroom discourse to be one of the most critical elements in effective schooling (Calfee, Dunlap, & Wat, 1994; Kuhn, Shaw, & Felton, 1997; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991; Wiencek & O’Flahavan, 1994). Through talk, teachers guide, organize, facilitate, or direct student activities. Allington and Johnston (2000) identified classroom talk as the most important feature of effective fourth-grade teachers’ classroom. In such “conversational communities” (p. 14), collaborative learning allowed for a “great deal of instruction done not by the teacher but by the students” (p.

15). The researchers described the talk as “respectful, supportive, and productive and...not only modeled by the teachers in interactions with students, but also deliberately taught” (p. 14).

Discourse extends beyond what is said by participants; it addresses the entire context and implications of the social interaction. Gee (1996) identified two types of discourse. “Little D,” discourse, examines the interchange of words such as reading, writing and talking. “Big D,” Discourse, examines how discourse is situated or understood in a specific cultural context. Critical discourse analysis is used to examine how social and power relations, identities, and knowledge are constructed through written and spoken texts in social setting.

The term *critical* in Critical Discourse Analysis may serve several purposes. First, it is often associated with studying power relations. Next, it may be used to describe, interpret, and explain the relationship between the form and function of language. Finally, it may be used to explicitly address social problems and seek to solve social problems through the analysis and accompanying social and political action (Rogers, 2003). Gee (2003) sums up his description of Discourse Analysis: HOW people say (or write) things (i.e., form) helps constitute WHAT they are doing (i.e., function). In turn, WHAT they are saying (or writing) helps constitute WHO they are being at a given time and place within a given set of social practices (i.e., their socially situated identities). Finally, WHO they are being at a given time and place within a given set of social practices produces and reproduces, moment by moment, our social, political, cultural, and institutional worlds (p. 48).

Common Talk Pattern

Most classroom talk is characterized by single dominant discourse pattern: A teacher asks a question, a student responds, and the teacher gives feedback (Alvermann, O'Brien, & Dillon, 1990; Cazden, 1988). This pattern is often called the IRE pattern (initiate, respond, evaluate). Although this pattern has the potential to support discussion, it is often used by teachers to quiz students about content they had just studied. Typically teacher talk to elaborate on previous information or presentation of new information accompanies the IRE pattern. Chinn and Waggoner (1992) assert that most teachers who employ this pattern find it very difficult to move away from it. They speculate reasons for the difficulty are because teachers embrace the control and authority associated with this approach, and it seems an effective way to probe student comprehension.

Talk as the Hidden Curriculum

Barnes (1976) asserts that the oral language used to communicate in the classroom is the major factor in determining the actual curriculum that is being taught. He refers to this as the "hidden curriculum" to contrast it with the curriculum that is written in teacher manuals and associated with state standards. Barnes also distinguishes between two types of language functions in the classroom, transmission and interpretation. Dillon and Searle (1981) explain

In the transmission view, knowledge is seen as existing outside the learner, and teaching is seen as transferring a body of knowledge to the learner. In the interpretation view, knowledge is seen as being developed within the learner, and teaching is seen as giving students the opportunity to develop and express knowledge from a more personal perspective. (p. 312)

The interpretation view is more consistent with social constructivist paradigm while the transmission view tends to ignore the importance of what children bring to the task in the form of background knowledge.

Assisted Performance

Researchers have investigated classrooms in which the interpretation view of teaching and learning seems to be evident. Gallimore and Tharp's (1990) establishment of the Kamahameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP) in Hawaii was based on a theory of teaching and learning as assisted performance, which drew from Vygotsky's ZPD. Classroom discourse was similar to conversations between a parent and child or between one who is in close touch with the learner's relationship to the task. Gallimore and Tharp (1990) proposed six means of assistance gleaned from different theories and disciplines for the KEEP model: modeling, contingency management, feeding back, instructing, questioning, and cognitive structuring. Each in turn will be briefly described.

1. "Modeling is the process of offering behavior for imitation" (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990, p. 178). Typically children and members of a culture are socialized by imitation and unreflective acts of mature members. Modeling is a powerful means of assistance and often continues its effectiveness to adulthood.
2. Contingency management assists performance by means of rewards or punishments that follow a behavior. Rewards, praises, and encouragement of gains are essential as student advance through the ZPD.
3. Feeding back is an interactive method for assessment and can be done in many ways from paper-pencil tests to instantaneous teacher responses to children's conversation.

4. The ubiquitous nature of instruction is effective when embedded in a context of other assisted performances. Gallimore and Tharp (1990) state “It is important that instructing be included in teaching, because the instructing voice of the teacher becomes the self- instructing voice of the learner in the transition from apprentice to self-regulated performer. The noninstructing teacher may be denying the learner the most valuable residue of the teaching interaction: that heard, regulating voice, that gradually internalized voice, which then becomes the pupil’s self-regulating ‘still, small’ instructor” (1990, p. 181).
5. Questioning allows the teacher to know what the students are thinking and goes beyond instructing by calling for an active linguistic and cognitive response whereby enabling the teacher to assist and regulate the students construction of support and their reasoning. One component of responsible instruction is assessment which allows the teacher to tailor instruction to the student’s point in the zone of proximal development. An assessment question inquires to discover the level of the pupil’s ability to perform without assistant. In contrast, the assessment question inquires in order to produce a mental operation that the pupil cannot or would produce alone.
6. Last, cognitive structuring refers to provision of a structure for thinking and acting. In a school setting, cognitive structuring may be as grand as worldviews or as simple as labeling. It is further divided into two types: structures of explanation and structures for cognitive activity. Structures of explanation prompt students to make connections between old and new knowledge by

organizing perceptions in new ways. Structures for cognitive activity include structures for memorization, recall, or rules for accumulating evidence.

Talk as Discussion

Wienczek & O'Flahavan (1994) holds the teacher responsible for engaging students in authentic, extended discourses with each other and their teacher. They offer five strategies to create productive discussion groups. The first strategy is to assist students in constructing group participation norms. Next, helping students develop interpretive norms for judging their progress. A third strategy is coaching. The two major forms are proving students with guidance and direction and helping them reflect on their interactions and achievements. Next, by helping students articulate what they are thinking the teacher is reminding students of assumptions they are making, drawing their attention to information, and providing new perspectives. Finally, positive motivation is critical to successful classroom discourse. This can be ensured through discussions that are authentic (Calfee, Dunlap, & Wat, 1994; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991).

These studies of classroom discourse illustrate the complex nature of talk within the classroom. The focus of the study resides not only in the writing event, but in the social context. The various types of talk aided me in two specific ways: (a) selecting the teacher participant for the study based on her manifestation of an interpretive view of talk and (b) analyzing and describing the interaction between the teacher and writers during data analysis. The next section will briefly describe the function of scaffolding because it is foundational to conferencing. Then the many facets of conferencing will be examined as a review of the literature will show the potential of conferencing in composition development.

Scaffolded Talk as Instruction

Vygotsky's (1978) theory suggests that an effective teacher is one who is able to identify the zone of proximal development of the students within her classroom and construct discourse that scaffolds children's developing abilities in environments that are highly social and where students and teacher engage in meaningful activities that are characterized by a great deal of productive talk.

Vygotsky's conception of student-teacher interaction in the zone of proximal development parallels Bruner's (1975, 1978) observation that in facilitating the child's acquisition and development of language, adults provide scaffolds for children as fundamental to their interactions with them. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) proposed the metaphor of scaffolding to describe the adult's temporary support of the child through the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Aspects of scaffolding reflect theoretical tenets of the zone of proximal development (Meyer, 1993).

First, meaning is negotiated through the reciprocal relationship between the scaffolder and the scaffoldee. The simplification of the learning task and provisions for necessary support is dependent on the complementary participation of students contributing to instructional decisions. This reciprocity is similar to the apprentice and master relationship. Second, the goal of scaffolding is to transfer responsibility to the learner whether he may be a child, apprentice, or student. The goal of the teacher and student is for the student to achieve independently what was once only possible with assistance. Finally, scaffolded instruction is socially constructed because it is collaborative, yet nonevaluative. The scaffolding occurs through dialogue indicating that the teacher and student jointly construct an outer structure of shared meaning. When the

student assumes ownership of the newly acquired knowledge, the scaffolding is gradually removed.

Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) suggest six functions of scaffolded instruction later described further by Meyer (1993): (a) recruitment, initiating student interest in the task; (b) reduction in degrees of freedom, constraining the task; (c) direction maintenance, supporting goal-directiveness and risk taking; (d) marking critical features, highlighting discrepancies between progress and goal; (e) frustration control, mediating frustration and independence; and (f) demonstration, modeling solutions.

In the words of Vygotsky, (cited in Tharp and Gallimore, 1988, p. 31) teaching is good only when it “awakens and rouses to life those functions which are in a stage of maturing which lie in the zone of proximal development.” The research on exemplary teachers indicates that frequent scaffolding is characteristic of highly successful teachers, regardless of the grade level taught (Allington, Johnson, Day, 2002; Berliner & Tikunoff, 1976; Block & Mangieri, 1996; Medley, 1977).

Conferencing

Conferencing has a strong theoretical basis in the work of Vygotsky. The intensive interaction with someone who not only serves as a present and responding reader but who is more skillful and experienced than anyone in the learning context is central to Vygotsky’s insistence on the dialectic between the individual and society. That is, teacher-student writing conferences theoretically allow students to work in a zone of proximal development. Thus, the writing conference is a scaffold that may provide needs-based one-to-one instruction.

Spoken text has an instantaneous feedback system that provides the speaker with immediate cues to indicate that the receiver comprehends the message. Response from the receiver may include questions, comments, facial expressions, hand gestures, or a laugh, depending on the comprehension and interpretation of the receiver. If the speaker is alert to the feedback, he or she will clarify the message in order to more adequately communicate the point of the message. Conversely, in written text, the writer cannot see the response of the reader in order to clarify his or her intended message. Often in children's writing, there are gaps in the text, bits of viable information that the writer omitted assuming the reader could follow the writer's thought. Similarly, only parts of what is going on in the mind of the writer are reproduced as written text. These gaps may leave the reader confused, uninterested, or frustrated. Poor written communication can be improved by scaffolding the writer with "more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Conferencing is analogous to the questioning, commenting, gesturing, and responding of the listener during verbal text.

Conferencing is a private conversation between the teacher and student about the student's writing or writing process. Writing experts assert that conferences with children about their writing enable teachers to learn what students already know (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983, 1994). As Graves (1994) contended, "The purpose of the writing conference is to help children teach you about what they know so that you can help them more effectively with their writing" (p. 59). Still, the art of conferencing is not simply marked by teachers acting as good listeners. While students convey what they know about writing through the creative process of writing personal narratives, poems, short stories, and editorials, teachers simultaneously respond to this writing both as

instructional leaders and as interested and knowledgeable readers. Teachers use the writing conference as one way to provide the models or demonstrations that enable student writers to "discover the meanings they don't yet know" (Atwell, 1987, p. 94). In an effective conference, the teacher plays a key role as that of co-discoverer of the writer's meaning and writing processes (Calkins, 1994). Thus, the writing conference is an optimal moment for teachers to employ their pedagogical content knowledge or "the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations-in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9).

Based on the perceptions of twelve middle school teachers and students, teachers who are good at conducting conferences understand their dual roles. They must see themselves as text-oriented instructors who build skill and student-oriented nurturers who build confidence (Wilcox, 1997). According to those interviewed for the study, teachers were valued more for their skill at generating ideas and facilitating revision than for their skills in writing mechanics. Focusing on the role of student-oriented nurturers was by far the most important teacher role. Caring about students and being recognized as consultants and coaches rather than managers and critics were paramount. Other aspects of nurturing teachers were (a) respect for their students, (b) students' trust in the sincerity of their teachers, and (c) high expectations during a writing conference.

The research on writing conferences of teacher and adolescent has been reported as a successful scaffold to generate, elaborate, and extend student writing (Sperling, 1990, 1991). The amount of active participation by the student depended on the instructional purpose, duration, and place of the conference in the sequence of writing

tasks. Collaboration occurred on a continuum both across and among students. The multiplicity of conferences allowed different students to flourish at different times as active participants in conference talk (Sperling, 1990).

In a study of three ninth grade students, Sperling (1991) noted that individual students may position themselves differently during a writing conference thereby influencing the discourse about their compositions as well the teacher's response to their compositions. Findings from this study suggest that it is not productive for the teacher to engage in the same kind of talk for each individual.

Newkirk (1995) addressed the changing roles of conference participants with his notion that student-teacher conferences are performances in which both participants assume quasi-dramatic roles in collaborative negotiation, and in which teachers must engage in "role-shifting to ease the conversational burden on students" (p. 193). Such interplay points to the need for finely tuned dialogue to individual learners (Sperling, 1991).

Inequity in Conferencing

Consistent with Sperling's (1991) assertion, writing conferences should not unfold the same way for each student. Differentiation should occur if teachers are to meet the needs of writers with widely differing experiences and skill bases (Glasswell, 2001; Sperling, 1991). Glasswell, Parr, and McNaughton (2003) examined the conferences of teachers with six writers. Teachers in the study had been recommended by the district language arts curriculum advisors as exemplary teachers of writing. Three students had been identified by classroom teachers as struggling writers and three as proficient writers. Core activities in their classrooms included: teachers explicitly teaching writing through

modeling or mini-lessons, conferencing with their students, providing time for independent writing, and ensuring that children published their writing. Though the teachers in the study were considered expert teachers of writing, the researchers discovered particular teaching practices and instructional choices worked against themselves in conferencing with their struggling writers.

First, teachers may spend more time conferencing with struggling writers than with more proficient writers, yet often there is less sustained interaction time between the teacher and struggling writer. In the study of one 22-minute conference, jointly focused interaction lasted only 2 minutes and 6 seconds and other students interrupted the teacher over 10 times. During the interruptions, the conferencing student's attention was diverted to other actions within the classroom, thus distracting him from the teacher's goal of moving him toward sustained writing effort.

Second, teachers allowed themselves to be interrupted more frequently when conferencing with struggling writers. Data collected across all nine teachers in the study indicated that struggling writers were interrupted twice as often as proficient writers and the higher the school grade the more frequently struggling writers were interrupted and less frequently were proficient writers interrupted. Furthermore, the interruptions were significantly longer for struggling writers.

Next, teachers often focused on low levels of text during interaction with struggling writers. Text features that received focus were mechanics, word choice, sentence structure, and syntax, thereby limiting the potential for these students to expand their emerging knowledge of writing. However, interactional turns with proficient writers

were associated with higher levels or deep features of texts such as goals, intentions, and rhetorical concerns.

Finally, teachers demonstrated a control stance with struggling writers by controlling the focus and content of the conference. Also by identifying errors in the students' compositions, teachers positioned the students toward dependence on them rather than giving the students opportunities to practice independence while having a knowledgeable other as a safety net.

Written Comments

Conferencing is superior to the written response (Sperling, 1991; Sperling & Freedman, 1987) though written feedback is still common in many classrooms today. Written comments omit the nurturing that most writer's value (Wilcox, 1997) and disregards the teacher as a key role player in the co-discovery of the writer's meaning (Calkins, 1994), thus leaving a student floundering in the zone of proximal development. Written comments, as opposed to conferencing, fail to provide the dynamic interaction between teacher and student and may result in students misinterpreting comments. Even in classrooms that are characterized by process orientations, high-achieving students may misinterpret teacher-written comments on students' compositions (Sperling & Freedman, 1987). Written comments may not provide an adequate learning experience for all students simply because the verbal dynamic interaction between students and their teachers is missing or because comments may refer to information that had not surfaced in class, thus leaving the writer to guess what the teacher's comments mean (Sperling, 1991). Because some students may depend on the teacher as external authority, students

may revise texts in response to teacher comments, yet the revision may be inferior to the original text (Freedman & Sperling, 1987).

Summary of Conferencing

Supporting the notion of scaffolding through conferencing, Gallimore and Tharp (1990) argue that “teachers do not conduct instructional conversations because they do not know how. They do not know how, because they have never been taught. They almost never have opportunities to observe effective models or occasions for practicing and receiving feedback or for competent coaching by a skilled mentor. Like all learners, teachers themselves must have their own performance assisted if they are to acquire the ability to assist the performance of their students” (p. 198).

The focus and the participants in observational studies on conferencing have been diverse, but the findings have offered considerations for pedagogical practices. And though conferencing has been generally regarded by some as an effective form of writing instruction (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1994; McIver & Wolf, 1999; Murray, 1979; Wilcox, 1997), the “dialogic flaws” (Sperling, 1991) may impair the benefits of conferencing (Glasswell, Parr & McNaughton, 2003; Lensmire, 1994; McCarthey, 1994; Nickel, 2001; Sperling & Freedman, 1987). Regardless of the focus or participants, most teachers who approach the often-difficult task of a writing conference do so with the intent of guiding each student toward independence. Some students need more individualized, guided instruction that conferencing affords. Other students may feel more comfortable asking for assistance in a dyadic rather than a whole class situation. Conferences may assume different formats and serve a variety of purposes. They provide the space for teachers to assess the progress of students, help students solve a problem

with their writing, offer suggestions for revision, discuss plans for student writing, and to provide direct instruction on a problematic area, or to listen to students talk about their writing. For many students, conferencing alone cannot provide adequate writing instruction, but is useful when it is employed as a means to monitor students' writing and supported by effective writing instruction.

The review continues by considering the research relevant to struggling writers. Included in the review are characteristics and writing behaviors of struggling writers and the impact of inadequate instruction on the quality of their writing. Next, research on strategic writing instruction for struggling writers will be presented. Finally, because gender differences may influence the writing behaviors and writing content as well as the evaluation due to perceived gender of the writer, a brief selection of gender research will be included.

Struggling Writers

Students struggle with the act of writing for several reasons. Some students toil with generating ideas for written compositions or once that idea is established, they may find it difficult to add enough substance to support their idea. Others may struggle with the physical act of writing because they are hindered by poor handwriting, spelling, or mechanics. Still other students may struggle due to their limited exposure to print. These are just a few of the many reasons that children may struggle with writing.

Writing Characteristics

Faigley, Cherry, Jolliffe, and Skinner (1985) compared the characteristics of less capable high school writers, or struggling writers, with more capable writers. Significant

differences were found between these two groups of writers. A comparison of the two groups are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison Between Capable and Less Capable Writers

(Faigley, Cherry, Jolliffe, and Skinner, 1985)

Capable Writers	Less capable Writers
View writing as developing ideas	See writing as putting words on paper
Are aware of audience, purpose, and form adapt writing to meet these demands	Do not write with audience, purpose, or form in mind
Pause as they draft; reread	Do not reread or reflect
Are concerned with ideas	Are concerned with mechanics; view correct spelling and punctuation as hallmarks of good writing
Vary writing length based on purpose	Assume that longer pieces are better than shorter pieces
Collaborate with peers	Do not collaborate effectively
Assess their own writing	Do not assess own writing
Revise to communicate more effectively	Revise to make cosmetic changes
Use many strategies and vary according to assignment	Use fewer strategies and do not monitor their use

Struggling writers often have misconceptions about capable writers. In a study of elementary age children, Bright (1995) noted that struggling writers view capable writers

as students who work hard, have good penmanship, and write long compositions. Additionally, they believe that good writers write single draft compositions without having to revise or edit it. Poor writers show clear problems in simply generating text (Graham, Harris, MacArthur, & Schwartz, 1991) and are less knowledgeable about writing and the writing process than more capable writers (Englert, Raphael, Fear, & Anderson, 1988). Their compositions are generally brief and lack detail and elaborations (Graham et al., 1991). They are likely to produce poorly organized text at the sentence and the paragraph levels. Poor writers are less likely to revise spelling, punctuation, grammar, or the text in order to increase the clarity of their communication (Englert, 1990; Graham et al., 1991) although their compositions are replete with spelling, capitalization, punctuation and handwriting errors (Graham et al., 1991).

Behaviors of Struggling Writers

Careful examination of children with learning disabilities in written expression has identified several factors that may intensify the lack of content in their compositions. First, it is not unusual for these students to terminate their writing before they have accessed all they know about a topic. In one study, children with writing difficulties spent six to seven minutes writing an opinion essay, but when prompted to write more, they generated two to four times more text, and at least one-half of the prompted material was new and useful (Graham, 1990). Yet, once an idea is generated and reproduced as written text, they are reluctant to discard it even if it is not pertinent to the thesis (Graham et al., 1991). Next, interference from poorly developed text production skills such as handwriting, spelling, and mechanics contributes to the failure to generate possible ideas (Graham et al., 1991). Furthermore, lack of, or incomplete knowledge or interest in the

assigned topic may influence the quantity and quality of a composition (Graham & Harris, 1997).

The quality and methodology for teaching struggling writers may impede writing achievement for some students. Difference in the quality of instruction for low reading achievement (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1991) is resonated in some of the research on the writing of special needs students. Christenson, Thurlow, Ysseldyke, and McVicar (1989) studied 92 special needs students in ten schools, noting that these students averaged only about 20 minutes of writing each day and more than sixty per cent of that time was spent filling out worksheets, practicing handwriting, and completing spelling activities. Special education teachers of primary students often limited students' experiences with writing to filling out worksheets and copying words as well as working alone.

In contrast, writing events that promote social interaction has shown promise for struggling writers. Cooperative tasks can introduce young writers to approaches and styles of writing that are different from their own, therefore influencing their own composing (McCutchen, 1988). In a study by Zimmerman (1989), children acquired self-regulatory skills through their interaction with others. Moreover, a study by Karegianes, Pascarella, and Pflaum (1980) suggests that peer feedback may be even more effective than teacher feedback in improving writing performance for high school students. The participants for this study were 49 low-achieving 10th grade students attending an inner city school largely populated by Latino students. All students in the study had the same teacher and same instruction for 10 weeks, but one class participated in peer editing and the other class continued with teacher editing. Outside raters scored posttreatment

compositions. Though not significantly different, the compositions of students in the peer editing group were better than the compositions in the teacher editing group. The researcher suggests that higher achievement may be related to time on task.

Informal methods of learning may not be uniformly effective for all students (Mather, 1992; Pressley & Rankin, 1994). Process writing teachers provide more direct assistance, but they may offer little or no explication: instead they may use hints, questions, tactful responding to guide students' discovery during conferences, teachable moments, or mini-lessons (Freedman, 1993). Though this natural learning may present ample opportunity to write and read for real purposes, learn to spell by immersing students in a literacy-rich environment, capitalize on teachable moments and mini-lessons, and share and publish student writing, these activities may not provide enough direct instruction for struggling writers (Delpit, 1988; Reyes, 1991).

Reyes (1991) in her two-year study of 50 Spanish speaking sixth graders in two bilingual education classes noted that after two years of a process approach to writing most were still making the same spelling and grammar errors as before. Nor did these students adopt models of conventional form in their writing even though their teacher modeled correct form, presented mini-lessons on how to apply correct form, and even increased reading and writing activities.

As Lisa Delpit (1986) implores, do not "assume that the voices of the majority speak for all" (p.20). Direct instruction may be the most effective instruction for students who are at risk for reading and writing difficulties, including students with learning disabilities, those who are economically and socially disadvantaged, and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Delpit (1988) reported that without explicit

instruction, minority students feel they are being denied access to information needed for success in mainstream society.

The components of writing that hinder the acquisition of writing for some students may be amended through components that are identified with writing workshop. Tompkins (2002) observed in an intervention program of 24 seventh-grade students who struggled with reading and writing. Many of the aforementioned characteristics of struggling writers were characteristic of the students in her study as well. Through the components of writing workshop, such as direct instruction during mini-lessons and through students sharing of their published writing in the Author's Chair, as well as teacher providing levels of support identified by Fountas and Pinnell (1996), the students were more motivated to write and worked to improve the quality of their writing though the researcher does not indicate whether the writing quality did indeed improve.

Summary of Struggling Writers

The research on struggling writers indicates that struggling writers have difficulties with mental operations that underlie generating content and revising effectively (Harris & Graham, 1996a). The research on struggling writers asserts common writing characteristics among struggling writers (Englert, 1990; Englert et al., 1988; Faigley et al., 1985; Graham, 1990; Graham et al., 1991) and their misperceptions of competent writers (Bright, 1995). Writing instruction for struggling writers has typically focused on decontextualized, low-level skills (Christenson et al., 1989). Informal writing instruction may not be uniformly effective for all students (Mather, 1992; Pressley & Rankin, 1994), and for some students, explicit instruction may be the most effective instruction for students who are at risk for reading and writing difficulties,

including students with learning disabilities, those who are economically and socially disadvantaged, and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse (Delpit, 1986; Reyes, 1991). The body of research on struggling writers has implications for writing instruction that addresses the needs of struggling writers. The next section will discuss strategic writing instruction along with the instructional implications of the research presented thus far and some of the issues surrounding implementation of these writing models.

Strategic Writing Instruction for Struggling Writers

The nature of process writing has caused some concern among educators asserting that it does not provide enough support for students who face challenges in learning to write (Delpit, 1995; Graham & Harris, 1994; Mather, 1992; Reyes, 1992a). This concern is consistent with Hillock's (1984) report that while the mean effect size for process writing was positive (.19), the effect size was more than two times smaller than the environmental approach (.44) that is characterized by clear and specific objectives that are (a) pursued through structured tasks, (b) activities, such as small group problem-centered discussions that are conducive to high levels of peer interaction, and (c) materials and problems are selected that engage students with each other in some specific process important to some particular aspect of writing. Students who struggle with writing require more extensive, structured, and explicit instruction in the skills and strategies critical to literacy; however, but not as decontextualized learning of meaningless skills, but rather in an environment that promotes students as active collaborators in their own learning and where dialogue sharing and scaffolding are critical components (Englert et al., 1991; Graham & Harris, 1993).

Several writing models have been developed over the last decade in an attempt to provide strategic instruction for poor writers and have components that align with the environmental approach noted as effective in Hillock's (1984) study. A sampling of these models includes Cognitive Strategy Instruction in Writing or CSIW, (Englert et al., 1991), Self Regulated Strategy Development or SRSD, (Harris & Graham, 1993), and Strategic Writing Instruction (Collins, 1998).

Cognitive Strategy Instruction in Writing

Englert et al. (1991) developed a program that focuses on teaching writing strategies to middle elementary age students through verbal modeling. The strategies are solidly grounded in current theories of the process-writing approach, and have been designed to guide students and teachers through the stages of planning, organizing, drafting, editing, and revising. The mnemonic "P.O.W.E.R." is used to support students through the process. Each step of the process is supported by "Think Sheets." Think Sheets correspond to each subprocess and guide students through the writing process by focusing on the metacognitive processes in writing. External questions are included on each Think Sheet in order to free some cognitive capacity that might otherwise be used to remember the questions.

The seminal study by Englert et al. (1991) was conducted simultaneously in both general and special education settings and included students both with and without learning disabilities. Students in the cognitive strategy instruction condition received 5 months of instruction that consisted of four phases: (a) text analysis, (b) modeling the writing process, (c) guided student practice in composition, and (d) independent writing. Students in the control classrooms received regular writing instruction, which included

opportunities to compose texts two to three times per week. The research of the intervention of CSIW by 183 third and fourth graders shows that the intervention improves the quality of student writing. The essays of CSIW students included more of the elements of the Think Sheets and in more coherent ways, more aware of the needs of the reader, and the voice of their writing was more evident than essays of students not receiving CSIW. Though the concreteness of the model appears to present strategic writing instruction as memorized steps and procedures, CSIW is based on principals of a sociocultural view of learning that writing instruction should be embedded in meaningful and contextualized activities and the role of social and dialogic interactions to scaffold cognitive development (Englert & Mariage, 1996).

Self Regulated Strategy Development

Harris and Graham (1996b) recommend that teachers combine instruction in process writing with more intensive instruction. “Teachers conduct ongoing assessments of each student’s abilities, skills, knowledge, motivation, social characteristics, and prior experiences. They then arrange whatever support children need - from direct explanation through discovery” (p. 27). The Self Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model, (Graham & Harris, 1993) is a theoretically and empirically validated instructional approach that has been used to teach writing, reading, and math strategies to students experiencing academic difficulties (Harris & Graham, 1996a; Harris, Schmidt, & Graham, 1998). Presently, more than 15 studies using SRSD to teach writing strategies have been conducted in a variety of settings. These settings include resource and regular classrooms, one-on-one tutoring sessions, and small and large group instruction (Graham & Harris, 1993; Harris, et al., 1998), with most of the writing strategies typically

mastered in six to nine 40-minute sessions (Graham & Harris, 1999). Studies indicate that teaching writing strategies using SRSD leads to improvement in four main aspects of students' performance: quality of writing, knowledge of writing, approach to writing, and self-efficacy (Graham, Harris, MacArthur, & Schwartz, 1991; Harris et al., 1998). Effect sizes for measures of writing performance almost always exceed 1.0 in SRSD studies (Graham & Harris, 1993).

Strategic Writing Instruction

Strategic instruction is rooted in cognitive science that claims the basic tenets of declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge supplies the writer with knowledge about the world, ideas, entities, and relations that is stored in one's memory, yet research by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) has shown that expert writers have more knowledge of the procedure for writing, such as elaboration, focus, and goal direction, than do novice writers. Idea generation, translating ideas into text, correcting errors of organization, grammar, and spelling, improving the transition between ideas, and monitoring the overall written product can be a daunting task for most writers, especially for struggling writers. Through instruction in procedural knowledge, specifically in the form of self-regulatory strategies, teachers instruct students in ways of thinking about writing by setting goals and monitoring progress (Collins and Collins, 1996). Collins and Collins (1998) present an approach to writing instruction by integrating skills and processes in what they call Strategic Writing Instruction. They contend that many writers automatically turn to default strategies when they are faced with daunting writing tasks. These strategies include copying, visualizing, and narrating.

Rather than discouraging the use of default strategies, Collins suggests reconceptualizing these strategies as a scaffold for strategic writing.

Collins claims “There is nothing wrong with the copying strategy when it is used to conceive but not to deceive” (1998, p. 144). Educators may promote writing by helping students learn to transform copied materials to support their ideas rather than steering writers away from copying altogether. Exposing writers to published pieces can expand the writing of struggling writers. Indeed, what were once considered plagiarisms are now referred to as writing innovations. Another strategy that may benefit writing is the “Read, Think, Summarize, and Interpret Strategy.” Students write a summary of what they are reading in one column and their responses and interpretations in another column. This double-entry note-taking encourages writers to put ideas into their own words. Finally, visualizing may help writers organize their compositions, a strategy that has been noted within the context of strategic writing models (Englert et al., 1991; Harris & Graham, 1993). Collins (1998) maintains that strategic writing instruction involves the teacher co-constructing strategies with students by examining the difficulty the student is experiencing and collaborating with the student a strategic way around the difficulty.

Meta-Analysis of Research on Writing Interventions

Gersten and Baker (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of 13 studies that used experimental or quasi-experimental designs and explicitly implemented interventions to improve the content of expository, narrative, and creative writing of students with learning disabilities. Participants in the study were given the opportunities to select their own writing topics. Three interventions were common among the studies and consistently produced strong effects on the quality of students’ writing. Summed across all 13 studies,

the mean effect size on the aggregate writing measure was .81, which is considered moderately strong. The three interventions are explicit teaching of the recursive processes in the writing process, providing students with a framework or plan sheet to guide their planning and writing of different writing genres, and giving feedback to students on the quality of their writing from either teachers or peers. Consistent with previous studies, the results of the meta-analysis suggests that social interaction coupled with explicit teaching of writing strategies and text structures is considerably beneficial to the writing quality of struggling writers.

Summary of Strategic Writing Instruction

Research in strategic writing instruction has provided the field with a wealth of knowledge of effective instructional strategies that assist struggling writers. A sampling includes modeling and using Think Sheets (Englert et al., 1991), graphic organizers and mnemonics, (Harris & Graham, 1993), and reformulating and restating ideas from source documents (Collins, 1998).

Whereas some students may own strategies that support their writing, students who struggling with the development of more mature writing processes often require more intensive instruction and greater support (Harris & Graham, 1996a). The goal of all strategic writing instruction is for teachers and students to begin to think strategically and carefully about writing as they come together to co-construct personal meaningful strategies that will assist the struggling writing in overcoming writing difficulties. The writing needs of individual students will vary as well as the purpose for the writing; therefore, no single set of strategies will provide the right approach to all students at any given time.

While it appears that cognitive strategy instruction is an effective way to teach written composition, the research is limited in at least two ways. First, most of the experimental studies have been conducted in controlled environments where selected, small, and relatively homogeneous groups of students have been pulled out of regular classroom writing instruction to participate in an intervention. These studies have focused on students with learning disabilities (Graham & Harris, 1993; Graham & Harris, 1999; Harris, et al., 1998). The researchers of the SRSD model described above assert that it was not designed to replace any existing writing curriculum, but rather to complement effective practices in writing instruction. However, most of the experimental studies were conducted outside of a regular classroom situation. And secondly, long term maintenance and generalization of knowledge gained during instruction has been minimally investigated. In three studies (Harris & Graham, 1989a, 1989b; Sawyer, Graham, & Harris, 1992), students were pulled out of their special education resource classrooms for writing instruction. To test for generalization of strategy use, they were asked to write a story while in the special education classrooms. In all three studies, students were able to generalize instruction from one setting to another. The results from these studies indicate that the effects of instruction on writing achievement are maintained for students with learning disabilities for up to four weeks (Harris & Graham; 1989a, 1989b; Sawyer et al., 1992).

The effects of strategic writing instruction to struggling writers within the context of social interaction is consistent with many of the tenets of Hillocks' (1984) description of the environment approach to teaching writing, the mode that had the most significant effect size. This study extended beyond the assumption that achievement is related to a

particular writing model, instructional event, or specific cognitive strategies, to examine the socially constructed learning of writing. Once that learning is detailed and chronicled, the establishment of critical principles that cut across students, gender, and cognitive ability can be orchestrated to advance the cognitive and social participation of group members.

Gender Differences in Writing

Gender differences in choice of writing topics and writing behaviors may have unintentional effects on students' writing performance, thereby contributing to the struggle some students have with writing. Outcomes on national writing assessments indicate that there is a difference in writing performance between genders and between races. The National Assessment of Educational Progress 2002 writing assessment, (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003) conducted both nationally and at the state level, examined students' writing abilities in three types of writing: informative, persuasive, and narrative. Approximately 276,000 students at grades 4, 8, and 12 were included in the assessment. The complex sampling design followed several stages: selection of geographic areas, selection of public and private schools within those areas; and random selection of students with the selected schools. About 139,000 4th grade students in 5,500 schools, 118,500 8th graders in 700 schools, and 18,500 12th grade students in 700 schools were assessed. Nineteen per cent of 4th graders, 17 per cent of 8th graders, and 11 per cent of 12th graders were identified as special needs students. Special needs students were provided with required accommodations.

The results showed substantial performance gaps between males and females at all three grades, with females outscoring their male counterparts. The difference in

writing scaled scores favoring females was 17 at 4th grade, 21 at 8th grade, and 25 at 12th grade. Though there was no significant difference in the scaled score gap between genders in 4th and 8th grades, there was a significant gap at the 12th grade level.

Characteristics of boys as they interact with literacy may contribute to the poor writing of some boys. Primary teachers observe that boys do not get as involved in role play or dress up as readily as girls or express their thoughts and feelings about books as openly as girls (Barrs & Piedgeon, 1998 as cited in Barrs, 2000). Girls, more often than boys, journey into the lives of others and also into the self through reading. Because reading and writing often summon the aesthetic stance (Rosenblatt, 1978), a position that may be uncomfortable for some boys, it is only natural that their minimal engagement will produce insubstantial responses to the literacy event.

Graves (1973) monitored the thematic choices of 69 seven-year-old children by categorizing topics represented in their 860 unassigned papers. The themes were grouped according to territorial choice. Primary territory covers the areas of children's greatest experiences, namely, home and school. Secondary territory widens to include the metropolitan area around the child such as transportation, professions, sports, and community events. Extended territory refers to national and world events and persons identified with them. Data from the writing samples showed that girls wrote more in primary territory whereas boys wrote more in secondary and extended territories. The content of writing by boys was typically aggressive, violent, and was more about omnipotent persons and objects. Names and use of the first person was characteristically ignored. Conversely, girls expressed their personal feelings, developed characters, and typically wrote in first person. Graves offered that during the four months of observation,

girls were never exposed to extended vocational roles of women and their changing adult roles whereas boys were stimulated by contact with various community helpers and many male professions, thereby representing the changing role of the adult male.

Twenty-two years later and despite feminist influence, writing choices of girls and boys has remained fairly constant. Fleming's (1995) study of second grade students noted that students wrote along stereotypical gender lines. The boys in her study tended to write adventure and sport stories, whereas the girls wrote stories about relationships and descriptions of events. Gormley, Hammer, and McDermott (1993) also noted clear gender differences of 6th grade boys and girls in their response journals with their classroom teacher. The study extended over a two-year period with nine girls and eleven boys the first year and eight girls and eight boys for the following year. Girls were more likely to initiate and provide scriptal information from their own lives than were boys. Boys wrote more questions to the teacher. Likewise, the boys received more directives from their teacher than did the girls.

Peterson (2002) examined the ways in which the public nature of peer conferencing influence the writing choices of 8th grade students. Examination of students writing over five weeks suggests that boys generally positioned themselves within dominant masculine discourses, yet some wrote about relationships between male friends, and some girls wrote about personal experiences playing team sports – a more powerful masculine discourse. Five groups of two boys and two girls met with researchers to discuss writing topic selection for boys and girls. The boys claimed that they would never consider writing about romantic relationships, a common topic choice for girls, yet students supported girls in crossing gender lines to write sports stories. The peer groups

created different social factors thus situating the authorial voices of students. Girls and boys in the study wrote with the knowledge that the content of their writing would open up or constrain their literate identities by their choice of writing topic.

Gender differences in topic selection continue throughout high school and cross ethnic groups as well. Hunt (1995) examined 196 free choice writing samples of bilingual high school student in Puerto Rico. The researcher determined that males were more likely to write about philosophical questions, adventure, and social problems, whereas female students were more likely to write about relationships and subjects closer to home such as family and school. A Swedish study examined the themes within compositions by 13- 14-year old boys and girls about their future fictitious families. Thirty-eight of 58 narratives written by boys were coded as having family life, sports, or work as the main content. Friendships and relationships to other people were also central issues in their compositions. Twenty of the 58 boys wrote about odd or eccentric persons who lived incredulously. These narratives were characterized by irony, humor, and absurdity, but this genre was not evident in the girls' texts (Hallden, 1997). Hallden (1999) suggests that the detached humorous style of some of the male writers is a way to write about maleness without the familiarity and to keep intimacy at a distance.

Not only are there noticeable gender differences in choice of writing topics, but males may position themselves differently from females during writing conferences. Males' reserved approach to peer -conferencing may contribute to their functional writing expertise, but may minimize the advantage of personal and intimate scaffolding. According to Styslinger (1999), peer revision is biased toward female students. In a study of seniors in an English composition class, Styslinger noted her female students, who

were much more social than her male students, tended to dominate the peer revision process. Though students preferred to conference with members of their own gender, they occasionally turned to the opposite sex for advice. When these intergender conferences occurred, female students tended to begin the conversation and maintain it with prodding questions. Males tended to contribute purely functional questions, such as “Where does the period go if I have quotations?” Female students seemed more comfortable with the peer revision process than did the male students. When males conversed with one another, their interaction was minimal and dialogue was editorial, yet further complicated by their bodies turned outward and away from one another. Five male students secluded themselves entirely during peer revision.

Clearly, when given a choice, boys and girls generally do not write about common topics. The tone of compositions written by boys is usually more assertive, detached, and physical. Writing by girls tends to be reflective and more oriented toward relationships. The interaction of high school boys during writing conferences was clearly different from their girl counterparts. Therefore in order to curtail bias and promote fairness when assigning topics to students, students may benefit if teachers are aware of gender differences and writing habits.

When addressing the gender gap in writing, specifically violence as a topic selection by some boys’, Newkirk (2000) contends that for them:

Literacy gets in the way of the need to move, to talk, to play, to live in and with one’s own body in one sense, writing represents the choice of language over physical action; yet this choice can be mitigated by stressing action in the writing. Watch any first- grade boys composing and you will see the drama of

hands simulating explosions, accompanied by sound effects, with intervals of consultation with friends about who is in which space ship. When I have asked boys how their writing differs from that of girls, they are dismissive of the lack of action in the girls' stories. As one said, making a face, "They write about walking home together." (p. 296)

In summary, struggling writers have amazing thoughts and ideas, but because of repeated failures, false starts, illegible handwriting, limited knowledge of grammar and mechanics, and perhaps even gender or ethnicity or other inherent factors, they seldom learn to appreciate and value their ideas as text.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to review the theory and research that are relevant to understanding the interaction between struggling writers and exemplary writing teachers. The review began by examining Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and the construction of meaning as heavily dependent on oral language in social settings. The review was organized around four bodies of knowledge: effective teaching and expert pedagogues, classroom talk, struggling writers, and gender differences in writing. An in-depth examination of Hillock's (1986) meta-analysis of writing instruction and a follow up study by Sadoski et al. (1997) were also reviewed.

The ability to articulate one's thoughts through written communication is central to being literate. Yet, for the struggling writer, writing can be an overwhelming task. Murray (1984), an expert writer, sympathizes: writing is "one of the most complicated human activities" (p.6). Struggling writers may toil with generating ideas for written compositions or once that idea is established may find it difficult to add enough substance

to support their idea. Others may struggle with the physical act of writing because they are hindered by poor handwriting, spelling, or mechanics. Still other students may struggle due to their limited experiences or exposure to print. A synthesis of the research on effective teaching, and more specifically expert pedagogues, indicates that the teacher is more instrumental in promoting academic achievement than methods, models, or approaches. Building on prior research on writing instruction, this study examined more thoroughly the interaction between struggling writers and their writing teachers.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

This chapter explains how the study was conducted, including the research questions, the design of the study, participants and site selection, data collection procedures, and data analysis

The Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the interaction between exemplary teachers and fourth-grade struggling writers. Central to school reform and the quest for student achievement is the notion that improved teaching, particularly, exemplary teaching, is critical to the efforts (Pressley et al., 1996). Exemplary teachers typically create instructional plans derived from their analysis of students' needs (Pressley et al., 1997) and seem to hold a privileged knowledge of teaching and learning that is enacted in their practice (Berliner, 1994; Collinson, 1994; Noddings, 1995). Exemplary teachers also have been shown to have a substantial effect on the achievement of struggling students. The difference between having a good teacher for three years in a row versus another teacher can represent as much as 50 percentile points in student achievement on a 100-point scale (Babu and Mendro, 2003; Mendro et al., 1998). This is an influence greater than race, poverty level or parent's education (Carey, 2004).

This study examined the interaction between teacher and student during writing instruction, particularly whole group instruction because this was the instructional format used most frequently by Mrs. Ring and Mrs. Mac, the fourth grade teachers selected for

the study. Through analysis and interpretation, I anticipated developing a better understanding of how these teachers interacted with struggling writers during instruction.

The two research questions were:

1. What is the nature of the interaction between exemplary teachers of writing and struggling writers?
2. What are the responses of struggling writers to the interaction?

Design of the Study

Qualitative Inquiry

This study adheres to factors suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) and Merriam (2002) that define and characterize qualitative research. First, this study was naturalistic in order to preserve the important factor of context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). I was an observer in the participants' daily lives, more specifically in a fourth-grade writing block. Second, qualitative methods typically produce a rich description about a much smaller number of people and cases due to the duration of the study and the direct contact the researcher has with real-world situations as they unfold naturally (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Data are descriptive and anecdotes and quotes from the data are used to support findings. Third, qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). By examining the "how," qualitative research emphasizes the process by which data are gathered. Fourth, because researchers are primarily concerned with collecting and describing, data analysis is inductive rather than deductive (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The researcher is the "primary instrument for data collection" (Merriam, 2002, p.5) which enabled me to focus on the process by which I gathered data, while noting emerging patterns and trends in the data

along the way. I examined and analyzed the data as it was collected, and after transcribing the data, used the constant comparative method of analysis. Finally, the participants' perspectives are important to the final analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This study provided adherence to this factor that characterizes qualitative research by asking participants for their perspectives and consulting them when I needed to clarify my interpretations. The goal of analysis was depth of understanding of the interaction of teachers with struggling writers. In order to answer the research questions, this study incorporated these features throughout the data collection and analysis.

Cultural Considerations

Foundational to a theory of culture is an understanding that classrooms are cultures where each classroom develops a particular way of being a learner (Collins & Green, 1992; Dixon, Frank, & Green, 1999). For one classroom, this way of being may be very different from another similar classroom just next door. From this view, a particular way of talking, acting, responding, knowing, doing, and being is constructed through the discursive and social practices of the classroom (Bloome, 1985; Gee, 1989). Classroom culture begins to develop on the first day of class and perhaps even before that by the classroom arrangement, bulletin boards and material on the walls, and preceding reputation of the teacher. The discourse patterns and academic and social practices build throughout the year and eventually create a cultural belief system shared by most members (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In addition to understanding classrooms as cultures, this study was from a social perspective that views the classrooms of exemplary writing teachers as particular kinds of cultures within educational institutions.

Case Study Design

In order to answer the research questions, a case study design was employed. A case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event (Merriam, 1988; Stake 1994; Yin, 1994). This genre of research was appropriate to address the research questions because through case study, the idiosyncrasies of the classroom could be more closely examined and described. And secondly, through case studies, a view of individuals and the many factors that influenced their behaviors could be examined more intensively.

By incorporating more than one case study into its design, this project took the form of a comparative case study (McIntyre, 1969). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest two specific reasons for employing multiple cases and the ensuing cross-case analysis. One reason is to enhance generalizability. “Although it’s argued that this goal is inappropriate for qualitative studies, the question does not go away. We would like to know something about the relevance or applicability of our findings to other similar settings...multiple cases, adequately sampled and analyzed carefully...can help us answer the reasonable question, Do these findings make sense beyond this specific case?” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 173). Cross-case analysis for this study was not intended for broad generalization, but rather for deep understanding of the nature of interactions between teachers and students.

A second, more fundamental reason for a comparative case study is to deepen understanding and explanation and as a reality check among the cases. In addition, Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest multiple cases to examine “under what sets of structural conditions [the] hypotheses are minimized and maximized” (Miles &

Huberman, 1994, p. 173). Examining similarities and differences across cases may help the researcher find negative cases to strengthen the theory, a quicker and easier process than with a single case.

Two exemplary classroom teachers of writing were selected for intense observation and study. Two students who struggle with writing were selected from each class in order to discover the interaction of exemplary teachers with struggling writers. This study was bounded (Stake, 1995) to the language arts block for an approximate nine-week period for each classroom. In addition, this study followed the suggestion by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) to carry out the study in each classroom before going to the next in order to avoid confusion

Participants

The participants in this study were selected through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) which is to choose information –rich cases. “Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p.169). Foundational to the study was incorporating exemplary teachers that are recognized as expert pedagogues (Shulman, 1986). Because the initial data collection was designed to be daily and extend for at least five weeks at two locations, I chose to conduct my study in the school district where I live. The district is made up of one county, which is geographically the fourth largest in the state and contains seventeen cities and municipalities. There are approximately 550,000 people in the county. The largest race and ethnic groups are White at 83 percent, Black at 14 percent, and Hispanic or Latino at 12 percent. Eighty-eight percent of the households speak English only. Management and professional related occupations make up 26 percent of the workforce

and while sales and office occupations make up 27 percent. This county has the second largest amount of farmland in the state. The annual median household income is \$35,000 and 9.4 percent of the population live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

Selecting Exemplary Writing Teachers

I contacted the three language arts coordinators within the school district through both e-mail and the U.S. mail service for possible referrals of exemplary teachers. These sources were considered because this method was employed in several studies of exemplary teaching, for example Glasswell et al. (2003), Morrow et al. (1999), Pressley et al. (1996), and Pressley et al. (1998).

I received an e-mail from one coordinator who was also the supervisor of the other two language arts coordinators. She agreed to recommend names and consult the other two for recommendation for the study. Next, the coordinators were asked to rate the recommended teachers using a 4-point Likert scale (Appendix A). The scale was a compilation of some of the characteristics of exemplary teaching I synthesized from the review of literature and writing research. Each characteristic was operationalized to more concretely describe the characteristic and assist the coordinators in rating the teachers. The scale included 5 categories (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree, and Not Observed). In order to be considered for selection, the teachers had to score “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” for every characteristic. If the coordinators rated the teacher with two or more “Not Observed,” she or he would not be considered for the study. In addition to the scale, the coordinators were asked to list any awards, recognitions, or anecdotal comments about the teachers that gave assistance in recommending the teachers for the study. Because the comments were minimal, they had

little impact on the participant selection. Finally, the coordinators were asked to describe his/her contact or experiences with the teachers. The referrals suggested by the county language arts coordinators were an initial step toward narrowing the search for exemplary teachers. I faxed the Likert scale to the supervisor of the coordinators, who then made copies for each recommended teacher, had the coordinators complete the scales and additional notes, and faxed the information back to me. I reviewed the information and then contacted via e-mail all the teachers because they all met the criteria described above. However, one recommendation, a middle school teacher, rather than a 4th grade teacher, was not considered because her teaching assignment did not qualify her for this study in that all teachers needed to be at the same grade level for comparison purposes. In the e-mail, I briefly described my interest in writing instruction and shared that the teacher and her class had been referred as a possible candidate for a future study. One teacher never responded to the e-mail, the e-mail written in the form of a letter through the U.S. Postal Service, or my phone call to the school asking her to return my call. A second teacher only responded after I left a phone message regarding my study. She returned my call with an apology for not contacting me sooner. She informed me that she would not feel comfortable participating due to a change in her school's Exception Student Education program from a pull-out model to inclusive education and that she would have 9 students with an Individual Education Plan.

Because the remaining seven teachers showed interest, I scheduled a time to observe in their classrooms. After the initial visit to the classroom, I discovered that three were writing coaches, thus not candidates for my study because I wanted to observe writing by regular classroom teachers who were responsible for all subjects. Two of the

writing coaches had moved into that position this past school year, and one had been a writing coach for several years. During the observations of the remaining four teachers, I took notes and rated each teacher using the Characteristics of Exemplary Teaching Scale (Appendix A). This is the same scale that the district language arts coordinator used to rate each recommended teacher. Expertise was determined through observation of the teacher interacting with the students during writing. Informal conversations about writing instruction with the prospective participant alerted me to some degree to the teaching style. Observation of the physical environment, such as displayed student work and resources that promoted literacy and level of student engagement were key indicators of the teacher's instructional approach. One of the four remaining teachers informed me that she would possibly have an intern sometime within the semester so I excluded her as a potential participant. The last three participants were equally remarkable based on my impressions of their instruction, interaction with students, and display of student work even though school had only been in session for a few weeks for two of the three schools. Two were in the same city. One was teaching narrative writing and the other was teaching expository writing the first quarter. The teacher who I retained was from a year-round school and would begin teaching narrative writing during the second quarter. The other school that I retained was 45 minutes away from home and in another city and was focusing on narrative writing during the first quarter. I thought it would be interesting to observe writing instruction of the same genre by different teachers. The two teachers who were selected as participants were Mrs. Ring and Mrs. Mac (pseudonyms).

Following is a description of the teachers and examples of how they uniquely demonstrated characteristics of exemplary writing instruction within their classrooms.

These exemplars compiled to construct the Characteristics of Exemplary Teacher Scale include the following:

- (a) Passionate about writing (Hashweh, 1987; Shulman, 1986)
- (b) Committed to, cares about, and advocates for actions that improve students' lives (Collinson, 1994; Pressley et al., 1998; Shulman, 1986)
- (c) Develops highly effective instructional repertoires and knows how and when to combine instructional methods (Berliner, 1994; Doyle, 1985; Rosenshine, 1987)
- (d) Assesses children and relates progress to previous experiences (Allington, Johnson, Day, 2002; Brophy & Good, 1986; Wray et al., 2000)
- (e) Provides students with strategies to support independent learning (Englert et al., 1991; Gallimore & Tharp, 1990; Graham & Harris, 1993)
- (f) Writes with her students (Graves, 1983; NCTE, 2004)
- (g) Allows students to select their own writing topics or modify teacher assignments (Ball & Farr, 2003; Graves, 1994)
- h) Teaches grammar and mechanics within the context of oral reading and writing (Hillocks, 1986; Hillocks & Smith, 2003; Langer, 2002; Weaver, 1996).

Mrs. Ring

Mrs. Ring is a middle-aged white female and a former licensed cosmetologist who went back to school to fulfill her dream of becoming a teacher. She has taught for ten years, and received a Masters degree in Educational Leadership and was awarded National Board Certification in elementary education. When I met Mrs. Ring for the first time, she was conducting her class in the library because her classroom had been displaced due to leaks in the ceiling. The state had just experienced a hurricane a few

days prior to my initial observation, and the students were writing about their experience. Poems describing the hurricane, festooned with real moss and twigs, lined a wall outside the library. A hurricane-tracking map was posted on a makeshift wall to keep students alerted to impending hurricanes. Mrs. Ring had been composing a story about teaching an alien to eat an Oreo cookie. She was taking her students on a visual field trip to meet the alien and how he was introduced to Oreo cookies. She reread her writing from the previous day and modeled her thinking for the next event as she composed at the overhead projector. Mrs. Ring modeled for her students her own thinking strategies as she composed for or with her class. She told students “You are going to take a trip inside my brain.” She had given students two cookies on the previous day, and they shared the different ways they eat them. A chart listed their individual methods of eating the cookie. She had created an organizer that bulleted the major events and details. Beside modeled writing, Mrs. Ring engaged students in a cooperative learning activity to talk about how they eat Oreos, and then students independently described this in their writing.

She modeled almost every writing assignment whether at the sentence level or compositions. Her delivery sounded almost conversational and her instruction flowed effortlessly from one episode to another. Below are qualities I observed during initial observations and throughout the study. A description of these qualities follows the characteristic of exemplary writing teachers.

Passionate about writing. When I visited Mrs. Ring’s class for the first time, it was obvious by the displays inside the classroom and on the walls outside the classroom, that writing extended beyond the writing block and beyond narrative writing, the genre I mainly observed during the writing block. Poems written by students were posted on the

walls. I observed later that students rote in connection to their reading. For example, students took on the perspective of a character in a story in response to a reading selection. In another example, students selected a person to research, read short books about the person, and then wrote a brief biography. Throughout the study, I recorded art activities that extended the writing lesson. For example, after a lesson on onomatopoeia, the class brainstormed words associated with fireworks. Mrs. Ring constructed a painted poem about fireworks with the words forming the shape of fireworks, and then students wrote their own painted poem.

Committed to, cares about, and advocates for actions that improve students' lives.

Regardless of the extent of the independent writing assignment, whether the assignment was three sentences to describe a scene or entire story that would take a week to complete, Mrs. Ring modeled a similar writing piece for the class or facilitated the composing of a shared writing or the generation of ideas through class brainstorming. The combination of writing events illustrates her philosophy regarding student success.

MR I think that I care very much about my students, and I think they know that. I have high expectations and I will tell them at the very beginning of the year that I am going to push you and push you and push you, but I'm always going to be there to help you if you fall. I'll give you the tools.
(Interview, 10-06-04)

Develops highly effective instructional repertoire and knows how and when to combine instructional methods. Mrs. Ring had a 3-day training in Kagan's Cooperative Learning (Kagan, 1994; Slavin, 1992) and used this teaching method in almost every lesson and more than once in some lessons. Typically after guiding students through a

lesson, Mrs. Ring would direct students to practice the skill or strategy within a cooperative group before students' independent rehearsal or practice. Cooperative learning was employed as an opportunity for students to share their writing with and get feedback from members of their team. She always ended directives with a reminder to "coach and praise."

Often Mrs. Ring would take her students on a *visual field trip* (Dwyer, 1988; Harvey & Goudis, 2000) as a prewriting activity. For this study, a visual field trip involved students closing their eyes while Mrs. Ring described a place or event. The timing of a visual field trip differed according to the purpose but usually followed the shared planning of a story and before students began their drafts. A visual field trip was occasionally employed so that students could see the importance of adding details for the reader to visualize the scene. Modeled (Mrs. Ring does all the composing) and shared writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Routman, 2005) (students composed and Mrs. Ring did the physical writing) were staples of her writing instruction. During the initial interview, Mrs. Ring stated that she conferenced with her students. Though I observed conferencing only on one occasion with Kyle, this method of instruction was included in times other than the writing block, indicated by her reference during whole group instruction to conferences that she had with students.

Assesses children and relates progress to previous experiences. Mrs. Ring gave feedback to students regarding their writing throughout instruction. She gave students feedback at the beginning of writing instruction having read their compositions from the previous day, after guided instruction, or after independent writing. During instruction she evaluated whether students were grasping a concept or if they were struggling with it.

“I can look at something and say this isn’t working, let’s stop and let’s change because I’m not getting things across. I think that...I’d like to say that I’m more objective about myself, but I do feel that I can look and say, I really did not do well with this and it’s not the kids it’s got to be the delivery because there are too many that aren’t getting it. I also try to use a great variety of things. I get excited.” (Interview, 10-06-04)

Provides students with strategies to support independent learning. Guided instruction zigzagged throughout the lessons, usually preceding a cooperative learning activity or a modeled or shared writing. Modeled and shared writing though frequently blended, were an essential component of Mrs. Ring’s writing instruction. It was not unusual for Mrs. Ring to begin modeling a writing piece, then after a few sentences elicit ideas from the students in the manner of a shared writing. Composing on an overhead projector, Mrs. Ring modeled for her students her thinking as she composed for or with her class. She told students “You are going to take a trip inside my brain. I may make mistakes because this is my first draft” (Observation, 9-1-04). Students saw their teacher grapple with spelling, reread for clarity, revise awkward sentences, get excited about a descriptive phrase, or connect vocabulary words from the reading anthology to the written composition. Through modeling and shared writing, Mrs. Ring demonstrated to students that the writing is recursive rather than a smooth and immediate product.

Throughout data collection, Mrs. Ring modeled every writing assignment before students were expected to write independently with the exception of an occasional timed writing that prepared students for the state-mandated writing assessment. Typically, students were invited to brainstorm before all writing assignments regardless of purpose and length.

Writes with her students. Once again, Mrs. Ring demonstrated almost every writing assignment through shared and modeled writing. Occasionally, when students wrote independently, she would write simultaneously and then share her composition with the class. It was not unusual for her to ask for feedback about her composition from her students and then for them to comfortably point out parts they enjoyed and parts that they did understand or wanted more details.

Allows students to select their own writing topics or modify teacher assignments. Because writing objectives for fourth grade were bound by the constraints of the state-mandated writing assessment, Mrs. Ring was required to teach two major, though narrowly defined, writing genres, expository and narrative, and prepare them to respond to a given prompt within 45 minutes on the day of the assessment. However, writing was not limited to only the writing block, but occurred across the curriculum. Knowing that her students had to practice responding to a given prompt, Mrs. Ring selected writing topics that were proven to be engaging to fourth graders for the last several years. Other than lists of vocabulary words for the two reading levels in the class and lists of spelling words according to students' spelling development, few prescribed lists were displayed. However, charts displaying lists generated by the class were displayed throughout the room and were referenced by Mrs. Ring and the students during instruction. Rather than *give* students lists, they individually and collectively created their own. For example, students were familiar with a few transitional words that had been introduced in the previous grade, but Mrs. Ring wanted them to add to their existing knowledge. Focused lessons were conducted to facilitate the generation of words or phrases that students

already owned in their speaking vocabulary as opposed to words predetermined by an outside source such as commercial lists.

Teaches grammar and mechanics within the context of oral reading and writing.

During modeled or shared writing, Mrs. Ring explained to students why she used certain punctuation, specifically commas or quotation marks. She explained in the formal interview after selecting her as a participant, “I integrate my grammar and punctuation in my writing lesson. I don’t have a separate grammar block.” (Interview, 10-06-04)

Mrs. Mac

Mrs. Mac is from Cuba and moved to the U.S. when she was a young child. She has taught for 15 years and gives her mother, a former teacher in Cuba, credit for instilling in her a love for teaching. Her instructional style tended to be very linear and upbeat and every minute of instruction seemed planned. Any instructional material was easily accessible for distribution and transparencies for the overhead were always within reach. I noticed in her lesson plan book that she checked off each daily objective after it was taught. All the students seemed engaged in learning and appeared to enjoy Mrs. Mac. Though her instructional pace was faster than Mrs. Ring, she was careful to continuously monitor student understanding, give lots of wait time, and listen attentively to student responses.

Passionate about writing. During an interview Mrs. Mac explained that she has “the kind of classroom that has words everywhere. Just a rich literature based classroom is very important as well. ‘This is here for you. [Spreading out her arms to indicate classroom generated resources]. Copy any of it that you want.’ The kind of classroom that emphasizes writing is very important and to know that children should feel

comfortable knowing that all these things (points to charts on wall) are here for you. Use whatever you see.” (Interview, 10-06-04)

Though Mrs. Mac had taught writing in a second grade classroom for five years before moving to Lakeview, she was proactive in obtaining professional development in the pedagogy of writing instruction for intermediate grade students. She learned about workshops for writing instruction that were offered on Monday evenings from a former elementary teacher in the state and attended all ten workshops. After the workshops she persuaded her administrator to purchase the books written by the workshop presenter for all the teachers in grades three through five. In addition she was the facilitator at the school workshops for writing. Attendance was not required, but most teachers attended. Her enthusiasm and expertise spread to schools in the area and consequently she was asked to facilitate workshops in other schools as well. She explains, “I was just so excited about what I had learned and sharing it with others that I didn’t want to stop writing. I wanted to teach my children and the rest of the teachers. Teach anyone who would listen, basically.” (Interview, 10-06-04)

Committed to, cares about, and advocates for actions that improve students’ lives.

Mrs. Mac described in an interview she wants students to “know in a very positive way some of the things they do correctly and some of the things that they can improve. Do it in a way so they’ll feel comfortable and not humiliate them. I try to maintain the aspect that children need to be respected just like adults need to be respected as well”

(Interview, 10-06-04). Mrs. Mac’s respect for students was typically demonstrated in the way in which she talked to all students. For example, “Now make sure you connect all the pictures. I know you can do it. Nice ideas” (Transcript, 11-04-04). Her view of

children was obvious in the respectful way she interacted with them not only during instruction, but during noninstructional moments as well. “Now, Sarah, would you be kind and distribute one of these. This is to practice dialogue. Will you (class) go ahead, as usual, and write your name, date, and number at the top?” (Transcript, 11-03-04). She expressed her concern that so much emphasis is placed on the state mandated assessment.

I really feel that we should teach our children how to write, but right now in 4th grade it is not something that should be tested. I really feel that they should be exposed to it, but it’s not something that should take 80% of our time throughout the year. I don’t, I really do not believe that. I think it should just be a learning process. EXPOSURE is what I feel should be done. I would really like to do more fun writing. I have to be honest, I enjoy writing, but I think expository and narrative is very limited. It’s very limiting, and I really feel that the children HAVE TO stick to that format in order to get a good score. If you don’t stay within that format, no matter what a wonderful writer you are, you’re not going to get a good score. (Interview, 11-01-04)

Develops highly effective instructional repertoires and knows how and when to combine instructional methods. Mrs. Mac describes her approach to writing:

I don’t want them to be uncomfortable. I don’t think they all go through the unknown at the same time. I have to start from the familiar – what they know. And little by little – I may spend one day on a skill or a whole week on it depending on how the children respond to it. So I think it needs to be a process of little by little by little. I believe modeling is the most important thing. Modeling with children. I always, and I do this without fail, model the whole week a certain

prompt. Of course I'm getting input from the children, but I'm guiding them as we go along. (11-01-04)

Assesses children and relates progress to previous experiences. Mrs. Mac informally used Sharing as a venue for students to share their writing with an audience and to informally assess their writing development. Sharing was similar to Calkins' (1994) Author's Chair. Students were invited to share their writing almost daily. Sometimes sharing would occur at the beginning of class, but occurred most frequently when students returned from physical education. The amount of writing students shared depended on the focus of instruction. Because student volunteered to read their writing, the purpose of feedback from Mrs. Mac and students was to comment on positive aspects of the writing. More evaluative feedback by Mrs. Mac was through frequent and specific written comments on students' writing. Conferencing was employed to discuss major areas that needed improvement. Mrs. Mac explains:

I say, "Let's look at some of the comments, and let's talk about how we can improve it." Before they write the next paragraph, they have my comments in front of them so they know what are some things they need to stay away from and some things that they need to add. Then they write the next paragraph, and I take that night to look at it again. So they are getting constant feedback on a daily basis. I like to conference with each individual student at least twice a month. It doesn't take long, no more than 5 minutes with each child. I just go over some of the things that I see that they are still having problems with. I make a note of it and what we talked about. (Interview, 11-01-04)

Provides students with strategies to support independent learning. Writing instruction in Mrs. Mac's entailed events during which a carefully planned sequence of writing events prepared and enabled most children to independently accomplish an assigned writing task. Lessons typically began with an introductory, lively teacher-directed discussion or a review of homework that had been assigned to give students practice in a specific skill or strategy. Then students would practice a writing skill or strategy in isolation through guided instruction. Typically Mrs. Mac provided students with a worksheet from the writing curriculum she had asked the school to purchase that they would complete and then store in their writing folder. Students were invited and even expected to include the focus skill or strategy in their independent writing. Finally, students would share their writing with the class during Sharing. All writing during the writing block was prompt driven. For the first few weeks, all students responded to the same prompt when the class was practicing at the paragraph level. Later students could choose between several prompts. The following is a list of prompts students could choose to write about over the course of a week: (a) Tell a story about a time when you were lost, (b) Tell about how you became invisible for a day, (c) Tell about a time when you found an object at the park, and (d) Write about your adventure on a jet ski.

Many of the same writing events employed in Mrs. Ring's class were also a staple in Mrs. Mac's classroom. Common events were guided instruction, shared writing, independent writing, and feedback. While cooperative learning structures were employed usually on a daily basis and frequently throughout writing instruction in Mrs. Ring's classroom, cooperative learning was seldom observed in Mrs. Mac's classroom. Author's Chair, referred to as Sharing in Mrs. Mac's room was observed

only in her classroom.

Writes with her students. Similarly to Mrs. Ring, Mrs. Mac not only enjoyed teaching writing but also enjoyed writing. On a personal level, Mrs. Mac liked to write poetry and sometimes her poems were published in the newsletter from her church. Though she kept a journal, she admitted that she did not write on a daily basis. In the classroom, Mrs. Mac demonstrated through shared and modeled writing almost every writing assignment.

Allows students to select their own writing topics or modify teacher assignments. Like Mrs. Ring, Mrs. Mac was bound by the constraints of the state-mandated writing assessment. She described state-mandated writing as very limiting and explained why:

I really feel that the children HAVE TO stick to that format in order to get a good score. If you don't stay within that format, no matter what a wonderful writer you are, you're not going to get a good score... And I would really like to do more fun writing. I have to be honest, I enjoy writing, but I think expository and narrative is very limiting. (Interview, 11-01-04)

Mrs. Mac was referring to expository and narrative as the structure of the writing assessment mandated by the state department of education. While expository and narrative subsumes almost all writing formats, for the assessment, expository refers to writing to explain and narrative refers to writing to tell a story. So that students would be familiar with the format of the state writing assessment, she frequently had them respond to prompts. However, she selected prompts that former students had found enjoyable. In addition, she gave them several prompts from which to choose. For instance, starting a story with a catchy beginning was the focused writing strategy for several days. Each

day after she facilitated the brainstorming of ideas for the beginning to a story, students would compose their own beginning. Then after they had composed beginnings to five different stories, they selected one to develop into a story.

Teaches grammar and mechanics within the context of oral reading and writing.

While Mrs. Mac taught grammar and mechanics in a short focus-lesson during guided instruction, she also encouraged them to integrate the skill or strategy in the writing they were currently composing. She also rehearsed writing conventions during modeled and shared writing. While Mrs. Mac tentatively followed a scope and sequence that she had developed over the past few years, she was flexible and altered instruction based on her evaluation of students' compositions.

Selecting Struggling Writers

Two students were selected from each class. Participating students were established through criterion-based selection (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993), which included teacher recommendation, writing samples, and the *Writer Self Perception Scale*, WSPS (Bottomley, et al., 1998). (See Appendix B). These students were selected because they possessed characteristics related to the study's central question: What is the nature of the interaction between exemplary teachers of writing and struggling writers? In order to describe and explain the interaction, teachers were asked to recommend struggling writers for the study based on students writing samples and writing behaviors. Mrs. Ring suggested four students and Mrs. Mac suggested two students. Though a thorough analysis of students' writing was not conducted during the participant selection process, the writing samples of the suggested students were less developed and shorter than their classmates. A final data source for student selection was the *Writer Self Perception Scale*

because students' attitudes, values, beliefs, and motivation play a significant role in their literacy learning (Turner & Paris, 1995). According to Harris et al. (1998), "children who consider themselves poor writers, who have negative attitudes and emotions about writing, or who have learning difficulties that make writing even more challenging need an approach to instruction that directly addresses these issues" (p.133). Students who scored below the class mean on the scale were considered for the study. (See Table 2)

The *Writer Self Perception Scale* (Bottomley et al., 1998) is an effective public domain instrument that measures individuals' attitude toward their writing. The scale is grounded in theory of perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, (1977) and the affective domain (Cramer & Castle, 1994; Turner & Paris, 1995). The scale consists of 38 items that assess self-perception along five dimensions of self-efficacy. The five dimensions are (a) General Progress - perception of improvement in writing, (b) Specific Progress - explicit dimensions of writing such as focus, clarity, organization, style, and coherence, (c) Observational Comparison - how a child perceives his/her writing performance in relation to peers, (d) Social Feedback - direct and indirect input about the child's writing derived from teachers, classmates, and family members, and (e) Physiological States - internal feelings that the child experiences during writing.

To administer the scale, I introduced students to the scale and worked through the example with the class. I read aloud each question while students independently indicated how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a 5-level Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The WSPS took about 20 minutes to complete. The *Writer Self Perception Scale Scoring Sheet* (Appendix C) was used to analyze individual attitudes toward writing. Students

whose mean scores on the WSPS were lower than the class average on the WSPS were considered for the study's focal students. This scale was triangulated with teachers' knowledge of the students and students' writing portfolios for selecting the focal students for the study. Students who were recommended by the teachers were also students who scored in the low range on the WSPS. (See Table 3)

Table 2

Class Mean Scores on Writer Self Perception Scale

	General Progress (GP)	Specific Progress (SP)	Observational Comparison (OC)	Social Feedback (SF)	Physiological State (PS)
Mrs. Ring	30	29	27	24	25
Mrs. Mac	36	33	28	37	21

Table 3

Recommended Students Raw Scores Compared to WSPS Suggested Low Range Scores

	General Progress (GP) <30	Specific Progress (SP) <24	Observational Comparison (OC) <23	Social Feedback (SF) <22	Physiological State (PS) <16
Kyle#	33	26	15	20	20
Ray#	21	25	20	25	10
Trevor#	34	30	24	21	12
James#	30	31	27	27	27
Colleen+	12	11	9	7	6
Chad+	32	29	24	23	6

#Mrs. Ring's Students +Mrs. Mac's Students Bold indicates low range

Mrs. Ring suggested Kyle, Ray, James, and Trevor as possible candidates for the study. These students also had the lowest scores on the WSPS. Kyle's scores fell below his class average in all dimensions except for General Progress and fell within the low range in Observational Comparison and Social Feedback. Ray's raw scores fell below his class average in all areas except for Social Feedback. He scored in the low range in areas that addressed General Progress State, Observational Comparison and Physiological State. Because none of James' scores fell below the class average or within the low range he was not considered for the study. Trevor's scores fell below the class average in Observational Comparison, Social Feedback, and Physiological State, and with the low range in Social Feedback and Physiological State. When I compared baseline writing samples from Kyle, Ray, and Trevor, Trevor's writing samples had more words and better plot development than the other two so he was not considered for the study. I decided Kyle and Ray would be the focus students from Mrs. Ring's class.

Mrs. Mac suggested Colleen and Chad for the study. All of Colleen's scores fell below the class average and within the low range. All Chad's scores fell below his class average and within the low range in Physiological State. The scores from both Colleen and Chad's scales indicated that they would be good participants for the study. Similar to the outcome in Mrs. Mac's classroom, Colleen and Chad scores on the WSPS were the lowest in the class. Race and gender were diverse within both classrooms and would have been considered if there had been a pool of diverse struggling students to choose from; however, all the students suggested by the teachers, writing samples, and the WSPS were male, with the exception of one girl, and all were White.

Kyle

Kyle's scores fell below the class average in all areas except for General Progress and fell within the low range in Observational Comparison and Social Feedback. Kyle's score of 15 in the Observational Comparison Scale and 20 in Social Feedback as compared to the class mean of 27 and 24 respectively, suggest that Kyle did not perceive himself as competent in writing as his peers and had circled *strongly disagree* with all the statements that indicate his writing was compatible with his classmates. Several of his responses indicate that he felt his writing was improving, and that his family considered him a good writer. Twice he disagreed with statements that implied his teacher thought his writing was good, yet agreed with the statement, "I can tell that my teacher thinks my writing is fine." (See Tables 2 and 3 for additional data).

Mrs. Ring described Kyle as an active participant during writing instruction who really tries to apply the skill though he sometimes struggles to express his thoughts in a way that makes sense to the reader. In a later interview she stated, "He sometimes tries to be too elaborate. His (poor) understanding of language causes his writing to be confusing at times" (Informal interview, 11-08-04). The financial situation in Kyle's home may have interfered with Kyle's performance and is described in the following excerpt from my field notes.

Mrs. Ring explains to me that Kyle probably did not do very well on the timed writing from Friday. He came in a little upset because he did not have lunch money. The previous day he was given a "lunch" (meaning a PBJ) because he had already charged \$10 in lunches and was given an application to receive free or reduced lunches by the lunchroom manager. She explained that his parents must

have expressed their feelings about this with Kyle because he was upset about this. When this situation was brought to Mrs. Ring's attention, she put money in his account unbeknownst to Kyle. She explained to him that his lunch was taken care of. (Observation, 10-25-04)

Ray

Ray's raw scores fell below his class average except for the dimensions Social Feedback and Physiological State and within the low range in Observational Comparison and Physiological State. According to Ray's responses to the WSPS, he did not perceive himself as competent in writing as his peers, nor did he perceive himself as making as much progress in writing as his peers. The only item that Ray strongly disagreed with on the WSPS was *My writing is more interesting than my classmates' writing*, suggesting that he perceived his writing as less interesting than his peers' writing. The only item that Ray strongly agreed with was *People in my family think I am a good writer*. He circled *undecided* for all the statements that implied that his teacher thought his write was good.

Mrs. Ring claimed that Ray was unmotivated and contributed to Ray's struggle with writing.

Ray's problem basically comes from lack of motivation and his being somewhat lazy. Ray is often reluctant to participate in writing instruction and must be reminded of the grading consequences that will apply if he does not complete the assigned task. He lacks concentration and when he does do his work, he rushes and then makes careless mistakes. (Informal Interview, 10-08-04)

Colleen

Colleen's scores fell consistently within the low range on all five scales of the Writer's Self Perception Scale (general and specific progress, observational comparison, social feedback, and physiological state). She circled *SD*, strongly disagree, on 34 of the 38 items. Though 15 items were related to general and specific progress, she strongly agreed with only two items: *I am getting better at writing*, and *The words I use in my writing are better than the ones I used before*.

Colleen was an only child and lived with her mother and her mother's boyfriend, both of whom were deaf. Though they communicated with each other through sign language, Colleen most frequently communicated with them by speaking, and they in turn would read her lips. Lip-reading was convenient for Colleen because, she volunteered, she was not competent at signing. She was sensitive to the challenges that her mother faced and often took a leadership role in her family. Her mother was concerned about Colleen's academic performance at school and behavior problems she was having at home. According to Colleen, she does not get much academic support from home. She explained, "I have to practice on my own. My mom can't model for me because she doesn't understand writing very much" (Interview, 12-16-04). Colleen's speech was slightly impaired; however, she did not qualify for speech. Colleen's handwriting was noticeably poor and often difficult to read and admitted that handwriting was the most challenging part of writing (Interview, 12-16-04). Mrs. Mac described that as a writer, Colleen has creative ideas, but the ideas are typically disjointed and the meaning and flow are impeded by her near illegible handwriting and weak spelling

ability. To augment Colleen's poor handwriting, Mrs. Mac had given her two packets of handwriting worksheets for her to practice at home and at school.

Chad

Chad circled *SD* or strongly disagree on 7 of the 38 items. Six of these items were in the Physiological States scale which evaluated the writer's feelings during writing. According to the instrument, Chad did not perceive himself as relaxed or comfortable when he writes, nor did he enjoy writing. He strongly disagreed that his writing was more interesting than his classmates' writing. However, an average score in Specific Progress suggests that he perceived his writing was improving. He was undecided about his teacher and classmates' opinion of his writing as indicated by several statements circled *undecided*, but *agreed* that his family thought he was a good writer. Mrs. Mac explained that Chad had just transferred to her class from another school just a few weeks before I began collecting data in her classroom. She described Chad as very methodical and anxious about completing a composition within the time frame.

The Roles of the Researcher

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) ascribe two roles to the qualitative researcher. In one role the researcher is the collector and analyzer of data. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of the research project (Creswell, 1994). The second role is that of learner and is described in the following by Glesne and Peshkin, (1992):

It is important to have this role of self from the beginning. The learners' perspective will lead you to reflect on all aspects of research procedures and findings. It will also set you up for a particular kind of interaction with your

others. As a researcher, you are a curious student who comes to learn from and with research participants. You do not come as an expert or authority (p. 32).

As a learner, I made every effort to remain objective and open-minded throughout the study in order to learn as much as possible about the ways exemplary writing teachers interact with struggling writers. The researcher's personal demographics, background, and experiences influence decisions regarding data inclusion and analysis (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). I have over 20 years of experience as an educator. Seventeen of these years were as an elementary teacher including experience in every grade except for kindergarten and third grade. During these years as a classroom teacher, I studied and implemented various teaching models. For the past four years I have been an administrator responsible for the curriculum and instruction at the school where I am employed. My many years of classroom experience and continued concern for students who struggle with writing provide passion and perspective to this study. Yet, experience and concern may also bring bias to the study. Therefore, I followed Strauss and Corbin's (1990) advice to maintain theoretical and social sensitivity by retaining analytical distance while simultaneously drawing upon past experiences and theoretical knowledge to interpret what is seen by using astute observational and interactional skills. Three qualitative researchers, 2 doctoral candidates in the field of literacy, and one Advanced Placement English teacher with National Board Certification were employed as peer debriefers in order to minimize bias. One peer debriefer, the A.P. English teacher was consulted to assist in the selection of interactions. Their responsibilities were to assist with the interrater reliability of the codes and to alert me if they noticed any bias during the interpretive stage of the analysis. This process is explained later in the chapter.

The roles of the researcher may be conceptualized as ranging along a continuum of participation and observation (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). My role for the majority of the time was that of an observer of writing instruction in the classroom. I unobtrusively positioned myself in order to observe and record field notes. I was not actively involved in any of the classroom activities. I limited my interaction with the students and guarded my response to questions asked by the students during instruction in order to avoid possibly influencing the data. However, interaction was a natural consequence of my presence in the classroom; and to refrain from any participation at all would be inconsistent with naturalistic inquiry.

Procedures and Data Collection

The initial stage of the research was to gain entry into the classrooms for formal observations by receiving permission from the schools' administrators and teachers. The teachers who were selected for participation in the study were provided with a form required by the university that outlined the research and the nature of their involvement. By signing the letter they consented to participation in the study. However, they were assured that they could withdraw at anytime.

The next step was to select two focal students by criterion-based selection which included recommendation by the teacher, writing samples, and results from the *Writers Self Perception Scale*. (This procedure is thoroughly described on pages on 94-96.) Before selection occurred, each family within the classrooms was informed by letter that I would be observing the writing instruction of their child's teacher. The students and their families were asked to grant permission for their child to be observed and interviewed in the classroom. Parents of struggling writers were not alerted to their

child's writing status. They were informed that the students' names and identities were kept confidential and that they could withdraw their child from the study at any time. All participants were given a pseudonym similar to their actual name. All but one student returned the signed consent forms.

Upon receiving a schedule of the writing block from the teachers, I scheduled the classroom observations. Rather than preplanning what would be observed before arriving in the classroom, I decided who or what to observe based on which event(s) or situation(s) specific to that days' visit would provide the richest data in light of the research questions. Concurrently examining focus students within each classroom allowed for a more effective comparison of observations and maximized my time within the classroom. During independent writing or cooperative learning activities I would observe one student for a period of time and then switch to the other student. The length of the observation differed according to the situation. If something noteworthy was happening I would extend my observation. Even when my observation was focused on one student, I would take quick glances at the other student.

This study followed the suggestion by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) to carry out the study in one classroom before going to the next in order to avoid confusion. I observed writing instruction in the first classroom, that of Mrs. Ring, for 30 visits over the span of 9 weeks. Data collection was paused several times during these 9 weeks due to schools closing in the county as a result of three hurricanes. I tapered off my visits to Mrs. Ring's class when I began data collection in Mrs. Mac's class. I observed daily in Mrs. Mac's class for 7 continuous weeks. She was absent on two days due to sickness in her family and a wedding. Data collection began just as they were beginning a unit on narrative

writing- the same topic I had observed in Mrs. Ring's class. Each student participant was present and observed everyday during writing instruction.

Data Sources

According to Patton (2002), qualitative methods consist of three basic kinds of data collection: (a) in-depth, open-ended interview; (b) direct observation; and (c) written documents. The data collection for each research question is displayed in the Table 4 below. A description of each data collection procedure follows.

Table 4

Research Questions and Study Design

SOCIOCULTURAL	THEORETICAL	FRAMEWORK
QUALITATIVE INQUIRY	In depth study in natural setting	
CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS	Way of being a learner	Exemplary Teaching
CASE STUDY DESIGN	Understanding of similarities individual variations across cases	
Research Question1: What is the nature of the interaction between exemplary teachers of writing and struggling writers?		
Data Collection		Analysis
Lesson Plans Audio tape of writing instruction Audio tape of formal interview between researcher and teacher Informal conversations between researcher and the teacher Informal conversations between researcher and the students Field notes		Vignette (Miles & Huberman, 1994) Discourse Analysis (Gee, 1999) Document Analysis, (Patton, 2002) Interview Analysis, (Patton, 2002) Cross-case Analysis (Patton, 2002)
Research Question 2: What are the responses of struggling writers to the interaction?		
Lesson plans Audio tape of writing instruction Informal conversations between researcher and the teacher Field notes Student Written Documents		Vignette (Miles & Huberman, 1994) Document Analysis (Patton, 2002) Interview Analysis, (Patton, 2002) Cross-case Analysis (Patton, 2002)

Secondary data sources, such as unsolicited information, was included as well, but unlike primary data sources, they did not provide data to be analyzed in depth, but supported or extended analysis of primary data collected. Both teachers occasionally informed me about incidences that involved the focal students. For example, Mrs. Mac had a conference with Colleen's mother after school and shared with me the major points

of the conference. This unsolicited information was helpful because it extended what I was able to observe in the classroom. By triangulating data sources, analysis was designed to avoid bias and shortsighted conclusions (Denzin, 1989).

Writer Self Perception Scale. The WSPS, introduced and described above was used to measure individuals' attitudes toward their writing (Bottomley et al., 1998) and was administered at the beginning of the study in each classroom.

Interview transcripts. A semi-structured, taped interview with the teachers occurred at the beginning of the study and informal interviews occurred throughout the data-collection period. An interview guide (Appendix D) was employed in the initial interview. Though some questions did not directly address the research questions, they were useful for background information about the teachers. Informal interviews included questions about ideas that emerged throughout the data-collection period specific to each teacher's practice, as well as questions regarding the teacher's perspective of a writing event. The tone of the interview was conversational so as not to be intrusive or suggest a predictable behavior (Patton, 2002). I had ongoing conversations with the teachers and students to clarify any misunderstandings as well as to obtain further information as new data were added. I transcribed all interviews.

Instruction transcripts. I began recording classroom instruction at the beginning of the study in each classroom. I recorded and personally transcribed all audio-tapes of writing instruction. A tape recorder was strategically placed to record whole group instruction. Nonverbal behavior and aspects of the situation that were not reflected in the audiotape were supported by field notes of observations and were used as much as possible for corroboration with the taped instruction

Documents. Most of the students' written text during the writing block was either photocopied or typed on my laptop computer. Mrs. Ring stated at the beginning of the study that she would make photocopies of the focus students' written text; however, on several occasions and for an extended period of time, the copier at Cypress Grove was not functioning. Fortunately, lunch immediately followed the writing block. With approval from Mrs. Ring, I stayed in the classroom while students were at lunch and typed the two focus students' texts onto my laptop. Obtaining written text in Mrs. Mac's room was easier. Mrs. Mac gave me the writing folders at the end of each week so that I could make copies of students' writing. In addition, when students left for P.E., I was able to stay behind and type the focus students' daily work onto my laptop computer.

Field Notes. "Field notes are the fundamental database for constructing case studies..." (Patton, 2002, p. 305). Descriptive field notes were recorded to give an accurate account of the actions or talk by the teacher or focal students that I considered significant. This information included situations, events, quotations, contexts, or details. Feelings, reactions to the experience, and reflections will be recorded. Rather than relying on memory, field notes allowed me to better analyze the data as well as describe the experience to the reader. Consistent with a constant comparative method of analysis, insights, judgments, and interpretations were set off by brackets in order to separate the actual observation from my interpretation and hunches. Words and phrases that seemed to capture the topic were coded in the margins. A laptop computer was used most of the time except for the few occasions when the battery lost its charge. For these occasions, a spiral notebook was used to record notes. Handwritten notes were soon typed on the computer to keep a consistent format of field notes.

Journal. A researcher's journal (Merriam, 2002) was kept throughout the study in order to record impressions, insights, and feelings about events that occurred during the course of the study. Recording thoughts and feelings in a private manner is important, yet they are not intended for public display as data for support of findings. Though keeping a journal did not separate subjectivity from other written observations, it provided a way for me to monitor my concerns and biases and to remind myself of my role as researcher and learner. Recognizing that I was a research tool as I made deliberate decisions regarding inclusion and exclusion of data, the data collection and analysis was never completely free from bias.

Data-Analysis Procedures

Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study (Yin, 1994). Data analysis and interpretation were ongoing throughout the research period. Analysis emerged from the data, instead of being imposed from the beginning. The variety of types of analysis and data sources allowed for a broad understanding of data. By triangulating data analysis (Denzin, 1989), results were more reliable and better informed. A summary of how data that corresponded with the research questions were analyzed is provided in Table 4.

First I analyzed the *Writers Self Perception Scale* very early in the study as one source for determining struggling writers within each classroom. Next, I analyzed the teacher interview transcripts because they were the first data sources acquired. To do this I read through the transcript and labeled phrases with descriptive codes in the margin. This resulted in approximately 30 codes. I then reduced these codes to 10 broader

categories. I did not finely analyze these sources because the interview analysis served primarily to support or disprove hunches as well as provide me with information about the instructional philosophy of the teacher. Next, I began to analyze the transcripts of writing instruction though analysis did not begin until I began data collection at the second site. I analyzed the transcripts of writing instruction numerous times in order to adequately and critically describe the nature of the classroom interactions. A detailed description of the analysis process is described in the Transcript Analysis section.

Document analysis was useful for obtaining a baseline of students' writing performance at the beginning of the study but was primarily used to determine the response of students to the interaction. This analysis did not occur until the transcript analysis was completed. However, some preliminary analysis such as creating a table to display when a writing concept was introduced in each classroom was conducted throughout data collection. A full description of the document analysis is described in the Document Analysis section. Even after document analysis was complete, I reanalyzed some of the interactions during writing instruction. Student interviews were analyzed shortly after they were conducted at the end of the study in each classroom. Throughout the entire analysis process, I repeatedly went back and forth from one data source to another within the same data source genre as well as across genre. Finally a cross-case analysis was conducted across students within the same classroom and then across both classrooms.

Transcript analysis. The daily transcripts for each teacher were saved as the date of the observation in separate folders for each teacher on my computer. For example, the transcripts from a lesson in Mrs. Ring's class on September 9 were saved as 9-09 in a folder saved as "Ring." The "find" tool on my word processing program was used to help

me isolate moments of interaction between the teacher and struggling writer. I began by searching through each file in Mrs. Ring's folder and typed in "KYLE" for all text that included Kyle's name. One by one I read through the text to determine if the text included interaction between Kyle and Mrs. Ring. Sometimes the name was embedded within a memo to myself and not necessarily an interaction. In other instances, the "find" tool located interactions between Kyle and other students during a cooperative learning activities, but I did not include these interactions in the analysis. I copied and pasted the text into a new document. I read through the interaction to determine the *purpose* of the interaction, and then labeled it, for example, "10-7 sentence structure." All interactions between Kyle and Mrs. Ring were saved into one lengthy document, but were separated by dates. All interactions were saved in a file named "Kyle's Interaction." This same process was repeated for Ray, the other struggling writer in Mrs. Ring's classroom. Focal students' responses during brainstorming that did not result in a teacher response were not analyzed unless an interaction shortly followed or preceded the brainstorming. Interactions that served as an introduction to a concept or to monitor understanding were not analyzed unless an uptake was used to further mediate students' understanding. An example of an interaction that was not included follows. MR is Mrs. Ring. In the interaction she is introducing students to the idea of keeping their readers in suspense.

MR What do we call an ending like that? Any guesses? It's not something I've told you.

KYLE Endless

MR This is something that a writer would call a cliffhanger. It leaves you hanging, wondering.

A peer debriefer was consulted to assist in the selection process. We read through the interactions together and used the above qualifiers to make the determination. However, we made a few allowances for Ray and Chad because there were fewer interactions between them and their teacher. Because I was the observer in the context and was able to pick up on nuances of the classroom instruction not observable in the flat environment of transcripts, I clarified questions that she had about any interactions. This exercise was beneficial and served to promote credibility of the study. I repeated the entire process of transcript analysis with the students in Mrs. Mac's classroom.

The unit of analysis was the conversational turn as well as holistic segments of discourse because meaning occurred within the context of that segment. Combining some elements from Gee (1999) and Cazden's (2001) discourse analysis methods, I devised my own transcription system (Appendix E) to assist in transcribing the tapes. For example, nonverbal behaviors were described within brackets, explanations and descriptions were placed within parenthesis, and words stressed by the teachers were transcribed in italics. This system considers the complexity of the interaction and also helped me relive the observation while analyzing and describing the interaction. I labeled every interaction with a verb, the function of discourse, to describe the content of the teacher's talk turn, such as praise, elaborates, and revoices. This procedure did not describe the multifacets of the interaction. Then I repeatedly read through each interaction and followed Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, and Stuart-Faris (2005) assertion to examine "how language is used, by whom, when, where, and for what purposes, along with what is being said and written, by whom, and how, and what import the uses of spoken and written language have to the people in the event...(p. 56). I wrote my interpretations of the interactions in

the margins of the transcript. This interpretation involved the context of the interaction such as the writing event encompassing the interaction, the classroom discourse preceding and following the interaction, and who was involved. A final layer of analysis involved a critical analysis of some of the interactions when appropriate. Through this analysis I examined how social and power relations, identities, and knowledge were constructed through spoken text (Rogers, 2003). In short, I went from decontextualizing the interactions to recontextualizing them to gain a more holistic understanding of the social interaction.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe vignettes as a method of analysis that provides a framework from which to capture “rich pockets of especially representative, meaningfully data” (p. 81). They suggest the following structure and outline when using vignettes: the context, your hopes, who was involved, what you did, what happened as a result, what the impact was, and why this happened. I did not follow their suggestion explicitly, but used it as a guide when analyzing and describing the data.

Interview and WSPS analysis. The semi-structured initial teacher interview and informal interviews were analyzed to provide further data to support each teacher’s point of view. I highlighted text that supported practices I observed in the classroom. I also coded the themes that emerged in the interviews, but did not use them for this study.

The WSPS, described in the section explaining the procedure for selecting struggling students (pages 19-22), was analyzed using the recommendation from the designers of the scale. Students who scored below the suggested low range scores were considered for the study.

Document analysis. I conducted a finely grained analysis of students' writing. I read through available writing samples and underlined any text that possibly substantiated that the writer may have employed the skill or strategy on the day it was introduced or sometime within the bounds of the study. To manage the data, a table was constructed to display when a writing concept was introduced to the class. (See Appendices U & V) These tables were referred to repeatedly throughout the study. As data was collected, written evidence of employing a writing concept was added to similar tables for each student.

Teachers served as member checks to confirm the text I labeled as particular writing skills and strategies. At the end of the study I gave Mrs. Ring copies of three compositions written by Kyle and Ray. I provided her with a list of the eight major writing strategies that were listed in her lesson plans as the objective of the writing lessons over the nine weeks that I was in her classroom. Each strategy was coded with a letter. For example, detail was coded with a "d." I asked Mrs. Ring to read through the compositions and code texts where the student had employed the strategy. I compared the table I had created to display writing strategies that appeared in Kyle and Ray's writing to the coded text by Mrs. Ring. We were in 100% agreement with phrases coded as *red flag*, and *synonyms for said*. However, for other strategies some phrases could understandably fall under more than one category. For example, I placed **the rain was sprinkling** under *Show, don't tell* and Mrs. Ring had placed in under *Details*. Mrs. Ring wrote the following note when she returned the coded documents: "Ruth, I am sure there are several items I have overlooked. I tried going over it, then putting it down and coming back to it. Every time I found something else" (Document, 11-02-04). Finally the

participants' writing samples were scored using the Six Traits Writing model (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004) which focuses on ideas and content, organization, word choice, voice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Two writing samples from each of the four students were given to graduate students who were obtaining a Masters in Reading to score using the Six Traits model. The graduate students were given a list of the traits along with bulleted explanations for the traits and were asked to score each of the traits in the writing samples. I also scored each writing sample using this model.

Mrs. Mac provided students with a checklist (Appendix F) that included writing elements that had been introduced or would be introduced sometime during the unit on narrative writing. Students stored them in the pocket of their writing folders so they could remember to use the skills and strategies in their current composition. Students used a new checklist for each assigned writing whether it was a paragraph or an entire story. Once a skill or strategy was introduced and students had practiced it during guided instruction, shared writing, and usually as a short homework assignment, Mrs. Mac invited students to use it somewhere within their compositions. Then students checked the skill or strategy off the list when it was used in the composition. After students had used the checklist for approximately five weeks, Mrs. Mac stopped providing the checklist but encouraged students to continue using the elements from the list. Because the skills and strategies were more concrete in Mrs. Mac's classroom and easier to detect in their writing (using similes for examples) than the strategies in Mrs. Ring's classroom, I did not ask Mrs. Mac to code students' writing as I did with Mrs. Ring.

I also conducted an analysis that consisted of a fluency measure in which I counted the number of words in student's baseline writing samples and other composition written throughout the duration of the study.

Cross case analysis. After a case analysis was conducted for each of the four students, a cross-case analysis (Patton, 2002) was conducted between the two students within each classroom. I listed all my interpretations of the interactions described in the vignettes for each student in one column in a matrix. I created a column for Kyle and listed my interpretations and then created a column for Ray. Interpretations of Ray that were similar to Kyle's were listed in the same row. I followed the same method of analysis for the other two students. Interpretations that were different for individual students were listed in a row by themselves. This method allowed me to visualize the similarities and differences between cases within the same classroom and among all cases in the study. Though the analysis was systematically employed, the analysis was recursive and iterative, thus the nature of the constant comparative analysis.

Trustworthiness

The credibility of qualitative research depends on three distinct but related inquiry elements: the rigorous methods employed by the researcher, the credibility of the researcher, and the researcher's philosophical belief in the value of qualitative research (Patton, 2002). The issue of reliability and validity are important to any method of research.

Validity is important to the credibility of qualitative research. Validity refers to the goodness, authenticity, credibility, and quality of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), or simply, does the researcher see what s/he thinks s/he sees? The use of multiple,

layered data sources provide triangulation in order to reduce potential bias and subjectivity and strengthen the trustworthiness of the data collection (Patton, 2002). The classroom teachers and students were used as member checks. Throughout the study, I regularly met with the teachers and students to confirm or clarify observations and ask questions about field notes rather than assign interpretations based on my own experiences or professional or academic disciplines (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Three qualitative researchers, 2 doctoral candidates in the field of literacy, and one Advanced Placement English teacher with National Board Certification served as peer debriefers in order to minimize bias. Their responsibilities were to assist with the reliability of the codes. One peer debriefer, the A.P. English teacher was consulted to assist in the selection of interactions. One of the qualitative researchers and one doctoral candidate read through the vignettes to confirm my interpretation of the interactions to alert me if they noticed any bias during the interpretive stage of the analysis. Students in a graduate level literacy course scored writing samples and served to assist with reliability of scoring students' writing samples.

The use of the constant comparative method of iterative and recursive data analysis assured that the integrity of the interpretations of the findings “are rooted in the data themselves” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243) rather than the product of the pre-determined stances of the researcher. Findings and conclusions were derived through the analysis of the data and supported by numerous examples drawn from the data.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This inquiry began because of my interest in further understanding the nature of the interactions between exemplary writing teachers and struggling writers. The study was conducted in two classrooms at two schools within the same county in a southeastern state. Two struggling writers from each of two classes and their teachers participated in the study. A sociocultural theoretical framework guided this study and required the use of research methods aligned with this theory; therefore, the study was qualitative and conducted in the natural environment of two fourth grade classrooms.

Two broad questions guided the research:

1. What is the nature of the interaction between exemplary teachers of writing and struggling writers?
2. What are the responses of struggling writers to the interaction?

I spent the first quarter of the school year in the Mrs. Ring's classroom at Cypress Grove Elementary and the following seven weeks in Mrs. Mac's classroom at Lakeview Elementary. In an effort to understand what was occurring in the classrooms, I carefully recorded field notes to describe the instruction. I audiotaped almost every lesson as well as the semi-structured interviews with the teachers and focus students, and I personally transcribed each tape. I kept a journal to document my personal thoughts, feelings, and hunches. Students' writing samples were another data source that was beneficial in answering the research questions.

Mrs. Ring's students, Kyle and Ray, will be presented first, followed by Colleen and Chad, students of Mrs. Mac. Each student will be introduced with a summary, then vignettes describing the interactions and context of the interactions will follow. Interactions that did not result in a teacher response were not analyzed unless an interaction soon followed or preceded the initial interaction. Interactions that served as an introduction to a concept or that existed in order to monitor understanding were not analyzed unless an uptake was used to further mediate students' understanding. Since Ray and Chad had fewer interactions with their teachers, almost all their interactions were described in a vignette. The analysis of the interactions within the vignette will be presented next and then will be followed in some instances by a critical analysis to answer the question: What is the nature of the interaction between exemplary teachers of writing and struggling writers? Then the analysis of the student's writing related to the interaction will be described to answer the question: What are the responses of struggling writers to the interaction? For some of the lengthy vignettes, the analysis is presented intermittently throughout the vignette. Following the results for the second student in the classroom, a cross-case analysis of students within the same classroom will be presented. Finally, the data on all four students will be brought together at the end of the chapter.

Kyle

According to Kyle's responses to the *Writers' Self Perception Survey*, (Bottomley, et al., 1998) he did not perceive himself as competent in writing as his peers and had circled *strongly disagree* with all the statements that indicate his writing was

comparable to his classmates. Several of his responses indicate that he felt his writing was improving and that his family considered him a good writer. Twice he disagreed with statements that implied his teacher thought his writing was good yet agreed with the statement, “I can tell that my teacher thinks my writing is fine.”

He lived at home with both parents who were supportive of education, but Mrs. Ring did not feel that they helped much with schoolwork and according to her, “Work Kyle does at home is definitely his own” (Field notes, 10-10-04). His mother wrote a comment to Kyle on a composition that he had written about eating turkey. “This was a fun paper to read. I agree we should never eat turkey.”

Throughout the study, Kyle always appeared attentive in that he looked at Mrs. Ring during instruction and actively participated by frequently volunteering to respond to questions posed by Mrs. Ring, interacted with his team during cooperative learning structures, and wrote during all independent writing tasks. Mrs. Ring described that Kyle “...always participates during writing instruction and has really tried to take the given instruction and apply it.” (Informal interview, 11-08-04). During the first few weeks of school, Mrs. Ring offered the following advice to her students, “You’ve got to be confident. If you can explain your thinking, you will know what’s going on.” (Observation, 9-14-04). Kyle positioned himself as an active participant by voluntarily responding to questions or discussion even though his responses occasionally may have been considered somewhat outside the context. Mrs. Ring explained, “Kyle sometimes has problems expressing his thoughts in a way that makes sense to the reader. He sometimes tries to be too elaborate. His understanding of language causes his writing to be confusing at times.” (Informal interview, 11-08-04).

Occasionally Kyle was observed using visual resources to support his writing, particularly listed vocabulary from selections the class was reading or words generated by the class during the writing block. Kyle was focused while composing and was usually the first person to finish a writing assignment. After completing a task, he would usually sit back in his seat with his arms crossed rather than reread his composition for possible editing or revision. This gesture was not portraying defiance but appeared more as a sign to the people in his team of four students that he was the first to finish.

Kyle's handwriting was legible and seemed to flow smoothly. His spelling was usually accurate. Words that were spelled incorrectly were approximate to the actual spelling and did not impede the readability of the text. He was aware of most misspelled words and circled them as advised by Mrs. Ring as a signal to go back and check the spelling after writing the draft. However, he was never observed attempting to determine the correct spelling but left the word circled rather than correcting it. Similarly, though he complied, Kyle was reluctant to make revisions to an original text even after conferencing. Kyle usually followed Mrs. Ring's directive to plan before writing. His organizers were detailed, usually written in phrases even though Mrs. Ring stated that jotting down ideas was sufficient.

Introducing the Vignettes

The following four selected vignettes describe the interaction between Mrs. Ring and Kyle. Vignette 1 occurs during guided instruction and describes a brief interaction in which Mrs. Ring employed Kyle's responses to mediate further his developing understanding of using a comparison to describe. Vignette 2 occurs over two days and describes an interaction during guided instruction in a whole group setting and brief

conferences that Kyle initiated with Mrs. Ring during independent writing. Vignette 3 describes the interaction between Kyle and Mrs. Ring during whole group instruction as she attempted to guide their understanding of *show, don't tell*. In these interactions, Mrs. Ring used Kyle's responses as teaching points. Vignette 4 occurs during a shared writing. Mrs. Ring used a watercolor painting of an old house that she had painted as a catalyst to compose with the class the beginning of a Halloween experience. The objective of the lesson was to continue to review the writing strategies that had been introduced over the last few months and to employ onomatopoeia in their writing.

Vignette 1

Previous to the assignment described in this vignette, Mrs. Ring had supported students' understanding of adding detail to their writing during a visual field trip, a cooperative learning activity, and a shared writing. Then Mrs. Ring assigned students the short paragraph below to add description.

There was a girl sitting on a park bench. She had blond hair. Her dress was red. She had a dog on a leash. She was laughing.

Before students began independent writing, she again briefly gave them some ideas for adding detail. Then she modeled how to ask themselves questions about each sentence in order to communicate a better description for the reader. As if an afterthought, she explained that adding specific details for comparison was a possible strategy. To practice adding a comparison to describe, she asked the class, "How red is the dress?" Then a lively brainstorming session followed. Almost every student contributed a common red object to compare the red dress to; however, Kyle's contribution did not parallel the responses from the majority of the class.

KYLE As dark as a carpet

MR Make the connection for me. Tell me a little bit more about what you are thinking because I'm thinking red, and you're saying dark. You're not using red in it. My carpet is not red, so I can't see that color.

KYLE As red as red paint

MR Yes, but there are five million shades of red paint.

Kait As red as red M&M's.

Alij As red as velvet.

MR Not all velvet is red. It's not as easy as you think. Pick things that you know everyone would understand. How about a fire truck? How about a red light? If you say red like a pen, my pen might be maroon. It might be pink. (Transcript, 10-05-04)

In this brief interaction, Kyle was the fourteenth student to contribute. Even though multiple voices were offered and incorporated into the discourse, there was an apparent disconnect for Kyle as well as for Alij. Kyle volunteered "dark as a carpet" - a comparison that did not include the target word red or a common object recognized universally as a shade of red. None of the students had suggested dark in their comparisons. Mrs. Ring asked him to clarify his thinking in order for her to make the connection between dark carpet and a shade of red. Then she reminded him that he had not used the target word in the comparison. She continued to explain that the comparison was difficult for her by personalizing the description to her own carpet. Though Kyle did not explain his thinking as Mrs. Ring requested, this reminder was helpful since he used red in his next response, "as red as red paint." Kyle's disregarding Mrs. Ring's request and offering another comparison suggests that he thought he had a better understanding of the concept and was willing to take a risk to demonstrate his understanding. On the other hand, perhaps he could not explain his thinking and therefore made another attempt at the comparison. When Kyle offered "as red as red paint," a comparison that had been

suggested a few talk turns earlier by another student, Mrs. Ring countered with an exaggeration for Kyle and the class to understand that vague comparisons would be difficult to comprehend. Then Mrs. Ring acknowledged other students who were eager to share their comparisons.

In this interaction, Mrs. Ring had engaged the children in the process of comparing red in the dress to a familiar red object. She began with a question that allowed multiple voices to be heard and incorporated into the discourse. Though some students had grasped the concept of comparison early in the discourse, she did not attempt to close the discourse but allowed all students opportunities to offer their description to provide an enlarged and richer description of the concept. When Mrs. Ring introduced comparison as an additional way to add detail, she simply stated, “You have to be precise. How red is the dress?” Then she allowed students to voice their comparisons. However, when Kyle offered a comparison, he still had not grasped the concept. Then Mrs. Ring attempted to scaffold his understanding. Because Kyle was not given the opportunity to respond again to this particular comparison, his eventual understanding of the concept was not evaluated.

Prior to Kyle’s contribution, many of the 14 students had successfully compared the red dress to a commonly identifiable red object. Mrs. Ring had explicitly directed the students to make the comparison to objects that the majority of the people would understand and explained why some comparisons offered by students were vague. While she was promoting students’ construction of knowledge by having them suggest the comparison, this method may not have been beneficial for Kyle. While there was no requirement to participate, Kyle volunteered, which suggested that he thought he

understood the concept. After Kyle neglected to explain his thinking for the response, “dark as carpet” but suggested “red as paint” instead, Mrs. Ring responded with an exaggeration, “there are five million shades of red paint” to emphasize the importance of the comparison with a common object.” She did not assess Kyle’s understanding after the exaggeration but moved on to another student. It was not until two talk turns later that she again explicitly explained the concept and then gave examples of commonly known red objects.

According to Mrs. Ring’s lesson plans, using details was the objective of the lessons surrounding this vignette and that objective continued to spiral throughout the lessons for the next several weeks. I conducted a content analysis for details in the three stories Kyle had composed following this vignette. I based my decision on what constituted a detail from Mrs. Ring’s explanation during instruction. One example follows:

Teaching Sentence: **He carried a parakeet on his shoulder.**

MR Now, what I want everyone to do is to close your eyes. We’re going on a visual field trip. Everyone’s eyes are closed.

(Rereads paragraph.)

MR What does that parakeet look like? What color is it? How big is it? Where is it sitting? Is it on the right shoulder or the left? Is it pecking at the stranger’s face? Is it chirping? Is it trying to fly away? Maybe it has a broken wing. What’s going on with the parakeet? (Transcript, 10-05-04)

Mrs. Ring also culled the stories for details as well. (See Chapter 3 for analysis procedures). Table 5 below displays text that Mrs. Ring or I indicated provides details.

Table 5

Details Demonstrated in Kyle's Writing

Story/Text	Mrs. Ring	Ruth
<i>The Magic Pencil</i>		
... the rain was sprinkling	Details	Show, don't tell
I saw a strange silver pencil	*	Detail
Metal	Details	*
...started shaking	Details	*
Heavy and hard	Details	*
Short	Details	*
Shocked	Details	*
<i>The Bad Day</i>		
Rush to get in the jeep	Details	Precise Lang
Bruise on my knee	Details	*
Tripped over my shoe lace	Details	*
I buckled up and so did my mom	Precise Lang	Details
...I hit by head on the back of the seat	Details	*
Score is 8 to 10	Detail	*
Score was 16 to 15	Detail	*
<i>Toy Store</i>		
On a Saturday morning...	Detail	Red Flag
...and a minute later she was gone	Detail	Detail
I was sad	Detail	*

* Text not labeled by the other person

Overall Mrs. Ring labeled more text as details in Kyle's writing than I did.

Although I labeled three pieces of text as details, she labeled 15 phrases or words as details. While there was only one phrase that we both labeled as details, "...and a minute later she was gone," there were four phrases that we both selected but only one of us labeled as details. Some phrases could understandably fall under more than one category. For example, I labeled **rushed to get in the jeep** as precise language, and Mrs. Ring labeled it as details. But for another phrase, **I buckled up and so did my mom**, I labeled as details, but Mrs. Ring labeled as precise language. In her instruction, Mrs. Ring gave several lessons of adding detail to make the writing more vivid to the reader. As indicated

in the vignette, comparing one object to another was one way. However, Kyle did not show any examples of that in his writing.

It appears that what Mrs. Ring labeled as details in Kyle's independent writing was more lenient than her expectations of her class during shared and guided writing. What represented details was a difficult construct. Further, it was impossible to determine if the "details" were a result of classroom instruction and interactions or if Kyle would have expressed the story with the same language before instruction.

Vignette 2

The following vignette extends across three days and describes the interaction between Kyle and Mrs. Ring as he attempted to compose a story in response to the following prompt:

Having a pencil to help you do your schoolwork is something that might be very helpful. Before you begin to write, imagine what it would be like to have a pencil that could do your work for you. Write and tell about a time your pencil came to life. (Observation, 10-18-04)

The day before assigning the prompt, Mrs. Ring read aloud the book, *The Widow's Broom* (Van Allsburg, 1992) and explained to the students that the read-aloud was intended for "using a piece of literature as a launch" for writing (Transcript, 10-18-04).

MR Just as a reminder. This story is based on what? We are using a piece of literature as a launch. Does anyone remember the story?

Tan ?

MR Not the prompt

Ray The Widow's Broom

MR When the witch took off, the broom stayed behind and did what?

KYLE Went out of control.

MR Well, it didn't really go out of control. It did what it likes to do best which was...

Class Clean. Sweep. (Offered other suggestions)

MR Yes and it took over and did a lot of chores for...

Class The widow

MR So of course you don't have a broom you have a ...

Class Pencil

When Mrs. Ring introduced students to the prompt, she reviewed with the class some of the major points of the story, *The Widow's Broom*. When she asked what the broom did when the witch was away, Kyle stated that the broom "went out of control." Mrs. Ring clarified that the broom did not really go out of control but "did what it liked to do best which was..." She monitored students' recall of the story by inviting them to finish the sentence with tasks that the broom did. Kyle later retained the phrase "went out of control" that he initially offered during guided practice to describe the broom to describe the magic pencil he found in his desk in his story, *The Magic Pencil*. Mrs. Ring did not consider the possibility of correctness and thus did not attempt to query Kyle about his response but rather evaluated his response as incorrect as indicated by her deferring the question to the class.

The pencil from the writing prompt that Mrs. Ring anticipated doing a student's work parallels the broom from the book doing the widow's chores while she is away. As a class, they brainstormed ideas for the story, and then each student independently planned a story.

The following day, Mrs. Ring introduced the strategy *show, don't tell* to make their writing more interesting. After much brainstorming of ideas for the sentence, **It was a bright sunny day**, students shared their writing in a cooperative learning structure. Then Mrs. Ring read aloud some of their beginnings to a story they had started the previous day.

MR One afternoon around 4:30 on a rainy morning - there again, can they describe the rain? How rainy was it? Was it a light sprinkle or was it an annoying drizzle? Did it just pour down and get it over with or was it just one of those annoying drizzles that just goes on and on all day. Not raining hard enough to make you want to stay in but raining just enough to force you want to go out, but you can't go out. That type of rain.

It was a regular day. But what does a regular day look like?

It was an ordinary day like any other day. Tell me what an ordinary day looks like.

One gloomy, dark, rainy day. Same thing. (Transcript, 10-19-04)

Then Mrs. Ring transitioned the lesson to her expectations for their innovative story of *The Widow's Broom* and referred to in the study as *The Magic Pencil*. Next, she read aloud the story she had composed in response to the prompt. Students questioned Mrs. Ring about some parts of the story, specifically about the description of the pencil and where she found it. Then she modeled her thinking in front of her students as she revised her story.

Before students were given time to continue writing their story, she reminded them to read over the beginning of their stories and to make any revisions that would better describe things, actions, or feelings by using the strategy, *show, don't tell*, that they had "just practiced" earlier during the writing block (Transcript, 10-18-04).

While students wrote independently, Mrs. Ring circulated throughout the class giving spontaneous and brief comments to individual students. At this time, Kyle revised **It was a rainy day** to **It was a rainy morning**, merely changing one noun to another. After 15 minutes, while the remainder of the class was still writing, Kyle approached Mrs. Ring and gave her the first draft to read. (See Table 6)

Table 6

Kyle's First Draft to *The Magic Pencil*

It was a rainy morning. Daltin and I rode our bikes to school. When we got there we had to go to the classroom. Daltin and I saw a strange silver pencil on my desk. I picked it up, it felt like metel. Then it started shaking.

When I picked it up it was metel. It was very short. I woundered why a penicil was on my desk. When I let it go it did work. Daltin asked if it is smart. So I let it do some of my work like math social studys and the Fcat. When it finished the Fcat it went out of controle. Daltin, and I thought it was loco then all sudden it hit me and Daltin

The following transcript is Mrs. Ring's directive to Kyle.

Mrs. Ring read the first paragraph silently (**It was a rainy morning**)

MR Show me it was a rainy morning. Remember what we worked on this morning?

Mrs. Ring only made a cursory read of the paragraph and focused on the beginning sentence since the objective of the lesson was to *show, don't tell* but overlooked the disparity between the setting, a rainy day, and friends riding bikes to school and then finding a strange pencil on one student's desk. The only comment she offered Kyle focused on the strategy *show, don't tell*, an expectation for students to

attempt in their writing. She reminded Kyle, “Remember what we worked on this morning?” to prompt him to revise the introduction to the story.

While Mrs. Ring may have been attempting to scaffold him by hinting that he should apply a technique reviewed earlier in the lesson, the prompt was nonproductive since she did not talk him through the process of how he, the writer, would show the reader a rainy morning.

He returned to his seat, erased the original sentence, and revised it from **It was a rainy morning** to **One rainy morning it was twenkling**. Apparently Kyle did not understand the strategy *show, don't tell* or how to implement it in his writing since he did not give details to describe a rainy day but just added **twenkling** to describe the rainy day. Once again, he approached Mrs. Ring with his story. Below is her response to the revision.

MR Honey, what does that mean? Do you mean, “One rainy morning, the rain was sprinkling?”

KYLE Yes

[Mrs. Ring continues reading without commenting]

MR I think there's just a whole lot more you can do.

[Mrs. Ring returns Kyle's paper to him, and he goes back to his desk.]

After Mrs. Ring read the sentence, **One rainy morning it was twenkling**, she began her response to him with a term of endearment, “Honey.” Then she directly questioned Kyle about the meaning of the sentence and then revoiced what she thought he was attempting to write by suggesting that he meant “sprinkling” instead of “twenkling.” She continued reading the composition without commenting other than stating, “I think there's just a whole lot more you can do,” and then returned his

composition to him.

In this brief interaction, Mrs. Ring may have been attempting to avoid her frustration by prefacing her response with, “Honey.” She positioned herself as in the known by using the “I” voice to evaluate Kyle’s effort and leaving him to determine how he should proceed, thus leaving him in the unknown. Mrs. Ring had used this writing prompt in the past as a writing innovation from a piece of literature and indicated that students typically enjoyed the prompt, but for Kyle, the prompt may have been dull and uninteresting thereby influencing his difficulty with writing “a whole lot more.” I observed that this encounter, Kyle approaching Mrs. Ring during independent writing, was unusual since Mrs. Ring encouraged and expected students to think and write during independent writing.

Table 7 displays Kyle’s revisions.

Table 7

Kyle’s Revisions to *The Magic Pencil*

One rainy morning the rain was sprenkling. Daltin and I rode our bikes to school. When we got there we had to go to the classroom. Daltin and I saw a strange silver pencil on my desk. I picked it up, it felt like metel. Then it started shaking.

When I picked it up it was heavy and hard. It was very short. I woundered why a penicil was on my desk. When I let it go it did work. Daltin asked if it is smart. So I let it do some of my work like math social studys and the Fcat. When it finished the Fcat it went out of controle. Daltin, and I thought it was loco then all sudden it hit me and Daltin. Then we got mad. The pencil hide into someone eleses desk. I asked him if he can give me my pencil. He gave me the pencil. Then It stoped shaking.

Kyle once again revised the text. Table 8 below compares Kyle's writing before and after Mrs. Ring prompted him, "I think there's just a whole lot more you can do." Line A displays Kyle's writing after the first extremely short conference when Mrs. Ring directed Kyle to show her it was a rainy morning, and Line B displays his writing after she stated that he could do more. He again revised the first sentence and taking the suggestion from his teacher, he changed **One rainy morning it was twenkling**, to **One rainy morning it was sprenkling**. The only other revision he made was to change the sentence from **When I picked it up, it felt like metel** to **When I picked it up, it was heavy and hard**. Before the revision, **I picked it up, it felt like metel** (5a) was very similar to a sentence that shortly followed, **When I picked it up it was metal** (7a). He continued rereading the draft and added to the end, **Then we got mad** (14b). Then he reread through the entire writing and added, **The pencil hide into someone else's desk. I asked him if he can give me my pencil. He gave me the pencil. Then it stoped shaking** (15b). .

Table 8

A Comparison of the First Two Drafts of *The Magic Pencil*

1a	One rainy morning the rain was sprenkling. Daltin and I rode our bikes to
2b	One rainy morning the rain was sprenkling. Daltin and I rode our bikes to
3a	school. When we got there we had to go to the classroom. Daltin and I saw a strange
4b	school. When we got there we had to go to the classroom. Daltin and I saw a strange
5a	silver pencil on my desk. I picked it up, it felt like metel. Then it started shaking.
6b	silver pencil on my desk. I picked it up, it felt like metel. Then it started shaking.
7a	When I picked it up it was metel. It was very short. I woundered
8b	When I picked it up it was heavy and hard. It was very short. I woundered
9a	why a penicil was on my desk. When I let it go it did work. Daltin asked if it
10b	why a penicil was on my desk. When I let it go it did work. Daltin asked if it
11a	is smart. So I let it do some of my work like math social studys and the Fcat. When
12b	is smart. So I let it do some of my work like math social studys and the Fcat. When
13a	it finished the Fcat it went out of controle. Daltin, and I thought it was loco then all
13b	it finished the Fcat it went out of controle. Daltin, and I thought it was loco then all
14a	sudden it hit me and Daltin.
14b	sudden it hit me and Daltin. Then we got mad.
15b	The pencil hide into someone eleses desk. I asked him if he can give me my pencil. He gave me the pencil. Then It stoped shaking.

The following day, without identifying the writer, Mrs. Ring read aloud parts of students' compositions and gave them feedback. She noticed that most of the students had not expressed any type of emotion when the pencil began doing the work for them, so she addressed the class in a humorous discourse

MR Now that one (referencing a student's composition she had just read) was one of the best for how all of the sudden this pencil became magic. But there again this writer wasn't shocked at all. Even as a teacher, if I were to walk in here on Monday morning, and I had not done my lesson plans. [Aside] See, I have homework too. You know that because some of you help me pack my bags at the end of the day. So if I haven't done my plans,

and I get a note from my assistant principal, and it said that she's going to check my lesson plans today, I'd be a little worried. "Oh, my gosh! I haven't done my work. Have not done it. SO all of the sudden, this pencil says, "Not to worry, I am magic." I'd absolutely break about in a cold sweat. Well, by the time I came back from fainting, and by the time my heart stops racing, I probably wouldn't even be able to talk [stutters this]. I think I'd be a little worried. I won't say that I wouldn't take advantage of someone who is going to help me out of a pinch there - even a magic pencil. But I can say it will be a little nerve racking up front. Now, I'm an adult, and I can reason things. But if I were a 4th grade student who sometimes even gets a little scared when the lights go out or when I watch a scary movie, the fact of a pencil talking to me would just scare the jeepers out of me. (Observation, 10-19-04)

Kyle looked over his paper for a few minutes after Mrs. Ring's challenge to the class, and without making any revisions, he took his composition to Mrs. Ring. She had been standing by a table in the library (where they were displaced again due to roofing problems in the classroom) and sat down when she began reading over Kyle's writing. Kyle followed suit. The following excerpt from my field notes describes the interaction.

She reads his story aloud. He has written two paragraphs – the beginning and middle. Mrs. Ring comments about the middle of the story.

MR Now think about this. When we start a new thought, we go to the next line and indent. [She pulls a few books out of a nearby crate to show examples of indenting. Then she drew a box around the sentences in Kyle's writing that should be in one paragraph and explained the purpose as she drew.] We indent so our eyes, as a reader, can see a new thought, when a new person is speaking, or a new feeling. Who is that someone else? [referring to the person whose desk in which the pencil eventually hid]

KYLE [shrugs]

MR I mean, if it's someone in your class, I'd assume you'd know their name.

KYLE Richard

[MR writes in **Richard** on Kyle's paper and then reads on. MR continues to divide into paragraphs as she reads.]

MR Notice how short each paragraph is – they are not really developed.
[Reads on]

MR You want to use “pencil” not “it.” [Continues reading]
How did you feel?

KYLE Shocked

MR [Continues reading]Now, when it hit you, where?

KYLE Head

MR How did it feel?

KYLE [Inaudible]

MR Even words like *Ouch* – onomatopoeia. [continues reading silently]

MR There again, it might scare me. (referring to the discussion she had earlier with the class about a pencil coming to life)

MR I blew your plan because I know you really didn’t want to start over. We are looking for quality. (Offers questions he should ask himself) How can I make it better? How can I make it clear to the reader? (Observation, 10-19-04)

When Kyle returned to his desk, he took out a sheet of paper, and using the original draft, he began another draft of the story. He completed this draft in ten minutes. I asked him if he had made any revisions, and he responded that he had changed a few words.

Table 9 shows the transformation of *The Magic Pencil* over three days. The only suggestions Mrs. Ring gave Kyle between the first two drafts were to clarify the rain **twenkling** to **sprinkling** and to state that he could do more. In the conference before Kyle composed the third draft, Mrs. Ring scaffolded his developing understanding of writing conventions, adding details, and plot development. She pulled books out of a crate to show Kyle how authors divide text into paragraphs, a skill Mrs. Ring often

demonstrated when she modeled writing, thereby helping him understand the purpose of organizing his thoughts into a readable format. She used a combination of explicit directives and questions to clarify or to provide details. She explicitly gave him the alternative pencil for it, suggested ouch to support how he felt when the pencil hit him on the head, and boxed in text to indicate separate paragraphs. She read the text and asked him four questions: “Who is that someone?” “How did you feel?” “Now when it hit you, where?” “How did it feel?” She concluded the conferencing by sympathizing with him, “I blew your plan because I know you really didn’t want to start over.” She realized that Kyle was anticipating completeness of the draft but reminded him, “We are looking for quality,” and then gave him questions to ask himself to make the story clear to the reader. Kyle’s verbal response during the interaction was minimal, supplying only one-word responses to Mrs. Ring’s questions.

The questions that Mrs. Ring used to probe Kyle in order for him to clarify meaning for the reader suggests that Kyle did not take ownership of the writing but perceived the assignment as a task to complete. First, he did not identify the owners of the desk in which the pencil hid in the sentence, **The pencil hide into someone eleses desk**. This would be an important detail for Kyle if he had chosen or embraced the topic. He even demonstrated resistance by shrugging his shoulders rather than give a vocal response to her probing, “Who is that someone else?” In the next talk turn, Mrs. Ring regains her position of power with her response, “I mean, if it’s someone in your class I’d assume you’d know their name.” Kyle responded with a one-word answer, “Richard.” Kyle did not specify where the pencil hit Dalton and him thus eliciting Mrs. Ring’s question, “Now when it hit you, where?” Again, if the topic would have been interesting

or initiated by Kyle, he may have included that detail. Mrs. Ring takes ownership of the piece in the next talk turn by suggesting ouch to show pain resulting from being hit by a pencil and fear of a magic pencil. She explicitly demonstrated that the paragraphs were too short by boxing in each paragraph and reiterated the brevity of the paragraphs with, "...they are not really developed." Yet, she did not explain what she meant by developed, an ambiguous construct for struggling writers and a term Mrs. Ring had not used before during any of the writing lessons. Therefore, it was unlikely that Kyle could deploy it in his revision. She implied that his writing lacked the quality that she expects as illustrated in the statement, "We are looking for quality," and then she offered questions for Kyle to ask himself to compose quality writing. However, the statements, "How can I make it better?" and "How can I make it clear to the reader?" may have been too general or perhaps even vague for Kyle. Though students had been given many lessons about using different techniques to improve their writing, she did not demonstrate when and how to use them during the conferencing.

Table 9

A Comparison of Three Drafts of *The Magic Pencil*

<p>One rainy morning the rain was sprenkling. Daltin and I rode our bikes to school. When we got there we had to go to the classroom. Daltin and I saw a strange silver pencil on my desk. I picked it up, it felt like metel. Then it started shaking.</p> <p>When I picked it up it was metel. It was very short. I woundered why a penicil was on my desk.</p> <p>When I let it go it did work.</p> <p>Daltin asked if it is smart. So I let it do some of my work like math social studys and the Fcat.</p> <p>When it finished the Fcat it went out of controle. Daltin, and I thought it was loco then all the sudden it hit me and Daltin.</p>	<p>One rainy morning the rain was sprenkling. Daltin and I rode our bikes to school. When we got there we had to go to the classroom. Daltin and I saw a strange silver pencil on my desk. I picked it up, it felt like metel. Then it started shaking.</p> <p>When I picked it up it was heavy and hard. It was very short. I woundered why a penicil was on my desk.</p> <p>When I let it go it did work.</p> <p>Daltin asked if it is smart. So I let it do some of my work like math social studys, and the Fcat.</p> <p>When it finished the Fcat it went out of controle. Daltin, and I thought it was loco then all the sudden it hit me and Daltin. Then we got mad. The pencil hide into someone else desk. I asked him if he can give me my pencil. He gave me the pencil. Then It stoped shaking.</p>	<p>One rainy morning the rain was sprenkling. Dalton and I rode our bikes to school. When we got there we had to go to the classroom. Dalton and I saw a strange silver pencil on my desk. I pick it up, it felt like metel. Then it started shaking.</p> <p>When I picked it up it was heavy and hard. It was very short. I was surprised how heavy this small pencil was. I wouder heavy small pencil will be on my desk.</p> <p>When I let the pencil go it did my work. I was shocked out of my skin. Dalton asked if the pencil was smart. So I let it do math, social studys, and the FCAT.</p> <p>The pencil finised the FCAT then it went out of control. It hit Dalton and I. We yelled OUCH!! That hurts. The pencil jumped into Richards desk. We asked him to please give my pencil back. Richard gave my pencil back. The pencil stoped shaking. We were mad.</p> <p>Dalton and I broke the pencil in half. Dalton took one half and I took another. When I was doing my work with a diffrant pencil I herd a nocie in our desk. We Yelled Oh NO!! at the top of our lungs. We noticed that the pencil multiplid.</p>
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Kyle made the changes that Mrs. Ring had written directly onto his draft. Kyle's revised draft was divided into more paragraphs than the original draft that was composed of two paragraphs. The BME model (Beginning, Middle, End) was used predominantly

in the classroom to promote organization of their narrative writing. Mrs. Ring shared with me that this model was more concrete than some models used in other schools. The planning was usually written in phrases and frequently included ideas generated from the class during brainstorming, teacher modeling, or shared writing. Kyle's division of the text into only two paragraphs may have been related to the organizer he drew and filled in which had three distinct boxes to indicate the three parts of the story and Mrs. Ring's directive from the previous day, "You (the class) have your plan, you have your beginning...If you need to make some corrections, go ahead. Then you may work on the middle. Any questions? You may begin." (Transcript, 10-18-04). Several weeks earlier, Mrs. Ring had taught a writing lesson that focused primarily on indenting. During modeled and shared writing, Mrs. Ring was observed throughout the study explaining to the class why she began a new paragraph and asking the class why a new paragraph was needed. A month before this vignette, a lesson was given that focused on the reasons for beginning a new paragraph.

During the conference, she helped Kyle divide the narrative into paragraphs by drawing boxes around sentences that had the same focus. She also drew a few extra boxes at the bottom of the page to indicate to Kyle that he was not finished and that he needed to add a few more paragraphs. Kyle had separated the text into the paragraphs on the revised draft that Mrs. Ring had boxed in during the conference.

Kyle also made other changes that Mrs. Ring had written on his paper. These included the correct spelling of Dalton and the addition of Richard as the "someone else." After Mrs. Ring's directive to use pencil not it, he changed **When I let it go it did my work** to **When I let the pencil go it did my work**. In the paragraph that followed, he

also changed it to pencil on his own initiative thus indicating some transfer. During the conference, she asked Kyle, “How did you feel?” to which he simply replied, “Shocked.” She had written the question in the margin of his draft, **How did you feel?** Kyle added to the earlier version, **I was shocked out of my skin** to describe his feelings about the pencil completing his work. This phrase may have come from Mrs. Ring during guided practice after reading aloud students’ compositions when she said, “I don’t find anyone saying I almost jumped out of my skin when my pencil got off the desk and started doing my work for me. If that happened tomorrow, nobody would be startled or alarmed or wondering what in the world is going on?” He added, **We yelled, “Ouch!! That hurts”** following Mrs. Ring’s suggestion, “Even words like *Ouch* – onomatopoeia to describe how it felt.” For support, she had written, *Ouch* in the margin of his paper.

In addition to the revisions suggested by Mrs. Ring, Kyle made several other revisions. In the second paragraph, he added a new sentence, **I was surprised how heavy this small pencil was.** And in the next sentence, he added **heavy** and **small** to describe the pencil. In the fourth paragraph, he deleted the phrase, **Daltin, and I thought it was loco.** He also deleted the phrase, **all the sudden** from the phrase, **all the sudden it hit me and Daltin.** He revised **It hit me and Daltin** to **It hit Dalton and I**, indicating that though he did not accurately use the subjective form of I, he used the name before the pronoun. He changed **hid into** to **jumped into**. He also added **please** when asking Richard to return his magic pencil. During the conference, Mrs. Ring had asked Kyle where the pencil had hit him, and he responded, “on his head;” however, he did not include that in his revision. Nor did he include the fact that he was scared, a suggestion

offered by Mrs. Ring. Kyle ended the story by breaking the pencil in half and then, to his surprise, the pencil was resurrected.

Since story beginnings had been one objective of the writing lesson surrounding the vignette and reviewed throughout the remainder of the study, a content analysis was conducted to note possible change over time. Table 10 displays the date, composition, and beginning words of the composition. It demonstrates that Kyle kept the same beginning pattern over the course of three months with little variation.

Table 10

Story Beginnings – Kyle

Date	Composition	Beginning
8-04	Baseline (Timed Prompt)	[After intro] One night me and my friend
9-10	<i>Favorite Show</i> (Timed Prompt)	One sunny day a show came on
10-08	<i>Why Mosquitoes...</i> (from Reading) Innovation	On one sunny day
10-19	<i>Magic Pencil</i>	One rainy morning
10-26	<i>Bad Day</i>	One sunny day at the football field
11-2	<i>Toy Store</i>	On a Saturday morning

During the conferencing, Mrs. Ring physically divided Kyle's text into paragraphs. She pulled several books off the shelf to show him how the authors indented to begin new paragraphs. Two narrative pieces following the interaction were analyzed for organization, specifically paragraphing. According to an analysis of the two narrative pieces, *Bad Day* and *Toy Store* composed one and two weeks respectively after the interaction describe above, both stories were divided into four paragraphs.

Though Mrs. Ring did not explain in the interaction why he should replace the pronoun it with pencil in order to clarify the referent, Kyle followed her directive and made the revision to the draft. A week later in *Bad Day*, Kyle used it five times. Since the narrative was a simple story about a familiar topic, football, using it as a referent would not impede the reader's comprehension of the story. For example, **Finally it was the fourth quarter. We had to kick the ball off.** Two weeks later in *Toy Store*, Kyle effectively used it several times in the composition, but in one passage, what he refers to as it is unclear: **We looked at cool stuff. I ran off to see something eles. I played with it intill I heard the doors lock.** Therefore, these passages suggest that the explication of it was not taken up as a learned writing behavior.

Vignette 3

Show, don't tell was the focus of the following brainstorming episode. Previous to the following transcript, the class had brainstormed examples of a messy kitchen and a messy classroom. Kyle had suggested that "spaghetti hanging from the ceiling" would show a messy kitchen and "paint all over new books" would show a messy classroom. In the transcript below, students were brainstorming what would show the reader that a bathroom was messy.

MR What about the bathroom?

(Students brainstorm examples of things they would see in a messy bathroom)

Dal Someone hadn't flushed the toilet.

(Students groan)

Jos Toothpaste squirted out all over the counter.

(Mrs. Ring decides to comment on Dalton's description)

MR I think the toilet thing, we're not talking about bad manners. We're talking about a mess. Mess – regular everyday mess.

Cas Soap on the floor.

Ami Counter is all wet

Lin The shower curtain is off and the shower is spraying

Trev Soap on the wall

KYLE Toilet paper is clogged up in the sink.

T OK. Guys, I am talking about a different kind of mess. See there again, you guys try to go way to the other end. I'm just talking about a regular mess. What's on the floor?

Cai Towels

MR What about dirty clothes? Toothpaste is open and squirted out. The mirror has water spots all over it. There's a dirty ring in the bathtub where dirty kids took a bath and all the dirt stayed in the tub. OK, those types of things are what we'd find in a messy bathroom. Now we've done a bedroom, we've done a kitchen, classroom, we've done bathroom. Now, you guys should be able to do an incredible one.

(Teacher gives the class 5 minutes to compose a sentence describing a messy room.) (Observation, 10-20-04)

Kyle composed the following sentence to describe a messy room.

The basement had mice running around biting on the pipes to make them leak.

After students wrote their *show me* sentence, Mrs. Ring circulated throughout the room and read aloud students' sentences without making comments. According to students' informal comments, when Mrs. Ring read aloud their sentences, they seemed to enjoy hearing the descriptions by their peers of a messy bathroom. After students read aloud their descriptions, and without any urging from Mrs. Ring, Kyle revised his sentence.

The basement had clean clothes floating in the swere water making them stink like a garbage truck.

He had circled the word **basement** and **swere** (sewer) to indicate that he was not sure of the spelling.

In this interaction, students had brainstormed ideas for a messy bathroom.

After Kyle's description, "Toilet paper clogged up in the sink," she suggests that the students' responses are exaggerated, though she maybe referring to Kyle's response in particular since his is more extreme than the descriptions offered previous to his. She possibly addressed the class, "OK. Guys," as an attempt to deflect attention away from Kyle.

Another interpretation of some of the interactions is that Mrs. Ring was too limiting in what she considered a mess, looking at a room from the perspective of an adult rather than that of a 4th grader. Factors that she described as contributing to a messy bathroom, such as towels on the floor, may be overlooked by children and therefore not even considered in their description. While most of the responses offered by Kyle's peers could be factors that would contribute to a messy bathroom, Kyle's description, "Toilet paper is clogged up in the sink," prompted Mrs. Ring to clarify what she would consider a messy bathroom. Mrs. Ring's response, "OK. Guys, I am talking about a different kind of mess...", suggests that Mrs. Ring had, if not specific descriptors of a messy bathroom, boundaries for the descriptors that she did not share with students before they began the brainstorm. In addition, she is addressing the entire class collectively, even students who had not responded. Regardless, if her motive was to indirectly communicate to Kyle that his response was unacceptable, the class could interpret her statement as a reprimand to

them as well and yet without voicing their resistance, evaluate Kyle as the agent of the reprimand.

After students shared their descriptions of a messy room, Mrs. Ring assigned them the following sentence to revise:

The lady was beautiful.

Mrs. Ring underlined the word **beautiful** to indicate what should be described.

Kyle revised the sentence.

The lady had blond hair, and a bright white dress waving in the breezy wind.

The following day, rather than giving the class a sentence to revise in order to practice *show, don't tell*, she gave them the phrase: **friendly lady** and underlined friendly to indicate the word to revise from an adjective to words that would show that the lady is friendly. She explained why she gave them a phrase, "I don't want you to feel tied into the sentence." (Transcript, 10-21-04). Typical of her instruction, she promoted prewriting by students brainstorming ideas before they began writing.

MR OK, show me a friendly lady.

Trev Saying hi to everyone

KYLE Helping deaf kids

MR There again in your effort to go to an extreme, you're losing your sense of direction. What could she be doing? She could be helping. She could be speaking.

In this interaction, Kyle volunteered that "helping deaf kids" showed friendliness. She responded to Kyle's description of a **friendly lady** by implying that his response was extreme and not focused. This was a likely reference to his description of

messy rooms suggested on the previous day and described above. Then she provided the class with possible examples of ways to show a **friendly lady**.

Another way to interpret the interaction is that Kyle may have based his description of a friendly lady as someone who is helping deaf kids from perhaps a source such as television show, a movie, real life, or a book. She dismissed his response and evaluated it as incorrect rather than asking him to explain the connection between **friendly lady** and “helping deaf kids.” She then offered “helping” as a possible way of showing friendliness, an action Kyle had just suggested. Over the next several minutes, students continued to brainstorm ways to show a **friendly lady**.

After brainstorming, she gave students approximately five minutes to compose a *show me* sentence, and then every student read aloud their sentence. Kyle revised **friendly lady** to **A kindful lady was giving out caned (canned) food to the poor.** In this attempt to show a **friendly lady**, Kyle replaced **friendly** with **kindful** and explained what she did to demonstrate this attribute. After Kyle read his sentence aloud, Mrs. Ring simply commented, “She certainly is friendly.” She had also commented briefly on other students’ descriptions as well.

After Mrs. Ring guided the class through the brainstorming of concrete ideas for **cool car** and **friendly lady**, she gave the class the phrase, **sad puppy**, to describe. She underlined the word that the students were to describe by *showing, not telling*. Kyle offered three responses during the following interaction.

TEACHING PHRASE: **sad puppy**

MR Now show me a sad puppy

KYLE Beady eyes

Trev Big eyes

Cait Lonely

MR What does lonely look like?

MR See I am so glad you said that. Thank you. That's wonderful because that's another point to make.

MR If you say lonely, then my next question to you is what does lonely look like. Show me lonely. We wouldn't say lonely, we'd say what?

MR We want to let the reader know the puppy is sad, and it's lonely.

MR I'm not going to say LONELY I'm going to say...

Ted Crying

MR That doesn't show lonely.

Amir Wailing

Lor No other dog

MR Then I can infer lonely from sitting all alone.

KYLE Mournful

MR What does mournful look like?

KYLE Nothing to do

MR See, what you did is, and thank you for doing that, but you gave me a synonym. You didn't show me. You just gave me a different word for sad. I want you to SHOW me the sad. I want to SEE the sad.

Jord Frown

MR We don't usually think of a dog as smiling or frowning, but can you look at your dog and see if it's sad?

Class (Heads nod in expressing familiarity. Some students verbally express their agreement).

MR Its jowls are hanging down. Or its tail is completely still.

Jord Not wagging

MR The tail that is usually shaking back and forth is still.

Ariel Ears are down

MR THAT is SHOW me. Don't tell why. Don't give a synonym.

Kyle and Trevor began by describing the puppy's eyes. Trevor's offer of "big eyes" may have been prompted by Kyle's suggestion of "beady eyes" yet neither showed a sad puppy. Cait's nondescript suggestion of lonely explained why the puppy was sad rather than concretely describing a **sad puppy**. At this point, Mrs. Ring interrupted the flow of brainstorming by thanking Cait for her response and used it to rephrase the initial directive of "show me a sad puppy" to a probing question that asked, "What does lonely look like?" Through probing, Mrs. Ring was asking for conceptual clarification of lonely. Then she asked, "We wouldn't say lonely, we'd say – what?" to guide them through the process of making the abstract concept of lonely more visible by concretely describing a lonely puppy. Then Mrs. Ring reminded the students of their audience and the purpose of concrete description. Finally, she reiterated the difference between telling and showing by leading them through a cloze statement that contrasted telling with an anticipated example of showing lonely. In the next two talk turns, students offered "crying" and "wailing" to show lonely. Even though Mrs. Ring stated that crying did not show lonely, the next student suggested a verb that did not show lonely either, but she did not comment. Perhaps she understood that they were referring to a **sad puppy**, the original teaching phrase. Lorel offered "no other dog," then Mrs. Ring revoiced her statement to infer that the "dog is sitting all alone" to describe another way of illustrating that the dog was lonely. Kyle offered "mournful," a synonym for sad, rather than showing lonely.

(Later, I questioned Kyle about the source for the word mournful, and he shared that it was a vocabulary word from his reading text.) By probing him to explain what mournful looked like, Mrs. Ring was showing him how to think through the process of going from a one word adjective to a more concrete description. And although his physical description of mournful influenced by his interpretation could be questioned, Mrs. Ring did not address this but instead explained that he did not show sad but gave a synonym for sad. Some students were struggling with the concept of showing a **sad puppy**, and it would appear that Mrs. Ring capitalized on Jordan's response, "frown," to connect students to their world as a possible source for ideas. She asked them if they knew when their dog was sad, and students responded that they were aware of their dogs' emotions. Then Mrs. Ring supplied the description of a sad dog as one whose "jowls are hanging down" and "its tail is completely still." Jordan and Ariel further described the tail as "not wagging" and the "ears are down."

Mrs. Ring began the interaction with an open-ended statement that required students to activate their schema in order to generate possible responses. Then by weaving a multiplicity of funneling discourse, such as probing, clarifying, and revoicing, Mrs. Ring intended to support students' developing understanding of the writing strategy, *show, don't tell*. Again, Mrs. Ring did not offer suggestions that would show a sad puppy until students had been given the opportunity to build on the concept.

Mrs. Ring gave students approximately five minutes to compose a description of a sad puppy. Kyle composed the following sentence.

The puppy was sitting alone with beady eyes and dropy ears with out a friend to play with.

He reread the sentence and made a few additions. He added **poor** to describe the puppy and replaced **alone** with **still as a stone** to compose the following sentence.

The poor puppy was sitting still as a stone with beady eyes and dropy (droopy) ears with out a friend to play with.

Though Kyle did not offer a description during the interaction that showed a sad puppy, Mrs. Ring used his response to show him how to move away from just another synonym by showing him how to think through the process of going from a one word adjective to a physical description of a sad dog. Kyle possibly accessed multiple sources to compose the sentence. He retained his original verbal suggestion, “beady eyes” and employed a revoicing of Ariel’s depiction of “ears are down” to **dropy ears**. He used the phrase, **still as a stone** that he had offered to show “scared” from the previous day. Kyle not only included physical aspects such as beady eyes, droopy ears, and sitting as still as a stone to describe a sad puppy, but he also included the social, **with out a friend to play with**, a description that no one had suggested during the brainstorming. During the interaction, Kyle had suggested “mournful” as showing **sad**, and then described “mournful” as “nothing to do” when Mrs. Ring probed him to describe what “mournful” would look like. He did not include mournful in his written description of a sad puppy suggesting that within the confines of this lesson he understood that the concept, *show, don’t tell* goes beyond a synonym to more deliberate physical description.

Throughout this vignette, Mrs. Ring used most of Kyle’s contributions to further mediate his understanding. However, in many cases, Kyle’s contributions were gross approximations, especially during guided instruction and brainstorming. This was observed in the following statements by Mrs. Ring: “See there again, you guys try to go

way to the other end,” and “There again in your effort to go to an extreme, you’re losing your sense of direction.” In the first statement, she addressed the class, “OK. Guys,” as a possible attempt to deflect attention away from Kyle, but in the second statement, she directed the statement toward Kyle. Her directness is indicated by volunteering suggestions that show friendliness after Kyle’s description, “helping deaf children.” Since talking and brainstorming were employed as precursors to independent writing, one interpretation of her response was for them to stay focused and within the topic during guided practice as well as independent writing (Interview, 11-08-04). Through brainstorming, Kyle was able to hear rich ideas and language from Mrs. Ring and his classmates and then employ some of those ideas in his own writing. Occasionally, he made revisions to sentences after his classmates shared their writing. For example, he revised the sentences that showed a messy room.

According to Mrs. Ring’s lesson plans, using *show, don’t tell* was the objective of the lessons surrounding this vignette and for several more days. It was also reviewed throughout the remainder of the study. When I conducted a content analysis of *Bad Day*, I observed one part of the story where Kyle may have employed the strategy. In the following excerpt from the story, Kyle was not only late for football practice, but he had injured his knee when he tripped while rushing to his jeep.

I ran to the field and my coach said that I was late. I answered back in a grown (groan). Coach said that he will get some football tape on my knee.

(Document, 10-26-04)

Rather than state he was in pain because of his injured knee, he simply responded to the coach with a groan. The coach understood what he was attempting to communicate and

offered to tape up Kyle's injured knee. Mrs. Ring also selected this text but labeled it differently. She labeled **answered back in a groan** as a synonym for said. I interpreted it as a *show, don't tell* phrase since he used the phrase to show his pain rather than state how he felt.

In the story, *Toy Store*, composed a week after *Bad Day*, instead of stating that he was happy to see his mother when she rescued him from being locked up in a toy store, he showed that with the following sentence: **I dashed out the door and hugged my mom**. While I interpreted the entire sentence as a *show, don't tell* phrase, she selected only **dashed** and labeled it appropriately as precise language.

Identifying phrases that could be interpreted as *show, don't tell* is equally as challenging as identifying phrases used to add detail. (See Vignette 1). Once again, it is impossible to determine if the phrases selected as *show, don't tell* were a result of instruction or if he would have used the description without instruction.

Vignette 4

Mrs. Ring displayed a simple watercolor she had painted of an old house with a fence in the foreground, the sun setting in the background, and a dirt road winding off the painting. Later in the day, students would use watercolors to paint their own scenes and then write a piece inspired by their paintings. She used her painting as a catalyst to cooperatively compose the beginning of a Halloween experience.

MR When your parents were here, we wrote about a fence. And you are going to be able to use that or some of the ideas from that in this piece of writing. Some of you had talked about putting a gate in your picture. So later on, if you decide to add a fence and a gate, then it will fit right in. Now what does this house remind you of?

Jai Like a witch about to leave

KYLE The house reminds me of like black clouds (teacher cuts him off)

MR No, I guess I'm not explaining myself very clearly. So let me go back and start again. When you look at this house what does it make you think? What type of house is it?

Kyle Haunted house

MR Maybe an old abandoned house. (Transcript, 10-29-04)

At the beginning of the brainstorming for the shared writing, Mrs. Ring invited the class to share memories the watercolor painting may have prompted. The first student to volunteer suggested that "a witch is about to leave." Then Kyle volunteered, "The house reminds me of like black clouds," but Mrs. Ring interrupted his response and suggested that she did not explain herself very well. She then slightly rephrased the original question to, "When you look at this house, what does it make you think?" Then she immediately revised that question to a more limiting question, "What type of house is it?" Kyle described the house as a "haunted house." Mrs. Ring suggested that the house may also be "an old, abandoned house." In this interaction, Mrs. Ring's voice tone hinted that she was not correcting Kyle but introducing another possibility.

This interaction may also be interpreted that even though Mrs. Ring took the blame for Kyle's response, she was indirectly communicating that his response was unacceptable. Although students were invited to respond to an open-ended question, Mrs. Ring made the assumption that Kyle did not understand her question and was too quick to thwart Kyle's thoughts.

MR How long do you think it's been since anybody has lived there?

Lan Long time

MR Ok, maybe you don't go Trick or Treating, maybe you do different things, but let's say you were walking home one night, or you were riding your

bike home and you got a flat tire and you needed help. As you walk, this is the only house for miles and miles. How do you feel about walking up to that house and rapping on the door?

Cass Spooked out

MR Of course, spooked out is a phrase we wouldn't use in our writing because it's just a little too cute type thing.

KYLE I feel like taking my bike and walking home.

Amir Terrified

MR Ok, terrified might be slightly strong emotion for this. But I would feel maybe frightened. Ray?

RAY Afraid

MR Frightened, afraid. Would you be nervous?

Josh Scared silly

Four of the five students who responded to the question, "How do you feel about walking up to that house and rapping on the door?" responded with some type of adjective that describes fear: "spooked out," "terrified," "afraid," and "scared silly."

Though Mrs. Ring commented to these students, she did not respond to Kyle's feelings, "I feel like taking my bike and walking home" but continued with the discussion. Kyle's response though different from his peers and from what Mrs. Ring expected, extends beyond a one-word answer to describe how he feels to a demonstration of his fear.

MR How does the house look?

KYLE Has no windows... (Mrs. Ring interrupts him)

MR I just want words to describe it. I don't want you to tell them all about the house. I just want words to describe. I'm not going to write a story about a house that might be a little...

KYLE Dirty

MR No, Honey. You're still not following me. I don't know how to get you focused on the theme of the story. (Calls on someone else) Josh?

Josh Creepy

(I heard Kyle whisper, "Oh," then he raised his hand to contribute – see below. Then Mrs. Ring wrote some of the suggestions on the white board. She turned back to the class and asked for more description.)

Ali Eerie

Ari ? doors

MR I don't want a physical description

KYLE Scary

Mrs. Ring continued eliciting description from the students and in the above excerpt she asked them specifically how the house looked. Kyle began to describe the house as having no windows, but Mrs. Ring again interrupted his response. She explained that she only wanted words to describe the house. To further explain her expectations, she began to offer a nonexample, "I'm not going to write a story about a house that might be a little..." but was interrupted by Kyle. He attempted to finish her explanation by offering the house might be a little "dirty." At this disconnect, Mrs. Ring used a term of endearment, "Honey," that preceded her direct statement that he did not understand the theme of the story. The term honey may have been used to mask her frustration that his responses were not meeting her expectations, and in addition, she was simultaneously dismissing his responses. Because of the disconnect, his responses were inconsistent with his classmates' and were detached from the flow of the story. Evaluating his contributions to the shared writing as incompatible with the theme, she admitted that she did not know how to get him to focus on the theme. At this point, she deferred the question to another student, Josh, who described the house as "creepy." Josh's

description seemed to clarify Mrs. Ring's expectations. Kyle whispered to himself, "Oh," as if he understood her expectation, and immediately raised his hand to contribute again.

In this interaction, Mrs. Ring did not initially tell students that she only wanted adjectives to describe the house, but when Kyle began to give a physical description of the house, "has no windows," Mrs. Ring interrupted him with more definition for what she anticipated. His interruption with the word "dirty" to describe the house does not indicate that he was not "focused on the theme of the story" but perhaps assisting Mrs. Ring in explaining what they were "not going to write a story about" – "a house that might be a little dirty."

MR OK, what are some sounds I might hear? What are some onomatopoeia words that I might hear?

(Mrs. Ring remembers that she has a list of onomatopoeia words. Passes them out and tells students to put them in their writing folder.)

MR Look over these two sheets for any sounds you might hear.

(For the next three minutes, students read over the words - making the accompanying voice inflections as they read them.)

MR OK, Ladies and Gentlemen, what are some words that you found?

KYLE Thump

MR What are some things that might go thump?

KYLE Wood falling on the floor.

MR Where would the wood be coming from?

KYLE The roof

MR OK, Ladies and Gentlemen, this is something I really want you to give some thought to because if we think about it, the focus of this story is walking home and you have to get help - whether you're Trick-or-Treating or your bike had problems or whatever. Are you going to spend a lot of time talking about a piece of wood falling from the roof?

Class Nooo

MR So, these are some things we need to think about. How are you going to work this into your story?

After looking over the list of onomatopoeia words, Kyle suggested “thump.”

When Mrs. Ring probed him for things that might make that sound, Kyle responded that wood falling from the ceiling onto the floor might make a “thump” sound. She considered his response unfocused, and in an attempt to deflect attention away from Kyle, she began her response with “OK ladies and gentlemen.” She used his response to remind students about the topic of the story: “walking home and you have to get help.” She reiterated the importance of staying on topic by addressing the class with the question, “Are you going to spend a lot of time talking about a piece of wood falling from the roof?” Students indicated that they understood that a piece of wood falling from the ceiling does not move the story forward. Rather than completely dismissing Kyle’s suggestion, she offered them a strategy that if they were going to use a description, they should have a plan for it in their story.

This interaction may also be interpreted that while Mrs. Ring perceived Kyle’s response as extraneous to the plot development and used this to remind students that details should move the story forward, she used this teaching moment at Kyle’s expense. More specifically, when she addressed the class with the question, “Are you going to spend a lot of time talking about a piece of wood falling from the roof?” and their unified response, “No.” Though I cannot determine if Kyle actually had a plot developed in his mind and the wood falling from the roof was a detail in the plot development, he did not propose that he would “spend a lot of time talking about a piece of wood falling from the

roof” as Mrs. Ring indicated in her exaggeration. Similar to an earlier interaction that addressed the entire class rather than Kyle, Mrs. Ring included them collectively when she scolded Kyle in the generic.

The discourse continued with students sharing words from the list of words that would be appropriate for the story and the object associated with the sound. After several minutes of dialogue, Mrs. Ring composed the following sentence incorporating some ideas suggested by students.

As the sun sets I started out for a night of trick-or-treating. I walked down the long, spooky road and round a...

MR What can we call it?

KYLE Building

MR No, I don’t want to say “building.” I’m trying to create a mood (says eerily)

In this brief interaction between Kyle and Mrs. Ring, she had composed the beginning of the story and stopped to invite students to suggest a word for the house in the picture. Kyle quickly volunteered “building,” but Mrs. Ring rejected his response by expressing in an eerie voice that building does not reflect the mood she was attempting to create. In this interaction, she used her voice to mediate Kyle’s understanding of the type of structure that might be associated with a **long, spooky road**. Another interpretation is that she is not only positioning herself as the knower by using the “I” voice but also taking ownership of the writing, “No, I don’t want to say “building.” I’m trying to create a mood.” Again, she is dismissing Kyle’s contribution.

Summary of the Interactions between Mrs. Ring and Kyle and his Responses to the Interactions

The interactions between Kyle and Mrs. Ring were embedded within the larger contexts of guided instruction and shared writing during the one-hour block of time scheduled for writing instruction. These interactions typically served as mediation toward Kyle's developing understanding of a particular writing strategy or skills. Though I observed instruction of eight writing concepts while researching in this classroom, the interactions in the vignettes selected for analysis focused on three: adding detail, using a strategy described as *show, don't tell*, and *onomatopoeia*. In some cases, the interaction was a combination of several instructional techniques, and in other cases, a single technique was employed to mediate Kyle's understanding of the focused concept.

In Vignette 1, Mrs. Ring used several discourse techniques to mediate Kyle's understanding of using comparisons to add detail. Kyle sidestepped her request to make the connection for her since his comparison of a red dress to dark carpet was vague, but offered instead an imprecise comparison previously suggested by a classmate. He may have avoided her request because he thought he understood the concept and was willing to take a risk to demonstrate his knowledge, or perhaps he simply could not explain his thinking. Mrs. Ring responded with an exaggeration to make a point but neglected to assess his understanding. After students volunteered comparisons to describe the red in the red dress, Mrs. Ring suggested several more common objects. It appeared that brainstorming was premature for some students since they did not have an understanding of this strategy though they volunteered to participate. While there was a difference in what was labeled a detail between Mrs. Ring and me, the analysis did indicate that he

included details in writing samples that followed the interactions described in this vignette.

Vignette 2 described the interaction between Kyle and Mrs. Ring as he composed a story, *The Magic Pencil*, an innovation of the story, *The Widows Broom* (Van Allsburg, 1992). When reviewing *The Widow's Broom* for the upcoming composition, Kyle suggested that the broom “went out of control” rather than to explain the chores that the broom did for the witch, a response that Mrs. Ring anticipated. Mrs. Ring responded that the broom did not really go out of control, suggesting that she disagreed with his statement rather than asking him to explain his response. Later in Kyle’s story, *The Magic Pencil*, he retained the phrase **went out of control** and used it to describe the pencil as going out of control after it finished Kyle’s work for him. In the later application, he used it more suitably suggesting his ownership of vocabulary that is meaningful to him.

In the first brief conference initiated by Kyle, Mrs. Ring overlooked the discrepancy between the setting of the story and the following sentence since Mrs. Ring was more focused on Kyle using the strategy *show, don't tell* to begin the story. In another conference, she used a combination of explicit directives, resources in the room, and questions for him to consider that were intended to help him add details to the story and thereby making the meaning clear to the reader. Mrs. Ring did not praise or affirm him at anytime during the conference and though she implied that his work was not “quality,” she empathized with him understanding that he thought the writing was completed.

He made a few revisions following Mrs. Ring's suggestions and also independently made a few revisions at the word level, adding a few adjectives and changing one verb to a synonym. One sentence and one phrase were deleted. While he followed Mrs. Ring's advice to circle words that he was not sure of the spelling, he was never observed attempting to use a source to confirm the spelling during this lesson or any other time throughout the study although students were expected to check for accuracy after completing a composition. Though Mrs. Ring consistently modeled rereading and revising throughout the entire study, Kyle revised when Mrs. Ring conferenced with him. In a few instances, he independently added or changed a word after his classmates read aloud their sentences. He used a phrase in his writing that Mrs. Ring had used during instruction to describe his shock at seeing the magic pencil. He also used a phrase he had suggested earlier to describe the magic broom but was corrected by Mrs. Ring as not accurately describing the behavior. However, overall when given opportunities to revise his writing, Kyle acquiesced by reading over his writing but made little attempt to add the skills and strategies practiced during class.

In Vignette 3, Mrs. Ring used most of Kyle's contributions to further mediate his understanding of the strategy, *show, don't tell*. Kyle's contributions during guided instruction and brainstorming were sometimes beyond the scope of the topic. At one point, she addressed the class, "you guys," as a possible attempt to deflect attention away from Kyle when his responses were evaluated as being extreme, but when it happened again, she directed the statement toward Kyle. Her directedness is indicated by volunteering suggestions that show friendliness after Kyle's description, "helping deaf children." Since talking and brainstorming were employed as precursors to independent

writing, she explained to me that her intent was for them to stay focused and within the topic during guided practice as well as independent writing. While Kyle frequently made gross approximations during guided practice and brainstorming, they were not evident in his writing. While he was able to compose *show me* sentences from simple phrases and sentences during guided instruction, my analysis of future compositions revealed two instances of *show me* sentences, yet Mrs. Ring did not label any sentences as *show me*.

In Vignette 4, Mrs. Ring used a watercolor illustration that she had painted to generate ideas for a Halloween experience and also to focus on using descriptive words and onomatopoeia in their writing. When Kyle suggested that the painting reminded him of black clouds, she interrupted his response and suggested she had not clarified her question, then rephrased it. The rephrasing helped Kyle, and he suggested the structure was a haunted house. The discourse continued, and she asked, “How do you feel about walking up to the door?” Kyle said he would “feel like taking his bike and walking home.” Then when she asked how the house looked, he responded, “Has no windows.” Mrs. Ring curbed his response and gave nonexamples to further explain her expectations, “I’m not going to write a story about a house that might be a little...” but Kyle interrupted her as if to complete her thought and suggested “dirty.” Then in her uptake, she used a term of endearment, “Honey,” to admit she did not know how to communicate to him the focus of the discourse. Then she deferred her question to Josh who suggested “creepy.” At that point, Kyle indicated he understood her expectation with a whispered, “Oh,” then raised his hand to contribute. Later, Kyle suggested a sound he might hear was “thump,” which would describe wood falling from the roof to the floor. Though Kyle’s explanation was sensible, Mrs. Ring gave the class a strategy with reference to

Kyle's suggestion. Though the strategy is legitimate, the exaggeration she used to explain it may have been uncomfortable for Kyle – "Are you going to spend a lot of time talking about a piece of wood falling from the roof?" Finally, when she began the shared writing, Kyle offered "building" (though he offered "haunted house" earlier) to describe the house in the painting. Then she used an eerie voice to further activate their schema.

I did not record any incidences of Mrs. Ring praising Kyle's writing or his contributions during the interactions described in these vignettes. Further, she seldom affirmed him as a contributor in the learning environment. Occasionally, she used exaggeration in response to Kyle's contribution in order to emphasize or clarify a point. One interaction may even be interpreted as somewhat harsh. At the end of the conference, she reminded Kyle that she was looking for "quality." Though the intention of this comment may have been to reinforce the points of her conference, it could also be interpreted as implying that his writing was lacking. However, I did record responses that exposed her care. She initiated two responses with "Honey." On one occasion, she used it at the beginning of her response to soften the impending question she had regarding his use of an unconventional word, twenkling to describe sprinkling rain. Then in another interaction, after Kyle contributed a string of decontextualized responses throughout a shared writing, she began her response to him with, "Honey," when she admitted she did not know how to get him to focus on the theme of the story. In another incident, she offered encouragement by sympathizing with him about his need to revise his story. Occasionally, she referenced the whole class rather than Kyle in order to deflect attention from him when his response was beyond the parameter of the topic. During another

interaction when Kyle gave a synonym rather than a *show me* description, Mrs. Ring thanked him and used his contribution to briefly further explain the concept.

Kyle appeared to understand the structure of narrative writing. Excerpts from Kyle's writing within guided practice illustrate that he attempted and usually gave evidence of including the skills or strategy within the confines of narrow writing situations. However, there is little evidence of transfer of these skills and strategies to the same degree in the larger context of independent writing that he did with guided practice. Although Kyle frequently made what sounded like gross approximations to open-ended questions, he did not include them in his writing. Some vocabulary and phrases can be traced to the language of Mrs. Ring and also to vocabulary from the basal reader.

Due to the abstract definition of some of the skills and strategies taught during the study, they were difficult to reliably identify within Kyle's writing. It is equally difficult to assess whether the writing was a result of instruction or if the writing was part of his existing expressive language and would have been employed without instruction. In addition, it cannot be determined if Kyle purposefully selected to omit certain skills and strategies in the larger contexts of the stories. However, comparing the word count across the stories gives some indication that his writings were getting longer. Kyle independently made revisions to sentences during guided practice by adding an adjective to further describe a noun. During the conference with Mrs. Ring about *Magic Pencil*, they methodically read through his composition. This approach appears to have been effective since Kyle made revisions on a second draft after the conference. Overall, when given opportunities to revise his writing, Kyle acquiesced by reading over his writing but made little attempt to add the skills and strategies practiced during class.

While Kyle accepted his position as student and Mrs. Ring's position as teacher, he did not accept the positioning as nonwriter, a result of Mrs. Ring's comments to him during conferences he initiated and comments to his responses to open-ended questions. He made some revisions after each conference and returned to Mrs. Ring to show the revisions, a move to position himself from nonwriter. Mrs. Ring evaluated his responses as deficient rather than creative or meritorious. Only once did she probe him to explain his response. Rather than explaining, he sidestepped the question, though the reason is unknown, and offered another attempt at the "right" answer.

Mrs. Ring may have been attempting to deflect attention from Kyle when she addressed the entire class in order to use his response for instruction to the whole class. However, in doing this, she made his response more noticeable by including the entire class in the instruction rather than just Kyle

The increase in text length from August to early November suggests that the length of his stories was getting longer. Kyle's baseline writing sample in August was about finding a meteor. The sample consisted of 107 words (Appendix G). A story written in the beginning of October, *The Magic Pencil* contained 159 words. *Bad Day* contained 270 words, nearly 50 more words than the previous composition and 65 more than a composition written a week later (Appendix H). The increase in text may have been influenced by the topic of his bad day, which was football, a sport that he had expressed interest in on several occasions. The last story, *Toy Store*, contained 205 words (Appendix I). Though a decrease from a story written a week earlier, it contained almost 100 more words than the baseline composition. The writing samples assessed by the two graduate students and me using the 6-Traits Writing model had mean scores for the

beginning, middle and end of October of 2.8, 3.2, and 1.8, respectively, with a 5 being the highest score possible. The scores are similar to the word count analysis in that *Bad Day* received a higher overall score than the other two stories - possibly, because he wrote about something that appealed to him. All six traits improved from the first composition to the second; however, the scores on all six traits for the third composition declined from the second composition though none of the scores was as low as the first composition.

Mrs. Ring e-mailed me several months after I had closed the study to let me know that Kyle scored a 3.5 out of a possible 6 on the state-mandated writing test. While 3.5 was considered “passing,” his score of 3.5 means that one scorer gave him a 3, and the other scorer gave him a 4. The Grade 4 narrative prompt (topic) directed students to write a story about going on a special ride.

Ray

According to Ray’s responses to the WSPS, he did not perceive himself as competent in writing as his peers nor did he perceive himself as making as much progress in writing as his peers. The only item that Ray strongly disagreed with on the WSPS was *My writing is more interesting than my classmates’ writing*, suggesting that he perceived his writing as less interesting than his peers’ writing. The only item that Ray strongly agreed with was *People in my family think I am a good writer*. He circled *undecided* for all the statements that implied that his teacher thought his writing was good.

Mrs. Ring shared with me early in the study that Ray’s mother had wanted a parent-teacher conference because Ray was not making A’s in written expression as he had in third grade. Mrs. Ring volunteered that the previous year’s writing instruction stressed grammar and mechanics rather than writing. His mom requested extra help for

Ray, so periodically, Mrs. Ring stayed after school to give him additional help. According to Mrs. Ring, though Ray's parents made sure he did his homework, he completed home assignments independently without adult assistance (Field notes, 10-08-04).

Unlike Kyle, Ray seldom volunteered to actively participate regardless of the context of instruction: whole group activities or in a cooperative learning grouping. During instruction, Ray usually did not look at Mrs. Ring or other students but looked down at his desk and fidgeted with something in or on his desk. Frequently, Mrs. Ring would move close to Ray to gain his attention. However, an analysis of his responses during whole group instruction, whether his responses were volunteered or imposed by Mrs. Ring, indicated that his responses were reasonable and closed-ended questions were usually answered accurately.

The number and the duration of interactions between Mrs. Ring and Ray were less than the number of interactions between Mrs. Ring and Kyle. He seemed rather quiet and though he seldom laughed aloud, he displayed a broad sheepish grin when amused. Mrs. Ring claimed that Ray was unmotivated, and that contributed to Ray's struggle with writing.

Ray's problem basically comes from lack of motivation and his being somewhat lazy. Ray is often reluctant to participate in writing instruction and must be reminded of the grading consequences that will apply if he does not complete the assigned task. He lacks concentration and when he does do his work, he rushes and then makes careless mistakes. (Informal Interview, 10-08-04)

Ray's perceived lack of interest and motivation may have influenced the interaction.

Students typically indicated their eagerness to respond to a statement or question posed by Mrs. Ring by raising their hands; however, Mrs. Ring did not limit responses to only those who volunteered to respond. Using a tone that was more conversational than interrogating, she frequently asked a question or solicited a comment from those who did not volunteer to respond. Throughout the study, I observed that Ray was one of the few students who seldom volunteered responses.

Occasionally, Ray referred to a modeled or shared writing piece that was displayed by the overhead projector to support his independent writing. Frequently, Ray's compositions were incomplete or misplaced. Mrs. Ring did not tell students when an assignment was due initially but made that decision based on her evaluation of students' progress on the assignment. Typically, a writing assignment extended over a week with the purpose of including writing concepts or skills that had been the focus of instruction in the writing assignment and also to give students ample time for revision of the draft as they received feedback from Mrs. Ring and their peers. It appeared that having a week to complete an assignment may have contributed to Ray's lack of motivation to complete it. When students were given time to write independently, he usually took more time than necessary to begin and was often easily distracted. However, when students were given a practice writing test to prepare for the state mandated writing test, he was able to complete the composition within the 45 minute time restraint. On another occasion, he completed an assignment within that same time frame that he had neglected to complete over the course of a week. Having a deadline may have been beneficial to Ray. Though the students had writing folders, Ray seldom placed his work in the folder and consequently misplaced writing plans and compositions

which necessitated that he start over. Sometimes he completed assignments but neglected to turn them in. Ray seemed to perform better when he had a time limit rather than several days to complete an assignment.

Ray's handwriting was legible, and his spelling did not impede the readability of his composition. An analysis of Ray's planning sheets indicates that his prewriting was detailed when he actually planned. The planning was usually written in phrases and frequently included ideas generated from the class during brainstorming, teacher modeling, or shared writing.

Introducing the Vignettes

The following five selected vignettes describe the interaction between Mrs. Ring and Ray. The first vignette describes how Mrs. Ring incorporated a vague response to affirm Ray as a contributor to the learning community. In Vignette 2, Mrs. Ring used a variety of techniques to facilitate Ray's understanding of reasons for indenting. Vignette 3 describes how Mrs. Mac prompted Ray through questions to get him to ask himself how he could go about changing the structure of a sentence. Vignette 4 extends over four days and describes several interactions as Ray attempted to practice a writing technique, *show, don't tell* and then embed it within the context of *The Magic Pencil*, an innovation from a children's book, *The Witch's Broom*. In Vignette 5, Mrs. Ring capitalizes on Ray's overt interest in contributing during the brainstorming of ideas for a Halloween experience. Mrs. Ring used the interactions to praise him for his contribution and to affirm him as a writer.

Vignette 1

In the following transcript, Mrs. Ring is attempting to convey that writers often

use ideas from other people to compose their own stories. Consistent with Mrs. Ring's teaching method, she seldom began the writing lesson by directly telling the class the concept but used a more indirect approach usually through open-ended questions and then employing those responses as a catalyst to generate subsequent responses.

MR One of the greatest tools writers have is...can anyone guess?

KYLE Pencil

MR Yeah, that's good. What's another tool?

Jor Uh, I don't know.

Rav Our brains

Eli Imagination

Cas Thinking skills

Jor Knowing how to spell

? Ideas

MR Where do ideas come from?

Cas Brain, mind

RAY Details

MR Where do we get ideas and details?

Eli Other people, sometimes you get ideas from other books

MR Say again

Eli Other people, sometimes you get ideas from other books

MR Elijah, when you read another book, you may want to write a story like that. You may want to use some of their ideas or techniques. We can't write it word for word. That is illegal – plagiarism...

Students suggest a number of tools writers use, but when a student suggests “ideas,” Mrs. Ring probes them about the origination of ideas. Though Ray did not volunteer to respond, Mrs. Ring called on him, and he responded that ideas come from “details.” In a few lessons prior to this lesson, adding details to a story was a strategy to assist the reader in better understanding what the writer attempting to say. Although it appeared that he had not given much thought to his response but rather offered a guess, Mrs. Ring did not discount his response but added his response to the original question and asked, “Where do we get ideas and details?” Mrs. Ring used his response in the question that followed though it did not serve to qualify or add to the question but affirmed him as a class participant.

Another interpretation of this interaction with the class may be that using the word “tools” may have been confusing to students even though Kyle was the only student who suggested a literal tool for writing. The interaction resembled a guessing game until Ray suggested “details.” Mrs. Ring used his response as a catalyst to pose another question that then resulted in the response she was anticipating.

Vignette 2

For several days, Mrs. Ring had been modeling narrative writing by composing an innovation of *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* (Viorst, 1972). She had supported students’ developing understanding of narrative writing by modeling her thought processes while constructing a graphic organizer to visually display events of her bad day. After she modeled the composing of the first event, students were directed to write the first event to their story. She collected the beginning of their stories and took them home to read. She had noticed that students were putting several events in

one paragraph and pointed that out to them the following day. At the beginning of the lesson, Mrs. Ring had instructed students to get a fiction book from their desk that they would use later in the lesson to look for examples of indenting. She read aloud excerpts from a familiar book, *The Pirate's Parrot* (McFarland, 2000), to demonstrate purposes for indenting. This book is riddled with dialogue and is a good model to illustrate the concept of indenting text when someone new begins to talk. As she read aloud, she pointed that out to the students. Then she encountered a paragraph that was indented because there was a change in action. Rather than directly stating the author's purpose for starting a new paragraph, she supported students' understanding by asking deductive questions that prompted them to use their current knowledge to generate new knowledge.

MR Now this isn't somebody talking, so why is it indented?

Ray It's a new paragraph

MR But why is it a new paragraph? There's not a new person talking. Why do you think McFarland indented there? [Five seconds wait time then calls on Ray]

Ray (No response after six seconds of wait time)

MR What is the event in this paragraph, Ray? What happened? [referring to previous paragraph]

Ray Spitalton spit

MR So that's the event.

MR What's the event in this one? Is it the same thing?

Ray No

MR That is what I want you (the class) to see. (Transcript, 9-22-04)

Rather than explicitly state why the author indented, Mrs. Ring engaged the students in the process of ascertaining the reason for indenting by questioning the class

and Ray in particular. Ray's response hinted he understood that the author's purpose for indenting was to create a new paragraph. Mrs. Ring began probing him about his response and helped him eliminate a reason, and then slightly rephrased the original question, "But why is it a new paragraph?" to "Why do you think McFarland indented there?" After five seconds of wait time, she attempted to back up to the last known point of understanding. Then to further clarify the question, she defined "event" as "what happened" since she did not use that term in the original question. Ray's response, "Spitalton spit," demonstrated his understanding of the event in the paragraph. She confirmed his response, "So that's the event". The next paragraph described a separate event. Mrs. Ring tried to assess his knowledge of the event in the next paragraph by asking him, "Is it the same thing?"

While Ray understood that the purpose for indenting was to start a new paragraph, he did not immediately offer a response when she probed him about the reason the author started a new paragraph. Using a variety of techniques, she attempted to mediate his understanding. Through this process, she gave him think time and clarification, and then used his last known point of understanding to help him recognize why the author started a new paragraph.

The objective of this lesson was to introduce or, possibly for some, reintroduce students to two primary purposes for starting a new paragraph: change in dialogue and beginning a new event. While the book she used was familiar to the class and a good model to demonstrate change in dialogue, students may have had difficulty "hearing" when a new event began, even though Mrs. Ring stated, "New paragraph" and then read the new paragraph, which was often just a few sentences such as "Bear squawked."

Since students did not actually see the text, this limitation may have contributed to Mrs. Ring's need to mediate Ray's understanding. Mrs. Ring explicitly explained the purpose for beginning a new paragraph while she modeled writing in her *Bad Day* story but did not return to it to reiterate paragraphing.

A content analysis of compositions written throughout the duration of the study indicates that Ray had a satisfactory understanding of the objective for indenting. Even Ray's earliest writing samples show his understanding of indenting even before formal instruction by Mrs. Ring.

Vignette 3

The following vignette is a continuation from the previous three days of writing with the objective to change the structure of a sentence, a concept that seemed challenging for many students in the class. The day previous to the transcript below, students had been given a worksheet with six boxes. Each box contained a sentence beginning with She or There. Students were directed to rewrite the sentences so that the sentences did not begin with She or There. In the excerpt below, Mrs. Ring thumbs through the worksheets and reads aloud students' revisions to the following sentence:

There were books on the shelf.

MR Someone said, "Encyclopedias, dictionaries." She was describing books. Other people wrote about the colors of the books. Some books were stacked. Listen [reads aloud] **Stacked upon the shelves were many, many different genre of books.** [Continues to look through samples and then reads some aloud] **Old worn out books were on the bookshelf covered in dust.** Maybe, worn out books covered in dust filled the shelf. So what kind of books are we going to use for our first sentence? We're going to look at this and ask ourselves, What kind of books?

Students raise their hands to contribute.

MR Ray, what kind of books? (Ray did not volunteer)

RAY Old books

MR What are the shelves like?

RAY Dusty, worn out

MR [Begins writing] Old books [pauses] Do you want sat upon, filled, covered?

RAY Sat upon

Mrs. Ring finished writing the sentence:

Old books sat upon the dusty, worn out shelves. (Transcript, 10-07-04)

Though Ray did not volunteer to participate, Mrs. Ring called on him to revise the focus sentence: **There were books on the shelf.** She prompted him through each question that students were to ask themselves in order to effectively revise the original sentence. This prompting was not limited to Ray, since the three students following the interaction between Mrs. Ring and Ray were asked questions in the same manner. Then Mrs. Ring wrote a new sentence on the overhead and again prompted students through the questions to assist the revision process.

Perhaps Ray got his ideas for the description from the sample she read aloud to the class: **Old worn out books were on the bookshelf covered in dust. Old books** may have been cued from the student sample “old, worn out books” and then **dusty worn out shelves** from “book shelf covered in dust.” A careful examination of Ray’s practice worksheet assigned prior to this interaction shows that he revised five of the six sentences but did not attempt the last sentence, **There were books on the shelf.**

Later in the lesson, students were given the following sentence to revise on their individual white boards: **The bird was in the tree.** Ray revised the sentence to read: **A**

beautiful crow sat in the old tree. He made four revisions to the sentence. He replaced a common noun, **bird**, with a specific bird, **crow**, and replaced a being verb, **was**, with an action verb, **sat**. He also added description by including **beautiful** and **old** to describe the bird and tree, respectively.

A content analysis of the base line writing, a story about Ray and his dog getting lost in the woods, and two compositions composed during the study, *The Magic Pencil* and *Bad Day*, indicate there was some variety with sentence beginnings within each composition. Ray's baseline composed in early August contained 18 sentences, though some were run-on sentences (Appendix J). Most sentences began with words to transition the reader from one action to the next. For example, five sentences began with then, two sentences began with when and after. Two sentences began with I. *The Magic Pencil*, written almost two months later, and *Bad Day* (See Appendix K), written two weeks after *The Magic Pencil* (Appendix L), each, coincidentally, contained 23 sentences. Of those 23 sentences, 10 began with the pronoun I, and two sentences began with then and when. These last two stories were written in first person and may have been a factor for the frequent use of I at the beginning of sentences.

Vignette 4

This vignette extends over four days. Students were once again displaced to the library since their classroom needed additional repairs. During the beginning of the lesson, students worked in cooperative groups to revise the sentence, **It was a bright, sunny, hot summer day**, to a *show me* sentence. After groups shared their revisions, Mrs. Ring transitioned the lesson to the magic pencil story that each student was writing. The story was based on an actual book, *The Widow's Broom* (Van Allsburg, 1992).

Students had created a plan and had written the beginning of the story during a previous lesson. Today they were assigned to consider revising any telling text to a *show me* text and then work on the middle of the story.

On the previous day, Mrs. Ring listed all the materials and supplies students would need to bring with them to the library; however, Ray had left his writing notebook in the classroom. During independent writing time, he quickly composed two paragraphs. While the three students who shared a table with him wrote diligently, he was turned sideways in his chair, looking at the magazines on the shelf next to him. “He had left his organizer in the classroom and seemed helpless without it. He seemed unmotivated to come up with something different than what may have been on the organizer. He doesn’t make any effort to revise, edit, add. Seated at his desk, he looks around room. After eight minutes of unproductive time, he took his draft to Mrs. Ring” (Field notes, 10-19-04). In the following interaction, Mrs. Ring silent reads the draft and makes a few comments to Ray.

MR **I tried to write with it.** (Reading from draft) What kind of punctuation?

Ray Period

MR This kind of punctuation shows a feeling.

Ray Emotion

MR No, you would use an exclamation point.
(Mrs. Ring continues to read) “Seat” is spelled s-e-a-t.
There are some words I know you don’t know how to spell. I would look at this part in here – very hard to read. I like **I fell out of my seat** and **felt like a snake bite**. (Transcript, 10-19-04)

During this brief conference, Mrs. Ring addressed a few editorial concerns, punctuation and a misspelled word. After she corrected the spelling for **seat**, she

acknowledged that there would be words that he would not know how to spell. This understanding was frequently and almost daily repeated by Mrs. Ring's directive to the class to simply circle words that they were not sure of the spelling and then to continue with their writing. Mrs. Ring had difficulty reading one part of the composition and advised Ray to "look at this part." She concluded the short conference by praising several phrases and thus affirming him as a writer. The phrase, **felt like a snake bite**, vividly described the pain inflicted by the pencil when it poked him. And the phrase, **I fell out of my seat**, showed his surprise at the pencil writing down all the problems for his science test.

Ray erased the first paragraph when he returned to his seat. Since I was seated near Ray, I casually asked him what he had written, and he replied that he did not know. The erased paragraph may have been what Mrs. Ring stated in the interaction that was "very hard to read." Ray's draft to *The Magic Pencil* is displayed in Table 11.

Table 11

Ray's First Draft to *The Magic Pencil*

When I got to school I meairned (meandered) in the class room. When I got to my desk, I saw this pencil on the ground. It was blue and orage and it had gator heads on it. I tried (circled) to write with it, but it pokked me. It felt like a snake bite. So I put it in my disk but as soon as I knew it It was writing down all my problems I couldn't believe my eyes I almost jumped out of my seat. And I wasn't worried about my big science test.

The following day, without identifying the author, Mrs. Ring read aloud some of the beginning and middle of students' paragraphs about the magic pencil and gave them

feedback. Most students were not including the focused writing technique, *show, don't tell*, in their compositions - specifically when the pencil was discovered to be magical. To demonstrate, she told them a story about a pencil that came to life and saved the day by writing her lesson plans for her. She included elements such as emotions, dialogue, and description. She ended the story by stating her expectations for their stories and then assigned them to make necessary revisions.

The next day, Mrs. Ring continued to guide students through the practice of using *show, don't tell* in their stories. She wrote a sentence on the overhead, and then the class brainstormed ways to demonstrate the adjective rather than writing an adjective to describe a noun. An example from the lesson was, "I was really scared." The lesson continued in the same manner for the next 25 minutes with Mrs. Ring posting a sentence and then lively brainstorming by the class. When Mrs. Ring posted the sentence, **The room was a mess**, she used Ray's bedroom as a possible example.

MR Let's say that we are going to use Ray's bedroom for an example. Ray may have laying around in it dirty socks, half-eaten pizza, Little Debbie cakes that he's trying to sneak underneath the bed that's been there for three or four years, as well as books scattered. Maybe he has cars and trucks or a forgotten stuffed animal in a corner from when he was younger. The mess is going to be all over. (Transcript, 10-20-04)

The class continued brainstorming descriptions of a messy kitchen and then a messy bathroom. When students were given the assignment to describe a messy room, Ray composed the following *show me* sentence.

The bedroom had dirty socks on the fan, pizza half eaten, some clean clothes on the bed that had never been put away and feathers flooded the room from a pillow fight.

After Ray read aloud his sentence, Mrs. Ring overtly praised him by simply saying,

“Very good, Ray.”

Ray used two phrases from Mrs. Ring’s description of his room: **dirty socks** and **pizza half eaten**, phrased slightly different from “half-eaten pizza.” He did not include the Little Debbie cake, books, cars, trucks, and stuffed animal in his description but rather added something more realistic - **some clean clothes on the bed that had not been put away** and something fanciful - **feathers flooded the room from a pillow fight**.

After students shared their descriptions of a messy room, without any brainstorming, Mrs. Ring assigned them the following sentence to independently revise - **The lady was beautiful**. She underlined the word “beautiful” to indicate what should be described. Ray revised the sentence.

The young lady had shiny blue eyes, nice blond hair, And some dark red limpstick. With some high-heeled shoes on that make her looked 3 inches taller she looked like a spurstar. (Document, 10-20-04)

Following the guided practice, she encouraged students to include the strategy in their magic pencil story they had been composing over the last several days. A few minutes after giving the directive, Mrs. Ring circulated the room. Ray’s draft and pencil lay on his desk as he sat slumped in his seat. When she got to Ray’s desk, he initiated the brief interaction.

RAY What am I supposed to do if I forgot my organizer?

MR It was on the list of things to bring. You are welcome to get out another piece of paper. Next time you go on vacation make sure you pack your toothbrush, toothpaste, underwear and socks. (Transcript, 10-20-04)

Ray did not make any additions to the draft he had restarted two days earlier.

Once again he exhibited the same behaviors from before: rolling his pencil between the

palm of his hands, slumping in his seat, and looking around the room. When she approached his table, as if to justify his reason for not writing anything, Ray asked, “What am I supposed to do if I forgot my organizer?” Mrs. Ring did not sympathize with him but quite the contrary. She put the responsibility for making that decision on Ray since the class had brainstormed a list of things they should take with them when they were displaced to the library, and then Mrs. Ring had written the list on the board. Mrs. Ring even suggested that he start over if necessary and then ended the short interaction with a reminder that was understood by the class and used occasionally in the class when students had forgotten things. While Mrs. Ring encouraged Ray to be part of the learning community and affirmed him when he participated by praising his contributions, she also had expectations for him as a student. A week later, Mrs. Ring realized she did not have Ray’s paper. She gave him the 30 minutes reserved for PAT, Preferred Activity Time (Jones, 2001), to finish or rewrite the story, which he did and turned in to Mrs. Ring.

While Mrs. Ring held Ray accountable for completing the writing assignment, it was not until a week after students finished the compositions that she realized she did not have his. Students were responsible for placing completed work in a basket. Moving from one location to another to hold class may have been a factor in the oversight, but I noticed earlier in the study he did not submit a writing assignment connected to *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears* (Aardema, 1975), a selection in the students’ reader.

Mrs. Ring continued to reinforce students’ developing understanding of the concept *show, don’t tell* and using precise language in their writing the following day. In the past few days, she had provided them with a sentence; however, on this day, she gave students a fragment of a sentence because, according to Mrs. Ring, “I don’t want you to

feel tied into the sentence. She gave students the following sentence fragments to rewrite in order to *show, don't tell*: **friendly lady** and **sad puppy**.

Ray expanded the phrase **friendly lady** to the following *show me* sentence.

The lady was walking down the street with a big smile helping people out with there problems.

After Ray composed the original sentence, he reread it and inserted the phrase **with a big smile** to further describe that she was friendly. Perhaps Ray borrowed the description, **helping people out with there problems** from Mrs. Ring when she had suggested helping as a way to demonstrate friendliness during the brainstorming of ideas for actions that demonstrate friendliness.

Ray expanded the phrase **sad puppy** to the following *show me* sentence.

The stray lonely puppy sat on the end of the porch with no one around to play with.

After Ray composed the original sentence, he reread it and inserted the word **stray** to further describe the puppy. He may have associated sad with the way he feels when he has **no one to play with**. He described a **sad puppy** as **alone** or **with no one around** and used **stray** to attend to the social aspect of sad.

I conducted a content analysis for the strategy *show, don't tell* in *The Magic Pencil* and *The Bad Day*. Mrs. Ring also culled the stories for *show, don't tell*. While Ray demonstrated the strategy *show, don't tell* at the sentence level, I noted little evidence in the larger compositions, and Mrs. Ring did not label any text as *show, don't tell*. We both noted the same text to label in two places but labeled it differently. I labeled **felt like I broke my ankle** as *show, don't tell* since the phrase demonstrated the pain of falling while doing jumping jacks. However, Mrs. Ring labeled it has a detail. While Mrs. Ring labeled **Clouds looked like pencils** as *show, don't tell*, I labeled it as details. There was

one phrase that I selected and labeled as *show, don't tell* that Mrs. Ring did not select at all. I labeled **I was like of my coch** (maybe gosh) **I said under my breath** as a *show, don't tell* since Ray was demonstrating his surprise that the pencil started to write for him.

Vignette 5

Mrs. Ring displayed a simple watercolor she had painted of an old house with a fence in the foreground, the sun setting in the background, and a dirt road winding off the painting. Later in the day, students would use watercolors to paint their own scenes and then write a piece inspired by their paintings. She used her painting as a catalyst to cooperatively compose the beginning of a Halloween experience. The following excerpt from the lesson starts after several talk turns between Mrs. Ring and students about the house.

MR How do you feel about walking up to that house and rapping on the door?

Cas Spooked out

MR Of course, spooked out is a phrase we wouldn't use in our writing because it's just a little too cute type thing.

KYLE I feel like taking my bike and walking home

Amir Terrified

MR Ok, terrified might be slightly strong emotion for this. But I would feel maybe frightened. Ray?

Ray Afraid

MR Frightened, afraid. [Pauses for five seconds.] Would you be nervous? [Without waiting for a response, Mrs. Ring turns to write on the white board the descriptive words suggested by students]

In this brief excerpt, Mrs. Ring attempted to solicit from students words to

describe their feelings about rapping on the door of the house in the picture. Previous to Ray's contribution, students offered "spooked out" and "terrified." Mrs. Ring explained "spooked out" was too informal and that "terrified" was too strong. Ray contributed "afraid," a synonym of words previously offered by his peers and Mrs. Ring. Then she repeated her suggestion, "frightened," followed by Ray's suggestion, "afraid." Since there were no more suggestions, using a rhetorical question as a technique to hint more suggestions, Mrs. Ring asked, "Would you be nervous?" Students nodded in agreement, and then Mrs. Ring began writing words on the white board that they had brainstormed as a class. Though Mrs. Ring asked the open-ended question, "How do you feel about walking up to that house and rapping on the door?" her responses to how students may have felt were more evaluative rather than accepting.

Mrs. Ring continued to guide students through a description of the house and then transitioned the brainstorming to words that describe sounds associated with the house. After several talk turns, Mrs. Ring gave them a list of onomatopoeia words and directed them to scan the list for words that could be used in a story about the watercolor painting.

Tre Eek!

MR After you ring the doorbell, the door might make that sound.

Jas Hinges

MR OK, maybe the hinges on the door. What else might go eek?

Cas A mouse

MR Yes, there might be a mouse inside.

Ray A bat

MR Excellent, Ray! Maybe I heard the distant sound of "Eek, eek," and it was a bat. What else might I hear from the bat?

Rav His wings

MR What sound? I'm not going to say "His wings" I'm going to use the word, right? I don't want to say, "I heard a bat making a noise and I heard his wings and I rang a door bell and I opened the door and it made a noise. I walked inside when I walked across the floor it made a noise. I'm not going to say it made a noise, I'm going to write **the noise**. So something else.

When two students suggested that hinges on the door and a mouse might make an "Eek" sound, Mrs. Ring acknowledged their suggestion with "Ok" and "Yes." But when Ray demonstrated his knowledge of the association of bats with old houses and offered that the sound might come from a bat, Mrs. Ring praised his response with "Excellent, Ray!" Then she employed his suggestion of a bat to solicit other sounds linked to bats.

In collaboration with Mrs. Ring, students composed the following introduction.

As the sun sets I started out for a night of trick-or-treating. I walked down the long spooky road and round an old dilapidated house on a hill.

MR What can we call it [the house]?

Kyle Building

MR No, I don't want to say "building." I'm trying to create a mood [says it eerily]

RAY Mansion

MR But that's not really a mansion (referring to the watercolor). But could we say old, worn-down mansion. Do you like that?

[Ray nods his head in agreement.]

MR OK, I'll use that, Ray. Thank you.

The house in the painting would not be described as a mansion as suggested by Kyle's nonspecific description that the house is a building and Mrs. Ring's differing

opinion. Yet, Mrs. Ring affirmed Ray as a participant by accepting his suggestion, but altering it somewhat to “old, worn-down mansion” to more accurately depict the structure in the watercolor painting. Then, in the next sentence, she affirmed him as writer by seeking his approval to change his original word. When Ray nodded in agreement to the change, she affirmed him once again by thanking him for his contribution to the writing.

Though subtle, she positioned Kyle and Ray as nonwriter and writer, respectively, in this interaction. Kyle suggested “building” to label the house (in the picture), but Mrs. Ring used the “I” voice to position herself as the gatekeeper, “I don’t want to say building.” However, when Ray offered “mansion” she added description to depict the mansion as an “old, worn-down mansion” and used “we” to include him in the composing. In one instance, she is excluding one student but including another with one short episode.

Ray was more attentive and volunteered more during this shared writing than in any other writing event. Mrs. Ring seemed to capitalize on his interest and used the interactions to praise him for his contribution and to affirm him as a writer.

A content analysis of *Bad Day*, a story composed shortly after introduction and guided instruction in using onomatopoeia, indicates that Ray did not use any type of this figurative language in the story.

Summary of the Interactions between Mrs. Ring and Ray and his Response to the

Interactions

The interactions between Ray and Mrs. Ring were similar throughout the study. In Vignette 1, Mrs. Ring acknowledged Ray’s response, though it was vague, and included it in the question that followed. Perhaps she responded in this manner because she called

on him even though he did not volunteer thus reiterating her practice of using students' responses to evaluate their understanding and her instruction. Since she did not define what she meant by writers' "tools," students' responses bordered on guesses rather than knowledge.

Again in Vignette 2, Ray did not volunteer to respond. During this interaction, Mrs. Ring read aloud parts of a familiar book to demonstrate two purposes for paragraphing. The method and source she used appeared to have been nonproductive for students' understanding of the concept thus necessitating her need to give Ray think time, some clarification, and access his last known point of understanding to mediate his understanding.

In Vignette 3, students were to revise the structure of the sentence. Mrs. Ring prompted Ray through each question that students were to ask themselves in order to effectively revise the original sentence. The descriptions he offered were very similar to the descriptions written by his classmates that Mrs. Ring had just read aloud to the class. In a sentence written independently following the brainstorming, he was able to satisfactorily demonstrate his understanding of the objective to change the structure of the sentence. An analysis of two stories written afterward shows some variety in sentence beginnings within the compositions but no obvious revising to the degree that was practiced during guided instruction.

Vignette 4 describes several interactions between Mrs. Ring and Ray. First, he approached her to conference with him about the beginning of her story. Though this was not an ordinary practice, it may have been facilitated by their relocation to the library. During the brief conference, she addressed a few editorial concerns and acknowledged

that there would be words that he would not know how to spell and to circle them if he was sure of the spelling and then confirm the spelling at a different time. She described one part as difficult to read, and he erased it when he returned to his seat. She concluded the conference by praising his description of several phrases and thus affirming him as a writer.

The following day after brainstorming ideas for a messy room, Mrs. Ring composed a few sentences using Ray's bedroom as the setting. Ray used in his own sentence and two phrases from the sentences that Mrs. Ring composed to describe a messy room. Mrs. Ring affirmed him when she read aloud his description. Ray demonstrated his ability to complete short assignments that were expected to be completed within a few minutes. However, when Mrs. Ring gave students time to independently work on their magic pencil story, Ray did not make any effort to add to the story he had restarted two days earlier. As if to justify his reason for not writing anything, when she approached his table, he asked, "What am I supposed to do if I forgot my organizer?" Mrs. Ring advised him to start over if necessary and concluded with a phrase she was heard saying several times during the study when students forgot something, "Next time you go on vacation, make sure you pack your toothbrush, toothpaste, underwear and socks."

The following day after guided practice of describing a friendly lady using the strategy *show, don't tell*, he independently demonstrated the ability to elaborate a simple phrase to more vividly describe a sad puppy through *show, don't tell*. While Ray demonstrated the strategy *show, don't tell* at the sentence level, there was little evidence of this technique in his longer compositions.

When Ray was interested in a writing event, he volunteered to contribute as demonstrated in Vignette 5. Almost every interaction between Mrs. Ring and Ray served to praise and affirm him. I recorded many instances of Mrs. Ring praising Ray or affirming him as a contributor when his responses were flawed or his contribution when his responses were acceptable. These actions may have been deliberately employed to recognize him in the community of learners since he seldom volunteered to participate.

Although Ray demonstrated his ability to finish short assignments that were expected to be completed within a few minutes, he struggled to complete assignments that extended over several days. This difficulty may have been compounded by school halting on three occasions due to hurricanes, but even after the hurricanes were over, I still observed this pattern. Another factor may have been that Mrs. Ring did not tell students when a composition was due but based that decision on students' progress since some would complete their writing before others. Furthermore, he was reluctant to begin a new draft if he misplaced or lost his work. While this behavior seemed to be a pattern for Ray, I did not observe any strategies assigned to assist him.

Due to the abstract definition of some of the skills and strategies taught during the study, they were difficult to reliably identify within Ray's writing. It is equally difficult to assess whether the writing was a result of instruction or if the writing was part of his existing expressive language and would have been employed without instruction. In addition, it cannot be determined if Ray selected to omit certain skills and strategies in the larger contexts of the stories. However, comparing the word count across the stories gives some indication that his writings are getting longer.

Ray's baseline writing sample in August about finding his dog when it got lost on a family camping trip consisted of 107 words (Appendix J) An October draft, *The Magic Pencil*, contained 238 words and was more than twice as long as a story written two months earlier (Appendix L) Another story written two weeks later, *Bad Day*, contained 323 words (Appendix K). The writing samples assessed by the two graduate students and me using the 6-Traits Writing model had mean scores of 2.5, 3, and 3.5 with a 5 being the highest indicating a steady improvement from August to the end of October. An analysis of each trait over the time period also indicated an increase from one composition to the next. However, for one trait, word choice, he received a mean score of 3.7 for the middle sample and decreased to a 3 for the third sample. He received the highest scores in ideas, organization, and voice.

In an e-mail I received from Mrs. Ring several months after I had closed the study, she shared with me that Ray scored a 4 out of a possible 6 on the state-mandated writing test while 3.5 was considered "passing." The Grade 4 narrative prompt (topic) directed students to write a story about going on a special ride.

Cross Case Analysis Between Kyle and Ray

The interactions between Kyle and Mrs. Ring differed from the interactions between Ray and Mrs. Ring. Mrs. Ring stated to her class at the beginning of the school year that she called on all students, not only those who volunteered to respond. She used this approach to evaluate students' understanding and to augment her instruction when necessary (Interview, 10-06-04). Kyle participated more actively than Ray; therefore, there were more interactions between Mrs. Ring and Kyle than between Mrs. Ring and Ray. Not only were the number of interactions different, but the roles Mrs. Ring played in

the interactions were also different. Though Ray participated less, his responses during brainstorming were typically viewed within the parameter of the topic or theme. Mrs. Ring described Ray as unmotivated at times and used the moments when he did voluntarily contribute to promote his engagement in the learning community. Kyle's responses, however, were often viewed as disconnected from the flow of the classroom and, at times, gross approximations of an expected response. During these occasions, Mrs. Ring's used the brief interactions to further mediate Kyle's understanding or to lead him toward her expected responses. There were several interactions throughout the vignettes where Mrs. Ring appears to be insensitive. For example, when she interrupted Kyle's contribution assuming he was "not focused," or when she used exaggerations to make a point, and when she perceived his contributions as deficient, she did not appear to be sensitive to Kyle's feelings. In one instance, though subtle, she excluded Kyle but included Ray during a short interaction. However, she also demonstrated care in her discourse when she used "Honey" - possibly to temper her frustration. She also occasionally deflected comments to Kyle by addressing the entire class though this could inadvertently be problematic for Kyle.

While it may appear that Kyle acquiesced to Mrs. Ring's directive on several occasions to revise, Ray more passively resisted her directive and, on a few occasions, did not submit his work. The reason for that lapse is not known though he commonly misplaced or simply did not complete a writing assignment. Both boys used resources in the room at times to support their writing. Evidence of intertextuality (Spivey & King, 1989) was noted in both their written and verbal discourse. Traces of responses from classmates were sometimes noted in Ray's responses while Kyle's responses were

original and sometimes fanciful. On one occasion, Kyle preserved and accurately used a phrase in his independent writing that he had inaccurately used during guided instruction and that had been dismissed by Mrs. Ring.

Kyle and Ray both showed progress in writing fluency from their baseline writing sample to compositions written at the end of the study a few months later. Both students also showed progress in the flow of their stories. Mrs. Ring often reminded students of the flow and smooth transition of ideas in order to communicate a message to the reader.

Mrs. Ring frequently facilitated students' learning of specific writing techniques, skills, and elements by having students practice them in small chunks and in isolation before, and sometimes while, applying them within the context of a larger writing piece. Modeled and shared writing of even the smallest writing contexts and many opportunities for interaction with other students provided students with scaffolds to assist their performance. Kyle and Ray were both able to perform these tasks in small chunks and with teacher assistance, but the specific skills and strategies were not evident to the same degree in their independent writing.

The following section describes the interactions and responses in Mrs. Mac's classroom.

Colleen

Colleen's scores fell consistently within the low range on all five scales of the Writer's Self Perception Scale (general and specific progress, observational comparison, social feedback, and physiological state). She circled *SD*, strongly disagree, on 34 of the 38 items. Though 15 items were related to general and specific progress, she strongly agreed with only two items: *I am getting better at writing*, and *The words I use in my*

writing are better than the ones I used before. Though Mrs. Mac, Colleen's teacher, was very encouraging to her, the scores from the instrument indicate that Colleen was not confident in her writing abilities. According to Mrs. Mac, Colleen was nervous about going to 5th grade and her ability to do the work, and to help her, she had "power talks to minimize her fears" (Interview, 11-19-04).

Colleen was tested during the beginning of the school year for Exceptional Student Education but just missed the required score for placement in the program. Colleen was an only child and lived with her mother and her mother's boyfriend, both of whom were deaf. Though they communicated with each other through sign language, Colleen most frequently communicated with them by speaking, and they in turn read her lips. Lip-reading was convenient for Colleen since, she volunteered, she was not competent at signing. She was sensitive to the challenges that her mother faced and often took a leadership role in her family. In the following transcript, Colleen talks about her mother's educational background. COL stands for Colleen.

COL My mom went to, all the time my mom went to, like, she only stayed there one year and then would go to about eight different schools.

Ruth When she was in elementary school?

COL Yep, every year she'd go to a new school. She hardly had friends since she was deaf, and that's a problem for me to help her and everything. I try to do my best with her, but I'm not very good with sign language though I know lots of sign language. (Interview, 12-16-04)

Her mother was concerned about Colleen's academic performance at school and about the behavior problems she was having at home.

Mrs. Mac informs me that she had a conference with Colleen's mom. Since her mother is deaf, an interpreter from the county had to be secured several weeks in advance to interpret for Mrs. Mac. Colleen's mother was concerned that Colleen "wasn't going to make it in fourth grade." Mrs. Mac assured her of the progress that she had made so far and that she would continue to work with her. She said, "Let's just give her time. She has made so much progress." Colleen's handwriting is near illegible and to help her, Mrs. Mac has put together a pack of handwriting practice sheets for Colleen to work on at home and another set for school. Her spelling is also poor. Her mom mentioned fits of anger that Colleen has at home. Mrs. Mac was shocked because she doesn't see that behavior at all in school. Recently, Colleen informed Mrs. Mac that her mom spends a lot of time with her boyfriend and not much time with Colleen. (Field notes, 12-1-04)

According to Colleen, she does not get much academic support from home.

COL I have to practice on my own. My mom can't model for me because she doesn't understand writing very much. (Interview, 12-16-04)

When I interviewed Mrs. Mac to be a possible study participant, she shared with me that some of her students who had speech problems were often challenged in their writing. When I began observing in her class, within a matter of minutes, I knew who she had been referencing. Colleen had noticeable articulation problems; however, she did not qualify for speech. Usually she was aware of syntactical problems and would stop and reword what she was trying to communicate.

MM OK, what do you want to say now, Colleen?

COL Then we chewed it and blew it up

MM Once you chew it, what are you doing? How are you going to get the bubble together? You blow it up as giant as an elephant. [getting her started] I blew, go ahead.

COL I blew up as fat as an elephant's bubble. Oh [realizes the sentences is not flowing]

MM Think about exactly what you are going to say. I blew up a bubble

COL I blew up a bubble as high and as fat as an elephant. (Observation, 11-19-04)

Colleen frequently used charts and visuals displayed on the classroom walls to support her writing. Early in the study, I noticed Colleen turning around in her seat to copy words from the posters. I asked her what she was doing when she was looking at the back of the room. She explained that she was using the charts to find another word for *said*. She was quick to add that Mrs. Mac approved of this practice (Field notes, 12-6-04). I noticed in her writing on that day that she had chosen announced to replace said. Though she attempted to replace commonly used words with synonyms displayed in the room, she often did not distinguish the subtle differences in the words and often used them out-of-context.

Ideas that were brainstormed during class occasionally appeared in Colleen's writing, and phrases she heard during writing instruction were occasionally appropriated into her story. Colleen frequently quoted Mrs. Mac when she responded to a question. Though she was able to imitate Mrs. Mac's words, she did not yet have the sophistication in her writing to appropriate the targeted literary concept or writing skill.

Colleen was an active participant during the writing block. She frequently volunteered to read her writing aloud to the class during sharing times. Her oral reading was very expressive and entertaining to the class (Field notes, 11-05-04). She offered

suggestions during shared writing and actively participated during guided practice. In fact, she was one of the students who volunteered most frequently.

Colleen wrote continuously and quickly during independent writing though she would occasionally look up just for a few seconds. Mrs. Mac reminded Colleen of the importance of legible handwriting when she conferenced with her. During conferencing, Mrs. Mac recorded a brief note on students' composition to remind them of the topic of the conference. Occasionally, when Colleen shared her writing with the class, she had difficulty deciphering her own text that had been written the previous day. As she read aloud, she would say the word that looked like the word in the text and then continue the phrase. If the phrase was not sensible, she would pause and eventually recall the original word, thus indicating that she was productively self-monitoring her reading miscues.

Colleen did very little physical prewriting (Appendix M). While Mrs. Ring's students use a beginning, middle, end model to organize narratives, Mrs. Mac encouraged students to answer who, what, when, where, and why in their planning and to respond to these questions at the beginning of their story. Colleen acquiesced to Mrs. Mac's directive to plan and usually jotted down extremely sketchy ideas - usually one word for each of the "W's."

Introducing the Vignettes

The following eight selected vignettes describe the interaction between Mrs. Mac and Colleen during writing instruction. Vignette 1 occurs during guided instruction in which Mrs. Mac elaborated on a response by Colleen for clarification and then expanded on another response in order to affirm and extend her contribution. Vignette 2 occurs during shared writing. Mrs. Mac elaborated on Colleen's response that described the day,

but Colleen did not offer suggestions when Mrs. Mac asked her to finish the thought. Vignette 3 describes how Mrs. Mac promoted future participation by encouraging Colleen as a contributor even when her response was erroneous. Also, this vignette describes the result of the lack of intersubjectivity between Mrs. Mac and Colleen. Vignette 4 describes the frequent interactions between Mrs. Mac and the class, and specifically Colleen, as the class engaged in composing a shared writing. During these interactions, Mrs. Mac used multiple instructional moves to mediate Colleen's developing understanding of composing a narrative writing. In Vignette 5, Mrs. Mac gave Colleen a directive regarding her grammar usage following a response by Colleen but does not explain the grammar rule. In an interaction that followed shortly thereafter, Colleen attempted to assimilate Mrs. Mac's directive in her response. Vignette 6 occurs over two days during sharing time. Mrs. Mac affirmed Colleen as a writer in front of her class by identifying language in her writing that deserved mentioning and Colleen's approach to the prompt that differed from her classmates. In Vignette 7, Mrs. Mac provided feedback to Colleen's story during sharing time. Though Colleen's suggestion for a synonym for another word is marginal in Vignette 8, Mrs. Mac again validated Colleen as a contributor.

Vignette 1

The first interaction I observed between Mrs. Mac and Colleen was during guided instruction. The writing block began with a three-minute review of their assigned homework, a worksheet that focused on similes. The directive on the worksheet was to match the listed similes with their meaning. Following the review, Mrs. Mac gave students three writing samples to critique. Using an overhead projector, Mrs. Mac

projected the writing samples onto a screen at the front of the class as the students examined the same document at their desks. Students raised their hands to volunteer to share writing skills or strategies that they noticed in the samples. The brief excerpt below picks up in the middle of the lesson.

MM In a story, though, you can write a lot of detail. Don't limit yourself to five paragraphs. I see quotation marks. What does that mean?

ALL Dialogue

Col [Reads sentence from the sample.] **Oh, I hope I don't break a nail.** An idiom.

MM No, she's probably just one of these one of these girly girls. (Transcript, 11-2-04)

During this brief interaction, Colleen found an example of dialogue used in the sample, "Oh, I hope I don't break a nail," and, in addition, identified the quotation as an idiom. This was the first time that idiom was mentioned in the lesson though, according to Mrs. Mac's lesson plans, idioms, along with similes, had been introduced almost two months earlier. I later discovered that Mrs. Mac integrated figurative language throughout the language arts curriculum.

In this interaction, though Colleen demonstrated her ability to recognize dialogue, she erroneously labeled the quotation as an idiom. Mrs. Mac told Colleen directly that she had incorrectly labeled the quotation and elaborated on her response by suggesting that the author merely used the quote to describe the character as a "girly girl" and then gestured how a "girly girl" might look. The students seemed to relate to her gesturing and chuckled in response.

Not only did Mrs. Mac expand on a response by Colleen for clarification, but she frequently elaborated on students' responses in order to affirm and extend their

contribution. Later in the same lesson, Mrs. Mac introduced a strategy she called “two-word descriptions” employed by writers to make meaning more vivid for the reader. In the transcript below, students had been given a worksheet that directed them to use their senses of smell, sight, and hearing to write two-word descriptions of scenes at a park, restaurant, and city. Mrs. Mac explained:

MM I want everyone to close their eyes and imagine a park you have visited. I want you to think of things that you smell at that park. Think of things you see at the park. Then think about things that you hear while you are at the park. And while you are thinking, see if you can think of a two-word description to describe. I don’t mean to separate words.

Mig Fresh green grass

MM Some people actually hyphenate it. I can imagine that in my head. You can definitely smell it after it rains. I have allergies, so I have to stay away from it

Din Delicious popcorn

MM Ok, but that is an adjective and a noun.

COL Crimson, red flowers

MM There are some parks that have beautiful flowers. If you can go up to it, you can even smell it. Can you think of something else you might smell at the park?

COL Smelly trash

Tom Smelly, GROSS trash (Transcript, 11-2-04)

Colleen suggested “crimson, red flowers” during her first contribution. Then when Mrs. Mac asked for suggestions for something one might smell at the park, Colleen was the first to raise her hand. She offered “smelly trash.” This description included only one adjective rather than two adjectives to describe the trash, but Mrs. Mac did not

respond to Colleen. In the next interaction, Tom added “gross” to compose “smelly, gross trash.”

I culled Colleen’s writing that was produced over the study for any occurrence of two-word descriptions that had been the objective of this lesson and then reviewed throughout the study. Only one incident of a two-word description was found: **great, exciting wilderness**. Colleen continued to use common adjectives such as beautiful, big, little, bad, and nice for the next six weeks. There was no evidence in her writing of descriptive words that had been generated by the class during brainstorming or reinforced in homework assignments.

Vignette 2

The objective throughout the week was to include who, what, when, where, and why within the introductory paragraph. On the previous day, students had independently composed their own introductory paragraph to the topic, **Tell about a time when you found an object at the park**. On this day, Mrs. Mac used the same topic and went methodically through the five “W’s” - allowing students to share what they had jotted down beside each “W.” From the students’ contributions, Mrs. Mac chose which ideas to use in the introductory paragraph that the class would compose together and wrote them in an organizer on the overhead projector. Once the organizer was completed, Mrs. Mac solicited ideas for the beginning sentence.

MM Who can get us started? All of you have done the introduction for this one already. Look at your ideas, and see if you can help us.

Mig One day at Rosa Park...

MM Ok, you gave me all the five w’s in one sentence. Let’s see if we can have a catchy beginning?

Jor One day on October 10 in Rosa Park

MM What kind of day was it? Can we add an adjective?

COL Cool, crisp

MM I like cool and crisp because in many places in October it is cool and crisp.
(Transcript, 11-10-04)

After Mrs. Mac wrote, **One cool, crisp day in October**, she asked Colleen to finish the sentence. She gave Colleen approximately eight seconds of wait time before she called on another student who completed the thought by adding, **I was playing with my friend**. Though eager to add words to describe the day, Colleen did not offer suggestions when Mrs. Mac asked her to finish the thought. The class had just brainstormed many ideas for the setting and plot, and Colleen had just previously written the introductory paragraph. Mrs. Mac demonstrated her understanding of Colleen's difficulty generating an action that complemented the setting by deflecting the question to another student who had raised his hand to respond. Below (Table 12) is Colleen's introductory paragraph to the topic, **Tell about a time when you found an object at the park**.

Table 12

Colleen's Introductory Paragraph

<p>When I saw a beautiful ring I was austunish (astonished). I yelled "mom I found something" She ran as fast as a bolt of lightning. We asked everyone in the park everyone said "no."</p>
--

When Mrs. Mac had read the paragraph on the previous evening, she wrote three comments on Colleen's paper: (1) What did you ask everyone at the park? (2) I like the

simile you used. (3) Where did this happen? Mrs. Mac had explained to me earlier during the initial interview that she collected students' writings, read over them in the evening and wrote comments on their papers, and then returned the papers the following day. She explained that she did this so that students would have feedback before they begin "so they know what are some things they need to stay away from and some things that they need to add." (Citation?)

Vignette 3

On the day prior to this vignette, Mrs. Mac had given a mini-lesson on using adverbs in their writing. Then students were given a worksheet on which they were to supply appropriate adverbs to the list of verb phrases. Students were given a few minutes to complete the first eight phrases, and then students shared with the class adverbs they used to complete the phrase. For homework, students were assigned the next eight phrases to complete on their own. Mrs. Mac began the writing lesson with a quick review of adverbs

MM First of all, yesterday we started thinking about adverbs. Who can remind us what is an adverb? Yes, Colleen?

COL It's an adjective, and it's a verb

MM No, not an adjective. Remember an adjective describes a noun. You're right in that it does describe something. (Transcript, 11-17-04)

When Colleen responded incorrectly to a close-ended question, Mrs. Mac seldom reduced her response to simply invalidating Colleen's response but promoted future participation by encouraging her as a contributor. In the same lesson, Colleen continued to be an active participant throughout the conversation.

Mrs. Mac continued to review with students the purpose for using adverbs in their

writing and then instructed them to share their best phrase from their homework.

MM What's the reason for using adverbs in your writing pieces? Who remembers what we discussed? Miguel?

Mig To make the writing more interesting

MM Why else?

? To paint a picture in your mind

MM Yes, so we can get a vivid picture in our minds of what is actually going on. Yesterday, we practiced 1-8 together. Then you had the bottom section for homework. Let's take a look at what you have. Let's take a few minutes and share them before we do the next section together. Take a look at which one you like. Which one do you think is your best one?

? Gently hugging the baby

? Constantly biting her nails

Jus Nervously taking a test

COL Hardly staring at the chocolate cake.

MM Very good. Hardly, I like that word.

Hardly means barely or scarcely, and according to the way Colleen stressed the word hardly when she offered the phrase, "hardly staring at the cake," she probably did not mean barely, but more likely, she meant intently. Mrs. Mac did not attempt to clarify the meaning or ask Colleen to define hardly. Students did the next five phrases together, listening to each others' suggestions. Then they were assigned the last four phrases to complete independently while Mrs. Mac circulated throughout the classroom. After seven minutes, students volunteered to share their phrases. In the following excerpt, Colleen used the word hardly again.

Teaching phrase: digging _____ in the backyard

CHAD Digging quickly in the backyard

? Digging uncontrollably in the backyard

? Digging furiously

COL Digging hardly in the backyard

MM [She looks a little puzzled.] OK. I can see what you're saying. Not too much digging was being done

Since Mrs. Mac did not clarify the meaning of hardly earlier in the lesson but praised Colleen's word choice. Colleen used it again. However, during this brief interaction, Mrs. Mac revoiced how she thought Colleen was attempting to describe the manner in which someone was digging. From a child's perspective, chocolate cake is an enticement, so the meaning for hardly in the phrase, "hardly staring at the chocolate cake," for Colleen would mean intensely. This meaning, though unconventional, would also apply to digging hardly or digging intensely. Rather than confirming her assumption with Colleen that she meant "not too much digging was being done," Mrs. Mac transitioned to the next teaching phase.

After rehearsing using adverbs to enhance the reader's interest in a composition for several days, Mrs. Mac wrote the word adverbs on the white board and directed students to add it to their checklist. This was an indication to students that they were to attempt to incorporate them in their writing. While Colleen was not able to articulate an accurate definition of adverbs when she volunteered to define it during guided instruction, she was able to identify adverbs in writing samples selected by Mrs. Mac as teaching models. Colleen used adverbs to describe action verbs only twice in two independent writing pieces. She used calmly announced in the following sentence, **He camly announced you hve to go to a cave and fall in a hole full of water**, in the story,

Being Invisible for a Day (11-5-04), and gracefully swam in **I gracefully siwn with my litte siter** in the story, *Saving Someone's Life* (12-7-04).

Vignette 4

The following vignette describes the interaction between Mrs. Mac and her class during a shared writing. On the previous day, they had composed the beginning of a story about an alien who had landed on Earth and needed to get back to his home planet. Mrs. Mac encouraged students to suggest ideas but also asked for clarification when suggested ideas were confusing or vague. Before they began, Mrs. Mac reminded students of the importance of developing the plot by including several attempts to solve the problem. She also reminded them to include the strategies they had been practicing - specifically two word descriptions and adverbs. The first attempt employed the alien jumping on a trampoline to launch himself into space, but the attempt was unsuccessful. Students cooperatively composed the transition to the next attempt.

(Mrs. Mac writes on the overhead.)

Soon after that we had another idea that I thought might work better.

MM OK, what are some ideas?

Eth Jet pack that will launch him into space.

Jas Get a stretchy piece of string and (the rest is difficult to hear).

MM What a wonderful idea. Do we have another idea? Let's share them, then we can choose.

Ter We can use a jet pack, or we can try to fix his flying saucer

COL You can chew some bubble gum and blow and blow and blow until it blows up.

(Tom said, "Yeah, but the heat would pop it." Mrs. Mac didn't hear him.)

MM That's kind of a creative way to look at it. So how would you get him inside the bubble?

Miq (Speaks up for Col) No, I would blow up the bubble, and he would hold onto it.

MM Oh, I misunderstood. That's certainly a creative way to look at it. I kind of like that.

Chad Hot wire his flying saucer

MM So you're saying work with what he has.

Nat Use a balloon

MM So you kind of have the same idea as Colleen, but instead of using bubble gum, you'd use a balloon.

Tom They can sneak onto a rocket ship that is about ready to blast-off.

MM But you'd have to go to NASA or something to that effect.
I kind of like the idea of the balloon and the bubble. Colleen, since you came up with that, you tell me what to write next. Go ahead and tell me.

COL I announced, "Why don't we try to get some bubble gum that I've been working on and blow you up to the sky?"

MM OK, let's see how we can incorporate - who else has an idea that might work better? How about let's... [begins writing without waiting for response]

Since I love to chew gum (Mrs. Mac stops writing and turns to the class.)
Let's say he has gum because he likes to chew (then she begins writing again) **and always has plenty of it at home, I carefully and expediently unwrapped the** (Mrs. Mac stops to solicit details about the gum from students).

MM How much gum should we say?

Jas 10 gumballs

Kad 3 pounds

MM Now remember, it needs to be an amount that will fit into your mouth. I think I heard some say, "10."

Mrs. Mac resumed writing:

...ten gumballs and chewed them.

Christian blurts out, “Like there’s no tomorrow,” and Mrs. Mac included the addition to the sentence to read

Since I love to chew gum and always have plenty of it at home, I carefully and expediently unwrapped the ten gumballs and chewed them like there was no tomorrow. (Transcript, 11-19-04)

In this interaction, the class was brainstorming ways to get the alien back to his home planet. Though many students excitedly volunteered suggestions to help solve the problem, Mrs. Mac made the decision to use Colleen’s idea - blow a large bubble that would cause the alien to float to his planet. Mrs. Mac gave Colleen ownership for this part of the story and solicited from her the text to describe this event, “Colleen, since you came up with that, you tell me what to write next. Go ahead and tell me.” Colleen thought for two seconds before she responded, “Why don’t we try to get some bubble gum that I’ve been working on and blow you up to the sky?” Colleen solved the problem in one sentence rather than unfold the attempt in a similar fashion that Mrs. Mac had facilitated during shared and modeled writing. Realizing that the syntax of the sentence and immature language did not adequately communicate what Colleen was thinking, Mrs. Mac solicited help from the class, but as if an afterthought, she composed the sentence herself.

MM OK, what do you want to say now, Colleen?

COL Then we chewed it and blew it up.

MM Once you chew it, what are you doing? How are you going to get the bubble together?

COL You blow it all as giant as an elephant.

MM (Revoicing) I blew. Go ahead.

COL I blew up as fat as an elephant's bubble. Oh. (Recognizes the dissonance.)

MM Think about exactly what you are going to say. I blew up a bubble...

COL I blew up a bubble as high and as fat as an elephant.

MM **As fat as** (Writes on overhead)

COL As fat as an elephant. (Colleen repeats the sentence assuming Mrs. Mac is going to use it)

MM (Does not look up from overhead) Do you want it to be fat or big?

Class Big

I blew a bubble as large

MM Instead of using big, let's use large. As large as what?

? Sumo wrestler

? House

? T-Rex

COL World's biggest animal

? Hot air balloon

? Blue whale

MM OK, one more

CHAD I don't know that you need to blow a bubble that big because he's not that big.

MM You're right, he's not very big. But you want it to be big so that it will float up. OK, what do you think? (Students voice at once what they like, but Mrs. Mac decides on elephant.)

Just before this interaction, Mrs. Mac began describing the method to return the

alien to his planet. However, when she asked Colleen to continue developing the event, Colleen repeated but reduced what Mrs. Mac had just written to **We chewed it up**. In an attempt to get her to add more detail, Mrs. Mac probed her, “Once you chew it, what are you doing? How are you going to get the bubble together?” Realizing the first question may be vague and possibly not beneficial, she immediately rephrased it to a more concrete question. Though Colleen’s response, “You blow it all as giant as an elephant,” does not sufficiently answer Mrs. Mac’s question, her description of the size of the bubble does move the story forward. Mrs. Mac revoices “You blow” to “I blew” and indicated that she wanted Colleen to rephrase her sentence so that it was in the same perspective as the rest of the story. Though she followed Mrs. Mac’s lead to rephrase the sentence to begin with the first person perspective, the words were grossly out of order, “I blew up as fat as an elephant’s bubble.” Recognizing the dissonance of the sentence, she sighed, “Oh.” Mrs. Mac offered a strategy to help her articulate her thoughts and then helped her untangle the sentence by giving her the first four words of the sentence. This seemed to be enough support to help Colleen rephrase the words in a more meaningful syntax, “I blew up a bubble as high and as fat as an elephant.” Mrs. Mac began to write the sentence but omitted high and introduced big as an alternative to fat. Without looking up from the overhead, she asked the class, “Do you want it to be fat or big?” Many of the students replied, “big” - possibly because they assumed that is what she wanted since she offered the alternative. Though she initiated big as an alternative to fat as she began to write, she independently decided to use “large” and, without an explanation, told the students, “Instead of using big, let’s use large.” While Colleen initially suggested an elephant to illustrate the size of the bubble, Mrs. Mac prompted the class for more

possibilities. All suggestions were definite except for Colleen's new suggestion, "World's biggest animal," that was offered after a student suggested a T-Rex. To conclude the sentence, she asked students, "What do you think?" Many suggested their own ideas. Mrs. Mac again made the decision to use Colleen's initial suggestion - an elephant.

The class continued to write the story by offering ideas that would cause the bubble to pop once it began floating. Colleen did not offer any ideas for this part of the story. The story read:

Then Zubu attached his tiny thin hands on each side of the bubble. He began drifting into the air. It looked like he might make it all the way up, but, to my horror, a hawk was passing by and his sharp talons got caught with the bubble...

Mrs. Mac continued to solicit ideas from the class.

MM What happens?

COL The bubble got all over the alien and the bird...

MM But what happens to the bubble first?

COL The bubble pops.

MM There you go.

COL And he got all sticky and the bird did too and they fell into a tree and got stuck.

(Mrs. Mac begins writing on the overhead) **and the bubble popped**

COL (Repeats previous statement) And he got all sticky and the bird did too and they fell into a tree and got stuck.

MM **And the bubble popped** (rereads). May we say into a million pieces?

COL Yes

MM And I had a thought, "and they all came tumbling down." What does that remind you of?

Class Jack and Jill

MM Yes, something that we learned in kindergarten or first grade. How can we end it?

? Once again he painfully landed ...

MM You're saying landed again? I think Colleen said he landed on a tree.

Jas Zulu and the hawk both tumbled down into my neighbor's pool.

? They both got caught in a tree limb.

MM Anything else? [Waits for five seconds] OK. [Begins writing]

Once again, this attempt was not a success. They both came tumbling down and were both stuck

MM I like your idea, Colleen, about getting stuck in a tree. How can we say that about the tree? Who can finish the last sentence?

COL To my shock, the hawk and Zulu were stuck to the tree.

MM We started a sentence, so we have to finish it.
Now we've already showed feeling, to my horror, so we don't need to show feeling again. Go ahead, Colleen.

COL They both got stuck in the tree and then I told my mom (Mrs. Mac interrupts)

MM Wait, wait. We are going to end it here

Mrs. Mac rereads paragraph ...**and were both stuck** -

COL In the tree and the hawk was yelling and screaming

MM (Interrupts her again.) We can have that in the next paragraph. We want to end this paragraph. What happens?

(Mrs. Mac finished writing the paragraph on the overhead)

They both came tumbling down and were both stuck in an oak tree.

MM And I included "oak" because I wanted to show what kind of tree it was.

When Mrs. Mac asked Colleen to respond to what happened when the hawk's

talons got caught in the bubble rather than focusing on the immediate and obvious result, Colleen skipped over it and began to describe the alien and the bird getting engulfed in the popped bubble. Mrs. Mac interrupted her with a direct question, “But what happens to the bubble first?” in order for her to focus on the result of the talons getting caught in the bubble. Colleen then backtracked and stated that the bubble popped. Mrs. Mac affirmed her with, “There you go.” While Mrs. Mac was writing, Colleen twice suggested, “And he got all sticky and the bird did too and they fell into a tree and got stuck,” assuming Mrs. Mac wanted to include this. Then Mrs. Mac probed the class for ideas to end the paragraph. Several students offered suggestions, but once again, Mrs. Mac used Colleen’s idea that the alien and hawk fell and got stuck in a tree. Colleen suggested, “To my shock the hawk and Zulu were stuck to the tree.” Rather than adding to the sentence, **They both came tumbling down and were both stuck**, Colleen had begun a new one. Previously during this shared writing, a student had suggested “to my shock,” a phrase that was offered as an alternative to “to my horror.” Colleen possibly borrowed this phrase from her classmate. However, Mrs. Mac instructed that since they had demonstrated emotions earlier with the phrase, “To my horror,” they do not need to include feelings again. Colleen offered another sentence but jumped to another entirely new and unrelated event, “I told my mom.” Again, Mrs. Mac curbed Colleen’s suggestion and reminded her that they were ending the paragraph and then reread the paragraph to review the flow of the story. Colleen offered another suggestion, “In the tree and the hawk was yelling and screaming,” but it did not conclude the paragraph either. Once again, Mrs. Mac curbed her response and told her that could be used in the next paragraph. Mrs. Mac asked the class, “What happens?” but again empowered herself to finish the sentence.

It looked like he might make it all the way up, but all of a sudden a hawk was passing by and his sharp talons were caught with the bubble popped into a million pieces. Once again this attempt was not a success. They both came tumbling down and were both stuck in an oak tree.

Students were to independently write the third attempt that would successfully return the alien to his planet. Below is Colleen's description (Table 13). I have left the original spelling intact, but misspelled words are followed in parenthesis with words I think she was attempting to spell.

Table 13

Third Attempt to Return the Alien to His Planet

<p>Als (Also) the thid (third) atped (attempt) was to wire the ship, But frist (first) ge (get) tiny Zubu out of the tree. I pored (poured) hot wathe (water) on the gum and it worked. I annoced (announced) “OK lets get the sihp (ship). (Document, 11-19-04)</p>

Colleen transitioned the third attempt by directly stating the transition, “**Als the thid atped...**” (Also the third attempt). Colleen introduced the third attempt to get Zubu, the alien, back to his home planet by hotwiring his space ship. Earlier in the lesson during brainstorming, Chad had suggested hotwiring the space ship as a possible suggestion for getting Zubu home. Colleen demonstrated sequencing of events by using **but first** to indicate Zubu had to get out of the tree before he wired the ship. Colleen employed her own suggestion to use hot water to melt the gum but neglected to add details about where she got the hot water or how she got the hot water in the tree. Similar to the omission of details in the shared writing in which Mrs. Mac coached her through those parts, she also omitted major details in this paragraph.

Dialogue and monologue had been introduced two weeks earlier and were expected to be included somewhere within the narrative. In the paragraph that she wrote

independently, she ended the paragraph with dialogue, **I annoced “OK lets get the ship.”**

Vignette 5

Mrs. Mac reviewed with the class the purpose of using idioms and the importance of starting a story with an interesting beginning. The interaction between Mrs. Mac and Colleen extended over three talk turns.

MM ...I do want to remind you to always have a catchy beginning. That is very important. Why is that so important?

Col It makes your writing more interesting (has trouble trying to pronounce “interesting”) Makes the reader want to read it over and over – like a big sandwich they want more and more.

MM Very good. You remember what I said a few weeks ago and you are a very good listener. Like that sandwich you are HOOKED. You want to read more and more and more. What are some things that are important to add to your writing pieces?

COL Who, what, when, where, and why and a catchy beginning.

MM Ok, what do we mean by catchy beginning?

COL It means that it is interesting, and it is more better.

MM Don’t use more better together, OK?
Now, boys and girls, remember we talked about the sandwich? We want a catchy beginning, so we can catch the reader’s attention. OK? (Transcript, 11-30-04)

Colleen repeated the analogy that I had observed Mrs. Mac using earlier to compare an interesting beginning to a big sandwich. Mrs. Mac praised Colleen for remembering the analogy and then further explained the comparison. Then Mrs. Mac asked the class an open-ended question about the important things to include in their writing pieces. Mrs. Mac called on Colleen again. Possible reasons for this may be because Mrs. Mac was standing beside Colleen’s desk, and Colleen overtly demonstrated

her eagerness to respond by raising her hand high and waving it to draw attention to herself. Again Mrs. Mac called on Colleen to review what is meant by a *catchy beginning*. Colleen responded that the purpose was to make the beginning “more better.” Without explaining to Colleen why “more better” was incorrect, she simply made an imperative statement not to use them together. Mrs. Mac continued the review of elements to include in their writing to make it interesting.

MM We started talking about what you need to include to make your writing pieces more interesting? What else?

Ste Capitalization and punctuation marks

MM Why is that important?

Sum You won’t know where a sentence starts, and you’ll have a run-on sentence.

MM Right. It will be hard for the reader to understand what you wrote. What else?

COL You want adjectives to make the story more gooder.

MM And when we include more adjectives or two-word descriptions what does that do in the reader’s mind?

Kad A mental picture

MM What else do you need to include? (Transcript, 11-30-04)

Colleen again volunteered to identify elements that make a story interesting. She explained that, “You want adjectives to make the story more gooder.” Then Mrs. Mac used Colleen’s response to review the purpose of adjectives. Though a few minutes earlier Mrs. Mac directed Colleen not to use “more better” together, she did not address “more gooder” during this later interaction. It would appear that Colleen was following Mrs. Mac’s directive, but because Mrs. Mac did not explain why “more better” was

incorrect, Colleen assimilated the information incorrectly thus making the accommodation incorrect.

The objective of the beginning of this lesson was to review the importance of introducing the story with a catchy beginning and to use figurative language to make the story more interesting for the reader. A content analysis of the beginnings to Colleen's stories does not indicate that she used any of the techniques Mrs. Mac introduced weeks earlier and reviewed throughout writing instruction. However, Colleen marked on the checklist for each story that she had included a catchy beginning. Table 1 displays the beginning to seven writing pieces by Colleen. The writings on November 6th and 7th were written before Mrs. Mac had a formal lesson on using catchy beginnings. Even after formal instruction and continued review, Colleen's compositions began in the same way, **I was...** followed by the setting of the story. From what I observed, Mrs. Mac never mentioned to Colleen that she did not use any of the techniques taught earlier or reviewed throughout the remainder of the study. Even when Colleen read her stories during sharing times and stated that she had used a catchy beginning, Mrs. Mac did not question her.

Table 14

Story Beginnings – Colleen

Date	Composition	Beginning
11-6	Introductory paragraph to narrative <i>When You Found an Object</i>	When I saw a butful ring I was austanis (astonished).
11-7	Introductory paragraph to narrative <i>A Time When You Were Lost</i>	When I was going to the store with my loved Mom.
11-8	(REVISED) Introductory paragraph to narrative <i>A Time When You Were Lost</i>	I was lost in the store.
11-5	Entire narrative <i>Being Invisible for a Day</i>	If I was invisble for a day it would be great.
11-29	<i>Swimming in the Gulf of Mexico</i>	My gretest adventure wa when I was swmming in the Gulf of Mexico
12-03	Entire narrative <i>Cannot Believe What You See in Your Kitchen</i>	I was coming from scool when I could not bleve myself.
12-6 – 12-08	Entire narrative <i>Saving Someone's Life</i>	I was at the buiful beach.

Vignette 6

The following vignette is the interaction between Mrs. Mac, Colleen, and some of her classmates during Sharing, an activity similar to Author's Chair (Calkins, 1994).

During Sharing, students read their writing pieces from the front of the class. The situation did not include a physical chair but a positioning of oneself as the focus of attention of the peers and of the teacher. Just as students analyzed writing models for specific writing elements, students were encouraged to also look for those things in each others' writing. Students were usually rewarded with specific praise from their audience who typically used the checklist as a guide to listen for elements of writing but did not limit their praise to the checklist. Sometimes Mrs. Mac asked students to state the

techniques they used, and sometimes the audience was asked to state what they heard. During Sharing, Mrs. Mac usually leaned against her desk which was several feet away and slightly back from the one sharing, crossed her ankles, and tilted her head down and to the side as if in concentration. Because of Mrs. Mac's physical position, she could not make eye contact with the presenter, but perhaps she tilted her head down in order to avoid eye contact with students in the audience. Occasionally, she would nod her head in agreement to something in a composition. Before students began, Mrs. Mac often reminded them of her expectations when addressing an audience such as not to cover their faces with their papers while reading and to read clearly and loudly.

Students had been assigned to write about a time when they were swimming in the Gulf of Mexico and something rubbed against their leg. To prepare students for the state-mandated writing assessment that students would encounter shortly after returning from winter break, students were given 15 minutes each day over the course of three days to compose their stories. Frequently, students shared in front of the class the latest addition to their compositions during the 20 minutes after P.E. and just before lunch. On other occasions, students shared their writing at the beginning of the writing block. When they shared depended on whether students had homework to check, the length of the lesson, the amount of time spent practicing the writing skill or strategy together, the amount of time for independent practice, and how many students were poised to share.

After Colleen read her story, Mrs. Mac asked the audience to state the techniques they heard.

Jul She had lots of adjectives.

MM And may I add something to that? As I was listening, I noticed some very interesting verbs as well. Yes?

Pet Some humor

Ter She used dialogue.

MM What else? This is another reason I like to share. Did you notice that everyone's story is different? She took a totally different approach as far as not just being out there in the gulf, but she has actually captured something. So she's taking a different turn. At the end you are sounding like an expository - do not repeat the attempts or use "in summary. I look forward to hearing the rest tomorrow.

Looking at her checklist, Colleen stated that she had checked off indent, catchy beginning, two-word description or adjectives, dialogue, senses, and capital letters and punctuation marks. By checking off these items, she was indicating that she had included them in her writing. Mrs. Mac reiterated her purpose for students sharing their writing with the class - so that students would realize that even though they all received the same prompt, everyone approached it differently. On the preceding day, she had expressed similar reasons for sharing.

MM I wanted you to see how everyone has different ideas, and you can complete a story in totally different ways that actually work. And what I like is listening to techniques that I taught you to use – wonderful verbs, two-word descriptions, and many of you continue to use figurative language. And I really appreciate that. Well, thank you for sharing.”
(Transcript, 11-29-04)

When I examined the text, she had erased the part that Mrs. Mac described as sounding like expository, a writing genre that students had practiced for several weeks before instruction in narrative writing, and had included the writing elements or techniques that she had marked on the checklist. Table 15 displays Colleen's beginning to *Swimming in the Gulf of Mexico*.

Table 15

Beginning to Swimming in the Gulf of Mexico

My gretest adventure wa when I was swmming in the Gulf of Mexico. I felt a simything AI smed “help”! I swim to the beach then I stad close to the beach. Now I was having fun., My mom came and said “did you have fun”? I said “yes I did”.

Frist thing I did was eat just a little. I wated and weant back in the butful ocen. Before I went for a swim I took a buket to see what was dowe in the ocen., When I found it, I took the bucket a scoopit up but it jumped away I said “rats”!

The following day, Colleen finished her story and volunteered to read the remainder in front of the class (Table 16). Before Colleen began, Mrs. Mac reminded Colleen, “Nice and loud, and don’t cover your face.” (Transcript, 12-02-04). Colleen stood up straight and read with expression. Mrs. Mac had shared with me earlier that she enjoyed listening to Colleen read her story because she was so expressive.

Table 16

Swimming in the Gulf of Mexico (Entire Story)

My gretest adventure wa when I was swmming in the Gulf of Mexico. I felt a simything AI smed “help”! I swim to the beach then I stad close to the beach. Now I was having fun., My mom came and said “did you have fun”? I said “yes I did”.

Frist thing I did was eat just a little. I wated and weant back in the butful ocen. Before I went for a swim I took a buket to see what was dowe in the ocen., When I found it, I took the bucket a scoopit up but it jumped away I said “rats”!

After that I tried a fishing hook. I asked my mom if I could have \$10.00. She yeled “OK”. The sign said fishing hooks \$2.00 So I boat it. I kewn it was out thar and I would get it. So I took the bait when I pulled it out the rop was took of. I gluped “This is not an ??? [said real when she read to the class] fish”.

I saw a fish caller I tred it worked. I got it by the tail it was a fish alain. I took it home and now it was my pet. He was cute I fed him fish food he liked it. I clad him snky because he got away all the time.

When she finished, Mrs. Mac gave her the following feedback.

MM Now one thing I like is the humor that you included, and I noticed that some of you laughed at some of the things she included. I do like the humor and figurative language. What else did you guys hear?

Kan Simile

Sar Dialogue and monologue

Chris Used some of her senses

MM I like many of your ideas, especially how you talked about bait. The only thing is add a little bit more about spending time in the Gulf. I like how you described where you were. I think overall you did a good job using all those skills. (Transcript, 11-29-04)

In this interaction, Mrs. Mac gave Colleen public feedback to her story which was an expected practice. She commented on the humor sprinkled throughout the story. This comment supports students chuckling at different points in the story as Colleen read aloud. After students offered what they noticed in her writing, Mrs. Mac stated that she liked many of her ideas, especially when the fish bit off the bait. Then she recommended that Colleen elaborate on her time in the Gulf; however, she did not mention to her to address the part of the prompt when something was supposed to rub against her leg.

I can only speculate why Mrs. Mac did not address this omission. First, the story was written over three days, and when Colleen shared her story, she only read what she had written that day; therefore, remembering what Colleen had shared from the previous reading, along with the other students, could be a challenge for Mrs. Mac. However, she used this method so that more students could read their stories during the time allotted for sharing (Transcript, 11-30-04). Another speculation is that she may have deliberately overlooked it and chose to focus on other aspects of her writing. And finally, she may have addressed this omission with Colleen at another time since Mrs. Mac conferenced with students at times outside of the writing block.

Mrs. Mac concluded her feedback with a general statement, “I think, overall, you did a good job using all those skills (on the checklist).” Even with Colleen reading her story aloud and using expression and gestures, some of the story was difficult to follow since the story jumped from one event to another without sufficiently describing each chain of events.

Vignette 7

Students were given the following prompt: **Write a story about saving someone's life.** Over the next three days, students were given 15 minutes each day to compose the story. Although the writing would be split up, the purpose was to somewhat simulate the state-mandated timed writing that had a 45-minute time limit.

Before students began writing, Mrs. Mac reminded students to use their checklist of writing skills and strategies. To further emphasize the importance of including elements from the list in their composition, she read over it with the students and solicited brief explanations for each element. These elements were (a) indent, (b) catchy beginning, (c) use two-word descriptions or adjectives, (d) use dialogue or monologue, (e) use simile, metaphor, or idiom, (f) use who, what, when where, why, (g) use my senses, and (h) use capital letters and punctuation marks. She also reminded students to plan but not to spend more than five minutes on the planning since the majority of the time should be reserved for writing. Students were given 15 minutes to plan and to begin writing their story. They would have 30 minutes over the next two days to complete the story.

Colleen composed the following beginning to the story, *Saving Someone's Life*, on the first day (Table 17). The original writing has been retained to illustrate how Colleen's poor spelling, omission of words, and placement of punctuation somewhat interfere with the readability of the text. (See Appendix N for the entire story.)

Table 17

Beginning to *Saving Someone's Life*

**I was at the butiful beach as I playing in the wather. Peaple where yeping
“Who” but I saw a litte gril downing. I raced over thar it was my siter
Colleen a sea mosther was in the wather and I was scared my sitner would
drown agin.**

Students went to their physical education class, and when they returned 45 minutes later, they were given the opportunity to share the beginning of their stories with their classmates during Sharing.

MM It is important that when you are addressing an audience, that you keep your paper down so that we can see your face. You also need to have contact with your audience (Transcripts, 12-6-04).

Many of the students indicated by raised hands and making noises that they were eager to share their stories. After two students had shared and received feedback, Colleen read the beginning of her composition. She was very expressive and stressed the words beautiful and raced. The oral rendition of her story was easier to follow than the written manuscript. The oral reading of her manuscript was close to standard English, and she used phrasing and expression throughout the reading. In the original manuscript, punctuation was lacking, words were misspelled and, in a few places, omitted making the plot difficult to follow.

MM: First of all, I like that you are introducing a problem that is arising. Don't say *drowning again* because you didn't talk about that. You also said that people were making a sound, you may want to include why they

were making that sound. I like that because you are showing feeling.

In Mrs. Mac's feedback to the beginning of Colleen's story, she noticed that Colleen introduced the problem at the beginning of the narrative, included a noise, (people asking, "Who?"), and showed the character's feeling of fear. Mrs. Mac offered two suggestions for Colleen that could improve her story. The first suggestion was an imperative statement. "Don't say drowning again." She told Colleen exactly what to edit and why. Though Colleen used dialogue, "Who?" in her writing, she did not lead up to it or explain it, thus leaving the reader confused. Mrs. Mac suggested that she further explain why the people were yelping, "Who?"

Nine students, including Colleen, read their stories and received feedback from Mrs. Mac during one block of time. Using the language Mrs. Mac used to describe the purpose of reading aloud to an audience, I categorized the feedback as *Positive* or *Areas of Improvement*. Two students, Julie and Terrance, read their stories before Colleen, and six students followed after Colleen – Sarah, Kad, Miguel, Erica, David, and Jasmine.

Every student, except for Julie, the first person to share, received positive feedback from Mrs. Mac and since the feedback was specific, I categorized all the positive feedback as *explicit*. For this particular sharing event, no comments were vague; therefore, no comments were categorized as *indirect*. Four of the nine students were given suggestions for areas of improvement. The suggestions were either indirect or explicit since none of the four students received both kinds of feedback. Colleen received explicit feedback and was the only student to receive two suggestions for improvement.

Colleen and Sarah were both praised for stating their problem in the beginning of their stories though the other students stated the problem at the start also. Colleen also received praise for showing the character's feeling of fear. Colleen showed that she was fearful that the sea monster would drown her sister. I have edited the original text to read similarly to Colleen's verbal performance of her story.

I raced over there. It was my sister, Colleen. A sea monster was in the water, and I was scared my sister would drown again.

Throughout the study, Mrs. Mac (and later students as they began to understand the concept) highlighted and emphasized instances where the author conveyed a character's feelings or emotions. Teaching strategies to show a character's emotions or feelings was the objective of several lessons. One strategy was to use specific verbs and adverbs to describe dialogue or adjectives a character may use to describe himself in a monologue (Transcripts, 11-2, 11-3, 11-4). Even during shared writing, Mrs. Mac reminded students to show a character's feelings and solicited ideas for dialogue from them (Transcript, 11-19-04).

Julie and Colleen were the only two students who received suggestions for improvement that were categorized as explicit. Julie was the first to share, and Mrs. Mac reminded her to address the prompt somewhere within the beginning paragraph. Mrs. Mac offered two suggestions for Colleen that could improve her story. (See Table 18)

Table 18

Mrs. Mac's Feedback to Students' During Sharing

	Positive		Areas to Improve	
	Indirect	Explicit	Indirect	Explicit
Julie				Always make sure you address the prompt sometime within the beginning paragraph
Terrance		I think what you did here was leave us in suspense. There is a lot more to come.	You are going to tell us how you dealt with the situation.	
Colleen		Introduced problem right away. Showed feelings [scared]		Don't say "drowning again" because you haven't talked about that. Why making noise?
Sarah		So you are telling us right away whom you have to save.	What are the first two words? Do you remember?	
Kad		You know what I like is that you're using figurative language already.		
Miguel		You are using feeling already. <i>Petrified</i> – that is one of the words that we learned when we were working in cooperative groups. You also said ? and I like that. You made me start imagining that in my head right away.		
Erica		I like how you are leaving the last sentence with suspense. Did you use the word gulped? That is a good word to use to show me why she may have been choking.		
David		You started with the word <i>help</i> that is a great beginning. It tells us write away. <i>Instinctively</i> , where did we get that word? Vocabulary. Yes, I am so glad that you are using vocabulary words in your writing		
Jasmine		I like that last sentence – <i>Hanging on for dear life</i> . I heard lots of description - <i>boiling pit of blinding orange lava</i>		

Vignette 8

In order to extend students' vocabulary, Mrs. Mac would pose a word, and students would then brainstorm synonyms for the target word. Love was the target word

in the following transcript.

Ter Hold dear

MM I've used many of these (synonyms) in the classroom with you. We even did an activity with this one.

Mat Over there [pointing to a class generated chart of synonyms]

Sus Venerate and idolize (words from the chart)

Jas Adore

MM Anything else?

Col Amaze

MM Amaze means you are in awe of something. It doesn't necessarily mean you love it, but nice try.

Mig Admire

MM Admire you may like it, but you don't necessarily have to love it, anything else? (Transcript, 12-15-04)

In the above excerpt, students offered synonyms for love. After a momentary lull in the brainstorming, Mrs. Mac reminded students that they had created a chart of synonyms for love. With that prompt, Matt directed his classmates' attention to the chart posted on a cupboard along the side of the room. Placed with that chart, across the cupboards, were other class-generated charts of synonyms for commonly used words. Susan and Jasmine offered words from the list that had not been suggested. Once again, the brainstorming ceased. Mrs. Mac asked if there was "anything else" to determine whether to move on to another target word. Colleen responded with "amaze." Mrs. Mac loosely defined the meaning of amaze as "when you are in awe of something." In an attempt to further explain why amaze could not be a synonym for love, she suggested that

something may amaze an individual without the individual actually loving it. Then as if to affirm her as a contributor, she ended the talk turn with “nice try.” The next student, Miguel, offered “admire” as a synonym for love. Similar to her attempt to clarify the difference between amaze and love, Mrs. Mac attempted to distinguish the difference between admire and love. However, she did not attempt to overtly affirm Miguel as a contributor.

Summary of the Interactions Between Mrs. Mac and Colleen and her Responses to the Interactions

The interactions presented in Vignette 1 describe Mrs. Mac elaborating in order to clarify a response by Colleen and then later to extend her contribution. These interactions served to affirm Colleen as a contributor to the activity and to mediate her understanding of idioms and, later, to affirm her contribution. The objective of the interactions encompassed within the writing lesson was for students to compose interesting writing by using two-word descriptions; however, Colleen only used this technique in one of her compositions for the entire study.

In Vignette 2, Colleen was eager to offer adjectives to describe the type of day but was unresponsive when Mrs. Mac asked her to finish the sentence. After giving her eight seconds of wait time, Mrs. Mac deflected the response to another student. In this interaction, Mrs. Mac gave Colleen the opportunity to contribute further, but when she was unresponsive, Mrs. Mac demonstrated her understanding of Colleen’s difficulty, which generated an action that complemented the setting and redirected the question to another student.

In Vignette 3, though Colleen's response was erroneous, Mrs. Mac revoiced the part of Colleen's response that was correct, thereby affirming her as a contributor. In another interaction, she praised Colleen after she offered an unconventional meaning for hardly. Since Mrs. Mac did not clarify the meaning of hardly earlier in the lesson but praised Colleen's word choice, Colleen used it again later in another phrase sentence. While Mrs. Mac overtly pondered Colleen's word choice, she responded by validating her response rather than explaining why the word was not the best choice for the context. "OK. I can see what you're saying. Not too much digging was being done."

Vignette 4 describes the interactions between Colleen and Mrs. Mac during a shared writing with the class about an alien who wants to return home. Mrs. Mac positioned herself as the authority by independently selecting Colleen's idea rather than seeking agreement from the class. In addition, she gave Colleen ownership for that part of the story by asking her for the actual words to write. Similar to Colleen's written compositions, Colleen solved the problem in one sentence rather than developing the events in the plot. Realizing Colleen's response did not clearly articulate what she was attempting to communicate, Mrs. Mac turned to the class and herself to rephrase Colleen's sentence. But then, without waiting for input from the class, she began composing and concurrently explaining her composing process. Within this discourse, she also offered Colleen a strategy to help her articulate her thoughts. On a few occasions, although Mrs. Mac had given Colleen ownership of the story, she guided students toward more precise language – fat to big to large. On a few occasions when Colleen overlooked details that were important to the flow of the event, Mrs. Mac probed her for detailed information and affirmed her response. Twice toward the end of the

shared writing, Mrs. Mac curbed Colleen's ideas since they did not flow with the current ideas. One idea was related to the event, but instead of bringing closure, it would have extended it. Then another idea was unrelated to the event, and Mrs. Mac suggested that it could be a consideration for another paragraph. Little by little and by using multiple instructional techniques, Mrs. Mac facilitated Colleen and the class in crafting a kernel sentence offered by Colleen into a meaningful paragraph.

Vignette 5 began with three talk turns between Mrs. Mac and Colleen in which Mrs. Mac praised her, asked her further questions, and then made an imperative statement to her, "Don't use more better together, OK?" However, because Mrs. Mac did not explain why the grammar was incorrect, Colleen attempted to assimilate the information in a later response, "more good." Though the grammar was still incorrect, Mrs. Mac did not address it but used Colleen's response as an uptake to the next question.

In Vignette 6, Colleen shared the beginning to *Swimming in the Gulf of Mexico*. Her classmates offered the skills and strategies that they noticed in her writing. Then Mrs. Mac reiterated her purpose for students' sharing their writing and highlighted Colleen's different approach to the prompt. A few days later in Vignette 7, Mrs. Mac gave feedback to nine students after they shared what they had completed in the 15 minutes reserved for independent writing. Most students had only completed the beginnings to their stories. Though all those who shared received praise, Colleen was one of the four students who received suggestions to improve their writing, and while some suggestions were indirect, the two suggestions to Colleen were direct.

In Vignette 8, Colleen suggested that amaze is a synonym for love. Though Mrs. Mac disagreed, in an effort to affirm Colleen as a contributor, she ended the talk turn with “nice try.”

Colleen demonstrated the basic story structure of narrative writing; however, she had some difficulty at first transitioning from an expository structure to a narrative structure. She even ended the last story before I ended the study with a summary, **In summary this is what happened to me...** Colleen had lots of creative ideas in her writing which possibly influenced the attention her classmates gave her when she read aloud during Sharing. In her writing, she frequently jumped from one idea to another without developing the idea, thus making her stories difficult to follow. Her handwriting and poor spelling also contributed to the challenge. However, her oral rendition was different. She was able to more effectively connect the events in the story through her body language, expression, and pauses. While she had declarative knowledge - factual knowledge, Colleen’s procedural knowledge – knowledge applied to a task (Anderson, 1983) was still emerging. Colleen was able to identify specific skills and strategies in writing samples and in her classmates’ writing during Sharing. Though the class had generated a list of more descriptive words to use in their writing, Colleen tended to use common adjectives such as beautiful, big, little, bad, and nice. When she did use the words from the list, she often did not distinguish the subtle differences in the words and often used them out-of-context. For example, **I would idolize to see the wilderness.** She could explain why a *catchy beginning* was important, but even after instruction and continued review, her beginnings tended to begin with the same pattern, “I was...,” followed by the setting of the story.

Dialogue appeared more frequently in all four completed stories than any other skill and was generally used to move the story forward. While figurative language had been introduced prior to the beginning of the study and reviewed through guided instruction, Colleen used only similes in her writing and only one simile in each composition. For example, she used “I was as happy as a dog getting a chew toy” in *Being Invisible for a Day*. According to her responses during guided instruction, she did not have adequate background knowledge of idioms which possibly contributed to the lack of placing them in her writing. Since she struggled to comprehend the meaning, she did not use them in her writing. Phrases that used the senses or emotions for description were embedded within every narrative. For example, in Colleen’s narrative about getting lost in a grocery story, she used both emotions and the sense of hearing in the following sentence: **Sece she can’t hear so I could not call her.** (Document, 11-8-04)

Comparing the word count across the stories she had written in early November to mid-December gives some indication that her stories were getting longer. The composition, *Being Invisible for a Day*, written in early November, had a word count of 254 words (Appendix O). The next composition, *Cannot Believe What You See in Your Kitchen*, written almost a month later, had 359 words. (See Appendix P). Though the plots were very different, this was Colleen’s third composition about an alien, and the familiarity may have contributed to the large increase in words. Mrs. Mac brought the frequency of having an alien character to Colleen’s attention and suggested that she write about something different in the future. The composition, *Saving Someone’s Life*, written a week later had 265 words. (See Appendix N). The writing samples assessed by the two graduate students and me using the 6-Traits Writing model had mean scores for the

beginning of November, beginning of December, and a week later of 2.4, 2.4, and 2.2, respectively. Most of the scores for separate traits declined over the six weeks. She received her highest score for voice, 3.3, in her middle composition, *Cannot Believe What You See in Your Kitchen*, which also had the largest word count. The lowest scores were for sentence fluency and conventions. Even though her handwriting was difficult to read and possibly influenced the score, she also scored low in these areas on the last composition, which I had typewritten. The scores by individual raters for each trait were usually within one point of each other; however, in the composition *Being Invisible for a Day*, the traits organization and word choice each received a 2, 3, and 4 by the three raters and a 2, 3, and 4 for organization and a 1, 2, and 3 for sentence fluency in *Cannot Believe What You See in Your Kitchen*.

When I returned to Mrs. Mac's classroom for a pizza party to show my appreciation to the students for allowing me to observe in their classroom, Mrs. Mac informed me that Colleen had scored a 3 out of a possible 6 on the state-mandated writing test. She was given a prompt in which she wrote about a special person in her life. Mrs. Mac expressed that she was pleased that Colleen had been given a prompt that required an expository format since she "had some trouble with narrative."

Chad

Chad enrolled at Lakeview just a few weeks before I began data collection at this site. According to Chad's responses to the *Writer Self Perception Scale* (WSPS), he did not perceive himself as relaxed or comfortable when writing nor did he enjoy writing. Though his responses to several statements indicated that he perceived that his writing was improving, he strongly disagreed that his writing was more interesting than his

classmates' writing. He was undecided about his teacher's and classmates' opinion of his writing as indicated by several statements circled *undecided* but *agreed* that his family thought he was a good writer. Chad was a reserved but willing participant in class activities during writing instruction though his active participation was less frequent than Colleen's participation. His responses and opinions were usually reasonable.

When Mrs. Mac conferenced with Chad, he volunteered that he has a difficult time getting started on a writing piece because he had several ideas and was indecisive regarding which one to write about. I also observed him seeming to deliberate for longer than most of the students did before he began writing. Mrs. Mac shared that Chad's mother was worried about him passing the FCAT writing because he struggled to complete a practice timed-writing assignment. Furthermore, she explained that Chad had no concept of time and that he took a long time to complete tasks at home. Mrs. Mac suggested that his mom set a timer for tasks.

Unlike Colleen, Chad had neat handwriting and meticulously formed each letter, which possibly contributed to his difficulty completing an independent writing assignment within the time constraints. Most words in his composition were spelled correctly. Similar to Colleen, Chad did very little prewriting. (See Appendix Q). Following Mrs. Mac's directive to plan, "even for just a few minutes," (Observation, 11-29-04), he responded to the who, what, when, where, and why - a writing plan used within the classroom. Chad shared with me that he usually listed who, what, when, where, and why on his planner and then wrote words straight from the prompt to answer.

Introducing the Vignettes

The following six vignettes describe the interactions between Mrs. Mac and Chad

during writing instruction. Though some vignettes are brief, they function to describe Mrs. Mac as a writing teacher and Chad as a writer. Following the analysis of the interaction is a description of Chad's response to the interaction as demonstrated in his writing. Depending on the purpose of the assigned writing, the demonstrated writing is sometimes at the sentence level while other times it is at the paragraph level or through a review of the entire composition.

Vignette 1 occurs during guided instruction in which Mrs. Mac questioned Chad's response in order to mediate his understanding. Vignette 2 describes how Mrs. Mac used an erroneous response to affirm Chad as a contributor to the learning community. Vignette 3 describes the interaction during a shared writing. In Vignette 4, Mrs. Mac gave feedback to Chad during Sharing. In Vignette 5, while Mrs. Mac's feedback did not sufficiently mediate Chad's understanding of a concept, the continued classroom discourse was beneficial. In Vignette 6, Mrs. Mac again affirmed Chad through an erroneous response.

Vignette 1

The objective of the following excerpt from guided instruction was to include sensory words, specifically two-word descriptions, to more vividly describe a place. In the following transcript, students brainstormed two-word descriptions of things they might hear in a park.

CHAD Screaming kids

MM How many adjectives do you have there, Chad?

CHAD Screaming is an adjective. Kids is a noun.

Sar Tweeting blue jays

MM Did you hear that? Could you hear the blue jays?

Jas Annoying, screaming kids

Mar Loud, screaming kids (transcript, 11-2-04)

Though the class had just previously brainstormed two-words descriptions for things they might smell at a park, Chad volunteered one word, rather than two words, to describe kids in the park. Mrs. Mac monitored his understanding of the task and understanding of adjectives by questioning him about the number of adjectives in the phrase. In the next talk turn, Chad responded by explicitly identifying the words related to the part of speech. Without further interaction with Chad, Mrs. Mac called on other students to respond. Jasmine and Marcus added adjectives to Chad's original phrase, "screaming kids," to create two-word description of kids in the park.

Chad's completed homework and participation during guided instruction suggested that he could identify and generate adjectives within the confines of these contexts. He also transferred this knowledge to his independent writing. He included **shiny, silver necklace** and **big, fancy restaurant** in the composition *When You Found an Object*. *Swimming in the Gulf of Mexico*, a composition written two weeks later, had only a sprinkling of adjectives. These included **warm, sunny day; risky; and dark outside**. However, there was no evidence of adjectives in *Saving Someone's Life*, a composition written a week after *Swimming in the Gulf of Mexico*.

Vignette 2

The following day, Mrs. Mac once again reviewed strategies for using description in their writing. Later in the same lesson, students practiced using dialogue by writing captions to pictures. In the following transcript, the focus was on a clip art picture of a

chef sprinkling seasonings into a large bowl. Students brainstormed dialogue that would demonstrate that the chef was excited before they independently composed their own caption.

MM First of all, what is his occupation or job?

Rob Chef

MM What makes you think he is a chef?

Rob He has a cape and hat, salt and pepper.

MM Yes, an apron. I think you said “cape.” Now we know that he is a chef. What is something the chef might be saying if he is excited?

Ter This is going to be some good soup.

COL I love cooking!

MM I love cooking. If this is something he is doing for a living, yes, he should enjoy it. So maybe he’s excited about making a new dish or making something that is going to taste good.

Sar Hey, don’t do that. I worked a long time cooking that.

(Some students said the dialogue showed anger and not excitement)

MM Yes, that is a good one as well, but it may lend itself a little more toward anger, but it certainly is a good idea as well.

CHAD Yeah, I got a raise.

MM [teacher chuckles] That was a good one, but do you think it might apply to this picture? We want to make sure that it goes along with the picture.
(Transcript, 11-03-04)

Mrs. Mac affirmed Chad as a participant by chuckling at his response and then added, “That’s a good one,” a comment sometimes following a clever joke. She coached him by questioning the suitability of the dialogue to the picture and then directly stated how to rectify the dialogue. By questioning his response, she was reiterating that

dialogue must be appropriate for the character and the situation. Monologue and dialogue began appearing in Chad's writing the day it was introduced. A narrative composed just four days after the introduction of monologue and dialogue included several incidences of dialogue and contained complete conversational turns between two characters but without quotation marks, as illustrated in the following example.

I asked her if she wanted to go to Chicago. She replied with a quick yes.

I asked her if we could go to the top. She told me know because she was afraid of heights. (Document, 11-12-04)

A narrative composed two weeks later had only one incident of monologue but with quotation marks: **I whispered to myself "I don't want to kick."** The single incident may be explained by the story's lone character and the setting which was in the middle of the ocean. Then, in a subsequent story, he included dialogue among the three characters: Chad, his dad, and a character identified as "the bad guy." Though the dialogue is not punctuated correctly, Chad made an attempt to use dialogue to show emotions of the grieving but "bad" man.

I asked the guy why he's arguing and he told me that his dad died. Then after a while he exclaimed "my dad's funeral is today, and then he added at least you have a dad". I told him, put the gun down. (Document, 12-8-04)

Vignette 3

The following vignette describes the interaction between Mrs. Mac and her class during a shared writing. On the previous day, they had composed the beginning of a story about an alien who had landed on Earth and who needed to return to his home planet. The following transcript picks up in the middle of the students brainstorming ways to interpret the language of the alien. Though Mrs. Mac commented after almost every student

offered an idea, she did not comment on the way Chad suggested they interpret what the alien was trying to communicate.

MM Right now, let's go ahead and see how we can continue. Some of you asked me about dialogue. Certainly you can use that too. Let's go ahead. Who can help me? How can I begin the next paragraph? Remember to indent to show that it is a new paragraph. Who can help me? Remember we want to use transition words whether they are in the middle of the paragraph as well. OK, Tom can you help us?

Tom All the sudden, he spoke in his alien language that I didn't understand.

MM So let's see. [Teacher writes Tom's sentence on the overhead and students copy.]

MM [Teacher rereads] What would come next? Give me some ideas.

Mig You can say what he said.

MM Give me the sentence you want me to add. You said you want me to use dialogue. (Referring to a request made by Miguel earlier in the lesson)

Tom It's a foreign language though.

MM I understand that.

Tom You'd have to write it in a different kind of language.

MM Absolutely

(Tom persists and Mrs. Mac defers his idea to other students in the class)

MM Let's get back to Miguel, and let's listen to the others and use the one that we feel is best.

Mig You can use different kinds of letters.

MM Give me an example. What would we write?

Mig Who are you?

MM But you said in his language. What would his language be? If the alien is speaking, what letters or what sounds would we use? If the alien is

speaking, and you said that you want to use alien language, then we have to think of something.

COL Use squiggly lines and put quotation marks around them.

MM Anybody else have any ideas?

Syd We could say that he could push a red button, and he could speak our language.

Pet You know how some languages they make like a “t” but with two lines crossing it.

MM If you want to use alien language... (stops and rephrases) How are you going to eventually understand the alien? You have to think about that if you are going to use a foreign language. How are you going to understand the alien?

Kan K and then a line under it and an a with a line on top –

MM But what does that mean?

Kan Hello

MM But how would you know that’s what he means?

CHAD We can just guess what he said.

Jas We found an alien translator in a cereal box

MM [Teacher and students laugh aloud] Cute, that’s cute. Good imagination.

Kan You can play like charades and figure it out

MM If the alien knows how to play charades. Oh, boy [laughs]
It sounds like during this process we are having a hard time describing what to write, so maybe we can just guess what he’s saying by looking at his body language. (Transcript, 11-18-04)

In this excerpt, students suggested several ideas for interpreting the language of the alien. In some cases, Mrs. Mac probed students for further explanation. For example, when Kanesha (Kan) suggested an idea for written communication rather than interpreting the language, Mrs. Mac asked her what it meant and how others would know

the meaning. Next, Mrs. Mac did not comment on Chad's solution to simply guess what the alien said but continued to call on students for further ideas. Jasmine suggested using an alien translator found in a cereal box, and Kanesha suggested that they play charades to interpret the language. Mrs. Mac realized that some students seemed to understand the complexity of trying to communicate with an alien while other students did not. Mrs. Mac decided to discontinue the brainstorming and independently chose the method for understanding the alien - the method offered by Chad to simply guess what the alien was saying.

Mrs. Mac wrote the following:

All of a sudden he spoke in an alien language that I did not understand. I uttered

She stopped writing to solicit from students the actual dialogue between the alien and one's self.

MM First of all, when the alien spoke in a foreign language, what do you think you'd say if an alien was speaking to you in a foreign language? What would you utter? What would you say?

CHAD Same language he speaks

MM Let's stay focused.

Tom I come in peace.

COL What are you doing with my precious toys?

MM Remember the alien just spoke. We want to stay focused on what the alien just said. What would you say once you heard that? That's what I want to write now.

Mig Greetings

MM Ok, what else?

Syd I can't understand your language.

Mig Huh?

MM OK, I kind of like that. What happens next?

In the excerpt above, Mrs. Mac was attempting to draw from students what one might say to the alien. Chad's suggestion, "Same language he speaks," was vague and did not align with what Mrs. Mac asked. Then she curbed Chad's response by directing him to "stay focused." Students suggested possible responses to the alien following Mrs. Mac's directive to Chad though he did not volunteer any responses at this point in the lesson.

The class continued with the shared writing and composed the following paragraph.

All of a sudden he spoke in an alien language that I did not understand. I uttered, "Huh?" Then the alien looked at me intently and responded, "My flying saucer has crashed in your backyard. Can you help me get home?"

Mrs. Mac continued to solicit ideas for the next sentence from the students.

MM So what would be next?

COL I announced, "I will help you get home if you can help me think."

MM I think you are trying to say let's work together.

Ryan I'll help you get home if you do my homework.

CHAD I'll help you get home if you teach me how to speak your language.

MM OK, what else?

Jas Well, where is your home planet?

MM That's a good one, too

Ter Oh, so now you can speak English

MM What did you say, Jasmine? I think I kind of like that.

Jas Well, where is your home planet?

[Students respond affirmatively]

In this interaction during the shared writing, Mrs. Mac was attempting to jointly compose a response to the alien's request for assistance to get home. Ryan offered help in exchange for the alien helping him complete his homework, and Chad again brought up the notion of understanding the language. Mrs. Mac's response, "Ok, what else?" was not directed specifically toward Chad but was intended to get the class to continue brainstorming. Then shortly after Jasmine's suggestion, "Well, where is your home?" Mrs. Mac responded, "That's a good one, too" indicating that the former suggestions were also good ideas.

The following day, the class continued the shared writing. In the following transcript, a bubble had been decided as a possible vehicle to transport the small alien back home. Below, students brainstormed the size of the bubble.

MM A large as what?

Ter Sumo wrestler

Sar House

Mig T -rex

Col World's biggest animal

Kad Hot air balloon

Jas Blue whale

MM OK, one more.

CHAD I don't know that you need to blow a bubble that big because he's not that big.

MM You're right; he's not very big. But you want it to be big so that it will float up. OK, what do you think? (Students voiced all at once what they liked, and the teacher decided on *elephant*) Transcript, 11-19-04)

All the comparisons from students regarding the bubble size were large objects.

Mrs. Mac was willing to allow students to suggest one more object at the end of the brainstorming moment; however, Chad used the allotted last suggestion to disagree with the projected size of a large bubble rather than offer a comparison . He contended that since the alien was “not that big,” and had been described in the shared writing as **a tiny slime-green alien**, (Document, 11-18-04), the bubble did not need to be as large as his classmates suggested. Mrs. Mac attempted to affirm his participation and agreed that the alien was “not very big” and then continued to explain that the bubble needed to be big so that it would float.

Though Mrs. Mac had specified that students could offer one more suggestion, Chad used his talk turn to disagree with his classmates' description. This dissenting response can be seen as a sign that a classroom culture had been created in which students not only felt comfortable contributing but voicing disagreement as well.

Chad contributed on four occasions during this vignette. Twice, he contributed, and Mrs. Mac did not verbally respond to his contribution but continued to solicit ideas for the shared writing from other students. In one interaction, Mrs. Mac had asked the class, “What would you utter? What would you say?” Chad responded, “Same language he speaks,” therein describing how he would respond to the alien rather than stating what his actual words to the alien would be. Then she curbed his response with, “Let's stay focused.” Whether Chad understood what she meant is not clear because her statement was vague and did not reiterate the focus at that point in the brainstorming. However,

Tom, the following contributor, understood that she wanted the actual words to say to the alien. In their last interaction in this vignette, instead of offering an object to compare the size of the bubble to, Chad evaluated the objects his classmates had suggested as too large since the alien was “not that big.” Mrs. Mac affirmed him as a contributor when she agreed with Chad about the size of the alien and then explained the bubble needed to be large so that it would float.

Vignette 4

Students had been assigned to write about a time when something rubbed up against them while swimming in the Gulf of Mexico. Students were given 15 minutes each day over the course of three days to compose this story. This vignette is after the second day of composing. Chad had written the introduction and the first event to his story on the day he volunteered to read aloud his story during Sharing. The following excerpt shows some responses by his peers and then an overall summary by Mrs. Mac.

COL Catchy beginning

Kad Humor

Syd Simile - kicking like crazy

MM Did you use a simile?

CHAD Yes, dark as a shadow

Sha Dialogue (actually monologue)

Pet Adverbs

MM OK, what are your adverbs?

CHAD Quickly, slowly

MM The only thing I want to say, Chad, is that you mentioned kicking three or four times. You want to make sure you don’t repeat the same thing over

and over. It starts to sound alike. You know, sentence after sentence. So you want to make sure you use a synonym or, maybe instead of kicking, you may want to use another body part like an elbow. But just be careful because I did notice that you used kicking about four times. Good job. I like how you are using some of the skills that we are learning in the classroom – adverbs and “dark as a shadow.” I think I heard some transition words as well. (Transcript, 11-30-04)

Students who volunteered to comment on Chad’s composition noted evidence in his writing of some of the writing elements the class had practiced during guided instruction over the past month and that they were expected to include in their stories. Colleen stated the beginning was catchy, a term Mrs. Mac and the class often used to describe a beginning that caught the reader’s attention. Kadajah thought the story was humorous, and Sydney, confused by the word *like* offered what she considered a simile, “swim like crazy.” Mrs. Mac did not comment on what Sydney referred to as a simile but explicitly asked Chad if he included a simile. He responded by stating what he considered a simile, “dark as a shadow,” thereby demonstrating understanding of the concept. Peter offered that he heard several adverbs, and then Mrs. Mac asked Chad to identify them. Chad looked over his composition and noticed quickly and slowly.

I categorized Mrs. Mac’s comments in the same way that I did after she commented on Colleen’s story. The one area of improvement that I categorized as being explicit was Mrs. Mac’s suggestion that he use another word for kick because it was used several times in one paragraph. She offered one evaluative comment, “Good job.” Then she mentioned two writing elements she noticed - transition words and figurative language. After students responded, Mrs. Mac commented on Chad’s composition. First, she noted that he overused the word kicking, thereby making all the movement in the text sound alike. She suggested that he use synonyms for kick or to use an entirely different

body part such as an elbow. She concluded with a caution to be careful not to overuse words. Mrs. Mac offered, “Good job,” directly following the suggestions for improvement. The placement of, “Good job,” may indicate her attempt to encourage him should he have been discouraged by her comments. While, “Good job,” on the surface sounds like a positive comment, in reality, it is a judgment (Kohn, 1999). By saying, “Good job,” Mrs. Mac was telling Chad how to feel rather than letting him choose how to feel about the results of his writing. However, following the evaluation, she explicitly stated the writing elements she noticed in his composition, which is a more powerful way to reinforce a behavior. Table 19 displays Chad’s story.

Table 19

First two paragraphs from *Swimming in the Gulf Of Mexico*

One warm, sunny day at the Gulf of Mexico, I felt something brushing against my leg while swimming. It felt slimy and sticky. I looked in the water to see what it was, but it was dark outside so the water was as dark as a shadow.

I started to kick so it would go away. But the more I kicked the closer it came. So I whispered to myself “I don’t want to kick”. So then I started swimming quickly but then I realized that I was kicking. So then I couldn’t swim, well maybe I can I just cant kick. I started to swim slowly. But the thing was still next to me. By morning time I was still swimming, and I could tell what was next to me because there was light out. I looked into the water and there was a jellyfish next to me. And I didn’t care if kicking made it come closer. I was just going to swim like crazy.

Vignette 5

To practice the writing technique, *show, don't tell*, Mrs. Mac gave students a worksheet containing ten sentences that could be improved by using verbs or adjectives to give the reader a better mental picture of the context of the sentence. In the following transcript, she explains the purpose of elaborating by composing showing sentences.

MM I conferenced with many of you this morning, and something I want all of you to work on is showing sentences and not telling sentences. These kind of sentences are going to build vivid pictures in the reader's mind. The only way you are going to have that is by having showing sentences and not telling sentences. Why is it important to have showing sentences rather than telling sentences?

Pet For description

MM But why is description important?

Mig It makes writing more interesting.

Jas It gives the reader a mental picture in their head.

MM And what you want to do, boys and girls, is to make sure your reader is involved in your story. (Transcript, 12-07-04)

Mrs. Mac distributed a worksheet containing six “telling” sentences to the class. Collaboratively, the class revised the first three sentences to make the sentences more interesting through, *show, don't tell*. Mrs. Mac gave students approximately five minutes to revise independently the final three sentences. After students revised the sentences, they volunteered to share their revisions one sentence at a time before moving on to the next sentence. Chad volunteered to read his elaboration of the following focus sentence:

My mother and I walked by the chapel and looked through the stained glass windows.

Chad read aloud his elaboration.

CHAD My mother and I walked by the chapel and admired the statue.

MM So the only thing is, you didn't include anything about the glass window – you changed it completely to a statue. We want to keep it to a glass window. (Transcript, 12-07-04)

In this brief interaction, Mrs. Mac explained to Chad that *show, don't tell* is not accomplished by simply changing one noun, window, to another noun, statue. While students continued to share how they had revised the sentence, Chad followed Mrs. Mac's directive and revised the sentence to the following:

My mother and I walked by the chapel and admired the wonderful stained glass windows.

Mrs. Mac's explanation did not seem sufficient. Chad simply added the adjective wonderful to describe the stain glass windows rather than describing what may have been depicted in the windows. After students shared their sentences, without further prompting from Mrs. Mac, Chad once again revised the sentence to

My mother and I walked by the chapel and admired the shiny, rose shaped stained glass windows.

In this lesson, though Mrs. Mac coached Chad to “keep it a glass window” the coaching was not adequate as indicated by Chad's addition of the vague adjective, wonderful. However, as his classmates continued to share their revisions, Chad initiated changing the sentence once more from **wonderful, stained glass windows** to **shiny, rose shaped stain glass windows**, indicating the design of the stain glass.

Even while students spent about 5-10 minutes reviewing homework assignments or sharing answers to independent practice assignments, the session was fast-paced with the students being attentive and with Mrs. Mac frequently elaborating on their responses. Though Mrs. Mac's comment to Chad during this vignette was not helpful, Chad's attention to his classmates' responses may have clarified his incomplete understanding.

Vignette 6

To expand students' written vocabulary, they collaborated in groups to brainstorm synonyms for target words, and then a representative from each group shared the synonyms that they brainstormed with the class. In the following brief excerpt, Chad suggested that faster is a synonym for hurry.

CHAD Faster

MM Let's see. (Deliberates) Hurry, faster. So what part of speech is that one?

CHAD I'm going faster.

MM That would also be an adverb as well. Right? It tells how we're going. Again, it's related, but I don't know that it would go along. (Transcript, 12-15-04)

Just before Chad suggested faster as a synonym for hurry, Colleen had suggested swiftly as a synonym for hurry. Similar to her response to Colleen, Mrs. Mac attempted to make Chad's suggestion valid. She deliberated after his response, repeated what he said, and then questioned Chad about the part of speech. Chad did not answer her question but offered faster in a sentence - maybe as an attempt to show how it is similar to hurry. In the offered sentence, faster is clearly an adverb and not a verb like hurry. She closed the interaction with an affirmative response suggesting that faster is related to hurry but not the same.

Summary of the Interactions Between Mrs. Mac and Chad and his Responses to the

Interactions

Chad was an attentive student throughout writing instruction but compared to Colleen, he volunteered to participate less frequently. The interactions between Mrs. Mac and Chad were usually brief.

In Vignette 1, Mrs. Mac mediated his understanding of two-word descriptions through a simple probe to prompt him to reconsider his response. Chad used two-word descriptions during guided practices and in his independent writing.

She affirmed him as a contributor in Vignette 2. She chuckled at the dialogue he had composed for a picture, and then she added, “That’s a good one,” a comment sometimes following a clever joke. Then, she again used a simple prompt, “Do you think it might apply to this picture?” to stimulate him to reconsider the dialogue. Chad used monologue and dialogue during guided instruction and in independent writing; however, the frequency of use seemed to depend on the setting of the story.

In Vignette 3, Mrs. Mac did not verbally respond to Chad’s first contribution during brainstorming but continued to solicit ideas for the shared writing from other students. Then, in another interaction, Mrs. Mac evaluated him as “not focused” based on his response that did not actually align with her question, yet she did not reiterate the “focus” after her imperative statement, “Stay focused.” In another interaction, Chad volunteered an evaluation of his classmates’ suggestions for the size of a bubble rather than offer a suggestion himself. Mrs. Mac affirmed him as a contributor but projected an explanation for his classmates’ reasoning.

In Vignette 4, Chad read aloud some of his story, *Swimming in the Gulf of Mexico*, and received feedback from Mrs. Mac and his classmates. His peers noted several skills and strategies from the checklist as well as humor in his story. Mrs. Mac mentioned two writing elements she noticed - transition words and figurative language. She offered a subtle positive comment, “Good job,” suggested that one word was overused, and then proposed other possibilities.

In Vignette 5, Mrs. Mac's coaching did not appear to sufficiently mediate Chad's understanding of the strategy, *show, don't tell*; but, as his classmates continued to share their sentences, he independently revised his sentence to compose an adequate *show me* sentence.

In Vignette 6, Chad offered faster as a synonym for hurry. While Mrs. Mac overtly considered the relationship, she could not validate his response but affirmed him as a contributor.

Chad understood the structure of narrative writing and used the skills and strategies taught within the writing lessons in guided practices and in independent writing. However, Chad's responses to the WSPS indicated that he did not perceive himself as a good writer, was not relaxed or comfortable when writing, nor did he enjoy writing. He felt strongly that his writing was not as interesting as his classmates' writing.

Writing within a specified amount of time in preparation for the impending state-mandated writing assessment was problematic for Chad. He expressed that to Mrs. Mac and volunteered that to me in an interview. In the final interview, he explained that he had a difficult time trying to generate new ideas for his story that no one else had suggested during prewriting activities. Although Mrs. Mac initiated brainstorming in order to activate students' schema and to hear and employ others' ideas into their own writing if they chose, Chad expressed that for him, this practice was "stealing other people's ideas."

Comparing the word count across the stories from early November to mid-December gives some indication that his stories were getting longer. The composition, *When You Found An Object*, was written over three days in early November and had 179

words (Appendix R). Chad was not able to complete this story due to time constraints. In a month's time, Chad was showing a steady increase in production as illustrated in the composition, *Swimming in the Gulf of Mexico*, was written at the end of November and contained 309 words (Appendix S). *Saving Someone's Life* was written about a week later and contained 322 words (Appendix T). The writing samples assessed by the two graduate students and me using the 6-Traits Writing model had mean scores for the beginning of November, end of November, and a week later of 3.8, 4, and 3.7, respectively. The scores by individual raters for each trait ranged between being the same and having a one point difference except for scores for the trait word choice in *When You Found An Object*. In that case, the scores were 3, 4, and 5, and similarly, the scores for voice in *Saving Someone's Life* were 5, 5, and 3. Most of the scores for separate traits declined over the six weeks. He received the highest score (4.3) for voice on the last two compositions. Scores for all six traits improved when comparing the first and last composition; however, three traits had higher scores for the middle composition than the last composition – ideas (4.3), sentence fluency (4), and conventions (4).

When I returned to Mrs. Mac's classroom for a pizza party to show my appreciation to the students for allowing me to observe in their classroom, Mrs. Mac informed me that Chad scored a 5 out of the possible 6 on the state-mandated writing test. He had been given a prompt in which he wrote a story about going on a special ride.

Cross Case Analysis Between Colleen and Chad

Colleen and Chad were both new to Lakeview Elementary although Colleen had enrolled several months before Chad, and he had enrolled just a few days before I began observation in their classroom. Mrs. Mac suggested they were both struggling writers,

and their responses and low scores on the WSPS supported her evaluation. The interactions between Colleen and Mrs. Mac differed from the interactions between Chad and Mrs. Mac. Colleen participated much more actively than Chad; therefore, there were more interactions between Mrs. Mac and Colleen than between Mrs. Mac and Chad. Not only were the number of interactions different, but the roles Mrs. Mac played in the interactions were also different. Most of the interactions between Colleen and Mrs. Mac unfolded as ways to encourage Colleen as an emerging writer. She used Colleen's idea for one of the major events in the shared writing about helping an alien return to his home planet. Mrs. Mac gave her more ownership of the writing than the rest of the class, though she promoted continued input from all students. On one occasion, Mrs. Mac praised Colleen's contribution. Unbeknownst to Colleen, the praise was flawed, yet the praise may have incited Colleen to contribute a similar response shortly thereafter.

Responses typically served to affirm Chad as a contributor when responses were invalid, and his contributions when responses were valid. An imperative statement to Chad, "Stay focused," may have alerted Chad to a disconnect; however, Mrs. Mac did not reiterate the focus to Chad. Evidence of intertextual connections was observed throughout Colleen's written and verbal discourse; however, Chad offered that he did not like using other peoples' ideas.

Chad showed progress in writing fluency from his baseline writing sample to compositions written at the end of the study a few months later. Though Colleen demonstrated progress in her writing development, the number of words in the first and third document stayed consistent. There was a large increase in words in the second

writing assignment, which was probably due to a repetition of characters from previous stories and traces of events composed by the class during a shared writing.

Cross Case Analysis Among All Students

Some writing behaviors typical of struggling writers were observed in these students as well as behaviors characteristic of more capable writers. For example, though I observed Kyle rereading his writing as he composed, a characteristic of a more capable writer (Faigley, Cherry, Jolliffe, & Skinner, 1985), he appeared reluctant to make revisions to make the meaning clearer to the reader. Though Colleen had creative ideas, the ideas were often disjointed or not developed. In addition, text production skills such as handwriting, spelling, and mechanics interfered with the readability of her stories. Writing within a specified time frame and within narrowly defined genres to prepare students for a state-mandated assessment may contribute to children perceiving themselves as already or as becoming struggling writers, as in the case of Chad. However, Ray was more productive working within a set time frame.

An analysis of classroom discourse at the micro level examined the interaction between teacher and student within the context of whole group instruction and was further nested within the discourse of mediated activities such as explicit instruction and modeled writing. The interactions were only a small trickle in the flow of classroom language and literacy events. Because writing begins as a social and cognitive process, the thinking is transparent and thus makes it difficult to determine hidden factors that may also contribute to the writing process before the physical act of writing begins. A critical stance was employed in suitable interactions to unpack the social and power

relations, identities, and knowledge that were constructed through spoken text (Rogers, 2003).

While both teachers often affirmed students' participation when their contributions were accurate, they also often affirmed students as participants in the learning event even when contributions were vague or inaccurate. Often, the teachers probed vague or incorrect responses for clarification or elaborated on these responses to mediate understanding. Though praise was used sparingly, Mrs. Ring utilized it on a few occasions with one student in particular, Ray, who seldom volunteered to participate. The praise appeared to recognize his participation and on one occasion to welcome him back to the learning community after he had removed himself, though not physically, when he was "pouting." Mrs. Mac praised Colleen more frequently than any other student. On one occasion, Mrs. Mac used praise somewhat haphazardly which may have contributed to Colleen using a word unconventionally again shortly following the initial phrase. While Mrs. Mac promoted a democratic classroom culture, her position changed intermittently from "deciding together" to being an authority who independently made decisions without consulting the composers of the shared writing. Kyle participated frequently, but his contributions were often vague or outside the parameters of the topic; therefore, Mrs. Ring typically followed Kyle's response with language to mediate his understanding. Though Mrs. Ring's typical approach was to facilitate meaning construction, on one occasion, she admitted her inability to communicate to him the theme of the writing event. In a few incidences, the teachers did not respond to students' contributions whether to praise, affirm, or clarify.

Students' writings were analyzed for traces of the skills and strategies addressed surrounding the interactions. In an interaction between Kyle and Mrs. Ring in which Kyle initiated a conference, he followed through with the explicit revisions Mrs. Ring suggested. On another occasion, Kyle appropriately preserved and used a phrase in his writing that Mrs. Ring had countered as being vague when he used it to describe an event in a children's book. While students worked on a writing piece for about a week so that they could develop the plot, include the focused skill or strategy, and revise and edit, Ray occasionally misplaced his assignments or neglected to complete them. However, when students were given a practice writing test to prepare for the state mandated writing test, he was able to satisfactorily complete the composition within the 45-minute time restraint. Traces from classroom discourse and writing resources such as class-generated lists were identified in writing samples from Kyle and Ray, students in Mrs. Ring's room, and from Colleen, in Mrs. Mac's room. While Mrs. Mac encouraged students to use any resource in the room and synonyms, figurative language, and ideas suggested during brainstorming, Chad did not feel comfortable using ideas suggested by his peers.

Although Kyle and Ray demonstrated specific skills or strategies during guided instruction, they did not transfer them to the same degree in their independent writing. The skills and strategies introduced in Mrs. Mac's classroom were more concrete. She provided students with a checklist to further support transference of skills and strategies from guided instruction into their independent writing. Chad understood the structure of narrative writing and used the skills and strategies taught within the writing lessons in guided practices and in independent writing. Colleen demonstrated the basic structure of narrative writing and was able to identify specific skills and strategies in writing samples

and in her classmates' writing during Sharing, though she did not demonstrate many of the skills in her own writing. Both teachers focused on some of the same skills and strategies but with a teaching style that was unique to each of them. A word count of all the stories composed by each student throughout the study showed an increase in the number of words from one composition to the following composition. The only exception was Colleen. Her word count increased over 100 words from the first composition to the next. However, the large increase may be due to the fact that she used similar characters from previous stories, an alien and a hawk, and events from a shared writing composed as a class. There was then a decrease of about 100 words from the second to third composition.

Deconstructing Brainstorming

Brainstorming was employed in both classrooms, and to unpack how it may have influenced the interactions between student and teacher, I deconstructed how brainstorming was conducted within both classrooms. Mrs. Ring often used brainstorming throughout the writing block as a catalyst to introduce a new skill or strategy or to front-load a writing task. For example, during the flow of discourse about using details, she explained that adding specific details for comparison was a possible strategy. She added that details should be precise. Without giving examples, she asked the class, "How red is the dress?" Early in this brainstorming event, five of the eight examples offered by students were fruits or other objects that had a uniform color of red associated with it. While some students understood the concept without examples, other students' responses indicated that they did not understand the concept. According to Osborne (1953), the problem should be clearly stated by the facilitator before

brainstorming for idea generation. Mrs. Ring instructed, “If I don’t have a point of reference [Mrs. Ring stopped and restated her directive]. You want to make sure that most, 100% of the people would understand.” The breach in understanding of the task required Mrs. Ring to probe for clarification and even to evaluate some responses as incorrect, thus possibly hindering the quantity and freewheeling of ideas - another principle of brainstorming (Osborne, 1953). Neither of the suggestions by Kyle fell within the parameters of comparing red with a known object. After Kyle’s first response, Mrs. Ring asked him to make the connection for her, but he offered another response instead. Again, his response was evaluated as incorrect, and though she possibly used an exaggeration to mediate his understanding, she did not evaluate his understanding. It was not until two talk-turns later that she explicitly explained the concept and then gave examples of commonly known red objects. After most students offered suggestions, and some more than once, Mrs. Ring explained, “It’s not as easy as you think. Pick things that you know everyone would understand. How about a fire truck? What about a blazing fire? These types of things. How about a red light? Things that 99% of the people will understand. If you say red like a pen, my pen might be maroon, it might be pink, it might be all kinds of things that aren’t necessarily red.”

While students were not required to contribute, most of them did offer a response thus suggesting either they thought their answers were valid, or they were comfortable with the possibility of suggesting an invalid response. As with any time a student volunteers to respond, the construct may become problematic when a student does not anticipate invalidation of a response by the teacher.

Mrs. Ring used brainstorming as a prewriting activity for a shared writing about a Halloween experience. A watercolor drawing was used to stimulate idea generation by the students. Mrs. Ring explained to the students that they would have an opportunity to paint a picture later in the day and then began with an open-ended question, “Now what does this house remind you of?” She asked an open-ended question. She also had objectives for the brainstorming, but she did not set the purpose for the activity for the students. It was not until after Kyle introduced a *show me* description, that she explained that she only wanted descriptive words. She continued with questions such as “How do you feel about walking up to that house and rapping on the door?” and “What are some sounds that I might hear?” The open-ended solicitation follows the principles of brainstorming (Osborne, 1953); however, during the brainstorming episode, Mrs. Ring overtly evaluated students’ responses, a construct inconsistent with Osborne’s guidelines for brainstorming.

Brainstorming in Mrs. Ring’s classroom had the following characteristics. First, Mrs. Ring used brainstorming not only to facilitate idea generation for a writing task but also as a method of instruction. Students responded, and she gave them feedback. By evaluating students’ responses, she was monitoring their understanding (Interview, 10-08-04). Students also learned from each other and used ideas from their classmates in their own writing. Second, students were not usually given specific expectations or instruction before they began; therefore, students began with incomplete knowledge, and consequently, the brainstorming was riddled with responses from Mrs. Ring that asked students for clarification. Furthermore, the brainstorming took on the characteristics of a guessing game in which they were to conjecture what Mrs. Ring was thinking rather than

being intentionally mindful contributions. Mrs. Ring typically ended the brainstorming event by more explicitly stating the objective or setting the purpose. Though not always productive for students, this practice aligns with her goal to get her students to think (Interview, 10-08-04). Third, though she introduced a brainstorming event with an open-ended question, she had narrowly constrained expectations for their responses, and responses that were marginal or different were not accepted or even probed for clarification in some cases, specifically for Kyle. Fourth, Mrs. Ring typically allowed everyone to voice their ideas, and as a result, the amount of time spent brainstorming was not proportional to the assigned task (e.g., two sentences to *show, not tell* that a room is messy). In addition, the brainstorming may not have been necessary for all students, and for them in particular, this practice delayed their writing until the end of the brainstorming event.

Brainstorming in Mrs. Mac's classroom occurred much less frequently than brainstorming in Mrs. Ring's classroom, and that decrease in frequency aligns with Mrs. Mac's discourse style and instructional approach. Brainstorming usually happened during a shared writing or to generate ideas for a writing prompt. The shared writing about helping an alien return to his home planet extended across three days. Students generated ideas for an episode each day while Mrs. Mac facilitated the brainstorming and did the physical writing. One episode began with "Who can help me? How can we start our next paragraph with a transition without saying, 'Our second attempt.' We want to vary it a little bit. So who can help me without saying our second attempt? Feel free to use the transition chart or use some that you are familiar with" (Transcript, 11-19-04). After eight suggestions, Mrs. Mac decided which suggestion to use and asked Colleen, since it was

her idea, to tell Mrs. Mac what to specifically write. Next, students were asked to suggest the size of the balloon, and after seven responses, Mrs. Mac indicated the closing of suggestions with the statement, “One more.” Four students suggested description for the alien’s hands before Mrs. Mac began to write. The brainstorming continued in this manner with Mrs. Mac writing a few words, stopping to ask for suggestion for description, the next phrase, or to complete a thought. Usually, all ideas were voiced if only a few students volunteered. Though there was not a consistent number of ideas that she allowed before she determined what to write; she would indicate closure to the brainstorming for that particular text by directly saying what she was going to write or by simply writing it. Though students were encouraged to help compose the story, Mrs. Mac independently made the decision about what to actually write. When one boy suggested, “An army guy thought it [the large bubble] was a bomb and shot it.” Mrs. Mac replied, “I’ll be honest with you. I’m trying to stay away from guns or weapons being used because I try not to use violence. OK?” While Mrs. Mac positioned herself as the gatekeeper for what would be allowed in the story, her sentiment is consistent with topics other teachers prohibit in students’ writing (Schneider, 2001). Mrs. Mac kept the momentum of the shared writing moving forward by allowing a fraction of the class to offer suggestions before she decided what to write.

Chapter Summary

This study examined the interactions between exemplary writing teachers and struggling writers. The classroom culture created a space for students to work collaboratively and to share ideas. The writing instruction of both teachers was characterized by many practices that typify good writing instruction such as developing a

literate classroom environment, monitoring students' progress as writers as well as their strengths and needs, and adjusting their teaching style and learning pace as needed. The teachers facilitated the writing process through explicit instruction, modeled writing, shared writing, cooperative learning activities, feedback and visual fieldtrips. Students selected for the study were suggested by their teachers based on their writing samples and then finalized by their scores on the WSPS. Vignette were created for each student to describe the context of the interactions between the teacher and student. An analysis of each interaction was presented for each vignette. The chapter ended with a cross-case analysis of the two student participants within each classroom and then a cross-case analysis of all four students.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the interaction between exemplary teachers and fourth grader struggling writers. Several researchers in the field of literacy promote examining the classroom practices of exemplary teachers to determine characteristics of their successful teaching since teachers are more efficacious than curricular materials, pedagogical approaches, or programs (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Bond & Dykstra, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Duffy & Hoffman, 1999; Pressley et al., 1996; Pressley et al., 2001). Exemplary teachers have been shown to have a substantial effect on the achievement of struggling students. The difference between having a good teacher for three years in a row versus another teacher can represent as much as 50 percentile points in student achievement on a 100-point scale (Babu & Mendro, 2003; Mendro et al., 1998). This is an influence greater than race, poverty level, or parent's education (Carey, 2004).

The questions that guided my study were: (1) What is the nature of the interaction between exemplary teachers of writing and struggling writers? (2) What are the responses of struggling writers to the interaction? The next section presents a synthesis of the results and analysis compared to extant literature that emerged in the data collection process. Several areas of similarity across the participants emerged from the data. They included mediated action through teacher response, written response to mediated action, social positioning, and best practices?

The initial step toward selecting participants for the study began with compiling a list of characteristics of exemplary writing teachers based on the research of exemplary teaching and effective writing instruction. While the teachers selected for the study demonstrated characteristics of exemplary writing instruction during preliminary observations or professed the practices during the initial interview, as the study progressed some of the practices were not manifested as frequently or in the manner that the review of research describes or that I had anticipated. While these classes were not ideal when scrutinized through the lens of a qualitative study, many characteristics that describe exemplary teacher were present; therefore, I continued the study within the two original classrooms.

Exemplary Teaching Revisited

Passionate about writing was the first characteristic on the list that describes an exemplary writing teacher. Mrs. Ring continued throughout the study to showcase students' written work on the walls inside the classroom and on the bulletin board outside the classroom. This was an indication to me on my first visit the importance that Mrs. Ring placed on writing. While Mrs. Mac did not physically showcase students' work, students "showcased" their writing during Author's Chair. Because Mrs. Mac was in a year round school she had to strip the room every 12 weeks for the incoming teacher and students. This may have contributed to the limited displays of student work.

Exemplary writing teachers are committed to, care about and advocate for actions that improve students' lives. With respect to Kyle, I observed Mrs. Ring caring about his physical needs by putting money in his lunch account when his parents were unable to purchase his lunch but did not want to admit their financial situation by applying for aide.

Mrs. Ring tutored Ray after school on several occasions to scaffold his understanding of the skills and strategies addressed during regular classroom instruction. An analysis of the verbal interaction between Kyle and Mrs. Ring does not suggest the same care in her discourse. Mrs. Mac was respectful of all students and praised and affirmed them throughout the duration of the study.

Implementing highly effective instructional repertoires and knowing how and when to combine instructional methods is another trait of exemplary teaching. Both teachers used a variety of instructional methods within the writing block and common practices included mini-lessons, guided writing, and modeling. In addition, Mrs. Ring promoted the social aspect of writing through cooperative learning structures and prewriting through visual field trips. Author's Chair was only observed in Mrs. Mac's classroom. These different methods facilitated students' writing and added variety to instruction. While Mrs. Ring deployed a variety of best practices, the discourse engulfing some of the methods may have interfered with the effectiveness of the practice. (This finding is further described in the chapter.)

In the initial interview, both teachers claimed that assessment was one component that guided instruction. Mrs. Ring depended on an informal assessment, classroom observation, and completed writing assignments, a more formal measure, to assess students' understanding. However, on at least two occasions Ray had not submitted writing assignments that were supposed to have been written over the course of a week. His negligence only became apparent to Mrs. Ring when she read each students' writing to assess their progress. Mrs. Mac read students' writing at the end of the school day to determine their understanding of the skill or strategy presented during writing instruction

and wrote a brief comment isolating one specific writing element for the student to consider for his or her next writing piece. Mrs. Mac further assessed students' writing during Author's Chair by providing positive feedback, and, depending on her quick and informal assessment of the piece, she identified one element for them to revise or consider for the next writing piece. Neither teacher conferenced with students on a regular basis, a component of writing workshop. Because their writing instruction followed a gradual release model, conferencing was seldom and, in addition, relegated to times during the day other than the writing block. Both teachers modeled writing for their students and served as scribes in shared writing – exclusively for instructional purposes.

Neither teacher demonstrated that they were writers who enjoyed the activity by writing while their students wrote. Both teachers considered the state writing assessment when planning writing instruction. Topics for writing were prompt-driven within the confines of two narrowly defined writing descriptions of narrative and expository genres. Students in Mrs. Ring's classroom frequently responded with a variety of writing genre to a piece of literature they had read in their anthology. So that Mrs. Mac's students would be familiar with the format of the state writing assessment, she frequently had them respond to prompts, though she was opposed to this format. However, she selected prompts that former students had found enjoyable. In addition, she gave them several prompts from which to choose.

Finally, both teachers taught grammar and mechanics within the context of model and shared writing. Using quotation marks were practiced first within the context of a comic strip. Students in Mrs. Ring's class drew the entire comic strip and wrote the dialogue while Mrs. Mac gave her students a preprinted comic strip with the task of

writing the dialogue. In addition to teaching grammar and mechanics while modeling, Mrs. Mac included a 5-10 minute focus lesson on grammar and mechanics to review students' homework in which they practiced the skill from the preceding day and to introduce them to a new skill.

Mediated Action Through Teacher Response

Sociocultural theory provides a lens for understanding the role of dialogue for student learning and, specifically for this study, the interaction between struggling writers and their teachers who had been identified as exemplary writing teachers during writing instruction.

Higher mental processes, such as voluntary attention, voluntary memory, and thinking develop on the foundation of lower mental processes such as involuntary attention and total recall by mediated activities. The mediators are signs. For example, language, numbers, or symbols with a definite meaning that have evolved with the history of a culture are all mediators. Teacher mediation is more than modeling or demonstrating how to do something. The more knowledgeable other, the teacher, provides support for students' learning within the students' zones of proximal development. Vygotsky described an individual in the ZPD when he is engaged in a highly difficult task in which his or her performance must be mediated by an adult or in collaboration with a capable peer. However, he did not provide guidance in designing instruction for mediation through the ZPD (Landsmann, 1991). Within the zone of proximal development are varying degrees of support.

Praise

Mrs. Ring and Mrs. Mac's responses to students during the context of writing instruction served multiple purposes. By limiting their praise to whole group commendations, except for a few isolated cases, they were creating a learning community in which no one student's participation was esteemed over another. While praise is considered one indicator of instructional conversation (Dalton, 1997) and may serve to assist students' performance (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990) as they advance through their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), excessive praise can decrease motivation or autonomy; therefore, praise should be limited to significant accomplishments (Brophy, 1986). Mrs. Ring offered overt praise to students on rare occasions. During one occurrence, Mrs. Ring reserved verbal praise for Ray's response during brainstorming as a conduit for welcoming Ray back as part of the group after a period of "pouting." Mrs. Ring generally extended praise to the whole class at the end of the writing block on occasions when she observed that students had demonstrated effort toward including specific skills and strategies in their writing, as in her praise, "Ok, Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm starting to see a LOT better coaching going on...so, thank you very much...those are some good things I heard." Sometimes, when Mrs. Ring read aloud students' writing, she would praise students' writing without identifying the writer as when she said, "OK, this is good. The only thing I caution this writer about is..."

Mrs. Mac offered praise more frequently for all students in her classroom than Mrs. Ring did in her classroom. Praise was sprinkled throughout her interactions with Colleen, "You're a good listener. I could tell that you were listening very attentively and you could tell me the actual words she used. Very good." By frequently praising

Colleen, Mrs. Mac was attending to the encouragement she knew was important for Colleen. She explained to me, “I don’t know if you noticed, but Colleen needs lots of encouragement. She has made lots of progress, and I just keep letting her know that I am proud of her success” (Fieldnotes, 11-04-04). Collinson (1994) asserts that exemplary teachers’ ways of knowing may provide a wealth of insight into merging their knowledge of students and knowing how to merge professional knowledge and personal knowledge to help students learn. The only praise Chad received in the selected interactions was after he shared his story, “Good job. I like how you are using some of the skills that we are learning in the classroom – adverbs and ‘dark as a shadow.’ I think I heard some transition words as well.”

Mrs. Mac used praise as a method to encourage Colleen as a writer. On one occasion in particular, she praised Colleen’s word choice when she supplied an adverb to describe a verb phrase. Colleen offered an unconventional meaning for hardly in “hardly staring at the cake.” Mrs. Mac praised her, “Very good. Hardly, I like that word.” Then a few moments later, Colleen used it again, “digging hardly in the backyard.” Since Mrs. Mac did not clarify the meaning of hardly earlier in the lesson, but praised Colleen’s word choice, Colleen used hardly in another sentence. The second time Colleen used a nonstandard meaning of hardly, Mrs. Mac paused, pondered the meaning for a few moments, and then said, “OK. I can see what you’re saying. Not too much digging was being done.” In this interaction, though both uses of hardly were incorrect, it would appear that Mrs. Mac made the decision to forego explaining the conventional meaning for hardly in lieu of validating her response by suggesting that she understood what she meant.

During Sharing, students were not only praised by Mrs. Mac for including writing elements she noticed in their writing, but their classmates also offered positive comments as well. Praise was used to commend students' knowledge of writing and was given sparingly to all students, except in Colleen's case.

Affirmation

Both teachers occasionally affirmed students in two ways. First, affirmation served to recognize students' contributions by the teachers responding with some type of feedback, such as elaboration, to indicate approval. Another way the teachers affirmed students was by recognizing them as contributors in the learning community even while students' responses were flawed or vague. This response appeared to be crafted to promote future participation. For example, in Mrs. Ring's class, Ray had offered "mansion" to describe a dilapidated structure in a watercolor painting, but Mrs. Ring countered that the structure was not really a mansion. Then she was quick to add, "We can say, 'old, worn-down mansion.' Do you like that?" When he nodded agreement, she said, "OK, I'll use that, Ray. Thank you."

While Kyle participated frequently, he received less direct affirmation. Mrs. Ring appeared to have "caught" herself explaining to Kyle why a response did not align with the objective of the lesson. "See, what you did is, and thank you for doing that, but you gave me a synonym. You didn't show me. You just gave me a different word for sad. I want you to SHOW me the sad. I want to SEE the sad." When she realized this, she backtracked and thanked him for his response, and, rather than transitioning to the next person, she explained to Kyle how to think through the process of going from a one-word adjective to a more concrete description.

Mrs. Mac attempted to affirm her students as contributors even when their answers were faulty. For both students, she attempted to salvage erroneous responses by looking for some bit of legitimacy in them. She would sometimes repeat their answer, ponder it for a moment, and if she determined their responses were inadequate, she would reply with “nice try” or a similar phrase. When responses were vague or faulty but entertaining, Mrs. Mac was comfortable laughing with her students. For example, “That’s a good one,” referring to the humorous dialogue Chad gave a chef in a cartoon.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming a topic or idea as a class, students, rather than only the teacher, served as a more knowledgeable other. This action not only promoted the generation of ideas, but created a situation whereby students enlisted help from their classmates, thus transcending their immediate knowledge. Brainstorming was employed in both classrooms as a form of mediated action.

Mrs. Ring often used brainstorming throughout the writing block as a catalyst to introduce a new skill or strategy or to front-load a writing task. While Mrs. Ring introduced a brainstorming event with an open-ended question, responses were evaluated, a construct inconsistent with Osborne’s (1953) guidelines for brainstorming. Mrs. Ring allowed all voices to be heard thus extending the duration of that particular segment of the writing block. While research indicates the importance of talk before writing (Dyson & Freedman, 2003; Routman, 2000; Peterson, 2003), the amount of talk was not proportional to the writing task. According to Osborne (1953), the problem should be clearly stated by the facilitator before brainstorming for idea generation. Specific expectations or instructions were not usually given prior to the brainstorming event;

therefore, students began with incomplete knowledge, and responses sometimes appeared as guesses other than intentional and thoughtful contributions.

Brainstorming in Mrs. Mac's classroom occurred much less frequently than the brainstorming in Mrs. Ring's classroom. Brainstorming usually occurred during a shared writing or to generate ideas for a writing prompt. Consistent with the fast-paced environment of Mrs. Mac's classroom, she allowed only a fraction of the class to offer suggestions toward the composing of a shared writing. Though there was not a fixed number of ideas she permitted before she closed a session of the brainstorming event, she allowed it to continue until a variety of ideas were generated. Students were given multiple opportunities throughout each lesson to contribute to the brainstorming event. She clearly stated the objective of the brainstorming and students' voiced their contributions. Though students were encouraged to help compose the story, Mrs. Mac positioned herself as the gatekeeper for whose idea to include, how to include it, and what would be allowed in the story.

Written Response to Mediated Action

One tenet of sociocultural theory is that consciousness is created through socially mediated activity: "The internalization of socially rooted and historically developed activities is the distinguishing feature of human psychology" (Vygotsky, 1978, 57). The following findings are associated with students' written response to the interaction.

Teaching in Small Chunks

Though common writing events looked differently for each class based on the teacher's style, the writing events were employed to support students' developing understanding of writing and to prepare them for upcoming independent writing tasks.

Both teachers taught in small chunks, or small pieces, of instruction students could digest, and provided many opportunities during direct instruction, modeled/shared writing, and guided writing to practice a writing skill, concept, or element before writing independently. Teachers were gradually releasing the responsibility of the task to the students. In the gradual release model of Pearson and Gallagher (1983), based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, learners move through a gradient of difficulty and begin the process of learning by observing and then assisting in the modeling of a process. Next, learners practice using the strategy with support, and then finally with time and practice, they begin to use the process independently and in other contexts.

Aspects of the gradual release model were applied in both classrooms as students repeatedly progressed through the writing events. During modeled writing, Mrs. Ring and Mrs. Mac did all the composing and demonstrated writing as they thought aloud during writing. During shared writing, they invited the students to participate. Students helped plan the text and told Mrs. Ring and Mrs. Mac what and how to write. During guided writing, the teacher supported the children by suggesting strategies and helping them use those strategies. Finally, all the strategies and skills that they had learned would be demonstrated in their independent writing. Routman (2005) describes this method for writing instruction as "The Optimal Learning Model."

The gradual release model was demonstrated in another way in these two classrooms. During the beginning instruction of narrative writing, both teachers modeled the process of brainstorming an idea, constructing some type of organizer for her ideas, and then writing the paragraph. (This sequence was repeated for other paragraphs over

several days until a story was written.) After composing the paragraph, both teachers would leave the model on the overhead or copied in their writing folder for the students to use as a source for their own paragraph. Students were encouraged to use the teacher's models as much as they needed in order to compose their own paragraph. Not only were the teachers gradually releasing responsibility to the writers through the writing events described above but also by providing them with models that they could use as little or as much as necessary. As mentioned above, both teachers provided students with support and practice before they were expected to write independently; therefore, when students were assigned a writing prompt, in most cases, they were prepared to write independently.

Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction has been observed as a common instructional practice among exemplary language arts teachers. In a comparative study, Pressley et al. (1998) determined teaching practices that distinguish outstanding primary-level teachers of literacy from typical teachers of literacy. Explicit teaching of skills was one of the nine characteristics that distinguished the successful classrooms in the study. In a study of exemplary first grade literacy instruction, explicit skill development was taught within the context of authentic literature (Morrow et al., 1999). In another study, 30 fourth grade teachers were nominated using a snowball procedure for their exemplary language arts instruction. Their teaching was typified by crafting direct and explicit demonstrations of the cognitive strategies used by good readers (Allington et al., 2002).

Explicit instruction may be the most effective instruction for students who are at risk for reading and writing difficulties, including students with learning disabilities,

those who are economically and socially disadvantaged, and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse (Delpit, 1986; Reyes, 1991). Struggling readers are typically less aware of the language system and of the importance of strategic reading activities; therefore, they are less able than more competent readers to infer strategies from generalized, less explicit skill instruction (Canney & Winnograd, 1979). Delpit (1988) reported that without explicit instruction, minority students feel they are being denied access to information needed for success in mainstream society. Students who struggle with writing require more extensive, structured, and explicit instruction in the skills and strategies critical to literacy embedded in an environment that promotes students as active collaborators in their own learning and where dialogue, sharing, and scaffolding are critical components (Englert et al., 1991; Graham & Harris, 1993). Explicit teaching of the recursive process of writing is one of the three interventions that produced strong effects on the quality of students' writing in Gersten and Baker's (2001) meta-analysis.

Explicit instruction includes explicit cues, modeling, guided practice, and application to independent tasks. When teachers are explicit, students demonstrate significantly greater amounts of metacognitive awareness of lesson content (Pearson & Dole, 1987) and score better on nontraditional, standardized, and maintenance measures of reading achievement than students who do not receive explicit instruction (Duffy et al., 1987). "Because students' instructional understandings, like their comprehension of text, represent, to varying degrees, their inferences about teachers' intended messages, explicitness influences what students learn. The more explicit an instructional cue, the more likely students are to infer a teacher's intended curricular goals unambiguously. That is, explicitness increases the likelihood that students' inferences about instructional

information will match teachers' intentions" (Dole et al., 1991, p. 252). In a study of the effects of explicit instruction on the growth of genre specific writing abilities of children in grades two and three, Purcell-Gates, Duke, and Martineau (2007), described explicit instruction as naming, modeling, describing, and explaining the function of the genre. While explicit teaching of literacy skills has been common among exemplary teachers and effective in student achievement, in this study, with the exception of science procedural text writing, explicit teaching of linguistic features specific to information and procedural science text did not enhance second graders' composition of these texts,

In contrast to explicit instruction, constructivist ideology asserts that knowledge cannot be transmitted directly from the teacher to the student, instead the student constructs knowledge through active engagement in learning activities by accommodating newly acquired understanding with existing understanding. The role of the teacher is to facilitate the learning by providing opportunities to acquire the new understanding and challenge previously acquired understanding (Bruner, 1973; Piaget, 1965).

Both Mrs. Ring and Mrs. Mac included many aspects of explicit instruction in their writing lessons, yet the degree of explicit instruction and when it occurred in the lesson differed between the two teachers. Mrs. Ring used a variety of supports throughout the writing block to scaffold students' writing development. Though the supports were included on a regular basis, the organization of the lessons varied on a daily basis. Specific writing strategies were indirectly introduced. Generally, Mrs. Ring introduced the strategy through an engaging modeling of the strategy followed by student interaction. Though the strategy was introduced at the beginning of the lesson, Mrs. Ring

did not label or clearly define it until the end of the lesson. During shared or guided writing, Mrs. Ring was frequently vague with her expectations for student responses, thus promoting conjecture from some students rather than mindful responses. Some students understood the strategy through this indirect approach, but for some, this method was not beneficial. While Mrs. Ring expected students to include the strategy in their composition, no measures were in place to hold students accountable. Practices that promote students' engagement and construction of knowledge were deployed in Mrs. Ring's classroom, but compositions written by Kyle and Ray seldom included the focus strategies.

Mrs. Mac's writing lessons were usually shorter and more compacted than Mrs. Ring's lessons. She clearly stated the strategy, provided examples, and then provided practice employing the strategy through guided instruction and then as an independent task. A checklist of elements Mrs. Mac expected students to use in their current writing piece held them accountable for attempting the strategy in their writing. While conferencing was not observed during the study, notes from conferences held outside the writing block had been recorded at the bottom of the composition and kept inside students' portfolios. These notes were a type of condensed explicit instruction and served as a reminder for the next composition. Mrs. Mac further exposed students to specific writings skills or strategies within the context of exemplary writing samples. During shared writing she limited contributions from students in order to maintain the level of instructional momentum. In addition, she asked for clarification of responses from students that were confusing or revoiced what she thought a student was trying to suggest.

Transfer of Learning

Early research on the transfer of learning was guided by theories that emphasized the similarity between conditions of learning and conditions of transfer. Thorndike (1913), for example, hypothesized that the degree of transfer between initial and later learning depends upon the match between the facts and skills across the two events. The theory posited that transfer from one school task and a highly similar task (near transfer), and from school subjects to nonschool settings (far transfer), could be facilitated by teaching knowledge and skills in school subjects that have elements identical to activities encountered in the transfer context (Klausmeier, 1985).

While the focus of early studies was on drill and practice, modern theories of learning and transfer retain the emphasis on practice, but they specify the kinds of practice that are important and take learner characteristics, for example existing knowledge and strategies, into account (Singley & Anderson, 1989). The following are key characteristics of learning and transfer that have important implications for education: (a) Initial learning is necessary for transfer, (b) Overly contextualized knowledge can reduce transfer, (c) Transfer is best viewed as an active, dynamic process rather than a passive end-product, and (d) All new learning involves transfer based on previous learning.

After mediating their instruction through the gradual release process described above, Kyle and Ray were generally able to demonstrate the skill or strategy at the sentence level. While students worked on specific writing concepts in a reduced environment, they concurrently worked on larger writing assignments in which they were encouraged to include these concepts. Almost daily, Mrs. Ring read excerpts from

students' work without identifying the author. Assessment of their writing was based on broader elements included in the state-mandated writing assessment such as organization, focus, support, and conventions. Mrs. Ring introduced and reviewed these elements, though ambiguous constructs, throughout the study through modeling these constructs while composing, weaving them throughout the writing block, and by having students identify these constructs in writing samples. Though Mrs. Ring repeatedly reminded the class to use the concepts that would enhance their writing, these concepts were seldom present in Ray and Kyle's larger, independent writing assignments. For this study, it was not possible to determine if the concepts that were present in their independent writing were traces from classroom instruction and interaction or if the concepts were part of their existing expressive language and would have been employed without instruction.

Mrs. Ring provided many activities for semiotic mediation, "the transformation of natural, lower forms of mental behavior to higher, cultural forms of behavior through the use of signs" (Dixon, 1996, p. 195), such as class generated charts, organizers, shared writing, and interactions and afforded them opportunity to compose in their zone of proximal development rather than assuming that all students were in the same zone. Bruner (1989) identifies two important conditions that must be present for learning: (a) the learner must be willing to try, and (b) the teacher must provide a scaffold. While sociocultural theory asserts that socially mediated activities have a major role in cognitive development, Perret-Clermont, Perret, and Bell (1991) describe two additional factors: (a) students must have the cognitive skills necessary to engage in the activity, and (b) the distance between the situation definition or a participant's personal understanding of an

activity of the teacher and learner must not be too wide. These factors are consistent with Singley and Anderson's (1989) characteristics of learning transfer.

Kyle was much more attentive and participatory than Ray, but according to Mrs. Ring, he struggled more in language arts than Ray. Kyle attempted and completed all writing tasks, both large and small. Though Ray attempted all writing during guided instruction, writing tasks that extended over several days were frequently incomplete or misplaced. Another factor that may have influenced the use of these concepts in their writing is the vagueness of the concepts for struggling writers. While conventions, format, and organization are concrete, concepts such as adding details and *show, don't tell* are more intangible.

Mrs. Mac provided students with a checklist of eight skills and strategies during the beginning of the study even before all skills and strategies had been introduced. Similar to Mrs. Ring's approach, Mrs. Mac encouraged and expected students to attempt the skills and strategies in their larger independent writing assignments. The content analysis of Chad's writing indicated that he employed the skills introduced and rehearsed during writing lessons. Because the writing skills and strategies taught in Mrs. Mac's classroom were more concrete, they were easier to identify for analysis. A comparison of the strategies and skills that Chad employed in his writing with the checklists suggested that Chad included all the skills and strategies in his writing though the beginnings still began with some type of description of the day.

Colleen checked that she had included all the skills and strategies from the checklist in her writing. While she had declarative knowledge, her procedural knowledge was still emerging. Colleen had lots of creative ideas in her writing, which possibly

influenced the attention her classmates gave her when she read aloud during Sharing. In her writing, she frequently jumped from one idea to another without developing the idea, thus making the story difficult to follow. Her handwriting and poor spelling also contributed to the challenge. On a few occasions, she attempted to replace commonly used words with synonyms displayed in the room but often did not distinguish the subtle differences in the words and thus used them incorrectly. She could explain why a “catchy” beginning was important, but even after formal instruction and continued review, her beginnings tended to begin with the same pattern, “I was...,” followed by the setting of the story. Dialogue appeared more frequently in all four completed stories than any other skill and was generally used to move the story forward. While figurative language had been introduced prior to the beginning of the study and reviewed through guided instruction, Colleen used only similes in her writing and only one simile in each composition.

Employing skills and strategies into their writing included a multiplicity of complex processes that are both hidden and transparent and involve understanding the skill or strategy and knowing when to include it in the writing. However, it was difficult and probably impossible to determine if the specific skills and strategies deployed in students’ writing were attributed to interactions and instruction within the scope of the study. Students brought with them knowledge outside the scope of the classroom and knowledge from other content areas that may have contributed to students’ appropriation of the skills and strategies. Also, what may have appeared as a lack of deployment may have been a deliberate decision by a student not to include a particular skill or strategy in their writing.

Some Practices May Be Counterproductive for Some Students

Shared writing and the associated brainstorming were two mediated activities used in both classrooms to promote writing development through social interaction. According to Hatano (1993) excessive modeling and guided instruction with parents, teachers, and peers accepting the responsibility for student's learning may lead to a passive view of learning by the student. Though a scaffold in gradually releasing responsibility to the learner, a concern posed by modeling and brainstorming in this study is that they may lead to counter productivity for some, more specifically, Chad.

Before students began writing, both teachers promoted possible ideas by prompting brainstorming. During the brainstorming session, students would springboard from others' ideas, reconceptualize, or modify their classmates' original ideas to offer new thoughts, or even argue why an idea was not plausible. Consistent with Routman's (2005) research, students seemed to benefit from prewriting activities because they wrote steadily once they began writing. After Mrs. Mac facilitated prewriting activities, she assigned students to write one event toward the plot development each day, usually over the three days, until the problem in the story was solved. Though Chad wrote steadily, he had expressed to me earlier in the study that he sometimes thought about the next event outside of the classroom since it took him a while to decide on an event. I was surprised by this announcement since Mrs. Mac had instituted prewriting activities before independent writing to facilitate students' comfort and confidence when writing independently, and consequently, students in her class seemed to write constantly as if the words flowed from their pencils. Chad explained brainstorming ideas did not benefit him since he felt that if he used his classmates' suggestions he would be "stealing other

people's ideas." Though brainstorming ideas in a whole group setting was instituted to assist idea development of students, this practice may have been counterproductive for Chad. According to his belief system, using ideas generated by his classmates was cheating and conflicted with practices encouraged by both teachers.

Social Positioning

Most students in Mrs. Mac's class were eager to share the latest addition to their stories with their peers at the front of the class. However, when Colleen was ready to share, she appeared more enthusiastic than most of her peers. When she read aloud her story, she read with much expression and confidence. While her stories were creative and entertaining, the language was simple and the plot undeveloped. She usually skipped from one event to the other without much detail or description. However, sharing was more than reading her story to her classmates; it bordered on performance. Since she was so expressive, she was able to communicate more effectively when reading her story than through her writing.

Traditionally, social identity referred to the social group to which an individual belonged, such as ethnic, gender, and economic. Within a classroom, a student's identity might also include membership in a math group or reading club. In addition, a student might have a social identity as "top reader," "best mathematician," or "new student." "Instead of fixed, predetermined, and stable, social identities are viewed as being construction through the interactions people have with each other and as a consequence of the evolving social structures of social institutions" (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005, p. 101). Social identity is also described as social position. When reading aloud her story, Colleen was on a level playing field with her classmates. Just

like all students when they read aloud their stories, she received positive feedback from her classmates and her teacher. Her story received recognition in the same manner as the talented writers. While Mrs. Mac had created a classroom culture in which respect was prominent, students appeared genuinely amused by parts of the story that were intentionally humorous. Colleen (along with Chad) was new to the school, whereby the majority of the students had been together since kindergarten. Colleen's position evolved over the few weeks that I was in the classroom. She became more confident when she shared as indicated by her increased expression, eye contact, and volume.

Walkerdine (1990) argued that people are "not unitary subjects uniquely positioned, but are produced as a nexus of subjectivities, in relations of power which are constantly shifting, rendering them at one moment powerful and at another powerless" (p.3.). Although Kyle accepted Mrs. Ring's position as teacher and his position as student, he did not accept being positioned as a nonwriter. After Kyle received feedback on the beginning of *The Magic Pencil*, he returned to Mrs. Ring on two other occasions to contest the social position of incompetent writer that she had constructed for him in the words, "Show me a raining morning" and later "We're looking for quality." He also did not respond to a direct question Mrs. Ring asked him for clarification but offered an alternative response instead. On another day, he attempted to complete Mrs. Ring's articulation of a point although he was rebuffed and further positioned as a nonwriter. In the fourth vignette in particular, the interactions surrounding the watercolor painting of an old house, Kyle continued to offer responses to open-ended questions although Mrs. Ring overtly demonstrated refusal of five of his responses and did not respond openly to two responses. I did not record any incidences of Mrs. Ring praising Kyle's writing or his

contributions during the interactions described in these vignettes. Further, she seldom affirmed him as a contributor in the learning environment, which could have been instrumental in substantiating him as a writer.

Although powerful discourse practices can drive the construction of social identity and position students in particular ways, students are more than weaklings who are either manipulated by or crushed by powerful social forces. It is limiting to assume that social identities and subject positions are generally only adopted or resisted.

“Resistance is not just struggle against the oppression of a static power (and therefore potentially revolutionary because it is struggle against the monolith); relations of power and resistance are continually reproduced, in continual struggle and constantly shifting” (Walkerline, 1990, p. 4). While during some of the interactions Kyle appeared to have little power, he engaged in both resistance and transformative behavior.

Best Practices?

While both teachers employed good writing pedagogy, sometimes the teachers’ discourse surrounding the practice may have interfered with students’ understanding the writing skill or strategy. Prewriting activities and talk surrounding writing are important (Dauite, 1990; Dyson & Freedman, 2003) and a gradient in releasing responsibility to the student (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). They were observed to be beneficial to the students in the study. Traces of their peers’ ideas and vocabulary shared during prewriting events were noted in the participants’ writing or oral contributions. Students in both classes not only benefited from the talk and verbal exchange surrounding writing but also appeared to enjoy them as well. Yet the sharing was almost excessive when Mrs. Ring allowed every student to participate during brainstorming. Allowing everyone to respond slowed

the momentum of the lesson though not necessarily interfering with student engagement. In a few instances described in the study, students had saturated the topic, and thereby, suggestions were irrelevant or disparate.

Mrs. Ring had shared during the initial interview the importance of her students' thinking. Sometimes Mrs. Ring was not always clear when she posed an open-ended question, and consequently, the brainstorming resembled a guessing game rather than a prewriting activity. Occasionally, Mrs. Ring anticipated narrowly constrained responses to the open-ended questions and interrupted Kyle's contribution when she assumed his responses were not aligned or compatible with her thinking. Though Kyle frequently volunteered, his answers were frequently gross approximations and seldom unconditionally accepted by Mrs. Ring. Responses that Kyle offered during brainstorming or responding to open-ended questions are consistent with various researchers in the field of writing who theorize that topics boys choose to write about and the content of their writing is often different from girls (Graves, 1973; Hallden, 1997; Newkirk 2000). Kyle's compositions did not have the same creativity and playfulness observed during brainstorming or guided writing.

In a few incidences, while Mrs. Mac may have been attempting to affirm Colleen by words of affirmation or by simply ignoring an obvious grammatical miscue to keep the pace of the lesson or to deflect attention from Colleen, she may have negatively reinforced these errors.

Mrs. Ring's approach to teaching writing was more indirect than Mrs. Mac's approach. Students in Mrs. Ring's class participated in many activities surrounding writing, but some of the concepts such as *show, don't tell* and *red flags* may have been

too vague for struggling writers. Students were expected to use the focus concept or technique in their writing, but they had no way of indicating where they had used it in their composition. Mrs. Ring's feedback usually consisted of reading a portion of a student's writing and giving direct feedback while keeping the name anonymous. Some researchers claim that struggling writers may need more direct instruction than other students within the classroom (Delpit, 1986; Reyes, 1992).

Mrs. Mac presented writing skills or strategies, guided them through practice as a class, independently assigned a short homework assignment to reinforce the concept, and then encouraged students to use the concept in their writing. In addition, students were given a checklist for each composition, somewhat like the scales in the study by Hillocks (1984) that had an effect size of .36 on students' writing. They also shared their stories in Author's Chair where they received positive comments from their teacher and peers as well as brief suggestions by Mrs. Mac. The feedback to Colleen was usually direct - a variable in Hillocks' (1984) study with a .43 effect size on students' writing when the feedback was positive.

Return of a Difference

While responses from many students were in the middle, comparing Kyle's responses with his classmates could be described as marginal. Mrs. Ring described them as "extreme" or "going to the other end." Psychoanalytic critics have rethought the traditional opposition of "knowledge" and "ignorance," by seeing "ignorance" as an active form of resistance to knowledge and by identifying the individual student's resistance to knowledge as being analogous to the repression of the unconscious. In a seminal essay on psychoanalysis and pedagogy, Felman (1987) has argued that "the

single most important contribution to education is the impossibility of teaching” (p. 18). She refers to teaching as the transmission of knowledge from an authoritative “knowing,” or in the case of psychoanalysis, the analyst, to an “ignorant” student, or analysand, who desires to know. Ignorance is not a passive state of absence – a simple lack of information; it is an active dynamic of negation, an active refusal of information...or the refusal to acknowledge one’s own implication in the information (p. 25). The points at which the student’s ignorance manifests itself, and the student desires to ignore the knowledge proffered by the teacher, is precisely the point at which any real learning has to take place (Felman, 1987). Brainstorming, a teaching practice used to generate ideas was a common practice in Mrs. Ring’s but to a lesser degree in Mrs. Mac’s classroom. While a guideline for brainstorming is “deferment of judgment” (Osborne, 1957) for another day, Mrs. Ring frequently commented on students’ responses in order to lead them to a response she expected or as a method to teach a concept. Mrs. Ring only probed Kyle one time to explain his thinking during one of the interactions described in the three of the four vignettes and during more than one interaction in some of the vignettes, she did not accept Kyle’s response as valid. His responses were not what she expected, and therefore, they were evaluated as being invalid, used to further mediate Kyle’s understanding, or to lead him to what she had expected. By evaluating Kyle’s responses as Other, she was positioning herself and students’ responses like hers as the only ones worth considering. Communication across differences demands a return of a difference in opening up multiple perspectives. In an effort to produce a product, Mrs. Ring overlooked the process and the opportunity to query Kyle about his responses.

Daddy Knows Best (Scolding in the Generic)

"Paternalism" comes from the Latin *pater*, meaning to act like a father, or to treat another person like a child. (Suber, 1999). Paternalism pervades the classroom in the ways government-mandated writing assessments potentially influence teachers' decisions regarding instruction and in the ways teachers interact with children. Paternalism "makes the product of oppression, powerlessness, invisible. It is rendered invisible because within the naturalized discourse, it is rendered 'unnatural', 'abnormal', 'pathological,' or a state to be corrected because it threatens the psychic health of the social body" (Walkerdine, 1990, pp. 24-25). Inasmuch as paternalism involves denial of difference for some students whose responses are not anticipated by the teacher and the power it enacts on the teacher who rejects their response, the relationship may also be problematic for students who are part of the "family," or students in the classroom. Paternalism may or may not be a tactic of power, not in the obvious "father knows best" manner but because it makes everyone else responsible for father's disfavor (Heald, 1997).

During two writing lessons, Mrs. Ring addressed the class collectively as a type of "scolding in the generic" (J. King, personal communication, Oct. 23, 2006) as an uptake to Kyle's response. While she may have been attempting to address Kyle indirectly by including the entire class, this maneuver may have had unexpected results for Kyle and the class. Rather than deflecting attention from Kyle, he became the focus of attention and thereby introducing or reinforcing Kyle as a struggling writer by his peers. Furthermore, by addressing all students, they had become recipients of Mrs. Ring's disfavor and, therefore, must share the burden of Kyle's response by responding in a manner that would satisfy her probing.

Implications for Classroom Instruction

This study examined the writing instruction in only two classrooms and, more specifically, between the two teachers and four struggling writers within those classrooms. Therefore, it is not the intent to generalize the findings of this study to other classrooms. However, this study does extend existing research in some areas and has implications for classroom instruction.

First, some of the skills and strategies that were the objectives of the writing block in Mrs. Ring's classroom may appear rather complex for struggling writers. Determining if some of the skills and strategies that were demonstrated in Kyle and Ray's writing were a result of writing instruction or if the skills and strategies were a part of their writing repertoire and would have been included regardless is a difficult undertaking. For example, dialogue appeared in Kyle's writing before formal instruction in using other words for said. Though these students did not include the skills and strategies to the degree that they did at the sentence level with guided practice, I can't help but wonder if the frequent writing, hearing parts of drafts composed by their peers and read by Mrs. Ring, and composing both small and large pieces of writing on a daily basis contributed to an increased number of words from baseline stories to stories composed almost two months later.

Another implication relates to writing fluency. Teachers of primary age children should consider teaching children fluent letter formation so that their handwriting is legible. Once students have developed poor handwriting, overcoming this practice would take careful guided practice through adult supervision, discipline, and effort over a long period of time by the writer (Levin, 2002). This implication does not ignore the fact that

some people have graphomotor dysfunctions and may need to resort to using a keyboard for written output.

Instructional practices should be based on students' needs. Though this may sound like common sense, teachers need to be empowered to make decisions that are best suited for the population of the class. Though some practices are supported by research, the practice may be more appropriate for the participants who were a part of the study. Similarly, teachers need to be reminded that students may struggle with writing for a number of reasons, and these reasons may assume many different forms. According to Levin (2002) "Writing is one of the most complex activities in which a child is asked to engage. In part, this is because the act of writing involves the rapid and precise mobilization and synchronization of multiple brain functions, strategies, academic skills, and thought processes" (p.208). Therefore, writing difficulties need to be handled with great sensitivity and care.

A checklist of writing elements may be a useful scaffold for students. As a visual cue, it may serve as a reminder to include specific writing skills or literary elements in their writing. The skill may be reinforced when the writer physically checks off that it has been included within the composition. As students begin to appropriate these concepts or techniques in their writing, a new checklist can be introduced with new writing skills and strategies.

Addressing revision possibilities to the whole class may not be as advantageous to a struggling writer as interacting with him in a conference. Writing conferences with the student that alert him to any revision needs, while providing the opportunity to ask

questions for clarification and encourage the use of authentic examples when possible may be more beneficial to struggling writers.

Writing events such as modeled, shared, and independent writing along with guided practice, cooperative learning, and visual field trips should be considered for inclusion in a comprehensive writing block. The writing events listed above facilitate writing instruction, and most were reported by the students to be helpful to some degree. Feedback, another writing event, though it looked differently in the two classrooms, informally evaluated students' writing. Whether feedback is transparent in the case of a practice like Author's Chair (Calkins, 1994) in which the author is situated in front of the class to receive feedback from her peers and teacher, or whether feedback is opaque wherein the teacher reads portions of a writing piece and thus keeps the author anonymous, they both have been described as beneficial by the participants. Though these writing events are important components of a balanced approach to teaching writing, the discourse between the teacher and students is crucial. Praise and affirmation should be considerations toward motivating developing writers. Struggling writers may benefit from explicit instruction before prewriting activities such as brainstorming so that their thinking can be more focused rather than being random guesses. Students may grasp a concept more easily if examples are initially provided by the teacher rather than the teacher using students' contributions to explain a writing skill or strategy.

Implications for Future Research

This study examined two classes at one grade level. With the increasing advocacy of differentiated instruction within whole group instruction, much more can be gained by examining other teachers and classrooms. A study of exemplary writing

teachers and struggling writers at other grade levels and in other genres would help inform the growing body of writing instruction research. More research is also necessary in other classrooms, schools, and districts around the country. Examination of writing instruction by exemplary teachers in private and parochial schools whose schools are not bound by the same mandates as public education may also serve to inform research. Much more can be gained by examining new teachers and classrooms with different contexts for writing instruction.

A final implication for future research may be a close examination of the effects that state-mandated writing assessments have on struggling writers that extend beyond the behaviors typically characteristic of struggling writers. Though there has been research in this area from classroom teachers (Graves, 2004; Shelton & Fu, 2004), policy makers (Hillocks, 2002), and literacy researchers (Brindley & Schneider, 2002; Hillocks, 2002), continued research is needed to assist classroom teachers in integrating research best practices in writing instruction within the confines of preparing students for high stakes testing.

Conclusion

This study adds to the literature on exemplary writing teachers and struggling writers within their classroom by examining the nature of the interaction during writing instruction and the subsequent responses of struggling writers. Previous studies have determined characteristics of exemplary teachers and struggling writers, but few case studies have been conducted that specifically examine the relationship between them. Though these teachers were responsible for teaching their

students how to respond to state-mandated writing assessments, test preparation was in the context of sound writing instruction.

The present study suggests that exemplary writing teachers facilitate the writing process through explicit instruction, modeled writing, shared writing, cooperative learning activities, feedback, and visual fieldtrips. A gradual release model was employed in both classrooms to progressively move students from observation to independent writing. While brainstorming was used in both classrooms to share ideas, to springboard from others' ideas, or to reconceptualize their classmates' original ideas to offer new thoughts, this practice was not embraced by one of the participants. According to his belief system, using ideas generated by his classmates was cheating and conflicted with practices encouraged by both teachers.

Several responses were employed by both teachers as they mediated students' understanding. While both teachers often affirmed students' participation when their contributions were accurate, they also often affirmed students as participants in the learning event even when contributions were vague or inaccurate. This type of affirmation appeared to be crafted to promote future participation. Praise was used sparingly. Both teachers' interactions occasionally contained elements of conversational talk thereby positioning them momentarily from the teacher role to a less authoritative role.

One student in Mrs. Mac's class used Sharing, a time when students read aloud their writing from the front of the class and received positive feedback from their peers and teacher, as an opportunity to position herself as an entertaining writer. In both classrooms, risk-taking by the students and using power with students to create caring

relations that extend beyond politeness and sympathy to involve ideas such as action, effort, achievement, community, and accountability were central to creating a caring classroom culture.

Struggling writers within these classrooms had similar writing behaviors, yet some behaviors were unique to the individual writer. Students' writing production increased over the duration of the study. The four students in the two classrooms demonstrated the focused writing skills within the narrow context of guided instruction. However, there was little evidence of the writing skills and strategies that had been the focus of Mrs. Ring's instruction in Kyle's and Ray's independent writing. Though the focus writing skills and strategies were not all the same in both classes, there was more evidence of Mrs. Mac's students including them in their writing. Most of the writing elements and skills that were the focus of instruction in Mrs. Mac's classroom were concrete, such as specific transition words, as opposed to some abstract writing elements, such as *red flags* in Mrs. Ring's class. Also, a checklist with a list of writing elements may have contributed to students using these elements in their writing.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Characteristics of Exemplary Teachers

Listed below are statements about exemplary teaching. Please read each statement carefully. Then circle the letters that show how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Use the following scale:

SA = Strong Agree
 A = Agree
 D = Disagree
 SD = Strongly Disagree
 N = Not Observed

Example: **I think Barbie is a super model.**

SA A D SD N

- This teacher is passionate about the subject(s) s/he teaches. **SA A D SD N**
 Develops a literate classroom environment where students' written work is displayed and the room is filled with writing and reading material
- This teacher is committed to, cares about, and advocates for actions that improve his/her students' lives. **SA A D SD N**
 Respects students' writing and offers a safe environment for students to take risks
- This teacher develops highly effective instructional repertoires and knows how and when to combine instructional methods **SA A D SD N**
 Adjusts teaching style and learning pace as needed
 Conducts minilessons that are responsive to current needs of students
 Provides guided assistance with writing assignments
 Models writing
- This teacher assesses children and relates progress to previous experiences **SA A D SD N**
 Conferences with students about their current writing efforts and helps them establish goals to guide their writing
 Monitors students' progress as writers as well as their strengths and needs
- This teacher provides students with strategies to support independent learning **SA A D SD N**
 Shared writing, guided writing, modeled writing,

Appendix A: (Continued)

independent writing, graphic organizers, text structure

- | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|----|---|
| • This teacher writes with his/her students. | SA | A | D | SD | N |
| • This teacher allows students to select their own writing topics or modify teacher assignments | SA | A | D | SD | N |
| • This teacher teaches grammar and mechanics within the context of oral reading and writing. | SA | A | D | SD | N |

Please list any awards, recognitions, or anecdotal comments about the teacher that assisted you in recommending him/her for the study.

Please list your association with the teacher that assisted you in recommending him/her for the study. (e.g. peer teacher)

Appendix B: The Writer Self-Perception Scale

Listed below are statements about writing. Please read each statement carefully. Then circle the letters that show how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Use the following scale:

SA = Strong Agree

A = Agree

U = Undecided

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

Example: **I think Batman is the greatest super hero.** SA A U D SD

If you are really positive that Batman is the greatest, circle SA (Strongly Agree).

If you think that Batman is good but maybe not great, circle A (Agree).

If you can't decide whether or not Batman is the greatest, circle U (Undecided).

If you think that Batman is not all that great, circle D (Disagree).

If you are really positive that Batman is not the greatest, circle SC (Strongly Disagree).

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. I write better than other kids in my class. | SA A U D SD |
| 2. I like how writing makes me feel inside. | SA A U D SD |
| 3. Writing is easier for me than it used to be. | SA A U D SD |
| 4. When I write, my organization is better than the other kids in my class. | SA A U D SD |
| 5. People in my family think I am a good writer. | SA A U D SD |
| 6. I am getting better at writing. | SA A U D SD |
| 7. When I write, I feel calm. | SA A U D SD |
| 8. My writing is more interesting than my classmates' writing. | SA A U D SD |
| 9. My teacher thinks my writing is fine. | SA A U D SD |
| 10. Other kids think I am a good writer. | SA A U D SD |

Appendix B: (Continued)

11. My sentences and paragraphs fit together as well as my classmates' sentences and paragraphs.	SA	A	U	D	SD
12. I need less help to write well than I used to.	SA	A	U	D	SD
13. People in my family think I write pretty well.	SA	A	U	D	SD
14. I write better now than I could before.	SA	A	U	D	SD
15. I think I am a good writer.	SA	A	U	D	SD
16. I put my sentences in a better order than the other kids.	SA	A	U	D	SD
17. My writing has improved.	SA	A	U	D	SD
18. My writing is better than before.	SA	A	U	D	SD
19. It's easier to write well now than it used to be.	SA	A	U	D	SD
20. The organization of my writing has really improved.	SA	A	U	D	SD
21. The sentences I use in my writing stick to the topic more than the ones the other kids use.	SA	A	U	D	SD
22. The words I use in my writing are better than the ones I used before.	SA	A	U	D	SD
23. I write more often than other kids.	SA	A	U	D	SD
24. I am relaxed when I write.	SA	A	U	D	SD
25. My descriptions are more interesting than before.	SA	A	U	D	SD.
26. The words I use in my writing are better than the ones other kids use.	SA	A	U	D	SD
27. I feel comfortable when I write.	SA	A	U	D	SD
28. My teacher thinks I am a good writer.	SA	A	U	D	SD

Appendix B: (Continued)

29. My sentences stick to the topic better now.	SA	A	U	D	SD
30. My writing seems to be more clear than my classmates' writing.	SA	A	U	D	SD
31. When I write, the sentences and paragraphs fit together better than they used to.	SA	A	U	D	SD
32. Writing makes me feel good.	SA	A	U	D	SD
33. I can tell that my teacher thinks my writing is fine.	SA	A	U	D	SD
34. The order of my sentences make sense now.	SA	A	U	D	SD
35. I enjoy writing.	SA	A	U	D	SD
36. My writing is more clear than it used to be.	SA	A	U	D	SD
37. My classmates would say I write well.	SA	A	U	D	SD
38. I choose the words I use in my writing more carefully now.	SA	A	U	D	SD

Appendix C: The Writer Self-Perception Scale Scoring Sheet

Student name _____

Scoring key: 5=Strongly Agree (SA)
 4=Agree (A)
 3=Undecided (U)
 2=Disagree (D)
 1=Strongly Disagree (SD)

Scales				
General Progress (GPR)	Specific Progress (SP)	Observational Comparison (OC)	Social Feedback (SF)	Physiological States (PS)
3. _____	22. _____	1. _____	5. _____	2. _____
6. _____	25. _____	4. _____	9. _____	7. _____
12. _____	29. _____	8. _____	10. _____	24. _____
14. _____	31. _____	11. _____	13. _____	27. _____
17. _____	34. _____	16. _____	28. _____	32. _____
18. _____	36. _____	21. _____	33. _____	35. _____
19. _____	38. _____	23. _____	37. _____	
20. _____		26. _____		
		30. _____		

Raw Scores					
Raw score					
___ of 40		___ of 35		___ of 45	
___ of 35		___ of 30			
Score					
Interpretation	GPR	SPR	OC	SF	PS
High	39+	34+	37+	32+	28+
Average	35	29	30	27	22
Low	30	24	23	22	16

Appendix D: Teacher Interview Guide

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How is it that you came to be an elementary teacher?
3. How is it that you came to be a fourth grade teacher?
4. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?
5. Tell me about the students in your class.
6. What are the goals for your students?
7. How would you describe your approach to teaching writings?
8. Describe ways in which you teach writing?
9. How do you know when you are successful?
10. What have been some of your greatest successes?
11. What challenges do you face in teaching writing?
12. What writing skills do you expect incoming 4th graders to have mastered?
13. How did you learn to teach writing?
14. In what ways, if any, have statewide academic testing affected your approach to teaching writing?
15. What are some ways that you help children when you notice they are having difficulty with writing?
16. Are there any strategies that you have noticed are more effective for good writers/struggling writers?
17. Is there some way that you have organized your instruction for writing class that you have noticed is particularly beneficial?

Appendix E: Transcription System Used in the Study

Description	Key
Text or reading the text of the writing	Bold
Nonverbal behaviors	[]
Description or explanation	()
Loud talking	ALL CAPS
Representation of sounds	Phonetic representation
Teacher is speaking	MR MM
Student is speaking	First three letters of name
Unintelligible utterance	X
Change in speakers	Double space

I remembered to:

- ☒ **Indent**
- ☒ **Catchy beginning**
- ☒ **Use 2-word descriptions or adjectives**
- ☒ **Use dialogue or monologue**
- ☒ **Use simile, metaphor, or idiom**
- ☒ **Use Who, What, When, Where, Why**
- ☒ **Use my senses**
- ☒ **Use capital letters and punctuation marks**

Appendix G: Kyle's August Baseline

Everyone probuly found some thing in there life. I'm going to tell you a story what I found.

One night me and my friend Bobby was playing in my backyard. When we herd a loud noise. W saw a flying object heading for us. It was a metor.

Me and my friend was scared when it hit the ground. Bobby and I was excited to see a real metor.

Me and Bobby picked it up with a shovle. It brocke. I took one half and Bobby toke the other.

Appendix H: Kyle's *The Bad Day*

One sunny morning, I got out of bed and put on my football stuff. I had to meet my team on the field before kickoff. I had to rush to get in the jeep. When I was running, I tripped over my shoe lace. I knew it was going to be a bad day.

I got up and saw that I had a bruise on my knee. It hurt like crazy when I walked. I got in the jeep with the help of my mom. I buckled up and so did my mom. When we were driving, my mom stopped at a red light and I hit my head on the back of the seat. It hurt. When we got at Gerson, my team kicked off the ball in the second ending.

Appendix H: (Continued)

I ran to the field and my coach said that I was late. I answered back in a growl.

Coach said that he will get some football tape on my knee. After Coach taped my knee I got on the field. I looked at the scoreboard. It was the third ending and the score is 8 to 0 with the away team in the lead. There was 10 seconds to go and we had the ball at the 20 yard line. We made a touchdown and missed the field goal.

Finally it was the fourth quarter. We had to kick the ball off. The away team made a touchdown.

Appendix H: (Continued)

The away team made the extra point. At the end of game the score was 16 to 15. It was the finale game of football season in first division. The day we lost was a very bad day.

You're end be
uld be
wonger-

Appendix I: Kyle's *The Toy Store*

(Original spelling is left intact.)

On a saturday morning I have never believed what happened. My mom woke me up at 6:00 pm. She said to brush my teeth and put on clean clothes. When I got done we went out the door. My mom was dressed.

I hopped into the jeep and my mom got into the jeep to start it. I told my mom were are we going. She said its a suprise. It was a long ride before the sign said five mins to Tampa. Then my mom finely told me that we are gong to Hobby Town U.S.A.

We looked at cool stuff. I ran off to see something eles. I played with it intill I heard the doors lock. I saw my mom leave and a minite later she was gone. I played with my favorite toys. When I saw a snack bar I at dinner there. I was sad.

A few hours later my mom came back with the own Tom. She was worried about me. I picked up all the toys and putted them back. Tom opened the door. I dashed out the door and huged my mom. My mom said I was grounded. I yelled MoM!!! after she said I'm just jokeing.

Appendix J: Ray's August Baseline

One day me and my family
went to the woods. When we
got there it looked so cool,
we got every thing set-
up.

After we set up every-
thing, then we walked around
through the woods. And my
dad ran off and I went to
go and get him. Then I
looked back and couldn't
see my mom and dad then,
I said stop but he didn't

I was still running
after him, so I said stop
again he didn't hear me,
After that I kept running
after him and we were
getting to far away from
camp.

Then I caught up with
him, but it was getting to

We had a great
day. We had a lot
of stuff to clean
up. We went to bed.



Appendix K: Ray's *The Bad Day*

One Friday day I had a really bad day. I think it is the worst day I ever had. Hear is my story about my really bad day.

It all started when I got late everyone got up late, no one set the alarm. I was tardy. I had to feed my ownself and I had to get on my bike and ride to school. I was so late the corsewalk person wasn't even there. When I got in the classroom they have already finished a writing story. That's how I knew it was going to be a bad day.

At P.E. I fell down when when was doing jumping jacks it felt like I broke my ancle. It hert so bad I trided to teel cauch but they said you don't have a slip. So we lined up for laps cauch said go and I didn't hear her say it so I got a bad start. I was just about to pass the first place person but he stuck his foot out and triped me. I thought that was mean and he was laughing the whole time. Then I went to go get water and when I put my head down the water went rite into my face. I knew it was going to be a bad day, there was like a crouse on me.

When we came back form P.E. I had to read 3 storys and they wre the longest story. I never got to comp. I was like how am I going to get comp done. Then out of the blue she said we are grading comp in a few minutes. I was like how am I going to get this story down and do comp.

Finally the bell rang and I was so happy to get out of there my mom was seting there waiting for me. She said how was your day and I said just fine.

Appendix L: Ray's *The Magic Pencil*

(Original spelling is left intact.)

One strange morning I looked out the window and the clouds looked like pencils. And then one fell out of the sky. it looked like it landed at school.

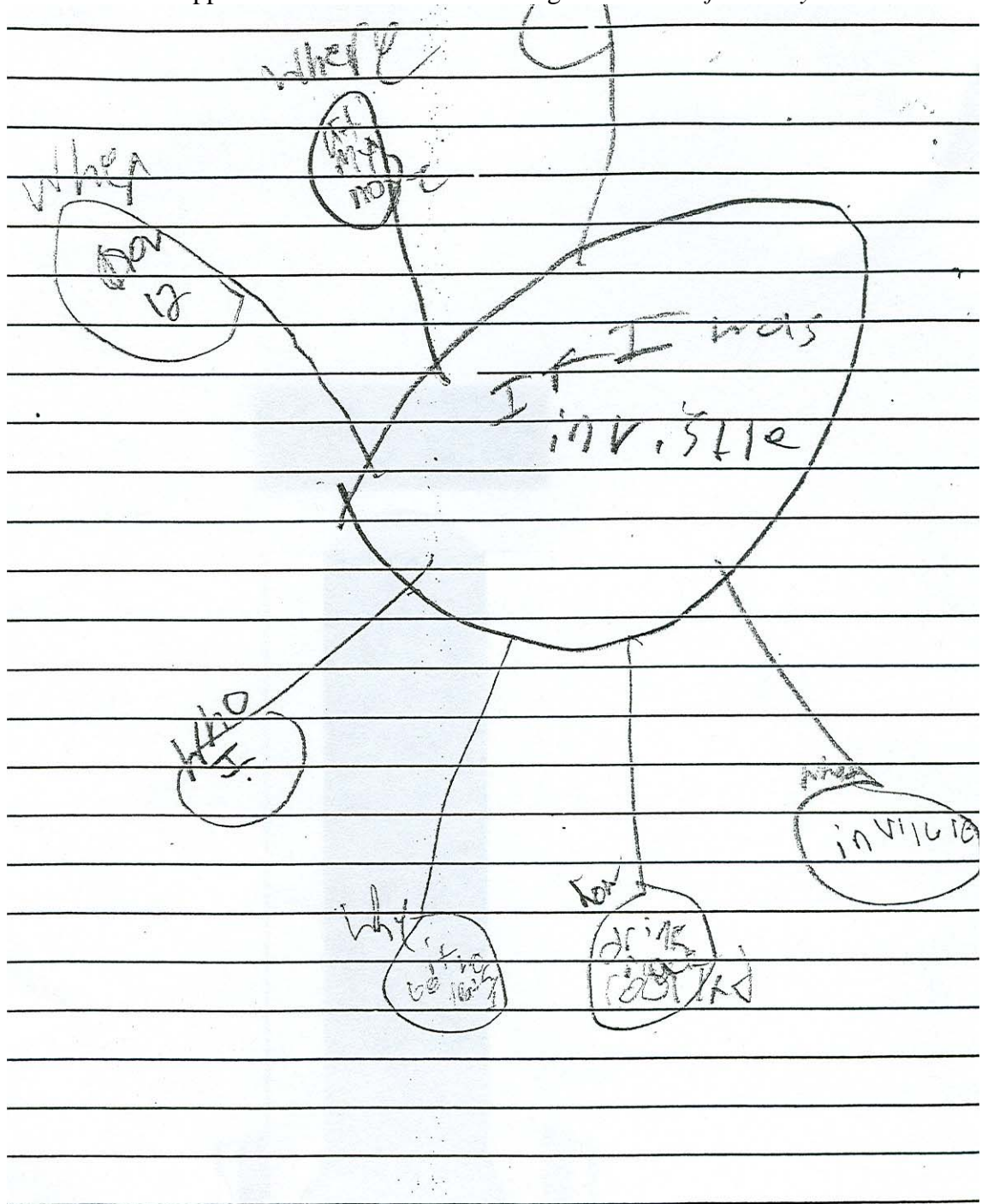
Then I got ready. I put on my favorite clothes that I wore rarely. I got in the car and we went to the school and the sky still looked the same it had pencils as clouds and a red sky. When I got there I sat in the line for about 20 min. I knew something was wrong.

When I got in the class there was this pencil on my desk and it had Gators on it "go Gators yeah." I asked everyone if that was their pencil and they said no. There was a test coming today and I didn't study. Then something amazing happened....

The pencil started to write for me. I was like oh my god I said under my breath. I thought I was dreaming. I was so shocked. I mean I was really shocked. It got all the answers right. I knew I was going to make a 100 on my test.

After lunch we were having the test and I knew I didn't have to worry about anything. But the pencil got mad at me. I guess he tried to poke me. David needed a pencil I gave it to him, but when I was leaving the pencil was on my desk.

Appendix M: Colleen's Prewriting for *Invisible for a Day*



Appendix N: Colleen's *Saving Someone's Life*

(Original spelling is left intact.)

I was at the butiful beacfh as I playing in the water. Peaple where yeped "Who" but I saw a litte gril downing. I raced over thar it was my siter Colleen A sea mosther was in the water and I was scared my sitner would drown.

After that I thought what I could do to help my sister. I gave her flotey and a flash loight. I think that she would have pefet partsun. When she got to the water it came back. When she sowed her flashlight is was not sared.

Later when she got out of the wather. I knew we got something out of our hands. The nest thing I tried was to give her 100 ponds of safom. To help her, I gave her a litte boat too. So this time I whet with her. I brined a fishing hook with a sraphook that was pefect to see what it is. I gracefly siwn with my litte siter.

In addition when I felt a tug. I relled it in it was a mughaps. He was as big a gray houd bus and his eys where as dark as a shadow. I exlmed "Ohno". Then it talcked and announced "plase do not go in the whather for an hour or I will eat you". So me and Colleen wating for an hour and he was gon for good.

At last me and my sister where OK!!! Now wan we go to the bach. We be cous. If you run into a sea moulter. You could try some of these things.

age 3

#2 Tell about how you became invisible for a day
 IF I WAS invisible for a day it
 could be great. I would venture out into
 the exciting wilderness. I would be
 idolized to see the wilderness. I
 could smell everything anywhere. I love
 to be in the wilderness!!! up

To Start with on November 12th.
 I was coming from school when I was so
 thirsty. I poured a drink - it was
 cool. I had to go to the bathroom
 a fly came to the cool lid and it
 had something in its back. A drop of a green
 emerald drop in my cool lid.

After that I drank it. I was
 invisible. I was as happy as a
 dog getting a chew toy. I said "I
 can't see myself". I said to my
 get a hold of yourself. I came
 down.

At last my mom came. She
 said "Colleen where are you?" I yelled
 "I am here". "Feel my hand" I
 exclaimed. I knew this was going
 to change my life. It was not a
 residence. I thought and thought
 a way to help me out of this mess
 but I was out of ideas. What could I do?

Appendix O: (Continued)

In summary this is what happened
me. When I heard that Spined
the tribes. I yelled give me
the gun. I thought he was
of me. He only annoyed you he
told me to a cave and fall in a hole
full of water. I was told
back to rage car now I wish
I didn't.

123

Appendix P: (Continued)

So many aliens, he found a light to the happiness. I was glad he liked the cat. He was a nice and stupid alien in the afternoon. I came to visit him, but he was adopted by Mr. Purple and Mr. Purple. ^{cannot read} I was glad to see him go. So I went back to my room. There was a prison in the living room. It was a tasty dinner ^{hear}. It said it spiced you. Where some that and you d tasty hear. You are my best friend from now on. I spice at him. He was my friend until it said an alien prison seen.

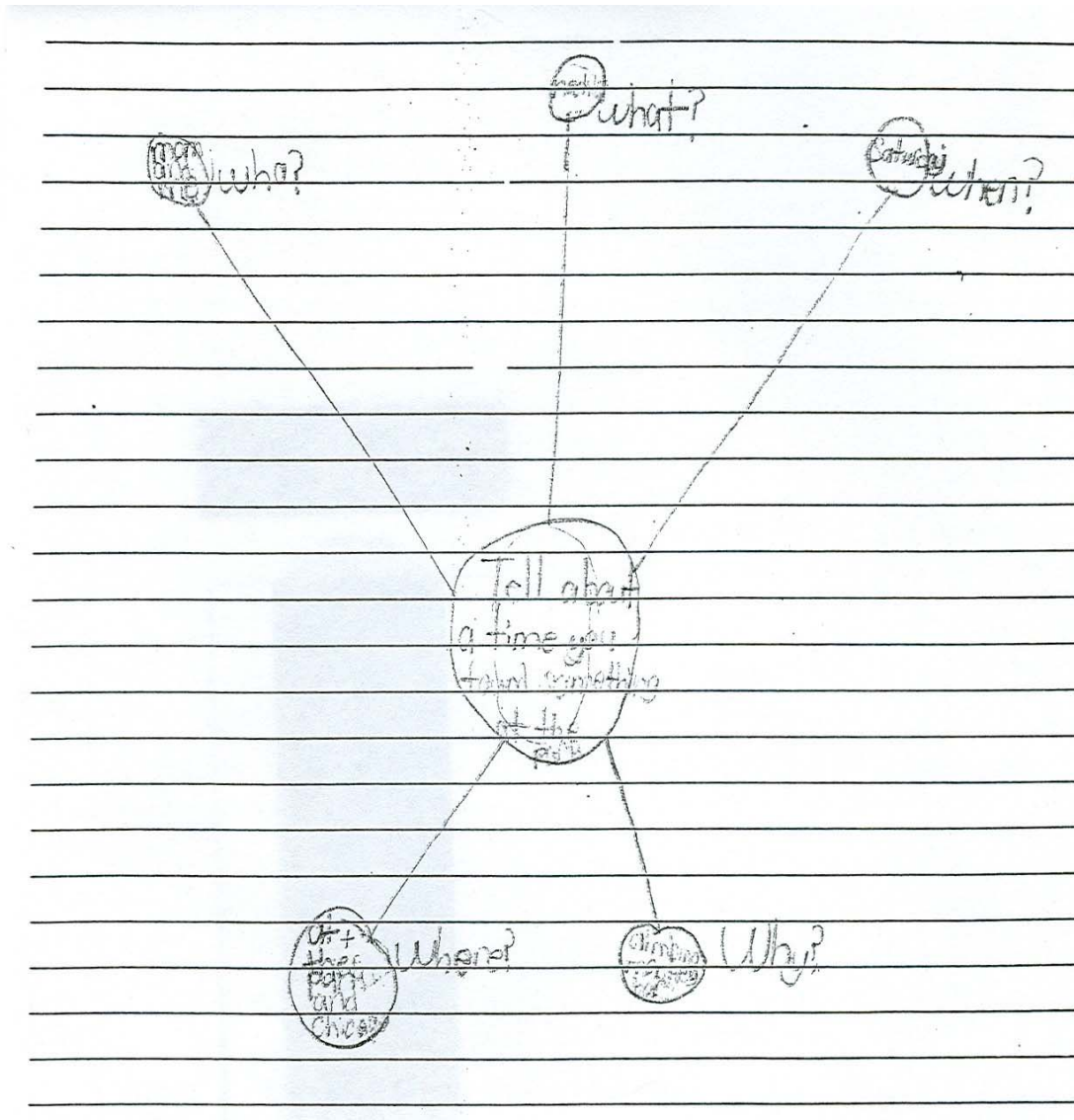
At last I loved him but he was in the ocean. Now I have to go home and be happy. If you want to use the things you can. I am no foreigner but maybe this will help you. I love you. Give an alien. Do not include this
this is used for expository

I cannot read everything that is circled.

Too many punctuation marks are missing causing run on sentences.

You already have written 2x about aliens. You should use a different idea.

Appendix Q: Chad's Prewriting for *When You Found An Object*



Appendix R: Chad's When You Found An Object

Tell about a time you found something at the park

It was a bright and sunny Saturday morning at
Jana Park. I was climbing the monkey bars when I saw
shiny silver neckties. I hollered to my mom, come here. I
found something. I listen on found out it could take you all
ere you wanted to go.

When I found that out I told my mom. I
asked her if she wanted to go to Chicago and she rep
with a quick yes. She was so excited about it she told
to take us there immediately. I had never seen a grown up
exhilarated. But I was happy too. When we were there
my mom about fainted but she managed not to. When
it was night we went to the city and then we
decided to go into the Sears Tower. I asked her if we
ld go to the top but she told me no because she was
afraid of heights. And then we left the Sears tower.

Then we went to eat at a big fancy restaurant
had pasta. It was a fi

Appendix S: (Continued)

The bad thing was it was so slimy that it slipped
of my hands. Then I tried it again and was stuck. I
was in the middle of the ocean with no help.

Appendix T: Chad's *Saving Someone's Life*

After school I am a car rider. One day my dad almost ran out of gas, so we went to the gas station. When all of a sudden a man who was driving to the pump tried to get there quicker, and when he didn't he out and started arguing.

Since my dad thought he was already pumping gas he told him that it will take a few more minutes. But the guy didn't accept that. He just kept arguing, maybe it sounds like it took a long time but it was only twenty seconds before he stoped. My dad told him it wasn't that big of a deal. The man just stood there stairing at my and announced "I'm fourty miles away from my house. That's when I jumped in and tried to knock some sense into him. I was trying to talk him out of it. But about 2 minutes later he told me that talking him out of it wasn't going to work.

When he took out a gun he started to get serios. I asked the guy why he's arguing and he told me that his dad died. Then after a while he exclaimed "my dad's funeral is today, and then he added at least you have a dad". I told him, put the gun down. When everyone heard me say that they gasped and ran away like they saw a ghost or a pettratiing dog.

After a while he got tired of me and my dad but mostly me so he started shooting at me. So I ran like crazy. But it made things worse. Then, I got another brilliant idea. I was going to kick the gun out of his hand. SO I ran I ran as fast as the violecetey of a speedi-ng bullet. And then when the time was right I kicked the gun out of his hand but my brillia-nts failed me.

Appendix U: Concept Introduction in Mrs. Ring's Classroom

Date Introduced	Concept
8 -9	Elements of narrative
9-22	Indenting
10-04	Red flags/transition
10-05	Adding detail
10-06	Sentence Variety
10-11	Variety in Words – synonyms for big, pretty, good, bad happy, sad
10-12	Precise language - Verbs that show emotion
10-18 10-24	<i>Show, Don't Tell</i>
10-25 10-28	Dialogue – synonyms for said
10-29	Onomatopoeia

Appendix V: Concept Introduction in Mrs. Mac's Classroom

Date	Concept	Resource
11-2	Idioms Intro 2-word descriptions	Narrative writing samples Worksheet
11-3	2-word descriptions Monologue/dialogue	Narrative writing samples worksheet
11-4	Monologue/dialogue	Narrative writing samples Worksheet Teacher model
11-8	Catchy beginnings	Author's Chair Writing sample Independent writing
11-10	Graphic Organizer 5-Ws	Checklist for self-monitoring Tell about a time when you found an object at the park. Shared writing
11-17	Adverbs introductory paragraph	Worksheet Sentences using 5ws folder with 3 topics for narrative – checklist Introductory paragraph – shared writing (Alien)
11-18	Adverbs Plot	Homework Shared writing – 1 st event
11-19	Adverbs plot	Homework Shared writing – 2 nd attempt Students write 3 rd attempt independently
11-29	Idioms New prompt – swimming in Gulf	Worksheet Students write for 15 minutes Author's Chair
11-30	Idioms	Worksheet Students write for 15 minutes Author's Chair
12-1	Similes	Worksheet Finish swimming in Gulf story
12-2	Similes Humor	Worksheet Author's Chair Sample
12-6	Looking for elements in writing sample New prompt – saving someone's life	Students highlight elements Students write for 15 minutes Author's Chair
12-7	Looking for elements in writing sample <i>Showing, Not Telling</i>	Students highlight elements Worksheet Students write for 15 minutes
12-8	<i>Showing, Not Telling</i>	Homework Finish saving someone's life story
12-13	New prompt – Getting rid of extra food	Students write for 15 minutes NO CHECKLIST

12-14	Great beginnings – Action, Question, Picture	Worksheet Students write for 15 minutes Author’s Chair
12-15	Great beginnings – Action, Question, Picture List of transition words List of feeling words List of synonyms for saw Synonyms for hurry like pretty	Homework Cooperative Learning Finish getting rid of extra food story

About the Author

Ruth Sylvester received a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Tennessee Temple University in 1981 and a M.A. in Elementary Education from the University of South Florida in 1991. She has been an educator for over 20 years in which she has been an elementary classroom teacher, curriculum coordinator, and an assistant principal for curriculum and instruction. She entered the Ph.D. program at the University of South Florida in 2000. While in the Ph.D. program, Ms. Sylvester taught several literacy courses, presented at regional and national literacy conferences, assisted with the Suncoast Young Authors Celebration, and contributed to two books.