

The Best Practices for Teaching Writing

by

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June 2010

A thesis submitted to the

Department of Education and Human Development of the

State University of New York College at Brockport

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Education: Childhood Literacy

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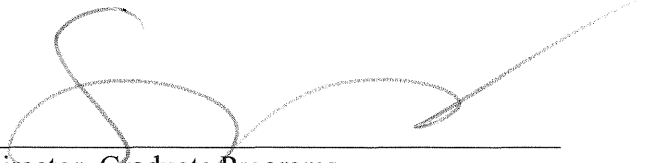
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Chapter 1

Introduction

There is a major problem in schools today. Many of my students are not proficient in writing. It has been my observations that students are lacking the basic writing skills and are not able to form clear and cohesive paragraphs. I perused this topic because it was an area that I wanted to improve in my teaching. The writing process is critical in developing overall literacy skills. What led me to explore this topic was the fact that I believed that I have not been fully equipped with strategies for instructing the writing process. As a result, I realized the need to seek more information in this area. This topic was important to me as I want to be the best teacher possible for my students. As a teacher, it is difficult to teach what you do not know or what you have limited knowledge. I wanted to know and understand the best writing practices to instill in my students. The purpose of this study was to provide me with the knowledge base to teach my students explicit strategies that they can use as they write in any content area.

Under the constructivist model, students learn through building on their prior knowledge (Fabes & Martin, 2003). Teachers who build upon basic knowledge and become more complex will see more gains in their students' skills. They have to experience new learning as building blocks. Each new block will allow them to comprehend the new material because they already have the foundation blocks. Students must also make their learning meaningful. If the students cannot connect their learning to themselves, they will not fully develop their understanding of the

topic. Students must construct their own meaning of the topic, not just memorize what is “right and wrong”. I based this study upon the constructivist model. If students can make writing connect to their lives and make it more meaningful to them, I believed that they will develop their writing skills. As a teacher, I needed to make sure that I scaffold on the instruction they have received in their previous grades.

I answered the following questions as I conducted this study. My primary research question was what impact will my modeling and scaffolding of the writing process have on students’ writing? I also wanted to see what impact the Self-Regulated Strategy Developmental model, developed by Graham and Harris (2003) had on student writing.

The research that I have examined focuses on teaching self regulation strategies along with writing skills. Self-Regulation Strategy Development is the release of control from the teacher to the student. It is the idea that if you teach the students strategies for writing, and scaffold their learning, they will eventually be able to do this on their own and with mastery. The research is based from the work of Graham and Harris (2003). Their model supports those children who struggle with writing. The strategies that are taught with self regulation are accessing background knowledge, direct instruction and discussion of other strategies, modeling, practicing mnemonic devises for writing steps, guided and independent practice in drafting and rewriting the stories, feedback on the quality of the stories and scaffolding instructional support. (Glaser, 2007).

Alber-Morgan, Hessler, and Kinrad, (2007) conducted a study that examined skills that should be taught during the stages of prewriting, drafting, and editing. They would teach the students the new skill and scaffold their learning until they could do it independently. This study was based on the Self-Regulation Theory. They found that students developed better writing skills and were able to eventually use the skills on their own.

Another common theme that has come out of the research is that of interactive writing along with connecting writing to the content in order to make learning meaningful. In order for students to become less resistant to writing, there needs to be an authentic literacy approach in order to make writing meaningful for them. Williams and Lundstrom, 2007, believe that using interactive writing with students will give them explicit instruction on what strategies to use and how to use them. It also allows the students to see how writing is useful and can connect with their lives. The third theme that has developed through the research is that of explicit teaching of writing skills. (Montelongo & Hernandez, 2007) Along with helping the students develop their ideas and teaching them writing strategies, explicit instruction of the actual writing skills like author's craft and sentence variation, is important in order for students to develop as writers.

I believed that students need to be taught the strategies that will help them become accomplished and skilled writers. In all work fields, people must have writing skills in order to be successful in their career choices. In order to better prepare my students for the real world, along with high school, I needed to provide a

different, more explicit method of instruction to improve their writing skills. I have examined the research conducted regarding self-regulation strategies and have become interested because it has been shown to improve the quality of students' writing. As a new teacher, I am constantly searching for new strategies and new innovations to connect the learning for my students. I have chosen the field of writing as I believe that it is an area in which I am a novice. I believe through this study, I will be able to develop a better understanding of the issues surrounding writing.

The benefits of this research are immense. If I can prove to my school the benefits of implementing a curriculum that will scaffold writing from kindergarten through sixth grade, I believe the improvement in our students writing will be significant. The writer's workshop model is taught across the grade levels at my school; however, what concepts are being taught are not uniform within each grade level, nor is there thought about building on previous knowledge. I believe that teachers may be struggling with what concepts and strategies to teach and simply do the best they can based on their individual beliefs. However, this may not be the best for the students. With this research, I will be able to share what I have learned and try to implement a school wide improvement plan for the writing curriculum.

I believe that it can be detrimental to my future students if this research is not carried out and not addressed. As a teacher, my goal is to be able to fully prepare my students for their futures. If this research is not done, I believe there will be no change in the instruction of writing in my classroom or in the classes throughout my

school. I believe that if we do not fully understand a concept, then we cannot fully prepare our students.

According to Engel and Streich (2006), there is a great need for this research. Many school districts are given a writing program, but there is no consistency across the grade levels, nor is there consistency within the grade level, nor is it consistent with the transition between primary grades and intermediate grades. They found during their research that a consistent program throughout the school is best for students to flourish in their writing skills.

As I was conducting my research, I found that there were three over all themes. Many authors found that authentic literacy is the best practice. Others found a model called Self-Regulated Strategy Development works, while others believe there needs to be explicit teaching of writing strategies. I am proposing that a blend of all three themes would best benefit children.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

“Effective writing instruction had clear and specific objectives and prepared students to write about specific topics” (Baker & Chard, 2009, p. 305). Writing instruction is essential component of students being successful in all areas of academics. I believe that if a student is properly taught how to write, they will be better equipped to accomplish his or her work in all areas. Writing is involved in all academic areas and therefore must be explicitly taught during the early stages of school.

Through the review of the literature I have discovered common things that have emerged through the topic of writing instruction. I have found: authentic literacy, self-regulated strategy development, and writing strategies, to be the common themes among the research. Authentic literacy is highly important in writing instruction in order to give the students a more enjoyable atmosphere in which to write. Self-regulated strategy development is a technique that has been developed and studied by Graham and Harris that using explicit teaching and modeling of the writing process and eventually scaffolds their instruction in order for the students to develop their skills on their own.

There are many writing strategies that have been shown to be effective for helping students become better writers. These strategies are essential for students to develop. Many of the commonalities of the research have to deal with explicit

instruction in all areas. If the teacher explicitly instructs his or her students, the students will better grasp the concepts and start to use them on their own.

Authentic Literacy

Authentic literacy incorporates both the reading and the writing process. Authentic writing can be defined as “writing on topics of one’s choice” and that it serves a “communicative purpose”. (Duke, N., Purcell-Gates, V., Hall, L., & Tower, C., 2006). If a child can write about what he or she is interested in, then they would find the writing process more enjoyable and would become more engaged in the writing process. Duke also found that adults who were in an authentic literacy program read and wrote more complex texts, as well as engaged in the process more often. Authentic literacy should draw upon what the students know. They should be interested and engaged in the topic. If this is the case, students will benefit more and their writing will be stronger.

The theory behind authentic literacy is that learning happens in context, which follows the constructivist theory of learning (Fabes & Martin, 2003). A child learns best when learning is supported through their background knowledge. Students need to be able to apply their learning in order for them to fully comprehend their new knowledge. Cynthia Lassonde, 2006, found this to be true when she was working with a resistant writer. She found that when she engaged him in conversations about what he likes to do, he was more willing to write, and in fact he started to lead a

writing group in his class. Lassonde drew on the strengths and interests of the child in order to support the child's writing.

As teachers, we should then encourage students to select their own topics within the genres we are working with. Even students who are not proficient in writing will still be engaged in the process if they are interested in the topic. If they are engaged, they will be more willing to work, which will lead to more improvements overall. According to Maslow (<http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/hierarchyneeds.htm>) and his hierarchy of needs, if the students' basic needs are being met, they will have more motivation towards the subject they are learning. Student's first needs are they need to feel safe with what they are doing. If they can choose what they want to write about, they will feel safe because they will be able to share their knowledge with their friends and also have a higher self esteem. Once the students reach those basic stages, they will have more motivation to do well and put effort into their work. We as teachers need to capitalize on what the students know and focus our instruction based on their knowledge.

The goal of this way of teaching is to provide all students to have choices and opportunities to see writing as their strength. If a child can incorporate what they know and combine it with a writing piece that will be used in their lives for authentic purposes, they will then be able to use writing to explore their interests and make it special to them. Students who are considered by many "troubled" often flourish in an authentic literacy environment. Cynthia Lassonde (2006) found this with one of her

struggling students. When she engaged her class in authentic writing activities, her struggling student flourished, he became a different person. “When Jamie was allowed to talk with peers or with me to develop his writing ideas, his momentum tended to flourish.” (Lassonde, 2006) Lassonde has taken a resistant child who is angry and has other social and emotional issues and turned him into a writer because she was able to connect what he enjoyed to the writing process. It is important that as a teacher I know my students likes in order to connect with them and use that information to connect my instruction to what they know and are comfortable with.

The major goal is to provide students with hands on activities for them to explore. A way to do this is to integrate writing within the content subject areas. If students are learning about slavery in social studies, have them write letters to plantation owners pleading for the freedom of slaves. If they are learning about the environment, have the students write a letter to the principal of the school asking for permission to start a club that will clean up the neighborhood. Any projects that can be incorporated into what they are learning will be best for the students to really engage and experience the writing process as a positive, rather than something negative. (Engel & Streich, 2006)

Duke et. all (2006) conducted a study that took place over a two year time period. It involved twenty-six second and third grade teachers, as well as their students, from districts that had middle to low socioeconomic status. The authors conducted this study in order to develop the abilities of students to comprehend and

write informational and procedural texts in science. Their focus was on providing authentic literacy opportunities to engage the students.

They defined authentic literacy activities as those that are reflective of reading and writing that occur outside of school. They used a three point scale to rate the degree of authenticity in both reading and writing. They read the description of the activity for students and rated the authenticity of purpose as well as the authenticity of the text. A three is most authentic and a one being least authentic. They also provided examples of what reading and writing activities, at all three levels, would be best suited for authentic literacy activities.

They assessed the students' ability to comprehend and write informational and procedural texts two to three times each year that they conducted this study. They found that those teachers who engaged his or her students more often in authentic literacy activities had a higher growth in comprehension and writing.

They did extensive research on the theory of authenticity and its effects on student learning. They did not find an abundance of research, but what they did find was that those who were actively engaged in authentic literacy activities read and wrote more often outside of school and also read and wrote more complex texts.

Authentic literacy can integrate many aspects of learning and it can be used to motivate students, especially those who are not motivated to write. Students will be able to show their abilities when they can write for real purposes and for real reasons.

Self-Regulation Strategy Development

The Self-Regulation Strategy Developmental model was first established by Steve Graham and Karen Harris in 2003. This model has been shown through more than twenty-five studies to improve “writing knowledge, strategic behaviors, self-regulation skills, and motivational skills” (Santangelo, T., Harris, K. & Graham, S., 2007, p. 2) with many students. There are three major goals of SRSD. The first goal is to help students in developing their knowledge about writing and the skills and strategies they will need. The second goal is to support the students in developing his or her writing strategies and abilities to monitor their own writing. The last goal is to encourage the development of positive attitudes about the writing process as well as themselves. The goals of the Self-Regulation Strategy Development are to develop decisive behavior, knowledge in order to implement a desired plan, and a persistence to achieve a goal (Santangelo, 2007).

There are six stages in this model. The first stage is developing background knowledge (Santangelo, 2007). Students need to develop their background knowledge in order to successfully complete their task. It will also help them to be able to understand and apply the strategy. The second stage is to discuss their current writing, as well as the purpose and benefits of writing. The third stage is to model how to use the strategy and self-regulation techniques. The fourth stage is to memorize the steps to the strategy they have been taught. The fifth stage is called support it. The students are able to practice the strategy with teacher support and scaffolding. The support lessons intensify as the week’s progress. The last stage is

independent performance; students use the strategy with little or no support (Helsel & Greenberg, 2007).

This model has five important components. Students must realize that learning is a collaborative experience. There needs to be a relationship between the teacher and the student for real learning to take place. There also needs to be explicit teaching of the strategies within the model in order for the student to be successful. There also has to be individualized attention for the student. The teacher needs to support him/her based on his/her level of needs. Instruction is criterion based; students need to be able to move at their own pace, and cannot move to the next stage until they have fully grasped and comprehended the current stage they are in. The last component of this model is recursive. It is an ongoing process because new strategies can be introduced, while past strategies should continue to be worked on and refined. (Helsel & Greenberg, 2007)

The theory behind this model is the sociocultural theory, especially the theory based on Lev Vygotsky. He believes that a child can achieve more growth when they are guided through the process. He also believes that “social interactions are essential for learning and that” children “develop cognitive skills through interaction with others more skilled than themselves.” (Fabes & Martin, 2003, p. 157) As teachers we need to educate our student’s through social situations where they can develop and use his or her writing skills in an authentic and social way.

It is extremely important for teachers to scaffold learning in all academic areas, but especially writing. Teachers not only need to scaffold learning in order to

make children successful, but they also need to give students opportunities to build upon their background knowledge. Students' experiences vary. Depending on their culture and their life experiences, they will not always bring the same knowledge to various topics. Teachers need to develop the lack of knowledge of their students, as well as build upon the knowledge they have to make them successful.

This model is trying to teach students to decide on what they want to accomplish, implement a plan of action and to have motivation in order to accomplish their plans. The big idea is to promote self-efficacy and motivation for all students. If students feel comfortable and confident with what they need or want to accomplish, they will be more motivated to complete their task to the best of their abilities. This strategy is aimed to help students who have a learning disability. However, I believe that it is applicable to all students, especially my students. Many of my students come from very diverse backgrounds and can use boosts in motivation as well as self-efficacy.

Glaser and Brunstein (2007) conducted a study to examine the benefits of teaching the self-regulation strategies along with explicit instruction in writing strategies. They wanted to examine the effects this teaching had on improving composition skills in elementary children. This study used one hundred thirteen fourth grade students from six different classrooms and three different elementary schools. This study had a pretest (administered one week prior), posttest (administered one week following), and a follow-up test design (administered five weeks after). There were three conditions to which the students were assigned

randomly. The first condition contained both the strategy and self-regulation, the second condition was only the strategy, and the third condition was the control. The students in the experimental groups were taught by instructional assistants who had been trained in the instruction strategy. The students in the control group were taught by their regular teachers.

The strategies for the self-regulation included: accessing background knowledge, direct instruction and discussion of the strategies, modeling, practicing mnemonic devices to remember each step, guided and independent practice in drafting and rewriting the stories, feedback on the quality of the stories and scaffolding instructional support.

The instructors would model the strategies for sessions one and two. They would then scaffold what they had modeled in order for the students to reach an independent level. They demonstrated four different areas: self-monitoring of strategic planning, self-assessment, self-monitoring of revision activities and criterion setting and procedural goals.

The analysis of the students work was scored on a scale provided by Harris and Graham. A score of zero was given if the elements were not present, a one if the element was present, and a two if the element was sophisticated. They scored the children on story grammar, story quality, strategy-related planning, strategy-related text revisions, and strategy-related knowledge. They found that overall the combination of using writing strategies along with self-regulation procedures increased students' writing skills. They also found that the students in the

combination condition group were better able to use their own knowledge while planning and revising a story. Student in this group also showed greater improvement in the quality of their stories from the pre-test to the posttest. They also were better able to maintain their skill level.

Self-Regulation is aimed to help teach students how to set goals for themselves, to self-monitor their progress, self-evaluate, and self-reinforce. Its purpose is to make students accountable for their learning by giving them the tools to become successful. By scaffolding their learning, they will feel more confident and better equipped to complete their task.

Writing Strategies

Many researchers believe that students need explicit teaching of writing strategies because they have not fully developed effective written rhetoric. Teachers need to give students a variety of strategies in order to support fluent writing. If teachers start this instruction early in the child's school process, the better the students will be in the area of writing. (Williams & Lundstrom, 2007). Williams and Lundstrom also believe that along with giving students explicit instruction, teachers also have to scaffold how the students use these strategies during interactive writing lessons. This will help teachers to support and monitor student learning and their progress.

The theory that supports explicit teaching of writing strategies through interactive writing is based on the work of Rogoff's (1990) theory of cognitive

development as an apprenticeship. Rogoff believes that if students can understand the strategies through the process of interaction with an adult, the adults will be able to scaffold the student's understanding of the skill and enhance the child's understanding and use of the skill. (Lundstrom, 2007)

The goals of this model are to equip students with the tools they will need in order to become successful in writing and the writing process. The best way to do this is to model the behaviors and the strategies for the students through interactive writing. Explicit teaching means that the teacher teaches step-by-step strategies to use in writing, to explain the steps in a language that the students will understand, to show the strategies in multiple ways throughout different genres, to demonstrate each step, and to give specific feedback on the student's writing.

Abler-Morgan, et.all (2007) conducted a study that is based on the belief that new skills will only be maintained if they are constantly reinforced. A teacher needs to create as many opportunities as he or she can to help a child become successful. The more examples of a skill that is provided during instruction, the more likely the child will be able to transfer this skill to his or her own work. Teachers cannot assume that students know how to transfer different sets of skills from mini-lessons to their own writing. It needs to be modeled for them.

The modeling of different skills can be done by using a variety of strategies. While a student is drafting a written piece, they can make a laminated card that will show the steps for planning and organizing a writing topic. Alber-Morgan, et.all (2007) also suggested many mnemonic strategies that can be used during the writing

process. A student that struggles with the drafting process could have a copy of DARE: **D**evelop your topic sentence, **A**dd supporting ideas, **R**eject possible arguments for other sides, **E**nd with a conclusion, posted in their writing folder. These acronyms coincide with the strategies from SRSD. These strategies help promote the students to be self efficient when he or she is involved in the writing process.

As a child is learning a new skill, reinforcement should be continuous. After they have mastered that skill, the teacher should gradually begin to only give reinforcement intermittently. This helps to promote generalization as well as internal motivation. The goals are to get the students to go through the writing process on their own. As teachers scaffold the process it is the goal that the students will eventually be able to do the steps on their own.

Scaffolding will also help them to manage their time by themselves. Students need to be taught self management, which coincides with the idea of the self-regulated strategy development model by Harris and Graham. Teachers need to teach their students the tools to be self sufficient and to create timelines to manage their time.

Mentelongo and Hernandez (2007) believed that students do not have the basic knowledge of sentence construction, which in turn affects the writing process, so they modified a strategy of sentence completion, to make it more engaging for the students. The students had to fill in the missing vocabulary word in a series of

different sentences. Imbedded in those sentences, they needed to abstract the hidden paragraph and organize it in a logical order.

Montelongo conducted eight sessions with the fifth grade students and nine sessions with the fourth grade students. Students were first introduced to the vocabulary words that they had been investigating. The students were then placed into groups of two to four students. Each group needed to complete the individual sentences by filling in the blanks with the correct vocabulary word. They then cut out the individual sentences and arrange them into two stacks: related sentences and unrelated sentences. The students then had to pull out the main idea of the paragraph and arrange the sentences in a logical order. Once done, the students pasted the sentence strips on paper to form a paragraph. The students are pulled together for a whole group discussion on the process and the teacher provided feedback. Students then were asked to write their paragraphs into their own words. They found that 83.6% of fifth graders, and 89.5% of fourth graders were able to correctly categorize the sentences. 88.2% of the fifth graders and 93.8% of the fourth graders correctly identified the main idea. 86.7% of the fifth graders and 86.7% of the fourth graders were able to order the sentences correctly.

Text structure affects the writing process. Teachers need to explicitly teach text structures as well as writing strategies. If students are not explicitly taught how to write, then they will not know how to write. We can expect them to develop the process; it needs to be explicitly taught. Interactive writing is a way in order to develop these processes. If students are explicitly taught how to do something and

their learning is supported, they will eventually be able to transfer their learning into action.

Chapter 3

Methods

In this action research study I attempted to find the best practices of teaching writing to students. The research question that will be addressed in this study is: how might my modeling and scaffolding of the writing process impact my students' writing process? Many of my students from the past, as well as those who are with me currently have very low self motivation and if not directed to work on something will not take the initiative during writer's workshop. It is my hope that through this process they will become more independent and my direct instruction will lessen as they gain more knowledge.

This study took place in an elementary school in an inner city school district in western New York. The school district enrolls about 32,147 students in the district (NY State District Report Card). They have one of the highest poverty rates in New York State with 73% of the students receiving free lunch and 8% receiving a reduced priced lunch. The district receives Title I funding which is a program that provides financial assistance to schools that have a high poverty rate in order to help them to provide the same opportunities that their wealthier counterparts are able to provide. (<http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>) The demographics of the district are 65% of the students are African American, 21% are Hispanic, 2% are Asian and 11% are Caucasian (NY State District Report Card).

The elementary school where this study takes place has grades kindergarten through sixth grade and enrolls approximately 423 students. 89% of the students

receive a free lunch and 5% receive a reduced priced lunch. The demographics of the school population are 53% of the students are African American, 23% are Hispanic, 3% are Asian and 20% are Caucasian. The school has been on the schools in need for improvement list, but last year it was in good standing with the state (NY State District Report Card).

Participants

The students who participated in this study are currently in sixth grade in my classroom; their average age is 11 years old. There are ten girls and fourteen boys in the current class. Fifteen of the students are African American, three are Hispanic, two are Asian and four are Caucasian. Two of my students are English Language Learners and do not speak English when they are at home with their families. The abilities of the students differ greatly. I have one student who has a 504 plan; thirteen of my students receive AIS services, provided by me. Of those 13, six of the students need services in both math and English Language Arts, six of them need it only for English Language Arts, and one needs it only for math.

The participants were picked by using a purposeful sampling based on their portfolios from their fifth grade year from among those who have been given consent from their parents or guardians. I picked two students, one girl and one boy, who are below the city school districts standards in writing, two students, both boys, that are at current standards, and two students, one girl and one boy, that are exceeding standards. The levels that I have chosen are based on the child's writing skills using

the district's four point rubric scale. A level four is a student that is working above their current grade level; a level three is a student working on grade level, a level two is a student just below grade level, and a level one is a student working one or more years below their current grade level. By choosing the three different levels of skill, I believed that this would give me an accurate view of the entire class and I would be able to form some generalizations based on the data.

Data Collection

The first data piece of data that I collected was a baseline narrative. This type of narrative allowed me to know what skills the students possess in the writing process as well as what skills they needed more instruction on. This was done the first week I started my research; it was the first piece of data that I collected. There was no instruction given to the students because I want to see what knowledge they bring to the writing process. I told the students that they were able to write about anything they wanted. Then I used a rubric (Appendix A) in order to assess their writing skills. The rubric assessed the different components of writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions and presentation. (Andrade, H., Buff, C., Terry, J., Erano, M. & Paolino, S., 2009)

After they wrote the baseline piece, I gave out a belief questionnaire (Appendix B) about the writing process and their beliefs regarding the strategies they use as a writer. This questionnaire was geared to allow me to understand what the student's self-perceptions are as writers as well as what they have been taught as far

as writing skills and strategies. The questionnaire contained ten questions that asked the students questions about what they have been taught, what their feelings are towards writing, and what they need as writers.

I taught writing through the writer's workshop model developed by Lucy Calkins. (Cooper, 2003) This model allows ten to fifteen minutes for a mini-lesson; this is a whole group lesson focusing on skills in which the students may need help, or an aspect of the writing process that needs to be addressed. This is where I explicitly taught the writing strategies as well as modeled the strategies and skills that I wanted to address.

During the work period, the students became involved in various steps of the writing process. At this time, I invited small groups to meet for guided writing. I also met one on one for individual conferences. This process involved a lot of scaffolding as well as modeling the content that the students needed in order to be successful. The groups were ability based. I used this time to encourage the SRSD stages as well as doing the sentence completion tasks that were modeled by Montelongo and Hernandez (2007). This was the time, as well as the individual conference that I took anecdotal notes of the students writing process.

When I met with my guided writing groups, I observed the students after the mini-lesson was taught in guided writing. I noted what strategies they were employing as well as their moods. I used a notebook with sections marked for each child. While I took the anecdotal notes on the children, I used a t-chart model. On the left side column I noted their behaviors as they are engaging in the mini-lessons

and guided writing groups, their conversations with their peers as well as with me, and I also observed how they worked through the different steps. On the right hand side of the t-chart I did my analysis of my notes. I wrote brief notes of the observations in order to help me with the data analysis later. I also took note of any misconceptions and understandings, which allowed me to further instruct my students.

I kept a journal my teaching each day in a notebook. I wrote my lesson plan for the day and then reflected on what I thought went well and what I thought did not. I will triangulate the data sources in order to notice common themes. Journaling allowed me to see what connections the students made.

Procedures

This study took place for five weeks for one hour per day. The first step was to have the students write their personal narrative and then complete the belief questionnaire. I then proceeded to go through the six stages of the self-regulated strategy development model that have been outlined by Glasser and Brunstein (2007), based on the work of Graham and Harris (2003).

1. Activate background knowledge
2. Explicit instruction of a strategy
3. Developing a mnemonic device for each step
4. Guided and independent practice
5. Progress feedback
6. Scaffolding of instructional support.

The students were taught a strategy to use while they are involved in the writing process. The strategy that I picked is able to be used across the content areas. The mnemonic device that will be used is adapted from Graham and Harris: POW + WWW-What-2 How-2: **P**ick your idea, **O**rganize your notes and **W**rite and say more. During the **O**rganize your notes section is when WWW-What-2 How-2 is introduced. **W**ho is the main character, **W**here did the story take place, **W**hen did the story take place, **W**hat does the character do or want to do, **W**hat happens next, **H**ow does the main character feel, **H**ow does the story end. After introducing this strategy through guided practice we read a story and picked out the seven different story parts of that story. This continued for the first two weeks of instruction. During the last day of this part of the study we took a story, found the seven story parts and determined how the story could be better. Through a list of ideas that were generated by the class, each person needed to rewrite the story in order to make it better.

Using the gradual release model, explicit instruction decreased as the students' independence of the strategy increased. Practice of the strategy was done during guided writing sessions as well as independent writing time. Guided writing week one was the most intensive, where the instruction was explicit and hands on. With each consecutive week, the students were able to become more independent through their process. After the students finished the final draft of their narrative, I used the same narrative rubric that was used on their baseline narrative (Appendix A)

Limitations

The limitations of this study must be discussed. In the inner city, many times, students' attendance is not consistent. Many times there are students that move from school to school on a monthly basis, or they are sick, or do not show up for school. Another limitation is that I am the observer/researcher. There could be personal bias in the use of the rubrics.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data started the first week of the study. I examined each student's baseline writing samples as well as comparing them to their belief questionnaire. In analyzing the baseline writing samples I graded their writing based on the rubric that has been discussed. I also looked for what skills and strategies that they used within the writing process. Each week I collected a piece of writing to analyze. As I analyzed the data I was looking for if the students were using the strategy that was taught and if their quality of writing was improving.

The questionnaire was useful to determine the self-perceptions the student's have about themselves as writers. It also allowed me to examine what skills and strategies they have been taught and if they employed these within their own writing. I analyzed the answers and found the commonalities. This provided me insight as to the attitudes toward writing as well as what strategies, if any, the students were using or what they have learned. It is important to notice what commonalities the students

share as well as the differences. This helped to determine what knowledge the students already had and what they were lacking.

Anecdotal notes from guided writing were used and I was able to determine what progress the students were making. I also was able to determine if they were able to transfer their learning to independent practice, which was the ultimate goal. The use of anecdotal notes also was used in order to determine the student's attitudes towards writing as well as their self-confidence and self-efficacy. I used a constant comparison method where I looked for similar attributes that the students were exhibiting in their writing and in their attitudes about the writing process. I then analyzed the attributes and used that information to guide my teaching.

Their final narrative provided me with the final tool of data collection. After the students went through all six stages of the SRSD model, as well as guided practice, they wrote a final narrative using those skills and strategies that have been taught throughout the six weeks. I then analyzed the final narratives using a rubric that was used during SRSD instruction. (Andrade, H. et.al, 2009) The students' papers were graded on seven different topics: ideas and content, organization, paragraphs, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Within the SRSD stages these topics are taught. During the last week there was no instruction given, nor was there any guided writing or individual conferences. There was however, a reminder about the strategy and the seven story parts.

The last piece of data was a final questionnaire. (Appendix C) This questionnaire contained four questions that allowed me to understand if the students

believed that the strategy was useful and if they would use it again. It also allowed me to see if their beliefs about writing changed.

Throughout the time during data collection I looked at each student individually as well as across the groups that have been established. I looked to see if they have independently used the skills that have been modeled and explicitly taught and if so to what degree. I also examined if the students who have been previously at a two level if there were any improvements to get them on grade level. Also those who were on grade level, did they advance to become above grade level. Also those who were above grade level, did they have any improvements in their writing abilities. Examining the data as well as the anecdotal notes allowed me to see how the student's grasped the concepts as well as how they used them.

Through triangulation of all three data collection strategies, I compared the three data sources, looking for commonalities as well as differences among the three different groups. I have found that this analysis helped me to understand the writing process as well as the importance of explicit instruction of writing strategies really benefited my students.

Chapter 4

Results

The objective of this project was to examine how the explicit teaching of writing strategies and skills along with Self Regulation Strategy Development impacted my students' writing. The research was conducted at an urban public school in Western New York. The entire study took place in my own classroom. The participants in the study were six sixth grade students. This project was intended for me to reflect and adjust the way I teach writing in order to better support my students' learning process and involvement. Furthermore, through reflections on how I taught my mini-lessons and how my students applied the taught skills, I wanted to see what I could change about my teaching practices in order for my students to have a better understanding of writing.

Participants

Many students have difficulty during the writing process and have not been taught specific writing skills or strategies to use while they are writing. Students' lack of skills and strategies concerns me. I purposely chose six students based on their previous years writing scores, as well as the baseline narrative they wrote for me this year. Two students are working above grade level, two are working on grade level, and two are working below grade level. These determinations were made based on writing rubrics used last year as well as the writing rubric used to assess their baseline narratives in September.

My students who were involved with the study were chosen because they met the criteria of either being above, on or below grade level and they also handed in the parental consent form as well as the assent form. However, I chose my six because I wanted to learn a little more about them.

Valerie was selected as part of this research study because of her below grade level progress. She was also selected because of her past history in literacy learning, especially in writing. She is an English Language Learner with Vietnamese being her primary language. I wanted to get a deeper look into what Valerie was capable of as well as where she really struggled. Since Valerie was below grade level I believed that explicit modeling and scaffolding of the writing process would be beneficial for her.

Dennis was also selected to be apart of this study because he was below grade level. He is a student who has great ideas, but cannot seem to put them together in a coherent piece. I believed that Self Regulated Strategy Development would help him to organize his thoughts and he would be able to be on grade level.

James and Travis were chosen because they were working on grade level. They both have great ideas and put them in logical order most of the time. I believed that through my teaching and the steps of Self-Regulated Strategy Development they could become above grade level.

Gregg and Courtney were chosen because they were above grade level. I chose them because I was curious as to if their writing could improve anymore.

Through explicit instruction and new strategies for the writing process I wanted to see if this could in fact enhance their writing to a higher level that it already was.

When analyzing the data across the six different students, I was looking for common themes that came up. I was also looking to see if they were able to take what I taught in my lesson and use it in their writing. I was able to assess this through observation during guided writing groups as well as individual conferences. I also collected a writing sample each week and scored it by the four-point rubric.

Research Questions

1. What impact will my modeling and scaffolding of the writing process have on students' writing
2. What impact does the Self-Regulated Strategy Development model, developed by Graham and Harris (2003) has on student writing.

Data Analysis

It is extremely important to model and scaffold the writing process. Through my data analysis I have found that many students have not learned explicit strategies with regards to writing. Many of the students believed that good writing meant that you used good sentence structure and that grammar was correct. I found that all of my students are unaware of what writing strategies they use. Most students believed that the writing strategies they use were to have correct spelling and correct sentence structure.

Valerie

Valerie is an example of one of those students. She is a second language learner and is very self-conscious of her inability to spell English words correctly. She focuses heavily on that and does not allow herself to write without worry. Her baseline narrative showed that she is continuing to learn how to read and write in English, for her native language is Vietnamese. She received all ones in the seven categories. Through the guided writing groups as well as individual conferences I heavily modeled the writing process to Valerie and made a point to tell her that spelling did not matter during the initial stages of the writing process. The following conversation shows her understanding:

Mrs. Escobar: Valerie we do not have to worry about spelling now. We are getting our ideas together so we can engage our reader.

Valerie: But Mrs. Escobar, spelling is important, that is what we are graded on.

Mrs. Escobar: Valerie do you know what an editor is?

Valerie: No

Mrs. Escobar: An editor is someone who makes corrections to an author's writing after the author is done with his or her story.

Valerie: Ok

Mrs. Escobar: Let me be the editor. I want you to be the writer and to only think about how you are going to write your story in order to get the reader's attention.

Valerie: OK!

After I was able to dispel Valerie's need to spell words correctly I started to see improvements in her writing. She began focusing on her content and not just spelling, which allowed her writing to improve. The following is an excerpt that exemplifies her focus on content, not on spelling:

She when't (went) but then she hard a screm (scream) down the hallway. She ran back to room 201. She wak (woke) Ronney up and sed (said) "Ronney, Ronney. I hard (heard) screaming (screaming) come withe (with) me to find Tyshawn". Ronney sed (said) "ok". Vanessa and Ronney when't (went) to the teacher longe (lounge) where they bump into Tyshawn. After that they hard some crying, they hard a lady crying.

This excerpt shows Valerie working on the content and meaning of her writing, without worrying about spelling. Whereas in her baseline she worried about spelling the words correctly, that her story did not make sense logically. The majority of the words in this excerpt, as well as in her story as a whole, are spelled correctly.

During week two of the writing process Valerie improved immensely. This week we did a shared writing as a class, where I heavily modeled the writing process and we wrote the first paragraph together. We used POW+WWW as part of my whole group instruction. We brainstormed different writing ideas, and we then

picked one and went through the process of planning who, when, where, what(2), and how(2). P-pick your ideas: the students brainstormed different ideas about what they wanted to write about, O-organize your notes: this is where the students would plan the seven story parts: WWW-who is the main character, W-where did the story take place, W-When did the story take place: W-what does the character do or want to do, W-what happens next, H-how does the character feel, H-how does the story end), the WWW, and lastly W, where they write and say more, the drafting stage of the process. After we were finished planning I did a shared writing with the class and heavily modeled how to incorporate the elements that we planned along with using an engaging beginning for the introduction.

We went through the process and wrote the first paragraph as a class, and then they finished the story on their own. Valerie scored in the two and three range according to the rubric this week. She scored a three in ideas and content, organization, paragraphs, voice and word choice. She was able to show her voice and use different writing strategies to engage her audience. The following is an excerpt from Valerie's story:

Then Ronney tried calling his mom, but the blizzard nocked (knocked) out the phone line. Tyshawn said "Yo I am hungry. Do you have any food?" Ronney and Vanessa said "no". Vanessa sed (said) "your thinking of food right now? We are stuck here for the night!!!!" Ronney said "lets sleep here. Its like having a sleepover in the school"

Valerie's ideas flowed in a logical order and were very organized into different paragraphs. Her voice became present when she developed her characters.

During an individual conference with Valerie, I asked her if she liked the new strategy that we were learning and why or why not. She said that it helps her to organize her thoughts. I also cleared up a confusion she had about "what does the character do or want to do". She did not understand what that meant. I went on to explain to her that it is the problem that the character has. We then looked at her planning page and discussed what might her main character be facing. She still did not understand, so we looked at a Junie B. Jones book. I asked her what was going on and as she told me what she was reading, we identified the problem. I then made the connection with Valerie, that in writing it is the same thing. The character has a problem, or wants to do something. She was able understand that concept after my explanation.

During the fourth week is when I explicitly taught writing skills, which included: complete versus incomplete sentences, transitions, sentence structure and voice. I did not collect any writing samples this week, because I wanted to focus on those specific skills each day. It was after this week that Valerie started grasping all of the skills and strategies that were taught. She was able to apply them after explicit modeling and shared writing. The following table shows her growth throughout the five weeks.

Table 1

Date	Ideas and Conventions	Organization	Paragraphs	Voice	Word Choice	Sentences	Conventions	Average Score
1/5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1/12	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.7
1/13	3	3	3	3	3	2.5	2	2.8
1/22	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3.3
2/5	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3.7

*A score of a 4 is working above grade level, a 3 is on grade level, a 2 is slightly below grade level and a 1 is severely below grade level.

*Valerie went from being severely below grade level to being slightly below above grade level.

Valerie needed the strategies modeled in order for her to grasp what the strategy is and how to use it. The first week there was no instruction and she did not write for a purpose; nor was there any organization or theme to her writing. The following is an excerpt from her writing during the first week.

I was bord (bored) so. I told my cosints (cousins) let go to ant (aunt) house. So we did we played with the dog name meme. So then we went to play pool. I won so then it was time to go to sleep but. I did not want to go to sleep.

After instruction and my modeling of the writing process this is what Valerie wrote during the second week of instruction. She was able to develop any story line that she wanted.

The crowd (crowd) is cheering, yelling out, "Ronney, Peter, Tyshawn and Vanessa!!" People knew that the Steelers will win this super bowl because they had the best quarterback, which is Peter, the best kicker, Tyshawn, and the two best wide receivers (receivers), Vanessa and Ronney. The game was tied and the Steelers had twenty points and so did the Dolphins. There was time for only one more play.

This is much more organized and has extremely more details than the first excerpt. Valerie is a second language learner and continuously works hard to use the English spelling patterns and sentence structure; which is much different than that of the Vietnamese language. Her ideas and her motivation have immensely improved because she now understands how to employ the strategies that are taught, because they have been modeled thoroughly.

Valerie has also benefited from Self-Regulated Strategy Development. This process allowed her to rely on my modeling and scaffolding of the writing process until she was confident that she could perform the skills on her own. Teaching Valerie the strategy of POW+WWW (P-pick your ideas, O-organize your notes, W-write and say more + WWW-who is the main character, W-where did the story take place, W-When did the story take place, W-what does the character do or want to do, W-what happens next, H-how does the character feel, H-how does the story end), allowed her to organize her thoughts on paper before she tried writing about them in a coherent story. Every story that she wrote, and it continues presently, she puts the

acronym on her story planner and plans her story before she starts to write. For example:

POW+WWW

Who- Me

Where- Vietnam

When- January 27, 2009

What(character do or want to do)- I want to go to the fireworks for Chinese New Year

What(happens next)- I begged my Grandma until I got to go

How (character feel)- sad then happy

How (end)- me and my cousins went to see the fireworks and then we stayed

Out late

The theme that was most prevalent through the five weeks of data collection was her organization. Each week the organization of her stories became more improved. Her ideas became more and more developed as the weeks went by. She started to really think of what would make her reader want to read her stories and her writing became clearer and full of details.

The following are two excerpts from the first paragraphs of Valerie's pieces. The first is her baseline and the second is from the third week of instruction.

Have you ever done something dumb? I have why dose (does) you'r(your) mom and dad say "don't jump on the bed"? Take my advice listen to you'r(your) mom and dad. (excerpt from baseline)

It was a wintery (wintry) day on December 8th 2008. I just came home from school and I could not guess what would happen next. I when't (went) to my room and changed out of my school clothes and into my home clothes. My Grammy is not home, she had to take care of my baby cousin Luna. My Grammy cooked some egg rolls. Do you know the smell of you'r(your) mom's home made cookies? That is what it smelled like. After that I ate and did my homework. I also did the chores that I was required to do like moping (mopping) the floor, washing the dishes, and washing the clothes. (excerpt from the third week of instruction)

Valerie became more detailed and more organized in her thoughts throughout this process.

Dennis

Dennis is another child who was below grade level when it came to writing. He is on grade level in reading and in math, but was unable to apply the strategies he uses in those areas to his writing. I believed that this strategy would be particularly good for him because he could think of the strategies as a formula to solve a problem. Dennis received a score of a one in all categories of the baseline piece that he wrote. Dennis is a student who has great ideas, but is not organized in presenting his ideas in a way that is engaging or in a way that makes sense to the reader. The particular strategy that was used made him become more organized because during the O of

POW, he was taught that this was the time to organize the seven story elements. As soon as the lesson was taught he organized his notes to make sure he included the seven story parts. Along with the analysis of the papers for each of the seven rubric areas, I also made a checklist to see if each child included all seven story parts. Four out of the five weeks Dennis included all seven. The week he did not include all seven was the last week of data collection, where he was on his own without instruction or guided writing groups. I do not believe he had internalized the strategy fully, which could be the reason his writing was not as strong as it has become. Many times student's work at different paces, Dennis needed more time working with this strategy. He needed more support during guided writing groups as well as in individual conferences because he could not internalize the strategy on his own.

During the second week of instruction I asked Dennis if he understood the strategy that we were learning, because I started to notice during the guided writing groups that he remained silent and did not participate or discuss the strategies with the group. He revealed that "I am confused, I don't understand what you are talking about." Through conversation I was able to understand where his misconceptions were and cleared them up. He did not understand why we were brainstorming the seven story parts instead of just writing the story. He was confused about the function of the O stage in POW. I referred him back to the day where we worked to make a previous story better. I told him that in order to make sure we have a great story we have to make sure that we include all the story parts in order for our story to be complete. We then went over what each W and H meant and I did an interactive

writing with him, where we planned the story and discussed what we wanted to write about, using the strategy POW+WWW. The next day during guided writing groups he was answering all of the questions about the seven story parts and what that meant.

I found that Dennis is a child who needs to be reassured while he is completing any sort of work. If reassurance is given, Dennis performs well and continues to work extremely hard. I noticed him shutting down often when he was trying to be so specific about “when” something occurred. I told him that it doesn’t need to be so specific that the time and date need to be recalled, but you could write about the season. He felt better about that and produced a great piece:

“One of the most boring Sunday’s of all my life occurred last summer. All I did was eat cereal and watch my dad play constantly on the computer.”

(excerpt from a writing on January 22, 2010)

Throughout the five weeks Dennis started to show a lot of improvements from the explicit instruction and heavy modeling I did for his guided writing group as well as in individual conferences. Dennis would have benefited from more time spent in the guided practice phase of SRSD. He was not ready to go on his own yet. The following shows Dennis’ growth over the five weeks. Note the last piece of writing, which indicates that he was not ready to employ the strategy independently.

Table 2

Date	Ideas and Conventions	Organization	Paragraphs	Voice	Word Choice	Sentences	Conventions	Average Score
1/5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1/12	3	2.5	3	3	2	2	2	2.5
1/13	3	2.5	3	3	2	3	3	2.8
1/22	3	3.5	4	3	4	3	3	3.4
2/5	2	3	2.5	2.5	2	3	3	2.5

*A score of a 4 is working above grade level, a 3 is on grade level, a 2 is slightly below grade level and a 1 is severely below grade level.

*Dennis went from week one of being severely below grade level to being almost on grade level.

Even though Dennis showed improvements overall throughout the five weeks of data collection, Dennis is a student who needed more time with me modeling the process and heavily supporting him. According to Harris and Graham (2008), the Self-Regulated Strategy Development is individualized in order to meet the needs of all the learners, some students will not be able to internalize the strategies right away and will continue to need to scaffold their learning. I believe Dennis needed more time receiving direct instruction, especially during the guided writing groups. Dennis performed the best when I modeled the process and supported instruction during guided writing. When I met with his group right after instruction he was able to ask questions write away and receive immediate feedback. The following is an excerpt from the fourth week of data collection that demonstrates his writing with this kind of support. This excerpt demonstrates that Dennis has taken the lessons and applied them to his writing. This excerpt will show that Dennis translated instruction on million dollar words to his writing. During guided writing groups Dennis struggled

with adding details to his sentences. However, after several sessions and support Dennis started to do this on his own.

Later on, my dad rushed in the door calling me. I ran downstairs and I saw a big brown box. My dad said "look in the box". I walked up to him and opened the box and there was a puppy with blue eyes, brown fur, and big paws. I picked the puppy up and my dad said "it's a girl". I picked her up and I named her Missy. (Taken from a writing sample on January 22, 2010)

This excerpt was from a story that Dennis wrote after explicit instruction and modeling was done of the writing process as well as planning using the acronym POW+WWW. He made significant progress during this week. His ideas were organized in a logical manner and he gave great detail during his writing. The last week of data collection, when there was no instruction or guided writing groups, Dennis did not effectively apply the writing strategies that were taught. The following is an excerpt from that week.

On one of the best days in the summer and I didn't come outside to play with my friends. I seen my cat laying down. I was wearing all white. My dad was wereing a red shirt with shayds(shades) on. I seen Rocky laying down and I run up to him, he runs in the kitchen I chase him. I seen him and he runs into a chair and he kept on running. (Taken from a writing sample on February 5, 2010)

This piece is not coherent and not well organized. I believe that Dennis needed more scaffolding, because he had many ideas that did not connect to a central theme. He

also did not develop his sentences fully, which led for confusion in reading his writing. He needed more time during guided writing groups because his last piece of writing is not as focused as previous pieces. I also believe that he may not have felt comfortable doing the strategy on his own. I gave no instruction that week, nor did I meet with guided writing groups or do individual conferences. This may have attributed to his inconsistency in his writing the last week.

The major themes that were seen in Dennis' writing samples were an improvement in voice as well as in organization, up until the last week where there was no direct instruction. I found that when Dennis was able to pick his own ideas his voice became less distinct as opposed to when there was structure to the assignment. Through the guided writing groups he started to develop more complex sentences as well. The following is from the third week of instruction:

"It's too dark" Tyshawn said "Well we can't turn on the lights, they are broken." Tyshawn walks to the door and all he sees is fog. "Everyone get to the lunch room as soon as possible" Ms. Johnson said. The whole class went down stairs. They started to walk in the fog with Mrs. Escobar. We heard a small yell and all of a sudden the whole class was gone, but the only ones left were Tyshawn, Ronney and Vanessa. They ran back to the classroom. They seem something walk by so they prepared themselves with scissors and a broom. They went out to try to go to the janitors' closet, or the lunch room, but they were so scared.

He was able to organize his ideas clearer after direct instruction on how to organize your notes. When I modeled how to determine the seven story parts, this helped Dennis organize his thoughts. It focused his thinking. However, he was unable to produce the same quality of writing when he was able to choose the topic to write about. The following excerpt is from the last week of data collection, with no instruction being given.

Later on my dad was playing a spelling game. I seen Rocky up stairs and I ran at him. Then he runs in my room I close the door I search my room and I think to myself "I think he left when I closed the door." I open the door and he's right in front of me now he meows and runs down stairs. After that he gets tired and falls asleep on the middle of the floor.

This was Dennis' middle paragraph in his story. It lacked a central idea and he lost his voice in this story. Dennis would have benefited from more instruction as well as more time spent in guided writing groups as well as in individual conferences. These two pieces are just two weeks apart. He needed the extra instruction in order to fully grasp the new strategy.

Overall, Dennis improved during this process. His writing became more organized and he started to develop a written voice. He also improved in paragraph construction. He was able to fully develop the paragraphs so they each had a topic, supporting sentences and a closing sentence. He did not progress the last week, because he did not fully internalize the strategy. I believe that he would benefit more with more instruction.

Travis

Travis is a student with wild ideas and a great imagination. However, he could not seem to put his ideas in a logical order. He is another student who I believed would benefit from being taught explicit skills and strategies to use while writing. Also, he would be able to transfer this knowledge to other academic areas in which writing is involved. That is where he struggles. According to Travis' past writing samples as well as his English Language Art scores, he was working on grade level. However, according to the baseline, I found that he was in fact below grade level in writing. His baseline score put him below grade level, bordering on severely below grade level. I examined other pieces of his work as well from earlier in the year; using the same rubric that I used for this research, and found that the baseline data is consistent with the data from earlier in the year. He was performing at a level 2, which is below grade level.

Travis caught on quickly with the strategy and how to use it effectively. He was able to understand and apply the seven story parts and was enthusiastic in using the strategy as well as reviewing it. He exclaimed one day during my mini-lesson: "Hey! I love this! It makes it so much easier!" I asked him what part is easier. "Its so much easier to organize now!" When we discussed the strategies during our individual conferences he was able to reflect on his writing and tell me what he was doing well as what he still needed to work on. For instance, I just taught a mini-lesson on using million dollar words and how it is a way to spice up sentences in

order for our readers to be engaged in our stories. When Travis came to me we read through his story:

Mrs. Escobar: Travis, tell me where you used a million dollar word.

Travis: Where, I don't see them in here!

Mrs. Escobar: Okay. So what is the next step for you?

Travis: I have to add some spice.

Mrs. Escobar: How will you do that?

Travis: How about here. I can say: *this wild class*

Mrs. Escobar: Good much better. I can really picture the class now!

Travis improved throughout the five weeks in his writing. He really flourished when he was able to write about whatever he wanted. January 13th and February 5th are the days that he was able to pick the idea on his own, without any prompts given.

Table 3

Date	Ideas and Conventions	Organization	Paragraphs	Voice	Word Choice	Sentences	Conventions	Average Score
1/5	2.5	2	1	1.5	1.5	2	2	1.8
1/12	2.5	2	3	4	3	2.5	2	2.7
1/13	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3.7
1/22	3	3	3	3.5	3	3	3	3.1
2/5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

*A score of a 4 is working above grade level, a 3 is on grade level, a 2 is slightly below grade level and a 1 is severely below grade level.

*Travis went from being between severely below grade level and slightly below grade level, to being above grade level.

Travis was always a child who is a creative thinker and had great ideas; however, he had difficulty organizing his thinking into a way that was understandable in his writing samples. Modeling how to organize your thinking and scaffolding that process really allowed Travis to organize his thinking and create great and interesting pieces. The following is an excerpt that is taken from the first piece of writing that Travis produced on January 5, 2010:

Who are you a forn (foreign) exchange student said the little boy. Shore will go with that was the allen's (aliens) response. So what your name said the little boy. My name is. My name is um...Allien (alien) Allen. And your is said the allen (alien). "Oh my name is Jamie, yeap (yup) Jamie Yong. 3 month later...

Travis ended the piece with the paragraph above. His ideas were great, but they were not organized. His sentences were not complete and hard to understand. For a week we examined short stories and determined the seven story parts. We also made suggestions on how to make the story better. Travis believed that there needed to be characters names in the story and he shared this as we made a collective list on how to improve the story. On January 13, 2010 I modeled the whole process from beginning to end and used the prompt: *something unexpected*. As I modeled I asked a lot of questions about why I am doing this or that. The students were able to vocalize each time the answer. Travis was very organized and had all seven parts written out during our guided writing group. He began writing and was engaged in the process the whole time. The following is an excerpt from that story.

Hi, my name is Luther, they call me the party pooper. My head is very round, I live on the ground and I have seen a thousand bloopers. Great job Luther, said the teacher. Now go sit down. Luther was a new student at Big Flats Elementary School. This was his first day at school and already he had tons of friends, but his main man, well woman, his best friend was a girl named Elizabeth, Elizabeth Carney. They were like Bonney and Clyde, but the good version. They played basketball together. Elizabeth's favorite sport was soccer and lacrosse.

This was the first part of the three-page story that Travis wrote. As you can see it is more organized than the previous excerpt and it also has more voice. If you notice the table that displays the growth Travis made, he improved in all areas. This second piece, where there was explicit instruction given as well as explicit modeling, was much more coherent and clear than the prior piece.

The themes that I found in Travis' writing were that he became much more organized throughout the process and his voice and ideas were more distinct when he was able to pick the topic that he wrote about. The table shows that on January 13th and February 5th, Travis was able to pick the topic that he wanted to write about. The scores reflect that he flourishes when he is able to do this. All areas except sentences and conventions were given a score of a four. He wrote longer and more detailed pieces when there were no constraints on his writing. Here is an excerpt from February 5th:

“Tyshawn” shouted my mom. “Coming” I said. “Go clean up your room”. I said to myself, o if I were invisible the world would be my playground.

“FILIDI-DUM, FILIDI-DEE, WHAT YOU WANT YOU SHALL BE.” “Who said that?” I said. “Me your jeni (genie)” “What is your name?” “Princess Babalaba-shaba-laba ding dong” said the jeni. “Can I call you ding dong for short?”

Without constraints, Travis was able to produce highly imaginative and original pieces of writing. If he was given a broad subject or given free reign over his topic, his voice was powerful and he wrote much more.

If there were constraints on his topic choice his writing tended to be shorter and lose voice. The following is after the prompt: *describe something unexpected*. This demonstrates his lack of voice, this was from January 22nd:

One playful day in Mrs. Castellon third grade class, it was very chilli outside, a friend of mine Jaquell Moody, was freezing. With this in mind I let him borrow my jacket. Suddenly a chair fell and Jaquell fell with the chair.

This was the introductory paragraph to his three paragraph story. This story was much shorter, only a page, as opposed to the story above which was two full pages. While there is still some voice in his writing, it was not as prevalent in this piece as it was in the previous example. I tend to think that it might not have connected with Travis. He may not have anything unexpected happen to him that he remembers well. When Travis was given a specific subject to write about his stories were only a page. In contrast, when he was given the freedom to choose his stories ranged anywhere

from two to four pages. For Travis, he thrived on choosing his topic and allowing his imagination to carry him through the writing process.

James

James is a child who is very indifferent towards school and often breaks down because he is struggling with personal matters. He is a unique child who requires a special way of teaching. James is a boy who I believed would benefit from explicit instruction in small groups. I included James in this study because I wanted to know him better as a learner. When James completed the writing survey that I gave to him, his answers were different than most. He had a skewed idea of what writing is. He said that the strategies that he had been taught to use were indenting and expressions, also that he uses paragraphs. However, he did say: “what I find enjoyable about writing is that you can write about anything you want in the world. You can share it with almost anybody and also have fun with your writing.” From this part of his survey I knew that I needed to utilize James’ strengths while we were in guided writing groups.

Guided writing groups allowed me to target specific skills that different groups of children needed to work towards improving. James benefited from these groups. As I modeled the last part of the strategy, the W in POW, I asked his group why is it important to add detail to your story. James said, “So your reader can picture what they are reading.” This allowed me to praise James, and in turn gave

him confidence to start writing on his own. James did well when he was praised positively. He needed to be told what specifically he was doing well, as well as what he needed to work on. Many times when we were conferencing I would specifically talk to him about the areas that he was weak in. I gave him specific feedback about how to improve and checked back with him to see if he needed further support. The following is a conversation that we had during an individual conference:

Mrs. Escobar: James why don't you have anything on your paper? Are you stuck?

James: I didn't like my story from yesterday

Mrs. Escobar: Oh, well why not?

James: I don't have a time when something happened unexpected

Mrs. Escobar: You can write about a time when you were excited about something

James: (no answer, shook his head no)

Mrs. Escobar: What about a time you were happy or sad?

James: I don't have anything

Mrs. Escobar: What about a time you were mad?

James: (went off and started writing)

James needed the extra guidance and the reassurance that it was okay to vary from the theme. He shut down as soon as he could not think of what to write about. As I coaxed him to think of something he could write about he was reluctant to do anything until I reached a point where he felt comfortable.

The following is the progress James made during the five weeks.

Table 4

Date	Ideas and Conventions	Organization	Paragraphs	Voice	Word Choice	Sentences	Conventions	Average Score
1/5	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1.9
1/12	2.5	2	2	3	2	2	2	2.2
1/13	3	1.5	1	3	2	2	2	2.1
1/22	3	2.5	3	2	3	3	3	2.8
2/5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

*A score of a 4 is working above grade level, a 3 is on grade level, a 2 is slightly below grade level and a 1 is severely below grade level.

*James went from working between severely below grade level and slightly below to working on grade level.

James showed small improvements over the course of the study. He is a student who greatly benefited from Self Regulated Strategy Development, because he needed the organization and structure. He performed well when there was direct instruction and explicit modeling of the writing process. The following excerpt is taken from the first week of data collection, where there was no instruction given.

This morning I was just making a bowl of cereal when my dad came in and said "son look what's on the news." Our family is well creepy because my dad a human and my mom well vampire. So what do you think I am? I'm half human and half vampire. But lets get back to my story.

James had a unique idea for a story, but it was unorganized that made it hard to follow.

He also needed direct instruction related to writing conventions. With explicit teaching during guided writing groups James was able to grasp the concepts we were working on and apply them toward his writing. As I have stated earlier I taught a

lesson about *write and say more*, the W in POW, on January 21st. As I modeled it James was very engaged and seemed to understand why this is important, and that each sentence does not need to be full of detail. There needs to be enough detailed sentences to make the story interesting. The following is an excerpt from a piece of writing on January 22, 2010 that illustrates this:

I was going to a Halloween party on Friday night. It was cold and dark, really dark. It was 2:49 pm and the party start's at 1. I took my litter brothers flashlight from out of my pocket. I was looking for house number 225. I started walking past the house numbers 220, 221,222,223, then I seen the house. I walked up to it and started feeling water on my feet. The water was getting deeper and deeper.

This piece of writing was more organized and had better organization than the previous excerpt. It also had more voice than the previous example. He was starting to use the lessons that were taught, about the detailed sentences, and started applying them to his writing.

During the fourth week of instruction we focused on what written voice was. I then discussed authors that the students are familiar (Roald Dahl, Paul Langan, Mildred Taylor, and Beverley Cleary) with and we discussed what his or her written voice was. James tried to find his written voice in this passage:

Today was Friday, the day that the Halloween part starts. I looked at my watch it was 5:00 pm, so that leaves seven more hours. Hi, I'm Jordan Daniels and I wear glasses and I'm a chocolate carmel (caramel) color. I hopped from my bed and said "another day, another nickel", in a dramatic and acting voice.

James started to put more details into his writing as well as using phrases and idioms that would catch a reader's attention. For example "another day, another nickel" is a saying that most sixth graders do not know, but the way James incorporated this phrase into his writing helped showcase his written voice. He even started to describe characters in a way so the reader can visualize what the character looks like; *a chocolate carmel color.*

The major themes that I noticed in James' writing were that he improved in organization and ideas. Unlike Travis, James improved if there was structure and he was given a topic to write about. When he was free to make the choices on his own his scores in organization and ideas declined. Many days when he was able to pick the ideas he wrote about, he came up with big ideas but the ideas did not have a clear plot or structure. The following is one of the stories that he wrote without any guidelines given:

After Kyle came over, me and Amy were getting everything ready for our camp inside. But my dad found out and said “no tent is going to be in my living room.” I said “then can we sleep in the attic?” We were lucky to go. So I went up in the attic. Kyle was talking to Candy. But I didn’t hear what they were saying. So I rose my underworld army. To listen for me so I could hear better.

This story had many different ideas, but they ideas were not connected and did not seem to relate to each other. It seems that James could have benefited from more instruction on paragraph formation and what each paragraph should contain. The ideas could go together, but there needed to be more instruction for James on paragraphs.

When James was given encouragement, his thoughts were more organized around a central idea. When he felt good about his story, or what to write about his writing improved. This was a story that was written on February 5th:

“Hello, I’m Jake. I’m half human and half vampire. My buddy Kyle and his sister Amy are human and vampire too. Amy’s best friend, Candy, is human and werewolf. Her little brother Randy started to control minds and blow out fire. Now we have to use every power we have just to get his evilness out. We went to the field to start our search for the...

This story was his last story, when there was no instruction given. However, as stated before James is a student who struggles with his own frustrations. He shuts down easily and started to shut down when he could not figure out an idea to write about. I

helped him brainstorm ideas, but did not give him any directions on how to write about it. He liked the idea about writing a science fiction story about a vampire saving good people. James was able to use his background knowledge about this topic, he reads the Twilight series, and applies it to his own writing.

James improved overall in this process, but he could still benefit from more instruction on the strategy. I believe that he needs more instruction on how to brainstorm topics on his own. If he did not immediately have something to write about he would shut down. He also needed more instruction on paragraph formation. He does not consistently start a new paragraph correctly. However, he has improved from the first baseline. At first, he did not have any paragraphs. He would just write and write with no organization or structure. James has improved in this area, but could continue to benefit from further instruction. James developed his written voice and discovered what he likes to write about.

Courtney

Courtney is one of my students who is working above grade level. She is a quiet student and does not participate much in class, but does a great job in all academic areas. I included Courtney in this study because I wanted to see if her writing would develop more using the Self-Regulated Strategy Development. Through the analysis of the writing survey that Courtney filled out the first week I found that she has been taught strategies, but is confused on how to use them. She said that the strategy she was taught was to “make sure the story has detail and

describe things as if it were real”. However, she feels that writing is frustrating and that she needs more strategies to use.

During the second week of instruction when I was working with Courtney I asked her if she liked the new strategy that we were working on. She said that she did and said “it’s much easier to plan my story and come up with my ideas, I am not as frustrated anymore during writing.” Many times when we were discussing POW+WWW during whole group instruction Courtney would offer answers and suggestions to a writing piece that we did together, which she had not done in the past. For example, during whole group instruction I asked the students to brainstorm what they would want to write about. When it was time to share, Courtney raised her hand and suggested that we write about a group of kids getting lost in a jungle. She would also volunteer, when asked what the acronym POW or WWW stood for.

I found that when Courtney writes about her family, her details and descriptions are more developed than when she is writing about another topic.

My sister Alyssia is tall, stick thin and has very shinny black and burgundy hair (excerpt)

versus

Then Vanessa got a cup and got a drink of water from the faucet, no water came out (excerpt)

The first excerpt is from a story she wrote about her and her sister. She described her sister in order for the reader of her story to picture what she looked like. In the second example this was the extent to how she described Vanessa, who was the main

character, during a shared writing activity. Here is another excerpt that illustrates this point:

My mom ran across the room like a cheetah. She grabbed her friend Mike who was sitting on the cozy light brown couch. Mike was tall with light brown curly hair. My mom hurried up and told him what was going on. They ran again to the hot attic...

Overall I found that the POW+WWW strategy was beneficial to Courtney. She showed much improvement in her voice as well as in word choice and ideas. The following is a concluding paragraph from her baseline writing sample:

The party was finally over. Caitlynn got into her car with her friends and drove off. When she got home Abby called her on her cellphone and talked about today. After she was done talking to Abby Lydia called. They talked about the same thing.

Her sentences and paragraphs became more descriptive as she learned how to employ the strategy that was being taught. The following is an excerpt from January 22nd:

My mom ran across the room like a cheetah. She grabbed her friend Mike, who was sitting on the cozy light brown couch. Mike was tall with light brown curly hair. My mom hurried up and told him what was going on. They ran again to the hot attic. That's when they said "Let go". I did...YES! They caught me and I was not hurt. "I'm so lucky". Since my room was in the attic, my mom decided to change my room with my brother. She never had to deal with that problem again.

This concluding paragraph is very descriptive and her written voice and the way she describes her characters are much more detailed than her first writing sample.

The two examples that were given were both conclusions to stories that Courtney wrote. The first example was taken during the implementation of Self-Regulation Strategy Development. The second example was taken from her baseline, where no instruction had been given. The first excerpt is full of description as well as written voice as opposed to the second excerpt which lacks description and written voice. During the process of Self-Regulated Strategy Development, Courtney really made great improvements in sentence descriptions and written voice.

We built a black ladder so nobody would be able to see it. We went back inside to eat our snack that we put out, but someone ate it. "DAVID!!"

"WHERE IS OUR SNACK? I KNOW YOU ATE IT!" "No I didn't, ask Fatboy over there eating a cookie"

Courtney used different strategies in writing to show that she was angry. Her voice allows the reader to understand the family dynamics and how the brothers and sister interact with one another. She also was able to build suspense and create drama using different writing strategies.

Ronney turned around and didn't see Mrs. Escobar. "They took her!" Then the door unlocked and two ghosts were coming towards them. "Ahhhhh" screamed Vanessa. One of the ghosts turned around and went to turn on the lights. They found out it was Ms. Johnson and Ms. Leigh. "It's over! You guys can go come." "YES!" Tyshawn cried, "I'm going H-O-M-E!!" They put on their coats and left the building. They came back to school the next day but no sign of Mrs. Escobar. They never knew where she went.

Courtney was asked again when she took the post writing survey is she liked the new strategy. She wrote: "yes because I can write better, and come up with ideas of what I am going to write about. I can easily plan it out. The following is the progress that Courtney made during the five weeks.

Table 5

Date	Ideas and Conventions	Organization	Paragraphs	Voice	Word Choice	Sentences	Conventions	Average Score
1/5	3	3	3	3	2.5	2.5	3	2.9
1/12	3	3.5	4	3	3	4	4	3.5
1/13	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3.6
1/22	4	4	4	4	3.5	4	4	3.9
2/5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

*A score of a 4 is working above grade level, a 3 is on grade level, a 2 is slightly below grade level and a 1 is severely below grade level.

*Courtney steadily improved in all areas during the five weeks.

Courtney's writing, even though it was on grade level to begin with, improved throughout the five weeks of instruction. Courtney became more detailed in her writing. The following is a excerpt from the first week of instruction that demonstrates that Courtney is writing well, but her sentences lack detail.

Lydia cleaned herself up and walked away from Abby with a stubborn attitude. More and more people showed up for Caitlynn's party with gifts. There was music, drinks, games and more. Abby was really upset she couldn't enjoy herself at all. Abby just sat down until it was over. "Abby cool off don't worry about it you know you'll get over it" said Amani.

Courtney became more descriptive when I introduced the seven story parts as part of the strategy we learned. (POW+WWW) The following is from the third week of direct instruction which will showcase Courtney's ability to create sentences that are more detailed.

I climbed over the railing, then my hands slipped. "oh, lord he-lp! Alyssia, don't stand there, help." "Mom," I screamed. She didn't come. Alyssia was struggling to pull me up because I was heavvvy and she didn't have a grip. "Lissy, I'm so scared I'm going to fall." "Mom, m-ooooomm". My mom came in the house and she walked in the blazing hot attic.

Courtney made steady improvements to improve her writing throughout the five weeks. The major themes that were prevalent in Courtney's writing were an improvement in her organization and ideas and voice. Her ideas and voice improved when she had free reign to write about what she wanted. This excerpt was from February 5th, where she was able to plan and write about any story she wanted. This excerpt shows the organization that Courtney has developed as she described building a tree house.

By the time we started building we were having fun. We were all cooperating and working really hard. Soon it was time to take a break. We went inside to get a glass of cold pink lemonade. "Hey guys, we still got three walls and a roof to do so let's get it done!" We went back outside and finally finished our tree house. It looked great! Now it was time for step two: operation decorate...

This story described the steps that she and her friends took to build a tree house in her backyard. It was well planned and flowed well. She effectively used paragraphs for each scene that she was describing and she also used transition words between paragraphs. She used descriptive words to help visualize what she was writing about. For example: *cold pink lemonade, as we walked through their fresh room, which felt so good, coming down the weak stairs....* Courtney is able to create images through her writing.

However, her writing was shorter and had less description when she was given a topic to write about. This excerpt was taken from when we did a shared writing for the lesson. The first paragraph, we wrote together as a class. This excerpt is Courtney's second paragraph:

I got to call my mom and tell her I'm going to be home late, replied Tyshawn. Then Vanessa got a cup and got a drink from the faucet, no water came out. "Mrs. Escobar, No water's coming out and I'm really thirsty", complained Vanessa. Suddenly the door locked from the inside. Ronney came up to the door and struggled to open it.

While this excerpt is still well written, it lacks the detail and voice that Courtney developed through the process of learning Self-Regulation Strategy Development. She uses different writing strategies correctly and she has complete sentences, but it is lacking voice that she uses while she is writing about her family.

Courtney found her written voice when she was writing about her family. She was able to connect with that topic and write well. She also became more descriptive in her writing. Her sentences started to become more complex and more detailed. I believe that Courtney could benefit from further instruction in topic choice. She needs to broaden her written genres in order to become more developed and well written, no matter what topic she chooses.

Gregg

Gregg is a student, like Courtney, who is working above grade level. In his writing survey one question was *what do you find difficult about writing?* He wrote: *“What I find difficult about writing is to find out what to write about and how your story is going to go.”* He also stated that writing was just “ok” that it was not his favorite subject. I chose Gregg for the same reason that I chose Courtney. He is above grade level in all subjects and I wanted to see if using Self Regulated Strategy Development along with the strategy POW+WWW would affect his writing.

Gregg’s thinking changed over the five weeks of instruction. When I distributed the baseline questionnaire I asked the question: What do you find difficult about writing? He responded with: *What I find difficult about writing is to find out*

what to write about and how your story is going to go. The Self Regulated Strategy Development provided a strategy for all the students to use while they are thinking about what they want to write about. I modeled how to brainstorm different ideas and how to choose one. I then explicitly taught them how to use POW+WWW and determine the seven story parts. The last week of data collection I gave a brief five question post assessment (appendix C). One of the questions asked: Do you like the new strategy you learned? Why or Why not? Gregg responded with:

Yes I do like the new strategy I learned. I like it because it makes it easier to organize what you want to write about and it helps me pick an idea faster with better ideas. I like this better than just writing any story and I will use it more often now.

Throughout the five weeks I noticed that Gregg’s voice really developed. The following graph shows the development of Gregg as a writer over the five weeks.

Table 6

Date	Ideas and Conventions	Organization	Paragraphs	Voice	Word Choice	Sentences	Conventions	Average Score
1/5	4	4	3	4	3.5	4	4	3.7
1/12	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
1/13	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
1/22	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
2/5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

*A score of a 4 is working above grade level, a 3 is on grade level, a 2 is slightly below grade level and a 1 is severely below grade level.

*Gregg improved in paragraphs and word choice over the five weeks.

Gregg’s writing became much more sophisticated during the five weeks of learning about SRSD. The following is an excerpt from Gregg’s baseline piece of

writing on January 5, 2010. This excerpt demonstrates that already, Gregg has strong writing skills.

*Later that night Sam was the only one awake. She kept hearing the weird sounds from outside and she saw this lazer (laser) green light. Sam quickly put on her slippers and ran out to the backyard. Her jaw dropped down and she couldn't believe what she saw with her **OWN** eyes. There were these little green creatures with big black eyes. They were bald and both of the weird creatures looked the same. They ran into the bushes. Sam tried to follow but they were gone.*

His writing is organized and contains much detail. This excerpt shows the multiple strategies that Gregg already uses. He uses description to engage his audience, he writes differently when he is trying to stress a point, ex: **OWN**, and he uses different sentence structures to convey his message.

During the third week of instruction I taught a lesson on using “Million Dollar Words” Gregg became more descriptive this week as he worked on describing his characters so that his readers can picture what they look like. Gregg worked hard on this and tried to emulate stories that he has read before. The following is taken from Gregg’s final piece of writing after the lesson:

It was a windy, but hot afternoon in a little town called Dark Falls. It was pretty quiet in that town but busy and a lot of kids and teenagers. They all went to the only school in Dark Falls, which was the Avenue Academy School. Also known as the Double A. In that town there was a 17 year old boy named Seth. He had wavy brown hair and bright blue eyes. Everyone loved his good looks but there was one girl who he charmed the most. Her name was Jenna. She was a pretty young lady also 1 with long black hair. She was very quiet and wore red ribbons around her neck every day.

This last excerpt really uses the million dollar words that we had discussed. Even though the rubric does not show the growth, his voice improved during this piece. In this piece, Gregg had a strong voice as well as organized ideas. He describes his characters in order for his audience to picture them. Also, because he is an avid reader, he is able to use the voice of other authors to develop his writing voice. He received a four in all areas except word choice and paragraphs.

Throughout this process Gregg improved in all areas. Even though the scores do not reflect it, his voice developed as well as word choice. From the beginning of this process Gregg started off as a strong writer. Even though he was strong, his written voice and the way that he started to put description into his sentences improved throughout the weeks. The following is an excerpt from January 22nd that demonstrates Gregg's ability to use description in his writing.

“Time out!!” I called as sweat dripped from my face. It was too hot to do anything. I made my way to the hose and turned it on, of course nothing came out. I untangled the hose and splashed icy cold water onto my face. My grandma’s hose had the coldest water I ever drank in my life! She also has a pool that is about four feet deep.

Gregg developed his ideas and became descriptive throughout this process. He became conscious of what readers would want to read about. The major themes that I saw with Gregg were an improvement in voice as well as an overall improvement in his writing quality.

Themes

There were three major themes that were prevalent in all six students. The major themes that I saw that were repetitive with the majority of the students were an improvement in voice, organization and ideas and conventions. With regards to voice, which is an author’s way of communicating with an audience through his or her writing so that it sounds authentic and original to that author, four out of the six students made significant improvements in this area. Dennis, Travis, Courtney and Gregg were the four students who really made themselves believable as authors. For example Travis is the author, as seen in his excerpts above, who loves to create stories that are highly imaginative, while using comparisons as well as humor throughout his writing. Gregg became a writer that to me resembled the works of an author like R.L. Stine. His writing became incredibly descriptive and authentic to whom he was as a writer.

The second major theme that I found to improve tremendously in five out of the six students was their organizational skills with their writing pieces. The only student that did not make the growth according to the rubric was Gregg. I believe that the explicit modeling of the new strategy POW+WWW, through Self Regulated Strategy Development, made a significant change to everyone's writing. The students' stories followed a logical order and always contained the seven story parts. If you look at the two excerpts from Valerie's section you will notice that the first one, her baseline, did not follow a logical order, the ideas and problems were out of order. However, after the introduction to the new strategy, Valerie wrote more coherently and her writing began to follow a logical sequence. James is another student who exemplifies this notion. The only one who did not make a growth through the rubric was Gregg; however, Gregg was already a four in this area. I also believe that even though the rubric does not show it, Gregg made tremendous growth throughout this process. I believe he found his written voice and his stories were of a quality that are reflective of books that are published. I truly liken his writing to the style of R.L. Stine. He also became very detailed in his writing, but rubrics only go so far and his growth was not shown on the rubric.

The final theme that was prevalent and interesting was the area of ideas and conventions. Five out of six students improved in ideas and conventions. The one area that I want to draw attention to is topic choice. Travis and Courtney improved greatly and wrote longer pieces when they were given the choice to choose the topic he/she would write about; not only were Travis' and Courtney's ideas more

developed, their writing pieces were considerably longer and better organized. In contrast, Dennis and James needed the structure of the topic chosen for them in order to have a coherent writing piece. The development of ideas became stronger through this process, because it allowed the students to think about and plan what he or she would be writing. The strategy also made them pay attention to the seven different story parts that needed to be included in each writing piece.

Summary

Overall five out of the six case study students improved in his or her overall writing using the Self-Regulated Strategy Development. I found that students needed to require background knowledge and explicit teaching of a strategy in order for them to effectively use the strategy on their own. When skills were taught it was beneficial for the students to be involved and practice those skills during guided writing groups. I have never before conducted guided writing groups, but now I have realized how beneficial it is for my students. I believe that teaching Self-Regulated Strategy Development to my students has greatly benefited their writing. All of my students, especially the ones that were performing below grade level have immensely improved their writing skills. The major themes that I found prevalent in my students writing were an improvement in voice, organization and ideas and conventions.

One area that I found that could have been changed was the amount of time that was spent learning the strategy. Dennis is an example of a student who did not get enough time learning the strategy in order for him to use it effectively on his own.

Next time I implement Self-Regulated Strategy Development I will continue with the strategy until every child is able to successfully use it on his her own. A second area I believe that could use extra attention is topic choice. I believe that some students like James could benefit from instruction on how to choose a topic to write about.

This strategy has improved my students writing in numerous ways. Not only did it benefit my students who were severely below grade level, it also benefited my students who were already on grade level. Self-Regulated Strategy Development along with explicit modeling and teaching of writing skills and strategies has impacted my teaching practices as well as the writing behaviors of my students.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The research project I conducted focused on six of my students. The six students varied in academic strengths. There were two students who were above grade level, two who were on grade level and two who were below grade level. Over the course of five weeks, students participated in mini-lessons, guided writing groups and individual conferences. My two research questions were: What impact will my modeling and scaffolding of the writing process have on students' writing? and What impact does the Self-Regulated Strategy Development model, developed by Graham and Harris (2003) have on student writing? As I was exploring these two questions I often found that the questions often coincided with one another. Self-Regulated Strategy Development stresses that the teacher initially does a lot of modeling and scaffolding of the writing process with his or her students.

Through the research process, I found that reflecting on my instruction and what my students learned helped me to achieve an insightful understanding of my students as writers. Through examining my students' surveys I realized that they truly did not comprehend what writing is or why it is used. It was my goal to help them realize the potential writing can have and that it is a valuable tool. I also spent a lot of time reflecting on the writing curriculum in my school and how it could be improved.

Reflections

To answer my research questions about modeling and scaffolding of the writing process and the impact of Self-Regulated Strategy Development, I observed and took anecdotal notes on my six focus students during lessons as well as during guided writing groups and individual conferences. I noted what concepts they understood and could apply as well as what their misconceptions were about the writing process and the new strategy, POW+WWW, which was put into place. I also reflected on each of my lessons and took notes for myself as an instructor and what I believed to be the positives and negatives of each lesson. I also was able to examine my research questions by looking at the surveys my students filled out before and after the intervention as well as the writing samples I collected once a week.

Through reflection of my teaching as well as the analysis of student work I began thinking about the impact Self-Regulated Strategy Development has on student's writing, as well as their process of writing. SRSD. As stated in the literature review, there are three major goals of SRSD. The first goal is to help students in developing their knowledge about writing and the skills and strategies they will need. The second goal is to support the students in developing their writing strategies and abilities to monitor their own writing. The last goal is to encourage the development of positive attitudes about the writing process as well as themselves as writers. (Santanelo, 2007) These goals allow the students to be successful and revalue the writing process.

Goals of Self-Regulated Strategy Development

The first goal is geared toward helping students develop their knowledge about writing and the skill and strategies they will need. This was addressed in three different areas: during mini-lessons, guided writing groups and individual conferences. Each day we discussed how to employ the strategy POW+WWW and I explicitly modeled what it looked like and what they could do if there were complications as they were writing. After that that day's lesson I met with guided writing groups and supported each group on the strategy and how they could apply it towards their own writing. Each group was ability based; they were all working on the same level. I also pulled different students out for individual conferences. The strategy that they used really made their overall writing pieces improved. In chapter four I presented a chart that displayed the growth each student made in seven categories. Valerie, for example went from a rubric scale of 1 to a rubric scale of 4 in almost all seven categories. SRSD attributed to this growth. It gave each student a strategy and a skill set that allowed them to use his or her background knowledge and apply the learned strategy and skills toward his or her writing. All students improved in most of the seven categories, if not all of them. However, Gregg and Courtney's rubric score did not exemplify the growth that they endured throughout the process. Sometimes, especially for higher level students, scores on rubrics can mask changes the students go through because there is such a broad criteria and no way of advancing up past the top score. I believe that this is the case for Gregg and Courtney. They are students who were already on grade level and the rubric score did

not show the growth they had with their writing. They developed a more distinguished voice and more organized and well thought out ideas through this process, even though the rubric did not show growth, the actual writing pieces did.

Supporting the students in developing their writing strategies and abilities to monitor their own writing is the second goal of Self-Regulated Strategy Development. This strategy is geared to all students. It allows for differentiated instruction as well as progress monitoring throughout the process. SRSD has seven steps that allow for this. The steps follow the gradual release model and are geared to make sure the students become independent in the writing process. The explicit instruction of a strategy was done during the mini-lessons that I have. The strategy that we learned was POW+WWW, which are the seven parts of a story. Through guided instruction and explicit modeling the students were able to grasp the concept and apply the strategy towards their own writing. Before I taught them the strategy with their own writing, we practiced the strategy using stories that were already composed. This helped the students to notice what they can do to improve a story, as well as look at their own stories and determine what can be better. Toward the end of the seven weeks the students were able to execute the strategy on their own with little guidance from me. Self-Regulated Strategy development allows for scaffolded instruction. This type of instruction gives a clear picture to students about what his or her teacher expects. They are not confused and gain confidence through this process.

All six of my case study students had a more positive outlook on the writing process and how they composed stories. Through this process they started to revalue

the writing process and the purpose for why they write. At the end of the process, I gave each student a post survey to see if their attitudes toward writing have changed. Not only did their attitudes change, but their beliefs about what writing is changed as well. At the outset of the study five out of the six students believed that writing was spelling and grammar. They only focused on the mechanics of writing and not on the ideas surrounding the written piece. After the process of going through the Self-Regulated Strategy Development they started to have a new value placed on the writing process. Students now understood what writing is, that it is about developing a written voice as well as developing the topic that the author wants to write about. They also believe that writing is easier because of the strategy. That “it makes it easier to organize what you want to write about and it helps me pick an ideas faster...I like it better than just writing any story and I will use it more often now.”(excerpt from Gregg’s post survey)

Implications

Some implications that surfaced during the implementation of SRSD were that some of the students were not ready to be all alone with the process. There were a handful of students who could not handle the process on their own and could have benefited from more lessons of explicit instruction and modeling. These students progress declined the last week of data collection. I noticed that they were not as organized and their ideas were not developed. I attribute this to not having the guided writing, where I would help the students with their writing and what he or she was

struggling with. The last week of data collection I did not meet with any of them. Dennis, I believe, would have benefited from more time with direct instruction. The fourth week of instruction he scored a 3.4 on his writing piece. There were improvements in all seven areas, especially in written voice and organization and ideas. However, the last week of data collection, where there was no instruction he scored a 2.5. He is a child who was not ready to be released. He still needed the support of modeling as well as guided writing groups and individual conferences.

Themes

A theme that emerged through this process that I reflected heavily on was topic choice. There were some students who thrived when given the chance to choose the topic they wanted to write about. The stories were longer; they had more detail and were well planned. When the same students were given a specific topic to write about the opposite outcome occurred. The stories were very short and lacked detail. There is some research that supports a child being allowed to pick his or her own topic. Cynthia Lasonde (2006) wrote about her experience with an unmotivated student who would not write and was reluctant in all academic areas. She got him to write when she engaged him in conversations about what he liked to do. Knowing who our students are, as educators, is extremely important. I found through this process that it is okay to allow students to pick the topics that he or she wants to write about. If it is authentic and has meaning for that student, he or she will take ownership of his or her work and will be proud of the outcome. Learning should

occur in context in order for the child to build upon his or her background knowledge and make connections to his or her learning (Fabes & Martin, 2003). In order for children to connect with learning, learning needs to be applicable to them in order for the child to understand, manipulate and use independently the new information.

This is true for most of my students, especially those who struggled with writing. Travis is a child who has a wonderful imagination, but could never capture his imagination into words. It was not until this process that Travis was able to figure out his written voice. When Travis was given the freedom or loose parameters to choose what to write about his writing pieces became pages longer and his ideas were more developed with significant detail and written voice. Travis, who was on grade level in writing, quickly became an above grade level writer, especially when he was able to create and not be stifled by a chosen topic. Courtney's writing also improved when she was given the freedom to choose what she wanted to write about. Even though Courtney was already on grade level, her writing growth improved immensely when she was able to pick her topic. Most often it was about her family and her written voice described her family so well that I as a reader was able to picture what her family dynamics were.

Lucy Calkins, who developed the workshop model, is a big proponent of topic choice. In her book *The Art of Teaching Writing* she said, "When we help children know that their lives do matter, we are teaching writing" (Calkins, 1994, p.16). When my students were allowed to write about what they wanted to write about their whole attitudes changed. I believe that giving my students the choice of what to write

helped them to revalue the writing process. They became more engaged and produced more writing when they were allowed to choose the topic. If students know that they matter to their teachers, they will be more motivated to learn. Students need to know and believe that their teachers care about them and value them. If they feel valued, I believe teachers would see more growth and more success in their students. It is encouraged by Calkins as well as Ralph Fletcher to allow students the choice of what to write.

Ralph Fletcher wrote the book *Boy Writers: Reclaiming Their Voices* (2006). He stressed in his book that it is important to allow boys to write about what they know. Boys like to write about video games, guns, sports, etc. It is important to allow boys to write about these activities because it will get them motivated to write. If they are not motivated, if they are restricted in the choices they can write about, they will not value writing. However, if teachers allow their boys to write about what interests them, they will be more successful getting their boys to write about other genres that are required. Teachers need to be more flexible in their instruction and they need to allow students the freedom at times to make their own choices.

Revaluating the Writing Process

Lam and Law (2006) discussed six components that effected student's motivation for writing, as identified by Lam, Pak, and Ma (2002). Those components are: "challenge, real-life significance, curiosity, autonomy, recognition and evaluation."(Lam & Law, 2006, p.146) Students are motivated to write when the

topic is authentic to them; it needs to be meaningful in order for them to invest their time and effort into it. If the topic is not of interest or they deem that it carries no value, they will not produce quality writing. It was found “that when teachers relate the writing activity to the students’ interests, future activities, or past experience, they help their students to answer such questions as ‘Why do I have to write this?’” (Lam & Law, 2006, p.147) This question often came up in my classroom, because the students were not invested in writing, they did not deem it as authentic and meaningful.

Through SRSD, not only did the students come to revalue the writing process because it brought value and flexibility for them, but they also became better writers. Many students, especially those students who struggle in school, need to be hooked somehow into why learning is important. It is the job of teachers to make learning authentic and to get students to buy into whatever the curriculum is. Duke, N., Purcell-Gates, V., Hall, L., & Tower, C., 2006 found that if a child is allowed to write about what he or she is interested in then they will become more engaged in the writing process because the topic is of interest to them. The way to do this is to tap into the student’s interests, get to know the students in order to build on his or her background knowledge, or to engage them in what they may like to do in the future. It is the job of teachers to motivate the students through authentic and meaningful tasks. Through the constructivist theory of learning (Fabes & Martin, 2003), children learn best when learning is supported through building upon their background knowledge. Students bring a vast array of knowledge to the classroom, and it is

important to tap into that knowledge, not only to have them feel valued and appreciated, but also to allow them to use their knowledge to further their understanding in what they are learning.

Modeling and Explicit Teaching

Lastly, I reflected on how the modeling of explicit writing strategies impacted my students' learning and ability to apply the strategies to his or her writing. I found that when I modeled the strategies, especially the writing process, my students were more involved in putting forth consistent effort to model after me. I believe that using authentic short stories to first determine the different story parts and then make corrections, made the students feel more at ease. Many students who are struggling become discouraged when there are comments or corrections made to his or her paper. I took a short story during the first introductions of SRSD and we read it as a class and came up with the seven story parts. Even if the story had all seven, I had the class brainstorm a list of ideas that could make the story even better, telling them that all author's are students, that their work is not perfect the first time around, it could always use improvements. This, I believe took some anxiety off of the students and allowed them to get their ideas down on paper.

As I modeled the writing process, this also allowed the students to see how it is done, especially those who struggle with writing. In the past, I did not do much explicit modeling of my writing, because I was unsure of my writing abilities. However, I took the time to show my students how to go through the process, and

gave them multiple chances to ask questions when they were confused. The guided writing groups allowed a time for when I had only three or four students at a time. I was able to work on different writing strategies, the ones they struggled with, with each group.

Interactive Writing

During this time I found that interactive writing became very powerful. It was a way to show the students what skills they were lacking and how they could gain access to them. It also became a fun way for the students to learn. They enjoyed finding the mistakes in my writing as well as give me the advice to improve my writing piece. The students were able to transfer this knowledge and skill set into his or her writing. Even though interactive writing is used primarily in primary grades I found it very useful during my guided writing groups. Wall (2008) stated “interactive writing can provide students in the upper elementary grades a change to apply and experiment with new and more advanced writing concepts” (p. 152). The students gained more confidence during this time. The SRSD strategy concept was new to all students, they did not have any previous knowledge of the process, and through interactive writing they were building their background knowledge on how to execute this new strategy. Research states that interactive writing “builds a bridge between writing and all other areas of the curriculum” (Patterson, Schaller & Clemens, 2008, p. 496). It allows for higher instruction and also allows for the student to be working in his or her zone of proximal development. It is enough support from the teacher for

the student to try the strategy on their own, while still allowing some independence for the child. Students and teachers are working together on a common goal, while the teacher is building on the knowledge the student brings. This type of learning creates meaning and encourages the student to try their best at whatever they are working on. Working in a child's zone of proximal development is not only important in writing, but it is also important in all other academic areas.

Recommendations

My analysis of the impact of both Self-Regulation Strategy Development and explicit teaching had on my students' writing, showed that students made remarkable improvement in all areas of writing. As a result of explicit teaching and building background knowledge of an array of writing strategies all six students were more confident about their writing and came to revalue the writing process. Therefore, I would recommend using Self-Regulation Strategy Development along with explicit teaching in future work with teaching writing. "Teachers can inspire students to write by creating a favorable classroom environment, such as by giving children adequate time to write and revise" (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). When students are writing or trying out a new strategy, it is important that the teacher allows them adequate time to work with that strategy before they expect mastery.

First of all, Self-Regulated Strategy Development is recommended based on my analysis because all six students improved their writing through the use of this strategy. I believe that the strategy should be implemented at all grade levels.

Through researching this strategy I have found many researchers starting the strategy instruction at second grade. If there were to be a common strategy implemented throughout the grade levels I believe our students would be more confident writers. The explicit strategy that builds upon the students' background knowledge is ideal for all students. If the strategy were consistent in all grade levels, the students would become better writers throughout their time in elementary school. It would provide a solid foundation for them to apply when they have to write in middle and high school.

The strategy is also geared for students with special needs. Many studies, such as Santanelo, Harris, & Graham (2007) and Saddler & Asaro (2007), were done using students with learning disabilities and the results were positive as well. My case study students are not classified as learning disabled, but the strategy was beneficial to all of them. All students made significant gains. The strategy is also useful because it is differentiated to meet the needs of all students. The students will not be left to his or her devices until he or she is ready to do so. It provides a gradual release of instruction that will produce positive outcomes for all students because it is differentiated to meet the needs of the individual learners.

Second of all, I recommend explicit teaching that involves shared and interactive writing during writing instruction. Before the intervention, there was not explicit teaching during writing mini-lessons. I did not feel confident in my own writing to do this, especially shared or interactive writing. I believe that through reading articles on explicit teaching of writing strategies as well as the abundance of articles on Self-Regulated Strategy Development, I have become more confident in

my writing abilities and was confident in teaching my students. Teachers cannot teach what they do not know. I believe that all teachers need to explicitly teach writing strategies in order to prepare students for all modes of writing. If teachers do not explicitly teach strategies, the students will believe that strategies are that of grammar and sentence structure, which I found to be the case during the writing survey I distributed to my students before any new instruction was given. If we do not teach our students explicit strategies to use they will grow to dislike writing because they will not feel confident in their abilities.

Teachers need to develop their own skills as writers in order to be able to scaffold students' use of strategies. Ongoing professional development will allow for this to occur. Those teachers who- are involved in the education of today's youth must be up to date on current trends and procedures. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) states that:

There must be a strong commitment to provide initial and ongoing high-quality professional development for all members of the school wide literacy team; although it need not be the same for each member-teachers will need more intensive training in specific instructional approaches than the school psychologist or a parent, for example. (pg. 2)

Teachers need to be committed to be life long learners. This can be accomplished through professional development and various workshops which will provide new training and new ideas. There are always new trends and new strategies for all areas

of learning. It is the job of the teacher to stay up to date on those trends and strategies and instruct their students in the most beneficial way for the students.

Lastly, through examining the writing that each student produce I have noticed that scores, either on a rubric or testing, do not always show growth. This was demonstrated by three of my students. Gregg and Courtney could not go any higher in the rubric score, but the growth that they showed in their writing was tremendous. They developed more as writers as the weeks went on, but this was not reflected through the rubric scores. Also Dennis, a child who went down in scores the last week, while on his own, improved immensely, but the growth was not reflective through the rubric score. His writing growth through this process improved, as did his attitude towards the writing process. He became more developed and more organized, but was not ready to be left on his own quite yet. I also believe that the growth of a student should not be measured by one test each year. The state puts a lot of weight into test scores but does not look at the child as a whole. I believe that there needs to be a change in the system in order to change the way the state views our students. The growth throughout the year is tremendous in all students, yet it is not reflected.

I believe traveling portfolios would be more beneficial than test scores. I believe that it is important to notice and reflect on the overall progress a student makes during the school year, not the score they receive on one test. Traveling portfolios would allow the students not only to be looked at in a different, more positive light, but it will also allow the students to self-reflect on their learning and

progress. I believe with the amount of stress that is placed on state tests, as well as classroom tests, the students become disengaged with their learning. In order to change their thinking and increase their motivation we need to change the way that we assess our students.

Upon reflection at the closure of this study, I believe that Self-Regulated Strategy Development and explicit teaching of writing strategies should be continued in the classroom as they proved to be an integral part of the improvement in students' improvement in writing. One area that I would change the next time I implement this strategy would be to differentiate the needed time for my students. Because I had to do the data collection over a short time period, all my students did not benefit fully from the instructional strategy that was presented. (i.e. Dennis) Next time I would allow for the differentiation of the strategy for all students. I would allow for more time for the students to master the strategy. For this project I only had a few weeks. Next time I introduce this strategy, I will continue to work with students who have not mastered it and allow for more time in guided writing groups as well as in individual conferences. I also would transfer their learning to other content areas. I would want them to use the strategy across the curriculum. I believe that if they used a solid writing strategy throughout the day, not only would they truly master the strategy, but their writing in all content areas would improve as well.

Overall, the improvements that I witnessed were astounded me. I did not expect that much growth from all of my students. I was presently surprised that not only the six students that were picked, but the rest of the students in my class truly

benefited from this strategy and developed an appreciation for the writing process. I now truly value what explicit teaching does for my students' growth as writers. I did not value it before, but this process has changed my whole attitude towards teaching writing. I am excited to use this strategy next year because in five weeks I saw tremendous growth I can not imagine what a whole year of explicit instruction and Self-Regulated Strategy Development will bring for my students.

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Appendix A

	4	3	2	1
Ideas and Content	The topic and main ideas are clear. Details and examples (e.g., facts, similies, metaphors, or comparisons) support the ideas.	The topic and ideas are clear, but there is not enough detail. The writing stays on topic but doesn't address minor parts of the assignment.	There is a very general topic, but the writing strays off topic or doesn't address major parts of the assignment.	The topic and ideas are unclear. It's hard to tell which information is most important. May be repetitious or disconnected thoughts with no main point.
Organization	The writing has a catchy beginning to grab the reader's attention, a developed middle, and meaningful ending. The order of ideas makes sense. Transitions show how ideas connect.	The paper has a beginning, middle, and end. The order makes sense. Transitions are used, but some don't work well.	The paper has an attempt at an intro and conclusion. Some ideas seem out of order. Transitions need a lot of work.	There is no real introduction or conclusion. The ideas seem strung together in a loose fashion.
Paragraphs	Paragraphs are properly indented and begin in the right spots. Each has one topic and has topic, supporting, and closing sentences.	Paragraphs are indented; some begin in the right spots and have topic, supporting, and closing sentences.	Paragraphs often begin in the wrong places; may not have topic sentences.	There is either one long paragraph or random paragraph breaks.
Voice	The writing has personality. The writer cares about the topic and speaks right to the reader.	The writing seems sincere, but the author's personality fades in and out.	The paper could have been written by anyone. The writing hides the writer.	The writing is bland or sounds like the writer is annoyed or doesn't like the topic.
Word Choice	Uses vivid words and phrases that help make the meaning clear. May include 5 senses words.	Words are ordinary, with a few attempts at descriptive words.	Words used are ordinary but generally correct.	The same words are used over and over, some incorrectly.
Sentences	Sentences are clear and complete. Some are longer than others. They begin in different ways.	Sentences are usually complete. Some variety in beginnings and length.	Many poorly constructed sentences. Little variety in beginnings or length.	The paper is hard to read because of incomplete, run-on, and awkward sentences.
Conventions	Few, if any, errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar.	Spelling, punctuation and caps usually correct. Some grammar problems.	Errors are frequent enough to make the writing hard to understand.	Errors are so frequent they are distracting. The paper is almost impossible to read.

Appendix B

Writing Survey

1. How did you learn how to write?

2. How did you learn to develop your ideas for what you are writing?

3. What do you think a good writer needs in order to write well?

7. What do you find enjoyable about writing?

8. What do you find difficult about writing?

9. In general, how do you feel about writing?

Appendix C
Post Writing Survey

1. Do you like the new strategy you learned? Why or why not?

2. What do you find enjoyable about writing?

3. What do you find enjoyable about writing?

4. What do you need from your teacher in order to become a better writer?
