

Meeting All Students' Needs Within A Scripted Writing Curriculum: A Self-Study

by

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Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

It was a Wednesday afternoon in my kindergarten classroom. As I read through the list of objectives for the next day's writing lesson, I glanced over some of the students' writing samples from earlier that afternoon. I looked at Jayla's piece (all names used in this study are pseudonyms), which read, "It was a cold day in January, and I was watching TV." I recognized that Jayla was beginning to develop the setting of her story. I noticed that Kyree had demonstrated mastery of his lowercase y formation, and Alyssa was incorporating transition words, such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *finally* into her writing. I then looked at Sam's writing and I noticed that he had not yet mastered appropriate spacing between his words. Finally, I looked at Joseph's writing, which revealed a need in the area of listening for the middle sounds in simple words. Glancing back and forth from the writing samples to the lesson plan objectives, I noticed a wide range of strengths and needs for my young writers, some of which did not align with the lesson objectives. I couldn't help but think, "How can I make this work?"

I teach at an urban charter school called Waterbury Prep (all names for people and places are pseudonyms) within a charter school network which operates throughout the northeast United States. There are eleven elementary schools in the network, in which all teachers follow the same, scripted curriculum for all subjects except guided reading. The kindergarten writing lesson that I teach on Tuesday in my city is the same one that the kindergarten teacher in another city is teaching that day. Each week, classroom teachers are given scripted writing lesson plans. Each lesson begins with a ten-minute handwriting and conventions section, continues with approximately fifteen minutes of shared writing, and

concludes with about twenty minutes of independent writing. The writing curriculum is divided into units, each unit focusing on a new set of objectives. For each day's writing lesson, there are separate objectives for the handwriting/conventions and shared writing portions, and it is not uncommon to see six objectives for each section. For example, in the "Stories: Part I" unit of the kindergarten writing curriculum, the objectives for one day's lesson are as follows:

Handwriting:

Objectives:

1. SWBAT (Students will be able to) distinguish between telling, expressing, and asking sentences.
2. SWBAT use a question mark when writing an asking sentence.
3. SWBAT use a period when writing a telling sentence.
4. SWBAT use an exclamation mark when writing an expressing sentence.
5. SWBAT use an uppercase letter at the beginning of a sentence or with a proper noun.
6. SWBAT edit a sentence for mistakes.

Shared Writing:

Objectives:

1. SWBAT identify the main event of a given topic.
2. SWBAT draw the main event of a given topic.
3. SWBAT think about what happened right before the main event.
4. SWBAT draw a picture of what happened right before the main event.
5. SWBAT identify what to include in the beginning of the story (catchy opening, setting and right before).
6. SWBAT write what happened right before the main event.

Reinforced Objectives:

1. SWBAT write a sentence (complete thought).
2. SWBAT use chunks, blends, diphthongs and digraphs, learned in Reading Mastery, in their writing.

3. SWBAT use the correct punctuation at the end of the sentence.
4. SWBAT start next sentence with an uppercase letter (Pannia, Unit 7: Lesson 111, 2013).

Thinking back to that Wednesday afternoon, as I read through my students' writing samples, I couldn't help but notice the gap between the skills addressed in the lesson objectives and the skills that my students were working to master in their writing. As a teacher, I believe that the most learning occurs when instruction targets the needs of each individual student. I also recognize the importance of exposing all students to the rigorous writing skills addressed in our everyday scripted writing lessons. My dilemma then was this: How can I do my best teaching of writing within the parameters of a scripted writing curriculum?

Throughout my career in education, I have developed a belief that all students can learn if teachers carefully plan and teach each student what he or she is ready to learn. Vygotsky developed the theory of the zone of proximal development, or ZPD, which states that learning is maximized when a child is taught within her or his range of ability (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, a student will not grow if a concept that is too easy to understand is taught, nor will he or she make academic gains if the concept is too difficult for him or her to understand. The teacher must strategically plan to meet them somewhere in the middle. It has also been stated that all people learn at different rates (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, if everyone has different learning needs and learns at different rates, the art of meeting all students' needs lies in careful, individualized planning. However, at my school, we do not create our own lesson plans; other teachers outside of our own school building write them. My goal as a writing teacher, then, is to be able to meet all students' needs within the parameters of a scripted writing curriculum.

Significance of the Problem

In many classrooms today, teachers use a scripted curriculum. This means that there is a pre-written script that teachers read from to teach various subjects. Programs such as *Reading Mastery* (McGraw-Hill, 2013) for reading, and *Investigations* (TERC, 2012) for math are commercial programs often used in elementary schools across the nation. In my school, the writing curriculum is scripted, but not commercially-made. Instead, it is written based on New York Common Core objectives and network objectives. One of the elementary teachers in the network writes all the lessons for the year. The lesson is then shared across the network with every teacher to use in his or her own classroom.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002) made federal funding for schools contingent upon each school's performance on standardized tests. In each state, students have to take yearly standardized tests to assess student achievement of state standards (Randolph & Wilson-Younger, 2012). Scores on these tests are then public information, and school funding is continued or taken away based on these scores (NCLB, 2002). For this reason, pressure to succeed is very high. As a result, many schools have adopted the use of scripted programs, which are created to teach skills required by state standards (Ede, 2006). The idea is that if all students are taught the same set of lessons, all students will be on track to succeed come time for the mandated tests at the end of the school year.

However, it has been found that not all students learn at the same rate and that students learn best when teaching is individualized (Vygotsky, 1978). If teachers deliver individualized lesson plans, student learning is maximized. Herein lies our problem: What if the objectives of the scripted plan do not align with the immediate needs of the students?

Similarly, scripted curriculum plans include a set number of lesson plans, designed to be delivered in a sequential manner, over a designated amount of time. However, research on teaching writing in an early childhood classroom suggests that instruction is directly influenced by the ongoing, informal assessment of the students' abilities as writers (Tompkins, 2010; Calkins, 1994). For example, if a teacher discovers that many of her students are having trouble developing the setting of their narrative stories, she might teach a minilesson on developing setting in the subsequent days, as it is what her assessment of the students' writing shows a need for. However, if a teacher who is using a scripted curriculum notices the same need among his or her students, he or she is unable to instruct on that topic, as it is not what is prescribed in the lesson for that certain day.

Finally, research on teaching writing in early childhood classrooms suggests that writing is a social activity (Calkins, 1994; Clay, 1975), which is best taught through a workshop model (Calkins, 1994; Tompkins, 2010). Within this workshop model, students write on self-chosen topics using the writing process, and each student is writing at different rates (Tompkins, 2010). Also, as students write, teachers assess student work daily by conducting writing conferences (Graves, 1983). During these conferences, teachers assess what students are doing well as writers and what they need to learn in order to improve as writers. However, if a teacher is mandated to teach through a scripted writing plan, there is no opportunity for students to engage in real writing, for real purposes, at their own pace. Also, there is no room for teachers to deliver instruction based on assessment, as the plans are already scripted.

With a recent increase in the use of scripted curriculum programs, there has become a significant gap between what research suggests about teaching young writers, and the actual instruction that occurs in classrooms mandated to use scripted curriculum.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study, then, was to examine how I, as a kindergarten writing teacher, dealt with this problem in my everyday classroom. I planned to examine how I adapted and delivered scripted writing lesson plans to address all of my students' needs by asking questions around the adaptations that I made, and how I met all students' needs. However, as I gathered my data, my questions began to change, and the following questions emerged:

Question 1: How does a scripted kindergarten writing curriculum align with the research on emergent writing?

Question 2: What happens when I implement a scripted kindergarten writing curriculum?

With new questions, I found a new purpose. In addition to examining how I met my students' needs, I examined the lessons themselves to see how they aligned with current research on teaching emergent writers.

In the world of education that we teach in today, it is very likely that teachers will continue to be faced with mandates around what is taught and how it is taught. There is a great likelihood of having to teach using a scripted curriculum of sorts. Therefore, this study has helped me to gain an understanding of how I can balance my beliefs as a teacher with my obligation to deliver a mandated, scripted curriculum. Through analysis of my lesson adaptations and delivery, I discovered information that would assist me in my struggle to teach through scripted curriculum. I believe that my reflection on this writing curriculum will not only benefit my students, but benefit myself as a professional.

Study Approach

The purpose of this study was to examine the way in which I taught scripted writing lessons to meet all students' needs, and to examine the lessons themselves to see how they

align with current research.

Since my focus was on researching my own teaching method and rationale for lesson adaptation, this research was conducted as a qualitative self-study over a five-week period. Originally, I planned to collect data over six weeks, but as I collected data at the end of the school year, end-of-the-year activities often replaced the formal writing portion of our school day, and I stopped data collection after five weeks. Continual interim analysis of research journal entries and lesson plans with imposed edits was employed.

Throughout the five weeks of the study, I collected data in a research journal (Borg, 2011). Each day, after I taught the writing lesson, I took a few minutes to write a narrative reflection of the lesson. Guiding questions for the entry kept me on track to inquire about the following: the extent to which lesson objectives were met, which aspects of the lesson went well and which did not, what student strengths and needs were noticed during the lesson, and what adaptations needed to be made to the next day's lesson in order to meet student needs. These entries were written by the end of the school day on which the lesson was taught, in order to maintain the validity of the reflection.

Data for this study were also collected in the scripted writing lesson plans of the writing curriculum. Each day, I reviewed the lesson plan as it was scripted and made any changes that I thought were necessary based on the previous day's lesson reflection.

Both the research journal entries and the lesson plans underwent continual interim analysis (Mertler & Charles, 2008) beginning in the second week of the study. During data analysis, I surrounded myself with the data, and used a coding method to discover any emerging patterns or themes in the data. I then compared these patterns and themes to the current research on early writing behaviors and instruction to draw conclusions about teaching

within a scripted writing curriculum.

Rationale

Waterbury Prep is a school comprised of a faculty, including myself, who believes in the best practices of teaching. One best practice is delivering individualized, reflective instruction that meets all students' needs based on data collection and analysis.

The environment in which I teach provides the rationale for this self-study in many ways. First, Waterbury Prep has a curriculum based on scripted lesson plans that provide little to no room for implementation of any experimental or new instructional practices within the classroom instruction. For this reason, I decided to study myself as a teacher, rather than the students as learners.

Also, as scripted curricula continue to be adopted by many schools across our nation (Ede, 2006), I realize this is not something that will be going away in the near future, especially not within my own school setting. Therefore, to stay true to my educational philosophy, I must find a way to meet all children's individual needs within scripted curricula. I also hope that my findings about my own teaching will help others in a similar situation inform theirs as well.

Summary

Balancing reflective teaching to meet all students' needs with delivering instruction within a scripted curriculum is a daily struggle for me as a teacher. With the recent influx of scripted curriculum programs and the push for teaching towards achievement on standardized tests (Ede, 2006), I know that teaching within a scripted curriculum is a trend that is not going away anytime soon. This self-study will assist me in beginning to find a balance between the mandates of my school and my educational philosophy. I hope that this research will be an

educational resource that will inform my own teaching and the teaching of others as well.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To provide a context for my research, I have reviewed and synthesized the current literature regarding emergent learning and scripted curricula. First, I will present common theoretical bases for student learning. Then, I will discuss how research suggests that young students learn how to write. Next, I will synthesize the best practices for instruction of emergent writing, including assessment of writing, as outlined in the research. Finally, I will discuss the present, but limited, research around scripted curricula in the United States today.

Theories on Student Learning

Throughout history there have been many different theories presented about how students learn. Many of these theories are teacher-centered, such as behaviorism. Others are student-centered, such as constructivism and the sociolinguistic theory. It is common for teachers today to have an instructional approach that hinges on multiple theories, as I do in this study.

Behaviorism

Behaviorism, which was popularized by B.F. Skinner (1974), is built on the idea that learning is a behavior that can be learned or unlearned, and this behavior can be observed as it changes. Behaviorists believe the teacher is a dispenser of knowledge, and students learn skills and sub-skills from the teacher in a sequential order. Additionally, these skills can be learned using incentives and rewards as motivation (Tompkins, 2010).

Constructivism

Contrary to behaviorism, constructivists believe that learning is not observable; it is a mental process that is individual to each learner (Tompkins, 2010). Constructivism asserts that learning is a continuous and natural process (Smith, 1971), as students are naturally curious. This theory is student-centered, viewing the teacher as supervisor, who engages with students,

allowing them to create their own, new knowledge using their existing background knowledge (Tompkins, 2010).

Sociolinguistic Theory

Sociolinguists believe that the foundation for learning to read and write comes from oral language (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Vygotsky (1978, 1986) theorized that students use oral language to organize thoughts, communicate and share with others, and ultimately, to learn. This theory encourages the use of social groups in instruction, to allow for use of oral language while learning. Sociolinguists believe that the teacher's role is to scaffold student's learning, using Vygotsky's (1978) theory on the zone of proximal development, and authentic activities (Tompkins, 2010).

How Young Writers Learn to Write

Emergent Literacy

The term emergent literacy was coined by Marie Clay (Tompkins, 2010) and refers to the time period from birth until one reads and writes in a conventional way (Morrow & Tracey, 2007). For the purpose of this study, we will refer to young writers as emergent writers. Emergent writing, then, refers to the writing that is done by our youngest students. In a kindergarten classroom, it is typical to see many emergent writers. (Tompkins, 2010).

In the past, it was thought that literacy learning begins at the school-age. Since the 1970's, however, much research has been done demonstrating that even before school-age, children learn that print carries meaning (Clay, 1991; Morrow, 1989). As Lucy Calkins (1994) wrote, "They [young children] leave their mark on the backs of old envelopes, on living room walls, on shopping lists, and on their big sister's homework" (p.59). It has been shown that preschoolers can demonstrate literacy in a number of different ways such as reading, writing,

drawing, discussing literature, and performing (Pinnell & Fountas, 2011).

At the emergent level, children begin to show interest in writing (Tompkins, 2010). Lucy Calkins (1994) described early writing as an exploration that is a natural part of the growing process. Children often write within play, and write earnestly to communicate with others. It has also been discovered that children learn to write in naturally social situations (Calkins, 1994; Morrow, 1989). Often, young writers' understanding of writing reflects the writing behaviors within their environment. The type of writing they engage in is influenced by the writing that they have seen done around them (Calkins, 1994; Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000; Tompkins, 2010). However, as Don Graves (1983) illustrated, all children come to school ready to write, and believing they can write, even if it is not within the typical writing conventions taught in the classroom.

Skill Development in Emergent Writers

Much research has been done over the past thirty years to inquire about the developmental abilities of our youngest writers. While it is thought that there is no fixed sequence of events in the development of young writers (Clay, 1977), research has shown general skills which are acquired during the emergent years. These skills are used as guidelines for curriculum formation in kindergarten classrooms.

Emergent writers' writing pieces are composed of many forms of writing – drawings, scribbles, letters, names, and even sentences (Calkins, 1994). They are aware that writing is a form of communication, and at first, random scribbles represent writing.

Eventually, they attempt to make letters or letter-like forms. Often, the letters are not formed conventionally, but have many features of the letters they know. For example, some of their letters may be composed of straight lines, like the uppercase letter *E*, and others may have

some dots above them, like in the lowercase letter *i*. However, as Clay (1975) wrote, “Observation of children suggests that they do not learn about language on any one level of organization before they manipulate units at higher levels” (p. 19). In other words, emergent writers do not need to have knowledge of all twenty-six letters of the alphabet in order to begin attempts at using them in their writing. Similarly, they do not need to master the conventions of writing in order to compose an entire story. However, as they grow, their writing begins to demonstrate mastery of a few principles of early writing (Clay, 1975).

As they grow as writers, children begin to develop a directionality principle, writing from left to right, and sweeping to the next line, otherwise known as return sweep (Clay, 1975; Tompkins, 2010). Within their writing pieces, children also tend to repeat the same symbols over and over again, which Clay (1975) described as the recurring principle. It is common for young children to write symbols and letters they know, such as the letters in their name or a punctuation mark they have learned, repeatedly throughout their writing. Also, it is common for emergent writers to use the elements of the symbols and letters that they know, to create new symbols. Clay (1975) defined this as the generating principle. Initially, emergent writers can only reread their writing immediately after they write it, but with time, they are able to recall what their writing says (Tompkins, 2010).

In the emergent writing stage, young writers are usually capable of writing five to twenty high-frequency words and their first and last names. High-frequency words are the most common words that readers and writers use again and again (Tompkins, 2010). According to Pinnell and Fountas (1998), kindergarteners learn to read and write many of the following words: a, am, an, and, at, can, do, go, he, I, in, is, it, like, me, my, no, see, she, so, the, to, up, we.

When spelling words that are not high-frequency words, young children use what Read

(1975) called invented spelling. This means that they spell words phonetically, using the letters and sounds that they know. For example, a young child may write the word *TIGR* for *tiger* or *FEL* for *feel* (Tompkins, 2010).

Research has revealed that children typically move through five stages of spelling before they spell conventionally. These five stages are emergent spelling, letter name-alphabetic spelling, within-word pattern spelling, syllables and affixes spelling, and derivational relations spelling (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2008). In this study, the students range from five to six years of age. According to research, most three- to five-year-olds fall into the emergent spelling stage, in which students learn to make a distinction between drawing and writing, how to make letters, directionality of writing on a page, and some letter-sound matches (Tompkins, 2010). Most five- to seven-year-olds are in the second stage of letter name-alphabetic spelling. In this stage, students learn the alphabetic principle (that sounds are represented by certain letters), consonant and short vowel sounds, and consonant blends and digraphs (Tompkins, 2010).

As research shows, our youngest writers are capable of demonstrating many writing skills. Their enthusiasm and necessity for writing warrants curriculum and instruction that fosters the skills they come to school with, and supports growth of new skills in writing.

Early Writing Instruction

The research on early writing instruction over the past thirty years builds on the research of multiple learning theories and emergent literacy. A successful writing classroom implements a social and word-rich writing environment that employs a writer's workshop and the writing process to produce quality writing pieces (Neuman et al., 2000; Tompkins, 2010).

Writing workshop. As mentioned earlier, young children write in naturally social

situations (Calkins, 1994; Morrow, 1989). Therefore, it is often recommended to establish a writing workshop (Bromley, 2007; Calkins, 1994; Tompkins, 2010) in which “the classroom becomes a community of writers who write and share their writing” (Tompkins, 2010, p. 349). As they write, students use the writing process, which follows the steps of “planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing for a real audience” (Bromley, 2007, p. 245). A writing workshop has many components, such as minilessons, work time, peer conferring and/or response groups, share sessions, and publication celebrations (Calkins, 1994). Variations on these components can be made across classrooms, but the main purpose of each is consistent.

Minilessons. “Effective instruction includes rich demonstrations, interactions, and models of literacy in the course of activities that make sense to young children” (Neuman et al., 2000, p. 11). An optimal method for this demonstration and interaction is the minilesson. According to Tompkins (2010), minilessons are “explicit instruction about literacy procedures, concepts, strategies, and skills that are taught to individual students, small groups, or the whole class, depending on students’ needs” (p. 486). Writing workshop usually begins with a minilesson on a topic that is deemed appropriate based on the needs of the entire class, as assessed by the teacher. However, lessons typically fall into one of the following categories: procedural (how the workshop runs), writer’s process, qualities of good writing, or editing skills (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). During the minilessons, the teacher may share a piece of writing as a model, so the students know what good writing looks like and sounds like (Calkins, 1994). The skills taught in the minilesson are then carried over into students writing during the work time component.

Work time. During the work time, students scatter around the classroom, and work on writing a piece on a self-chosen topic that they have been writing about continuously over a

period of time. As they write, they have access to the classroom library, so they can refer to the models of good writing they have seen in their reading instruction (Tompkins, 2010). As Calkins (1994) points out, it is also important for young students to have access to the many different materials to write and draw with – different types of paper, writing utensils, or little pre-made books stapled together. During the work time, students can confer with one another. “When doing individual seatwork, children are silent and solitary. Working collaboratively, by contrast, requires children to continually use and respond to language. Children explain, describe, challenge, negotiate” (Neuman et al., 2000, p. 53).

Conferring. The work time component is also when writing conferences occur. Conferences may take place student-to-teacher, peer-to-peer, or in writing groups (Tompkins, 2010). According to Calkins (1994), the components of an effective conference can be summed up in the phrase, “research, decide, teach” (p. 224). A conferrer meets with the author, who reads his or her work aloud. Then the conferrer asks questions about the work, doing research about the author and his or her work. Then, the conferrer decides what to suggest, based on what he or she thinks the student needs to hear most to improve the writing. Finally, the conferrer teaches the writer how to make the improvement. Graves (1983) states the importance of listening during conferring. Over time, young children learn how to speak about their writing and the process of their writing. The writing conference is also a time to individualize teaching. No one child possesses the same knowledge, and therefore, instruction should be suited to each individual child (Neuman et al., 2000). The writing conference is a good place to teach each individual based on his or her needs. According to Fletcher and Portalupi (2001), common conference topics for kindergarten writers are adding to the drawing, adding words to a drawing, sounding out words, spacing, adding more details, adding a second page or more, and including a

beginning, middle, and end.

Publication and celebration. Finally, it is important to give young children's writing some value and purpose, through sharing, publication, and celebration. Calkins (1994) writes, "The first step toward improving our student's earliest efforts is, I believe, to attend to them" (p. 267). Many schools have celebrations of student writers in the form of a school-wide Author's Day of sorts, but Calkins argues that publication and celebration should happen consistently throughout the year, as the pride gained from feeling a part of "the world of authorship" (Calkins, 1994, p. 266) can be momentum for young children to continue their efforts as writers. Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) suggest having a time during each writing workshop designated as share time, which can happen in either a whole-group or small-group setting. During the share time, students share the piece of writing they have been working on, whether it is complete or not, with an objective of getting feedback from the teacher and their peers.

Handwriting. Don Graves (1983) writes about the importance of handwriting instruction. He notes that there are five phases of handwriting. The first phase is the "get it down" stage, where children just write to write, mixing drawings, letters, and numbers with little regard for conventions. In the next stage, "first aesthetics," the children begin to care about the neatness of their writing, and discover the use of an eraser, sometimes ripping their paper from multiple erasure marks. In the third stage, they become fussy about spacing, and begin to look back into their writing to fix it up. Graves called this stage the "growing age of convention." Next, children progress into the "breaking conventions" stage, where they begin to use unconventional signs and symbols, such as arrows to add information into rough drafts of their work. Finally, in the "later aesthetics" stage, they begin to focus less on neatness, as they realize that their drafts are not yet final copies, and are open to edits. In this stage, you begin to see

young writers crossing out rather than erasing.

Handwriting instruction in kindergarten is contested by some who believe that kindergarteners are too young to learn handwriting skills (Tompkins, 2010). However, Graves (1983) argues that it is important to teach young writers the proper way to place their paper, arm, and wrist when writing. When writing, paper must be “slightly to the right of the midline and turned at a forty-five degree angle (Graves, 1983).” He adds that the arm and wrist should be on the table, and not in motion, and the pencil should be gripped with the thumb, index, and middle fingers and held at an angle to the paper. These small, but teachable, skills are imperative to incorporating the smaller muscles that create control when writing.

Instruction in handwriting is necessary to allow for fluency in writing and to prevent children from learning bad handwriting habits which must later be broken (Tompkins, 2010). Graves (1983) supports this, writing, “when handwriting flows, the writer has better access to his own thoughts and information” (p. 181). To teach proper letter formation in kindergarten and first grade, many teachers create succinct directions for each letter, putting it to a tune or a rhythm. For example, to form a lowercase letter *a*, they may sing, “All around and make a tail,” sung to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” When instructing, it is important that the teacher models formation of the letter first, followed by supervised independent practice, with specific feedback given to those who are forming their letters incorrectly.

Writing Assessment. Assessment of writing can be conducted in many different ways. Some of the most popular methods are anecdotal conference notes, rubrics, and portfolios. Using these methods, students’ writing can be assessed for both growth and quality.

Anecdotal conference notes. The structure of a writing workshop includes time for conferring with students about their writing. During this time, teachers should be taking

informal, anecdotal notes about the conference (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1983; Tompkins, 2010). This collection of notes about each student as a writer can serve as an assessment tool to measure growth and quality of the writing. Calkins (1994) and Graves (1983) note the importance of creating a system to record and save these conference notes. Calkins also suggests saving rough drafts, checklists, and anything else that may give a snapshot of a student's journey as a writer. Anecdotal conference notes can be beneficial when looking at the growth of a young writer over time. They can also serve as springboards for discussion during parent conferences.

Portfolios. Another form of assessment is a writing portfolio. A portfolio is an ongoing collection of student work throughout the year that documents growth (Bromley, 2007; Tompkins, 2010). Usually, the collection is held in a folder, large envelope, or box (Tompkins, 2010). Together, students and teachers choose pieces that represent their journeys as writers to include in the portfolio. Calkins (1994) stresses the importance of including both weak and strong pieces of work and including other records that children keep of their writing to document their triumphs and struggles as a writer. Throughout the year, the portfolio is accessible to students, parents, and teachers to use for assessment, reflection, planning, and discussion (Bromley, 2007; Calkins, 1994).

Rubrics. Writing can also be assessed using rubrics, or scoring guides (Bromley, 2007; Tompkins, 2010). A rubric can be generated by a classroom teacher or by a group of educators collaboratively. They can also be created alongside students. When students co-create a rubric with teacher guidance, they begin to develop metacognitive strategies to think about themselves as writers (Tompkins, 2010). The rubric usually has multiple numerical levels related to the categories of quality writing. The qualities are generally related to ideas, organization, voice (or

the style of the writing), word choice, sentence fluency (or how well the language flows), and conventions (also known as grammar or mechanics) (Culham, 2003; Tompkins, 2010). For each category, the piece of writing receives a numerical score, and the categorical scores produce an overall score for the piece. Rubrics can and should be shared with students before they write, and used by students as a guide during writing (Bromley, 2007). As Bromley (2007) writes, “knowing the key components of a good piece of writing provides students with goals for writing and the characteristics of a good report, essay, letter, PowerPoint presentation, play, or poem, for example, before they write” (p. 257). It is important to note that although rubrics generate a final number grade, they should be used only on key assignments (Bromley, 2007). As Fletcher & Portalupi (2000) write, “putting a grade on top of a paper often erases the student’s own evaluation of the work” (p. 105), and as teachers, we need to encourage students’ self-evaluation as well as our own in order to foster their growth as writers (Bromley, 2007; Calkins, 1994). One benefit of using rubrics is that they create a common vocabulary around the qualities of writing (Culham, 2003). Also, they can help parents understand their child’s writing grades (Bromley, 2007).

It is important to note that each form of assessment should not only be used as an indicator of achievement, but as a piece of data to inform students, teachers, and parents about students’ strengths and needs in writing (Calkins, 1994; Culham, 2003).

Scripted Curricula

According to Ede (2006), “scripted curriculum materials are instructional materials that have been commercially prepared and require the teacher to read from a script while delivering the lesson” (p. 29). Over the past decade, the use of scripted curricula has grown. With the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, President George W. Bush signed a reform bill that would ensure

all American students are reading at grade-level by 3rd grade (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). This led to the Reading First initiative, which provided funding to schools that adapt "scientifically-based" reading programs. "Programs qualifying as scientifically based are those that incorporate explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension" (Ede, 2006, p. 30). Even before NCLB, legislators created mandates that required teachers to use a single instructional method, or a "perfect method," or "silver bullet," as Duffy & Hoffman (1999) describe it. The current legislative push toward a single instructional method, which is usually pre-packaged commercially (Fang, Fu, & Lamme, 2004) has had some positive effects, but mostly negative ones.

Since the NCLB legislation addresses reading instruction, most of the recent research has been done in the area of scripted reading curriculum. The effectiveness of major scripted reading programs, such as Open Court and Success For All, has been studied extensively. Some studies find scripted programs such as these to be successful, while others have found that they do not make much difference in students' reading achievement.

One study that found scripted reading programs to be effective compared two groups of students – one of which was given Open Court scripted reading instruction, and the other was given a non-scripted comprehensive reading program. It was found that when tested at the end of the year, the students who were given Open Court scripted reading instruction scored higher on reading achievement tests than those who were not (Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider, & Mehta, 1998). Another study found similar results with the scripted reading program Success For All. When comparing two schools over two years – one who used Success For All and the other who did not – it was found that the students who were taught using Success For All scored better on reading, language, social studies and science achievement tests (Hurley,

Chamberlain, Slavin, & Madden, 2001).

There have also been studies that show the ineffectiveness of scripted programs such as Open Court and Success For All. In 2002, Moustafa and Land found no evidence that the Open Court reading program fosters reading achievement. Similarly, Greenlee & Bruner (2001) found that over a three-year period, students who were taught through the Success For All program gained 8.5% on reading achievement scores and students who were not taught through Success For All gained 17% on reading achievement scores, which suggests the ineffectiveness of the Success For All program.

While most research on scripted curricula has been conducted with commercially-produced reading programs, the research shows a divided camp on whether or not scripted programs are effective for learning. The limited amount of research on scripted writing programs gives an even greater rationale for this research.

Besides the effect of one-size-fits-all reading programs on student reading achievement, there is also research that explores the effect of this current educational climate on student learning overall, and the effect on teacher development.

In terms of students, Fang, Fu, & Lamme (2004) cite that when schools use prescribed, scripted programs, student engagement decreases as well as overall student learning. Additionally, children are negatively affected because teachers are unable to use differentiated methods to teach students who need them in order to learn (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999).

Scripted curricula and similar programs also have an effect on the profession of teaching itself. Since mandated programs have a prescribed curriculum for all students, teachers do not need to craft instruction for their students; they only need to deliver instruction. As Duffy & Hoffman (1999) write, the professional heart of teaching is threatened because teachers are

unable to use innovation and creativity to craft teaching to the needs of students. Similarly, Fang, Fu, & Lamme (2004) state that it “undermines teacher morale and inhibits their development of professional expertise and wisdom” (p. 58).

As a response to these negative impacts on both students and teachers, researchers strongly recommend an investment in the professional development of teachers (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999; Fang, Fu & Lamme, 2004). As Duffy & Hoffman (1999) write, “The answer is not in the method; it is in the teacher” (p. 11). In order to cultivate strong classrooms, we must build strong teachers, through thoughtful professional development.

Conclusion

Substantial research over the past few decades has discovered much about young writers. A child writes naturally in social settings, incorporating writing into their play. They acquire the skills of writing gradually, but in no set order. Writing instruction should then foster the natural capabilities of emergent writers through use of a writing workshop, which includes developmentally appropriate handwriting support and instruction, and authentic writing assessments such as anecdotal notes, portfolios, and rubrics.

Research regarding scripted curricula in the area of writing is limited, but research shows that the push toward mandate-driven scripted programs has led to mostly negative effects in the world of education. Since similar legislation continues to develop, more research needs to be done to evaluate the effects of these scripted programs.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As a kindergarten teacher in a network of charter schools that uses mostly scripted lesson plans, it has been a daily challenge for me to balance teaching from the script and meeting all of my students' needs. This was especially difficult in writing, as there was a wide range of abilities among all thirty-one of my students. At times, I thought the lesson objectives did not always match the immediate needs of my students. I found myself adapting lesson plans spontaneously, mid-lesson. I thought it would be valuable, then, for me to explore the daily lessons, my daily negotiation of the lessons and the impact of my lesson adaptations on my students' writing.

The main purpose of this qualitative self-study, as stated in Chapter 1, was to study how I met my students' needs within a scripted writing curriculum and to examine the lessons themselves to see how they aligned with current research on teaching emergent writers. I hoped that an in-depth self-study around this issue would give me insight into the following questions:

Question 1: How does a scripted kindergarten writing curriculum align with the research on emergent writing?

Question 2: What happens when I implement a scripted kindergarten writing curriculum?

Context of the Study

School & Classroom

This study was conducted at Waterbury Prep (all names are pseudonyms), which is a K-3 elementary school within a network of non-profit urban charter schools. The network includes 32 schools throughout the northeast United States and serves close to 8,000 students with a mission of preparation for college. The network has a reputation for excellence in performance

on statewide standardized tests, and achieves this through setting rigorous academic and behavioral standards for their students (www.uncommonschools.org).

Founded in 2010, Waterbury Prep is located in a mid-size city in western New York. It serves over 350 students, Kindergarten through Grade 3, and will expand to full capacity in 2013-2014 to serve through Grade 4 (Operations Manager, Waterbury Prep, personal communication, March 1, 2013). At Waterbury Prep, there is an extended school year (late August through June), and an extended school day, which begins with breakfast at 7:00 and commences with dismissal at 4:00. Students receive daily instruction in reading, math, writing, social studies or science and music or physical education in blocks of 40-70 minutes.

Each classroom at Waterbury Prep is led by two teachers and serves about 30 students. While both teachers in each classroom are responsible for student learning in all areas, for most parts of the day, one teacher leads instruction while the other offers instructional support.

The classroom in which I conducted this study was comprised of 31 kindergarten students, taught by my co-teacher and me. The two of us had been teaching together since August of 2012, and the study was conducted in May and June of 2013.

Writing Curriculum

As this study was focused around kindergarten writing instruction, it is imperative for me to explain how writing was taught in our classroom throughout the research period, which is how it is currently taught as well. Writing is taught daily in the middle of the day. Each forty-five minute block is broken up into three sections: handwriting and conventions, shared writing, and independent writing.

The handwriting and conventions section (lasting about ten minutes) is dedicated to meeting objectives around letter formation and writing conventions. In the beginning of the

kindergarten year, each day of handwriting is focused on direct teaching of letter formation, and each lowercase and uppercase letter gets a day's worth of instruction, with review days for every three or four letters. The letters are taught using the Zaner-Blosser Handwriting system, and the Kindergarten Handwriting workbook ("Zaner-Bloser," n.d.). First, the lead teacher models the letter formation, while orally narrating each stroke. Then, the students join in on the oral stroke narration, as the teacher forms more models of the letter. Next, the students form one line of practice letters together in their workbook, while chorally saying the stroke narration. Finally, the students independently form the second line of letters while narrating the strokes to themselves. During the independent handwriting portion, both the lead teacher and the co-teacher are circulating to each student, circling their best work, and giving them feedback on their letter formation.

Once all letters, numbers 1-10, and basic punctuation marks are taught (usually around January) the handwriting and conventions portion of the lesson moves toward more conventions. First, the curriculum dictates teaching telling sentences, asking sentences and expressing sentences, and their correlating punctuation marks - the period, question mark, and exclamation mark. Students are directly taught the function of each type of sentence and what punctuation mark it ends with. Similar to the process of teaching letter formation, the teacher begins by modeling reading a sentence, determining the type, and inserting the correct punctuation at the end. Next, the students assist in doing the same, and finally, the students independently read two sentences and determine the type of punctuation needed.

As the year progresses, the conventions objectives focus on rules of capitalization and determining run-on versus complete sentences. All skills are taught in the same gradual release method (Gambrell, Morrow, & Pressley, 2007).

The second portion of each writing lesson is shared writing (lasting about fifteen minutes). In this section, the lead teacher narrates his or her thoughts as he or she composes a model piece of writing on a given topic. Usually, the topics are in the narrative format, “Tell about a time you ____.” The basic writing process used throughout the kindergarten writing curriculum is called “Think, Draw, Think, Write.” Students are taught to first think about their picture, then draw their picture. Next, they must think about their story, and finally write their story. As the teacher writes his or her story, which is projected onto a big screen in the front of the classroom, he or she highlights certain components of the writing, depending on the objectives of the lesson. For example, if a major objective for the day is developing the setting of the story, the teacher will talk about how he or she is visualizing the event in his or her mind to picture where he or she was and when the event happened before they draw their picture of the setting. Throughout the shared writing section, the teacher will use different questioning techniques to prompt students for assistance in writing their stories. Questions are always related to the lesson objectives. During this section of the lesson, the co-teacher is again monitoring the students, and redirecting their attention when necessary.

The final section of the writing lesson is independent writing. During this section, the lesson objectives are reviewed, and students are given their own “Tell about a time you ____” writing prompt. Lessons are scripted so that students are given twenty minutes to write independently on the given topic. Students take out their personal writing journals, which consist of paper with boxes for drawing a picture at the top and structured writing lines below. During independent writing, students stay at individual desks, while both the lead teacher and the co-teacher circulate through the room conferencing with individual students. At times, under discretion from the lead teacher, one teacher may pull a few students who are struggling with

certain writing skills to a table in the back of the room, to provide more supervision and direction during the independent writing process. At the end of the independent writing block, the teachers choose two or three pieces of student work to share on the projector, pointing out the strengths of the piece, as related to the lesson objectives.

Participant & Positionality

Since the purpose of this study was to explore scripted lessons and the ways in which I adapted scripted writing plans, I chose to conduct a self-study, with myself as the sole participant. Since I was the one adapting, delivering, and reflecting on the lessons, I was able to reflect deeply on the experience of teaching within a scripted writing curriculum. I hope to be able to use the findings of my study to impact my teaching of writing in the future.

I am a Caucasian female in my late twenties. I was educated in a suburban school on Long Island, New York, where a majority of my classmates were white and middle-class like me. I continued my education at the State University of New York at Geneseo, where I earned a degree in Elementary Education and Special Education for grades one through six in 2008. Currently, I am working toward my Master's degree in Literacy at the State University of New York at Brockport.

Professionally, I have been teaching since late 2008. I began my career substitute teaching in an urban district in western New York, which serves mostly minority, low-income students. Throughout my substitute career I have worked with all grades first through sixth, and with both general education and special education populations. In 2011, I began teaching kindergarten for my current employer, Waterbury Prep, a charter school in the same urban community where I had taught previously. Currently, I hold the same position as a kindergarten teacher at the same school.

“Engaging in classroom inquiry can transform an educator’s views on teaching and learning” (Baumann & Duffy-Hester, 2002, p. 2). Therefore, I think it is important to communicate my positionality as a teacher-researcher as it was prior to this study, so I can most accurately reflect on the research experience.

Throughout my education and professional experiences, I have developed my own philosophy of education. First and foremost, I firmly believe that every child has the ability to learn, provided that they are given an appropriate education that meets their individual needs. In order to provide this education, a school must provide a safe environment that sets clear, school-wide behavioral and academic expectations. In the classroom, expectations around behavior must be clear and consistent, as behavior management is imperative in order to maximize learning time. I believe that instruction should be delivered explicitly, in an engaging manner, as children learn best when fully engaged and motivated (Justinger, 2011). Instruction should be delivered in both whole-group and small-group settings, allowing plenty of opportunities for student learning at each time of the day. I believe that instruction of major skills, such as comprehension and writing, can be embedded throughout the day and not just in their designated blocks of time. In order to best meet the needs of all students, a teacher must differentiate instruction to meet individual student needs, and scaffold instruction using explicit models, guided practice and independent practice (Gambrell et al., 2007). Assessment must play a large role in any successful classroom, and should be done through informal daily assessments, and formal interval assessments. Ongoing assessment of student learning should inform the daily instruction within the classroom. Finally, I highly value clear communication. I believe that there should be a constant flow of communication around students between teachers, families, and other school professionals in order to ensure that all parties involved are working together

toward a common goal of maximizing student growth.

Data Collection

The purpose of this study was to examine how I negotiate scripted writing lesson plans to meet the needs of all of my students and to examine the lessons themselves to see how they align with current research on emergent writers. In order to do this, I gathered data through collecting the original writing lesson plans along with my edited version of each, and keeping a research journal in which I narrated my thinking through the lesson adaptation process. My analysis of these documents provided me with some insight into how I meet student needs within a scripted writing curriculum.

Lesson Plans

My first source of data was the scripted writing lesson plans. Each day, for five weeks, I collected and copied the daily lesson plan, as it had been given to me. Then, if necessary, I adapted this lesson plan as I saw fit, according to the needs of my students. I made edits to the plan the day before it was to be taught, after reflection on the current day's writing had been recorded in the research journal (to be explained). I made edits to the lesson using a colored pen to cross-out areas I thought were not needed, and drew a star to indicate areas where I thought something needed to be added or altered. I then copied the original lesson plan, along with the edited lesson plan and kept them in a data folder throughout the remainder of the study.

Research Journal

The second component of data collection was a research journal. According to Borg (2011), "journal writing can be an effective means of pursuing thoughts, discovering insights, and making decisions" (p. 169). As I navigated through the writing curriculum, I documented my experience in a virtual narrative journal. After each writing lesson, I reflected on that lesson

and prepared for the next day's lesson in the journal. This was done after completion of the lesson, but no later than the close-of-business for that school day. For each journal entry during the first few weeks, I wrote a narrative that focused on the following questions:

- Which lesson objectives were met for most (75% or more) students?
 - What evidence am I using to support this data?
 - Based on observation and research, what do you think are some possible reasons why some students did not meet those objectives?
 - What can you do in future lessons to support those students?
- Were there other writing skills (that are not listed in the objectives) that you think need to be taught or reinforced to support student writing?
- What went well during the lesson?
 - Why do you think it went well?
- Were there any struggles during the lesson?
 - Based on observation and research, why do you think the struggle occurred?
- Looking at tomorrow's lesson, what adaptations will you make, if any, to address student needs? What evidence am I using to make these decisions?

However, as I analyzed my first round of data, I realized that my reflections were not directly related to the questions above, and therefore changed my guiding questions to the following:

- What went well during the lesson?
 - Why do you think it went well?
- Were there any struggles during the lesson?

- Based on observation and research, why do you think the struggle occurred?
- Based on research and your professional training, what is your professional evaluation of the lesson as a whole as it related to student abilities and student needs?
 - What are the positive aspects?
 - What are the negative aspects?
- Looking at tomorrow's lesson, what adaptations will you make, if any, to address student needs? What evidence am I using to make these decisions?

Each entry focused on my most important takeaways based on the day's lesson. All questions were not answered each day, but they served as a guide when reflecting on the lesson. After reflecting in the research journal, lesson adaptations, if needed, were made as stated above.

Data Analysis

Originally, data were collected and then analyzed to search for answers to these two research questions:

Question 1: How do I address the varying needs of my students within a scripted writing curriculum?

Question 2: How do I adapt scripted writing lesson plans to address all student needs?

However, as I began to code and analyze the data I found that my reflections were shedding light on two slightly different questions, and I decided to continue my analysis through the lens of these new questions:

Question 1: How does a scripted kindergarten writing curriculum align with the research on emergent writing?

Question 2: What happens when I implement a scripted kindergarten writing curriculum?

I analyzed both the lesson plan adaptations and the research journal using qualitative research analysis methods.

Lesson Plans

As lesson plans were adapted, I began continual interim analysis (Mertler & Charles, 2008) immediately. After about a week of lesson plans were adapted, I surrounded myself with the lesson plans, re-read through the lessons and adaptations, and began to gain a preliminary picture of the data. I started to see patterns emerge throughout the lesson adaptations and I began to see a few big categories (Mertler & Charles, 2008). I assigned each category of adaptation a color and highlighted each adaptation its appropriate color. I also took notes at the bottom of each lesson plan. Coding the data set in this way allowed me to notice overarching themes in the lesson adaptation process. According to Roberts (2011), “a theme is found when substantial quantity of similar codes can be clustered together in a broad category (p. 46).” Doing this allowed me to see trends in the way I adapted the scripted lesson plans.

Research Journal

I also began continual interim analysis (Mertler & Charles, 2008) immediately as I collected data in my research journal. After two weeks, I printed out the collected entries and read through them to look across the data set and gain a preliminary picture of the data. As I read through the entries, I used a pencil to make theoretical, personal, and methodological notes at the bottom of each reflection. As happened with the lesson plans, I began to see trends in the reflections. I used a highlighter to code the data (Mertler & Charles, 2008), similar to the way I coded the lesson plans. At this point in the research, I realized that my reflections were not directly connected to my questions. This led me to discover my true underlying questions around this issue, and I changed my research questions as mentioned above. My preliminary

analysis influenced my later journal entries, as well as subsequent lesson plan revisions. After coding the data in both my lesson plans and research journal, I triangulated the data and realized that there were several themes that ran through both data sets, which helped me to gain a greater understanding of my adaptation process.

Procedures

The data collection for this study took place over five weeks. The following was my sequential plan for collection:

Week 1:

- Began lesson plan adaptation
- Began writing research journal entries

Weeks 2 – 3:

- Continued lesson plan adaptations
- Continued writing research journal entries
- Began weekly analysis of both lesson plan and research journal data sets and identified emerging trends, themes, and patterns using a highlighting coding system
- Rewrote guiding research questions to reflect trends, themes, and patterns

Weeks 4-5:

- Continued lesson plan adaptations
- Continued research journal entries

Criteria for Trustworthiness

According with Mertler (2008), “both the collection and analysis of qualitative data are prone to errors of subjectivity and imprecision (p. 153).” As a teacher-researcher, I have been committed to conducting this study with accuracy and precision. The results of this study will

impact my future teaching strategies, and therefore, I have ensured that I collected and analyzed data in the most valid and credible manner possible. To ensure trustworthiness, I used prolonged engagement over five weeks. I wrote detailed and earnest reflections in the research journal that accurately depicted my reflections on the lesson. Also, I made sure that the reflections were written consistently each day and as quickly as possible after the lesson to ensure validity of the reflections. During analysis, I used triangulation across multiple data sources to ensure that my analysis is valid and credible. I also found multiple sources of evidence and used an objective lens when interpreting the data (Mertler & Charles, 2008). This has ensured that my bias or any anticipated findings did not influence the study results.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study was conducted in an ethical and trustworthy manner, there may be some limitations to its results. First, this study was conducted based on the data collected from one participant in one context. The study was conducted at a charter school, which delivers instruction differently than other public schools, which may make generalization of the findings difficult. Also, since it was a self-study, the perspectives gathered from the research journal are one-sided.

Another limitation may be the time period during which data was collected. Data collection began in late May 2013 and ended in late June 2013. This was the end of the school year, and during this time the school was placing great focus and attention on preparing for end-of-the-year exams. Due to this and other unforeseen circumstances, such as field trips and assemblies, there were some days when the writing lesson was not delivered as scripted, or even delivered at all (when the writing period was cut from the schedule).

Finally, the analysis of the research journal data was based on my own interpretations,

which could be biased based on my educational philosophy. I have grounded my interpretations in theoretical knowledge and in the data to mitigate this risk as much as possible.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative self-study was to explore how I adapted scripted writing lessons to meet all of my students' needs and how the scripted writing curriculum aligns with current research. In order to gain a solid understanding of my practices, I employed the use of lesson adaptations and a research journal within my own kindergarten classroom for five weeks. I analyzed the data using continual interim analysis (Mertler & Charles, 2008), grounding my interpretations in theory in order to ensure the validity of the study. I think that my findings will help guide me to become a better teacher of writing within the context of scripted lessons.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine how I deal with the everyday struggle of teaching writing to my kindergarteners within a scripted curriculum. This research set out to answer two major questions:

Question 1: How does a scripted kindergarten writing curriculum align with the research on emergent writing?

Question 2: What happens when I implement a scripted kindergarten writing curriculum?

Although the original research plan was to collect data on the implementation of the scripted writing curriculum for six weeks, the sixth week was the last week of instruction, and because of field trips, assemblies, and other end-of-the-year events, writing was cut from instruction. Therefore, over five weeks in June of 2013, I delivered scripted writing plans and adapted them when I thought it was appropriate. I kept a research journal in which I reflected on how the lessons went, what adaptations I made, and how the scripted lesson related to research and my students' needs and abilities.

There were a few major themes that emerged throughout the analysis of the data I collected through my research journal and lesson plans. The first two themes revolve around the authenticity of the curriculum as it relates to current research, specifically of the writing experience and the writing workshop. The third theme was that the objectives of lessons were often addressing skills beyond the skills set of emergent writers. Fourth, there was a pattern of teacher frustration. Finally, lesson adaptation was very common throughout the data.

Theme 1: Authenticity of Writing Experiences

Throughout the data set, it was found that students were having inauthentic writing experiences, as compared to what research tells us emergent writing experiences should be.

First, the writing block left little to no room for social interaction. Second, the students were not given opportunities to create ownership of their writing. Finally, the scripted curriculum included many parts of the writing process as outlined in the research, but was not fully aligned in the implementation of the process as a whole.

Lack of Social Interaction

One major theme I found was that although research on emergent writers suggests that children need to have authentic writing experiences in a social atmosphere, the students were not writing socially.

Young writers, or emergent writers, as Marie Clay referred to them (Tompkins, 2010), often write within a social situation. Naturally social situations are where emergent writers learn to write, as writing is an inherently social activity (Calkins, 1994; Morrow, 1989). After all, as Calkins (1994) writes, “Writers need to be heard” (p.15). When students have an opportunity to read to and listen to others during writing, they have a sense of purpose for their writing – so they can share it with others. Also, when students can confer about their writing with each other, they begin to write as if they were readers. According to Calkins, “When writers have readers who really try to understand and learn from them, writers soon internalize these readers” (p. 100). Students begin asking themselves the questions they need to in order to improve their writing.

In the scripted writing lessons examined in this study, there was limited social interaction. During the shared writing portion of the lesson, the students would interact with me, offering suggestions for the writing. For example, on May 29, 2013, students helped to craft the “teacher story” by reciting the “Juicy Story” song. This song highlights elements of a “juicy story,” one that adds details, uses “WOW Words” or vocabulary words, and uses hyperbole and

dialogue. When I would ask, “How can I make my story juicy?” and students would not be able to come up with an idea, I would prompt them with this song, which would trigger ideas to expand the shared writing. Individual students would then give me suggestions for expanding my story.

However, the students never interacted with each other. Even during a stretch of days where the objective of the lesson was to revise and edit their writing, students were instructed to do so independently, with no input from an outside source whatsoever. For example, from the May 30, 2013 lesson plan, which had an objective regarding students revising their writing, students were directed to do so independently using only a checklist, after the teacher had modeled how to do so. The checklist prompts students to check for their name and date, neat handwriting, correct punctuation, correct spelling, correct use of capitalization, and to reread their story to ensure it makes sense. The lesson plan dictated that after a teacher model, the students were to independently go step-by-step through a checklist of editing elements. As the students check for and revise these things in their story (if necessary), they are directed to put a check mark in that element’s corresponding box on the checklist sheet. This entire process is to be done by each student independently, as the lesson plan dictates.

During this portion of the lesson, as I observed my students trying to independently implement the checklist, there were many hands that immediately shot up in the air to ask a question. As I made my rounds to these students, they would say things like, “I don’t know what to do,” and “Is this right?” Clearly, my students were looking for someone else’s input on whether their edits and revisions were correct, which shows a need for social interaction during the writing block.

Other students earnestly tried to implement the writing checklist independently, but failed

to do so correctly. As I wrote in my research journal on May 30, 2013, “As the lesson indicated, they used highlighters [to revise], but that was a mess as well,” and “The students were really trying, but it was difficult for them to say the least.” Then again on June 3, 2013, during another revision and editing lesson, I wrote, “Out of the five areas for editing, we only got through two, and I don’t believe any kids actually did a quality job of implementing the editing strategies.” After reflecting on the students’ try-and-fail pattern, I realized that they were unable to revise and edit because they had no feedback about their writing. They were the only ones who had really read their stories, so it makes sense that they did not see anything that could have been made better in their story. If they had realized their mistakes, they would have made the changes in their revision. This independent checklist revision and editing process shows that these scripted writing lessons have little room for social interaction, which negatively affects the quality of the students’ writing.

The independent work time of the scripted writing curriculum’s writing workshop format also lacked social interaction in that it did not include the inherently social element of conferring, in which conferences occur teacher-to-student, peer-to-peer, or in groups (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1983; Tompkins, 2010). This lack of social interaction proved very frustrating for me, according to my research journal. During the revision and editing portion of the scripted lesson plans, I felt very discouraged because my students did not understand how to revise. As I mentioned before, the students weren’t adding in sensible revisions. On Monday, June 3, I wrote “Just as a prediction, I think since the quality of the revision/editing was low, the final copies will not be better than the originals. In fact, I think they will be worse, as students often revised editing in a nonsensical way.” On June 11 2013, reflecting on the editing portion of the scripted lesson, I wrote, “First, I would think-aloud

and edit for capital letters in my story, then the students would have a few minutes to do so, as my co-teacher and I circulated the room to provide assistance.” It seems that the solitary nature of the revision process outlined in the scripted lessons could have contributed to their lack of understanding of the revision process. Perhaps a more authentic writing experience, which included peer-to-peer revision conferences would have been helpful for my students.

Lack of Ownership

The data also show a lack of ownership among the students during writing. According to Tompkins (2010), the work time period during a writing workshop is when students scatter around the room and work on a writing piece on a self-chosen topic. However, in the scripted writing curriculum the topics for students’ writing were always dictated by the lesson plan, not by the individual students themselves.

This trend in lack of ownership was seen in both shared and independent writing portions of the lesson plans. First, during shared writing, I never provided a good model for creating ownership in writing. In the research journal entry from June 10, 2013, I wrote about the delivery of that day’s shared writing portion of the lesson, writing:

The lesson plan dictated a story that I was to write for the [students], intermittently asking them for assistance with certain ideas or words. I found that it took me a LONG time to physically write the entire middle/end of the story, and since I noticed it was taking so long, I felt like I rushed through it, not asking as often as I would have liked for assistance. Instead, it became modeled writing, rather than shared writing.

My frustration in this entry stemmed from a lack of ownership of my modeled story. Since the model story was prewritten in the lesson plan, I never modeled ownership of writing. Not only did it cause frustration for me as a writer and a teacher, but I was modeling inauthentic writing.

I never modeled how to choose a topic and why, and I never modeled genuine investment and excitement about writing a story. Instead, I generally stated “Today I am writing about...” as a precursor to my lesson, as it was scripted as such in the lesson plan. As illustrated in the above example, the scripted lesson plans gave me no opportunity as a teacher to model how to create ownership of writing.

A lack of ownership in writing was also demonstrated during independent writing. After shared writing of each lesson plan, students were given a topic on which they were to write for that day. For example, on May 21, 2013, they were told to write about a time they stayed up late. On May 22, 2013, they were told to write about a time they went to the park, and on May 28, 2013, they were told to write about a time they had fun with their family. The students were not allowed to write on any topic other than the one dictated by the lesson. According to Tompkins (2010), allowing students to write about topics that interest them is one way to motivate students to write. Perhaps the students were not very motivated to write on a particular topic. Even so, they were mostly successful in their writing, according to my research journal.

Not only was this lack of ownership evident in the shared and independent writing portions, but also in the conventions portion. For five consecutive lessons (May 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 of 2013), the conventions objective was for students to edit run-on sentences. The lesson plans dictated that students practice this skill via a worksheet that had two pre-typed run-on sentences on it. The lessons were scripted so that together, the teacher and students edited the first few sentences, and then students independently edited the rest. My research journal shows that students were not very successful at this task. In fact, the first entry in the journal from May 20, 2013, shows that I altered the conventions objective to work around

spelling, since my previous experience with this objective was vastly unsuccessful. Perhaps if students were able to practice editing with run-on sentences from their own stories, as opposed to pre-scripted sentences out of context, they would have been a bit more invested and successful with that skill.

Although there is substantial evidence for lack of ownership, my research journal data never cites any outright disengagement or complaints by the students. In fact, the journal suggests that all students were producing substantial writing pieces for each prompted lesson topic. If this solid level of engagement was the result of a teacher-directed writing prompt, I am very curious about what the students could have written if they had chosen their own writing topics that they were truly interested and invested in. Calkins (1994) suggests that each student have a writer's notebook, in which they continuously collect ideas about what they may want to write about. When a student has made a conscious decision to write about something, they have personally invested in the message they are about to communicate through writing, and are therefore motivated to write. Moving forward with my students, I would love to incorporate a notebook such as this to increase my students' engagement as writers.

Writing Process

The writing process, which follows the steps of "planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing for a real audience" (Bromley, 2007, p. 245) is not linear. In fact, Fletcher & Portalupi (2001) describe it as a writing cycle, one through which each student moves fluidly, at her/his own pace. In some ways, the scripted lesson plans align with research in that they reflect implementation of the steps of the writing process, but in other ways the scripted writing process is misaligned, particularly in the specific implementation of each step.

For example, the lesson plan from May 28, 2013 was scripted for the teacher to say, “Today we are going to start our story and tomorrow we will write the middle and the end. The rest of the week we will work to make our story better!” That lesson plan’s shared writing objective was for students to write the beginning of their story. The next day (May 29, 2013) the objective was to write the middle and end of the story. On May 30, 2013, the objective was to revise the story. Next, on May 31, 2013, the objective was to edit the story. Finally, the lesson for June 3, 2013 had an objective of rewriting the stories onto publishing paper. That lesson reads, “Today we have a new book to use now that we are publishing our work!” The elements of the writing process, as written in the research, are present in the scripted lesson plans.

Research also suggests that the work time component of the writing workshop be spent crafting a piece that students have been working on continuously over a period of time (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Tompkins, 2010). The scripted lesson plans do seem to encourage continuous writing, as demonstrated in the examples above. However, the plans dictate that students write certain parts of their story over a set number of days. For example, according to the plans collected during May and June, students were to write the “beginning” of their story on Friday, June 7, 2013 and then expected to move on and write their “middle” and “end” of their story on Monday, June 10, 2013, whether or not they were truly finished with the previous part. On June 12, 2013 in my research journal, I wrote, “The lesson suggested that the teacher give certain amounts of time for students to rewrite each section, to keep students at the same pace and on –task.” According to Fletcher & Portalupi (2001), “each writer has his or her own herky-jerky, highly personalized, often ritualized way of getting words onto paper. Any one-size-fits-all writing process would be not only inaccurate but destructive to students” (p. 62).

Although students in my classroom were writing stories over the course of a few days, the writing process, or cycle, was not fluid in my classroom, which may be a contributing factor to the struggle some of my kindergarteners had when writing full stories.

Theme 2: Writing Workshop

Another major theme gathered from the collected data was a mismatch between the components of the writing workshop according to the research (Bromley, 2007; Calkins, 1994; Tompkins, 2010), and the components of the writing workshop as laid out in the scripted lessons. Although the scripted writing lessons included all components of the writing workshop that the literature suggests (minilessons, work time, conferring, assessment and publication) the components did not seem genuine to the research.

Minilessons

Just as the research suggests (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001, Tompkins, 2010), the daily writing workshop in the scripted lessons began with minilessons; a minilesson on conventions (scripted to take ten minutes), and then a minilesson on the writing process (scripted to take fifteen to twenty minutes). In some ways, these minilessons aligned with research, but in others they did not.

The minilessons align with research in that they are the first part of the writing workshop, and they cover topics commonly covered in workshop minilessons – the writing process and editing skills (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Additionally, the minilessons taught writing skills through shared writing, which serves as a model for good writing, just as Calkins (1994) suggests. For example, during the shared writing minilesson of most of the scripted lessons, the teacher uses the think-aloud strategy to write the middle and end parts of his or her story. For example, one lesson script reads, “First I think about the

topic...Today I'm going to think about a day that was so cold I had to stay inside all day long" (May 28, 2013), and another revision lesson dictates that the teacher think-aloud about adding details by saying, "What could I say about hot chocolate? What did I see? How does it taste? I know! I remember the marshmallows melting into the hot chocolate. It looked like the snow that was falling outside. I'm going to add that detail to my story" (May 30, 2013).

Throughout the think-aloud of the minilesson, the lessons often dictate that the teacher feign ignorance and prompt students for help in naming the parts of the writing process, and other elements of writing, such as vocabulary usage, adding details, spelling, and grammar. For example, in the editing lesson dated May 31, 2013, the script reads, "Yes this sentence is missing punctuation. What kind of sentence is this? [reads sentence from story with missing punctuation and prompts students for answer]. Yes, this is an expressing sentence. If it is expressing, what punctuation mark do we use [prompts students for answer]?"

However, the minilesson does not fully align with current research because the objectives are pre-determined. The objective of a minilesson should be one topic that is determined by assessment of your class as a whole (Tompkins, 2010). As Lucky Calkins (1994) puts it, when deciding what to teach through a minilesson, you should ask yourself, "what is one thing I can suggest or demonstrate that will help the most" (p. 194)? In the scripted lessons, however, the minilesson objectives were pre-determined from the start of the school year. No matter what the current abilities of my students were, the lesson dictated that I teach each specific skill on a specific day.

Additionally, there are a large number of objectives for each minilesson. According to Tompkins (2010), mini-lessons should be on one single topic. For example, on May 30, 2013, the conventions minilesson had two objectives: "Students will be able to (SWBAT) identify

complete thoughts in a run on sentence,” and “SWBAT edit run on sentences.” During this portion, the lesson plan dictates that the teacher models how to edit a pre-written paragraph for run-on sentences.

The writing process minilesson from the May 30, 2013 lesson had five objectives: “SWBAT add details to their story,” “SWBAT write the middle and end of the story,” “SWBAT identify what to include in the middle part of their story (problem, talking characters, main event)”, “SWBAT indentify what to include in the end of the story (solution, happened after, feelings),” and “SWBAT identify and use dialogue when writing their stories.”

The shared writing objectives for the lesson from May 28, 2013, in which students are to write the beginning of a new story are numerous as well. There are four objectives: “SWBAT add detail to their story,” “SWBAT identify what to include in the beginning of the story (catchy opening, setting and right before),” “SWBAT use their senses to describe the setting and what happened before the main event,” and “SWBAT identify and use dialogue when writing their stories.”

After reviewing my research journal, I found that there were many instances when I felt overwhelmed by the sheer number of objectives in each minilesson. It was difficult for me to focus my teaching because I was not sure how to teach all objectives well simultaneously. On May 22, 2013, I wrote, “...in the past, there have been so many objectives on the lesson plan, that we are unable to address any in great depth.” On May 29, 2013, I wrote, “With so many objectives, it is hard to nail down just one to focus on. The scholars have so much to focus on when writing, that none of the objectives are practiced with quality.” On June 5, 2013, I wrote, “Overall, I think the lessons are just jam-packed with too many complex objectives, some that are out of their [the students’] developmentally appropriate range [of abilities], and it

is nearly impossible to achieve them all to 100%.” Perhaps a focus on a single objective each day or over a few days, as suggested by Fletcher & Portalupi (2001), would increase the chances that all students master each objective, and eliminate some of the frustration I felt as a teacher.

Work Time

Another major theme was the mismatch between the writing workshop work time as described in current research, and the writing workshop work time as outlined in the scripted writing lessons. The scripted lesson plans indicated a writer’s workshop format for independent writing; however, as compared to the literature, the actual independent work time during the lesson is not done in a true writing workshop format at all.

As stated earlier, during the work time in a writing workshop, students should be scattered around the room as they write (Tompkins, 2010). In their book, *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*, Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) emphasize the importance of comfort during the work time period. They write, “we believe people need to be comfortable to do their best work” (p. 17), and they suggest allowing students to move about the room, sitting at a desk, laying on the floor, or sitting in a corner with a clipboard in hand. Tompkins (2010) also writes of the importance of mobility throughout the workshop, saying that students need the freedom to move about to assist other students, or share their ideas. In the scripted writing lessons that I taught, the students simultaneously completed the independent writing while seated at their separate desks. The students had no opportunity to move about, or even speak to one another regarding their writing. This solitary, immobile work time is evident in the lesson plan scripts themselves, as they are scripted for the teacher direct students to their individual desks. The scripts say things like “when you get to your seats you need to be

thinking about...” (May 28, 2013), “when you get to your seats get out your work from yesterday...” (June 3, 2013), and “teacher will have checklist out on each desk” (May June 10, 2013).

Additionally, Calkins (1994) explains that in order to create an authentic writing experience for children, they should have access to a variety of writing materials, such as different types of paper and writing utensils, pre-made staples books, etc. during the writing workshop. During most of the scripted writing lessons, students were only to write on paper that was given to them using a pencil. This paper consisted of an empty picture box on the front with some writing lines (with a clear headline, midline and baseline) below it, and additional writing lines on the back. A monthly packet of these papers stapled together was referred to as the students’ writing journal. Although students were writing stories, their stories looked very different than those they had read in class. During other parts of the school day, the students would be read aloud to or read their own books. These books were bound, colorful, and had different types of fonts. Some books were bigger, while others were smaller, but no two books looked exactly the same. In writing, however, each student was creating a writing piece that looked exactly the same as their neighbor’s. This may be a contributing factor to the lack of authenticity and ownership of the students’ writing.

Conferring and Assessment

Another theme that the data analysis uncovered was in the areas of conferring and assessment. Although there was a conferring presence, its implementation was not quite aligned with research. As for assessment, it was a very prevalent theme in the research journal, but its function was not quite aligned either.

A large part of the writing workshop as outlined in the current literature is the conferring

that occurs during the work time. These conferences can take place student-to-teacher, peer-to-peer, or in writing groups. During this time is when individualized instruction occurs, as each writer has different needs at any given time (Neuman, et al., 2000). There is a designated work time period in the scripted lessons, as each lesson plan has a section for “Independent Practice of Skill Instruction,” which should last fifteen to twenty minutes.

According to my research journal, there was some conferring during this time. If there ever were conferences, they were student-teacher. These conferences seemed to be quick check-ins with an individual student, but each student was not receiving a conference every day, and maybe even not once every few days. In the research journal, I wrote about a specific student and/or conference a total number of five times throughout the five weeks of data collection, and even then they were all included in the same day’s reflection (May 21, 2013). Although there is evidence of conferring in my research journal, it is limited to student-teacher conferences only, and those were few and far between.

As for assessment, there were numerous times when I wrote an overall summary of my student work observations, but very little reflection on individual students as writers. These observation summaries paint a picture of quick assessments of student writing as related to the objective skill rather than a work time full of conferences and discussions around student writing. This focus on assessment is evident in that almost every research journal entry includes some sort of “report” on whether or not the objective was achieved by the majority of students. For example, I wrote, “A struggle that the students had was making sure they check for punctuation (May 21, 2013),” “Some students did not meet the objective of using a catchy opening and adding juicy details (May 22, 2013),” “Something I noticed was a struggle for many scholars was editing their work (May 24, 2013).” Instead of spending quality

conference time teaching the students by developing the skills they were ready to develop, I was more focused on assessing the overall mastery of the objective skill. Perhaps I could use the work time more wisely instructing my students, rather than assessing them.

Assessment was a prevalent theme in my research journal. The guiding questions of the journal were immediately geared toward assessment. The first guiding question for each entry was “Which lesson objectives were met for most (75% or more) of students?” The beginning of each journal entry was an overview of the objective assessments. For example, on May 29, 2013, I wrote that I believed 75% or more of scholars were able to orally chunk multisyllabic words (the adapted objective for that day’s conventions minilesson). I went on to write, “Also, as I rotated during independent writing, I saw at least three scholars using the chunking strategy to spell words within their story.” Again, this points to the work time being used to just assess students, rather than confer with and teach them.

The role of assessment, as outlined in the research is very different. First, assessment can be completed in many ways, such as anecdotal conference notes, portfolios, or by use of rubrics (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Tompkins, 2010). Whichever way it is implemented, the research stresses that assessment be used as a way to inform the teacher about all students’ individual strengths and needs in writing (Calkins, 1994). Although I was informally assessing (the research journal does not show that I was collecting any data on paper, or recording sheets), it was mostly assessments of the group as a whole, and not individual students’ writing behaviors.

As I analyzed the possible reasons for this type of assessment, I realized that it was partially because of the scripted curriculum itself, and partially because of the way in which my school teaches and assesses writers. These two things then influenced the guiding

questions for the research in the first place. My school is very objective-driven. Each day, we teach writing based on the objectives in the scripted lesson plans, and then we evaluate whether the students met that objective or not. These objectives are all tied to a writing rubric that we use to assess students' writing pieces on a bi-monthly basis. The rubric is the same for the entire year, which means that the standards for below-target, on-target, and above-target in specific areas such as content, mechanics, grammar, and vocabulary never change. I have been told in the past that this is meant to show students' growth as writers throughout the year – in the beginning of the year they are certainly below-target in each area, but as they grow as writers, we strive to help them achieve on-target or above-target through the scripted lesson plans. This bi-monthly rubric is the only formal assessment that my school uses for writing. All other assessment is done at the teachers' discretion from classroom to classroom. It is also important to note that the typical writing lesson does not include any extra support for struggling writers. Again, this is something that is done differently in each classroom, but all students are expected to receive the scripted writing instruction, in order to be sure they are getting all of the necessary skills, according to the writing rubric.

In my classroom, according to my research journal, I would assess students' writing informally on a yes-or-no basis – each student either achieved the objective or did not achieve it. Research tells us that we should use these evaluations to drive the next instructional steps in terms of objectives for minilessons (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). For this reason, I decided to formulate the guiding questions in the research journal to reflect this. For example, one of the research journal questions was “Which lesson objectives were met for most (75% or more) of students?” Another was, “What can you do in future lessons to support those students [that did not achieve the objective]?” These guiding questions led me to adapt the scripted lesson plans

to match my students' needs, as there were no guidelines around individualizing instruction according to the plans themselves, or the structure of writing instruction in my school. Using assessment to drive my instruction was something that I did as a supplement to the scripted writing curriculum.

Publication

Publication and celebration of student writing is recommended throughout the current literature on emergent writing. Giving students ownership of their writing can be very valuable in terms of motivation to write (Calkins, 1994). Usually, it is suggested that students publish their work by creating a final draft, and celebrate their work by sharing it out in some setting, which can be either large or small. Some schools celebrate students' writing by hosting a sort of Authors' Day, in which they have a big event where students read their writing to many people, including peers and parents (Calkins, 1994). Calkins (1994) and Fletcher & Portalupi (2001) suggest a daily celebration, done through a dedicated time each day for students to share their writing with others.

According to the scripted lesson plans, there was no time dedicated to publication or celebration on a daily basis. However, according to the research journal, I did adapt the script a bit to celebrate scholars on certain occasions. For example, the entry from May 21, 2013, cites students who were using word rules they had learned in reading, and I wrote, "I was sure to celebrate these scholars at the end of the lesson." Additionally, I know that throughout the entire school year, my co-teacher and I would always pick what we called a "Writing Master," at the end of each writing lesson. This was usually a student who was working hard to achieve either the objective skill of the day's lesson, or a skill that the individual student had been working on in writing. It is interesting to note that this was not often mentioned in the research

journal. This may be because the scripted lessons did not put a focus on publication or celebration, and therefore I did not focus on it either.

It should also be noted that since the data collection period, my school has revised the format of the daily writing workshop, and it now includes a five-minute section at the end of the lesson which is dedicated to picking one or two pieces of student writing to share, based upon the objective of the day. It is suggested that the teacher ask the other students to give that student feedback around the objective, usually positive, and then the teacher provides feedback as well.

Since the data collection and beginnings of the analysis period of this study, I have gone even further in developing the publication opportunities in my classroom. Now, every day after the students have done their independent writing, I provide them with a few minutes to turn to their neighbor (at their desks) and read their writing to each other. Although this is a new process, I plan to use this time to not only celebrate themselves as writers, but to help students develop their conferring skills as well as feel a sense of ownership and pride in their writing.

Theme 3: Objectives Addressed Skills Beyond Emergent Writers' Skills Set

A major theme discovered in the lesson plans and research journal was that many times, the skills being taught in the lesson (the objectives) were beyond the capabilities of my kindergarten writers. For all lessons in the five-week time period, the handwriting/conventions portion of the lesson was scripted to teach the objectives, "Students will be able to (SWBAT) identify complete thoughts in a run on sentence," and "Students will be able to (SWBAT) edit run-on sentences." Immediately during data collection, I adapted the conventions portion of the lesson to include a different objective. I chose to continue adapting this objective for each day

of the five-week data collection period.

I made this choice because I had spent a few weeks before data collection began trying to teach this objective as it was scripted. My observations told me that students were very confused about editing sentences for correct punctuation and capitalization. Only a few students were demonstrating understanding, and most seemed to be randomly placing punctuation and replacing lowercase letters with uppercase letters. I realized that this skill was far too complex for the majority of my students, so I decided to forego it and focus on something else that could help to improve their writing.

I decided to focus on teaching my students how to spell multisyllabic words through the strategy of “chunking,” in which you break the word into syllabic parts and spell each part separately. I chose this objective because at that point in the school year, about ninety percent of my students had mastered writing simple, three-letter consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words, and were now struggling to accurately spell multisyllabic words.

Although I thought this was an appropriate instructional choice, my students had difficulty mastering this objective as well. On May 20, 2013, when I first implemented the adapted objective, I wrote, “I would say about 20% of students were able to successfully chunk a word,” and “...they [the students] would sound it out rather than chunk it.” Again on May 28, 2013, I wrote, “I targeted a [student] who struggled with oral chunking to initially chunk the word, and he struggled.” On June 3, 2013, after a few weeks of working on this skill, I wrote, “[During independent spelling of multisyllabic words, 17/31 [students] (55%) got all three words correct!” Even though I was excited in that reflection, that still means that 45% of students did not correctly spell the multisyllabic words.

As I reflect now, and I take into account the research on the capabilities of emergent

writers, this may not have been an appropriate choice at all. According to research, emergent writers usually compose writing pieces with repeated symbols; they usually write sporadic punctuation marks, letters (typically letters they know from their name) and letter-like symbols. They are also capable of writing five to twenty high-frequency words, and are only beginning to recall what they have written towards the end of the emergent stage of writing (Clay, 1975; Pinnell & Fountas, 1998; Tompkins, 2010). The research does not state the mastery of letter-sound relationships or writing of simple consonant-vowel-consonant words. While these skills may be seen among some emergent writers, they are not typically expected from our youngest writers.

Theme 4: Frustration

A final theme that was apparent in the research journal was my apparent frustration. This frustration was largely due to time constraints, but also seems to be linked to the previous themes and the scripted curriculum's misalignment with the current research on emergent writing.

Time constraints were a prevalent source of frustration. On each lesson, the individual portions of each lesson (handwriting/conventions, shared writing, and independent writing) are stamped with target times in which to complete them. The handwriting/conventions portion is to be completed in ten minutes, the shared writing in fifteen to twenty minutes, and the independent writing is in fifteen to twenty minutes.

The research journal frequently cited my frustration around time constraints. On May 20, 2013, I wrote, "This portion of the lesson was meant to only take 5-7 minutes, but ended up taking an estimated 12-15, which is too long." Throughout the five weeks, I wrote many things around this theme such as, "The timing of the conventions portion was still not very fast." (May

21, 2013), “I will cut out the editing worksheet, as I don’t think there will be enough time to do that in addition to the spelling and assessment.” (May 21, 2013), “I will cut out the editing worksheet, as we will not have time.” (May 22, 2013), “We were short on time...,” (May 24, 2013) and “I believe that was way too much to teach in one 40-minute lesson.” (May 30, 2013).

There were many other references to frustration throughout the research journal. For example, on May 24, 2013, I wrote, “I have always been frustrated with the fact that our students are expected to do a great piece of writing in one shot with no first draft.” On May 29, 2013, I wrote, “I am very frustrated because I only just received these lesson plans yesterday, and the revision checklist is very wordy for kindergarten eyes. Also, it is a multi-step process that is being taught in one single day.” Referring to the conventions portion of the lesson from May 30, 2013, I wrote, “It was overwhelming to say the least.” The frustration of the grade-level team is expressed in the June 3, 2013 entry which says, “Our grade-level team leader will be speaking with our principal regarding the fact that there is way too much to expect of kindergarten writers in these lessons not to mention the amount of time they are meant for.” Towards the end of the data collection period, I began to realize the pattern of this frustration, and wrote, “It could have been frustrating, but I am beginning to have the attitude of, ‘I know this is developmentally inappropriate and there is just too much to expect in these objectives, so they’re just going to do what they can do.’ As long as I see improvement, I am happy.” (June 5, 2013).

As I tried to find the source for this frustration, I found a link between this theme and other themes mentioned earlier. First, much of my frustration seemed to come from the time constraints of the scripted lesson timestamps. As research suggests, the writing process should occur in an ongoing manner, each student at his or her own pace (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001).

It seems that this mismatch resulted in the documented frustration.

Second, students did not choose the writing topics, and many of the editing lessons were applied out of the context of students' own writing. Since giving students an opportunity to create ownership of their writing is so important to their success as writers (Calkins, 1994; Tompkins, 2010), the lack of this ownership also led to a deep sense of frustration.

Third, as demonstrated earlier, the objectives in many lessons were beyond the skill sets of the emergent writers in my classroom. For this reason, it was difficult for students to master the scripted lesson objectives, leading to more frustration on my part.

Finally, the misalignment in the area of conferring and assessment could have also led to this frustration. As mentioned earlier, the scripted lesson objectives shifted my focus to quick yes-or-no type assessments of objective mastery, rather than an assessment of each student's strengths and needs as a writer each day. My limited view of my students as writers caused me to focus only on the lesson objective skills. Since for a majority of objectives, students were not mastering them (as they were well beyond their zones of proximal development), there was a clear sense of frustration for me as a teacher.

The level of frustration that I encountered during the period of this study was very evident, and its source is clearly a result of the ways in which the scripted curriculum is misaligned with the current research on emergent writers.

Theme 5: Lesson Adaptation

The first three themes uncovered in the data led to frustration, which then led to a final theme of a significant amount of lesson plan adaptation. Throughout the data, the two main types of adaptations found were deletions/replacements and additions.

Every lesson that was taught over the five-week data collection period was adapted with

some kind of deletion/replacement. Most often, the adaptation occurred in the conventions portion of the lesson. Every lesson was scripted to begin with the objective, “SWBAT identify complete thoughts in a run-on sentence,” and “SWBAT edit run-on sentences.” However, I replaced that conventions objective with my own objective around spelling multisyllabic words. Other times, I simply deleted a portion of the lesson. For example, on May 24, 2013, I deleted the entire conventions portion, even though I had adapted the objective.

One reason for the replacements and deletions to the scripted lessons was that I simply did not have enough time to complete all portions. On May 21, 2013, I wrote, “Tomorrow, I will cut out the editing worksheet, as I don’t think there will be enough time to do that in addition to the spelling and assessment.” Also, on May 30, 2013, I wrote, “However, as the day went on, we began writing 10 minutes late, and since I knew revision would be a long process on the first day, I decided to forego spelling.”

Another reason for the frequently replaced and deleted objectives was that I found the scripted objectives to be too rigorous for my students. As I wrote on June 11, 2013, “This decision [to cut the editing portion of the lesson] was made because there have been time constraints during the writing time, and overall, my students are not ready to edit run-on sentences. I based this decision off of my observations during previous lessons with this objective, during which they struggled.”

There were also many lessons during which I added something that was not part of the script. Many of these additions were meant to give the students more guided practice before the independent portion. For example, on June 3, 2013, the scripted lesson was written so that the teacher modeled how to use an entire editing checklist to edit his or her story, and then the students completed the entire editing checklist process independently. However, as I wrote, “I

also adapted the lesson by making the editing process entirely, ‘I do, you do,’ so that I would model a part, then the students would do that part on their own paper.” Also, on June 11, 2013, I adapted by doing “the shared and independent portions [of the lesson] in an alternating ‘my turn, your turn,’ fashion. First, I would think-aloud and edit for capital letters in my story, then the students would have a few minutes to do so, as my co-teacher and I circulated the room to provide assistance.”

Overall, lesson adaptations were very prevalent. Every single lesson was adapted in some way. It is interesting to note that the one lesson that I did not alter in any way (May 30, 2013) was the first lesson in which students were taught how to use editing checklists. I chose not to adapt this lesson because, “as I have never done this before, [I] wanted to see how it went as written” (May 30, 2013). I then went on to write, “It was overwhelming to say the least.” On that day, both objectives had a 0% success rate. The unedited lesson was so unsuccessful, that I actually decided to alter it “on the fly,” so that the modeling and independent portions were smaller, and more manageable. As the kids were working on implementing the checklist, and I was circulating noticing their struggles, I interrupted their work time. I re-modeled one portion of the checklist, and then had them apply that part of the checklist to their own work. I did this for each section of the checklist. According to the research journal from May 30, 2013, “I think that modeling was a good idea, but students only had one example before they had to try it on their own. The students were really trying, but it was difficult for them to say the least.”

I also altered the lesson in the moment on May 20, 2013, when due to time constraints I canceled the shared writing portion of the lesson, and again on June 4, 2013, as I cut the conventions objective all together since we were running out of time in the writing portion of

the day.

Throughout the five weeks of data collection, lesson adaptation both in preparation for the lesson and during the lesson was very prevalent.

Conclusion

After careful analysis of the data collected in this study, I found that while there were some ways in which the kindergarten scripted writing curriculum aligns with the research on emergent writers, there are more ways in which it does not.

With social interaction limited to teacher-student interactions, there is no room for an authentic writing experience as outlined in the research. Students lack ownership of their writing, and although there is a clear link to the research-suggested writing process in the scripted lessons, the implementation of the process on a one-size-fits-all schedule also contributes to an inauthentic writing experience.

The research also suggests a writing workshop in which students learn the skills and craft of writing. The scripted curriculum includes many of the elements of the writing workshop such as minilessons, shared writing, a work time period, and assessment. However, it lacks the elements of publication and real conferring. Additionally, the elements that are present are not fully aligned with the research.

The data analysis shows that the above findings led to a prevalent theme of frustration from me (the teacher), which then led to a theme of lesson adaptation in order to meet the needs of my young writers.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

This study set out to examine what happens when I implemented a scripted writing curriculum in my kindergarten classroom. The study focused on the following questions:

Question 1: How does a scripted kindergarten writing curriculum align with the research on emergent writing?

Question 2: What happens when I implement a scripted kindergarten writing curriculum?

Conclusions

After thorough and careful analysis of the data, the following conclusions have been drawn.

Scripted Kindergarten Writing Lessons Used by Waterbury Prep Only Partially Align with Current Research on Emergent Writing Instruction

There are some areas in which the scripted writing curriculum at Waterbury Prep aligned with current research, and many in which it did not.

First, the research suggests that emergent writers should have authentic writing experiences in which they have ownership of their writing and are writing within a social context (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Morrow, 1989). Research suggests that students should generate their own ideas for writing (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001), in order to generate motivation to write in the first place. However, in the scripted writing curriculum, students are directed to write on one specific topic each day dictated by the lesson plan, with no option to write on any other topic. Additionally, they are not able to do this writing in a social context. As the data showed, the only social interaction was limited to teacher-student conferences, which were usually short and objective-driven. This directly impacted the students' success in the area of revising and editing their work. Researchers have

found that students need to have outside input in order to revise and edit their work, and when students have peer-to-peer conferences, they develop revision and editing skills, and a new awareness about themselves as writers (Calkins, 1994; Neuman et al., 2000). The scripted lesson plans did not provide opportunity for such social interaction, which shows that it is a bit misaligned from the current research on emergent writing.

Next, all of the scripted lessons included a minilesson on certain writing topics, mostly writer's process and editing skills. Minilessons of this type are highly recommended in the research as an ideal way to teach writing to children (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). The presence of a daily minilesson shows that the scripted writing curriculum does align with research in some way.

However, the minilessons themselves were not fully aligned with those described in the literature. The minilessons scripted into the writing curriculum had multiple objectives per day. Research suggests that each minilesson be focused on a single topic in order to create a realistic opportunity for students to learn (Calkins, 1994; Tompkins, 2010). Some of the minilessons in the scripted writing curriculum had up to five objectives per day.

Additionally, research suggests that the minilesson topics be chosen based on the needs of students determined by ongoing, informal assessment (Calkins, 1994). This was not the case in the scripted writing curriculum at all. The minilesson objectives were created for the entire year before the start of the school year, and in no way reflected the immediate needs of the students in my classroom.

Another way in which the scripted curriculum only partially aligned with research is in the area of the writing process. According to research, the writing process always includes prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Tompkins, 2010), and is ongoing but

never linear (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). The scripted curriculum does include some of these stages. During the particular time during which data was collected, the lessons focused on drafting, revising, editing and publishing. The simple presence of these stages of writing aligns with research.

Similar to the case of the minilessons, however, the writing process in the scripted writing curriculum is not fully aligned. As mentioned earlier, the research says that the writing process includes five stages, but those stages are fluid and different for every writer. Some students may take a longer time in a certain stage than others, and some students may have to go back to an earlier stage before continuing forward in the process (Calkins, 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). The scripted writing curriculum does not allow for this kind of flexibility in the writing process. The lessons dictated that all students finish each stage in the same allotted amount of time, and that each student move onto the next stage for the same amount of time. In this way, the scripted writing curriculum does not align with the research on the writing process.

Finally, the scripted lesson plans do not align at all with research in the area of publication. Research highlights publication and celebration of student work in both daily and intermittent small-group and large-group presentations (Calkins, 1994; Tompkins, 2010). However, the scripted lesson plans did not layout any opportunities for this at all.

It is Difficult to Meet all Students' Needs Within a Scripted Writing Curriculum

According to Vygotsky's theory on the zone of proximal development, learning is maximized when students are taught as individuals and teachers meet their needs at that particular moment in time (Vygotsky, 1978). All students' needs at each moment are inherently different. For this reason, it is very difficult to meet all students' needs within the

parameters of a scripted writing curriculum.

First, in this study, the established objectives of the scripted writing lessons were well beyond the skill sets of my students. Attempts at teaching these objectives often led to failure in terms of objective mastery. Meanwhile, each successive lesson of the scripted writing curriculum built on the objective of the last lesson, leaving no room to slow down and address the actual, immediate needs of my students in writing.

This created a lot of frustration on my part. There were multiple entries in the research journal that denoted frustration. Sometimes the frustrations were around time constraints built into the lesson (for example, I had only fifteen minutes to teach an objective regarding editing). Since the objectives were beyond my students' skill sets it was very difficult for me to teach the skill, as I would have to take substantial amounts of time to break the skill down to my students' levels. Other times, frustration occurred because I was becoming well aware of the lack of success in terms of objective mastery among my students. I knew that I only had a set number of days to get my students to achieve the lesson objectives before they moved onto a new one, so I felt a lot of pressure to teach it well, but also quickly.

Since the scripted writing curriculum has pre-planned objectives that are unaligned with student needs, meant to be taught on a specific timeline, it is very difficult to meet all students' needs within its parameters.

Scripted Writing Curriculum Shifts Teacher Focus Onto What Students Are Not Doing as Opposed to What They Are Doing

Throughout the research journal, there emerged a recurring theme around my evaluation of each day's lesson. I found that when analyzing the journal, there were a large number of instances in which I was very assessment-driven. I frequently noted what students were not

achieving in terms of lesson objectives instead of what students were doing as writers. This seems to have created a very narrowly focused view of my students as writers.

According to research, good teachers of writing assess students and notice what they are able to do, and then build on those skills to further develop the student as a writer (Calkins, 1994; Tompkins, 2010). However, I found that throughout the research journal, my reflections on the lessons were very negative. Often, I would note how many students did not achieve an objective. My evaluations were solely objective-based. I did not look at what they students were doing in order to build off of that.

The lack of conferring examined in the previous chapter seems to have played a role in this as well. The only sort of conferring that was done throughout the data collection period was teacher-student, and even then I was very focused on the objective skill only. I was not assessing each student as a writer, and examining their current skills and where I should push them next, as research suggests we do (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). This led to a lack of knowledge of each of my students as complete writers on my part. I did not acknowledge the breadth and depth of their skills as emergent writers; I only knew their abilities to implement objective skills from the scripted lessons.

Looking back, I realize that at that point in the year, my kids were really doing impressive things as kindergarten writers, but the scripted curriculum shifted my thoughts of writing success into a black-and-white yes-or-no assessment, as opposed to an evaluation of how each of my students is progressing on their own path as a writer.

All Scripted Writing Lessons are Adapted by the Teacher in Some Way

Throughout five weeks of data collection, there was not one scripted writing lesson that I did not adapt. Mostly, I adapted the lesson objectives to make them meet the needs of my

students. Sometimes I deleted an objective or two because there was simply not enough time to complete them all. Other times, I added an objective that more closely reflected the needs of my students. Even the one lesson that I chose not to adapt, I ended up adapting mid-lesson because I found it was developmentally inappropriate for my students.

All of this adaptation leads to me to question the point of the scripted curriculum in the first place. If the point of the scripted curriculum was to make it easier for teachers to decide what to teach, the goal was not achieved. The constraints of the scripted lesson plan made it more difficult. Instead of just figuring out the direction to go with my student writers based on informal assessments, I had to evaluate the scripted lesson, and find a way to marry it with more appropriate material for my students. If the goal was to ensure that all students are achieving certain rigorous objectives (as my school has a reputation for very rigorous standards, even in kindergarten), this was not achieved either. Just because the objectives were taught, doesn't mean that the students learned them (often, they did not). Most of the time, I had to alter the objectives anyway. Perhaps if there was a time for me to address students' immediate needs as writers, I could teach students the skills they need to master the more rigorous skills. Without this opportunity, the rigor was inaccessible to many kindergarten students.

Although the research on scripted writing curriculum is limited, my conclusion is that it is more of a detrimental hassle than a convenient equalizer. The pre-written scripted lesson plans required more time and energy from the teacher in order to balance lesson implementation with good teaching practices. Instead of creating equality among students' writing abilities and what they learned, it created a stressful writing environment in which both teaching and learning were limited.

Implications for Student Learning

Student Learning is Minimized Without an Authentic Writing Workshop

The findings of this study led me to conclude that the scripted writing curriculum lacked an authentic writing workshop and that student learning was not maximized.

The minilessons which had multiple objectives made it difficult for students to focus on one thing when writing, causing many of them to fail at mastering any. Also, the minilessons were unaligned to students needs, and therefore students had little to no access to the prerequisite skills needed to achieve the objective, making student learning less likely.

The inauthentic work time portion of the writing workshop also led to minimal student learning. The work time during the scripted writing lessons required students to stay at their seat and work quietly and independently. As researchers such as Calkins (1994) and Tompkins (2010) point out, the writing process must include opportunities to share and confer with other writers. This conferring provides the writer with authentic feedback to revise and improve their writing. During the work time of the scripted lessons in this study, students were unsuccessful at revising and editing their writing because they were unable to identify their own mistakes. This led to students just making marks similar to the teacher model, rather than truly revising and editing their own work. The lack of authentic work time with conferring led to minimal student learning during writing.

Finally, the scripted writing lessons did not dedicate any time to publication of writing, which is also an integral part of the writing workshop, according to research (Tompkins, 2010; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). This publication and celebration is a motivating factor for students, and gives them ownership of their writing. Also, it provides students an opportunity to learn from their peers' writing. Without an opportunity to share out, students missed the

opportunity to maximize learning.

Student Learning is Minimized When Lesson Objectives Are Not Within Each Student's Zone of Proximal Development

Throughout the lessons examined during this study, every time I attempted to teach the objectives outlined in the lesson plan, I noticed students really struggling to achieve the objectives.

For example, when I taught the original handwriting/conventions objectives around editing run-on sentences, only a few students were truly mastering the skill, while others were just randomly placing punctuation and capital letters. What I realized is that this objective skill was well beyond the capabilities of my students at the time.

To adapt the lesson, I decided to change the handwriting/conventions objective to spelling multisyllabic words, as I realized that many of my students were struggling to spell larger words in their stories. Although I thought this was a more appropriate objective, the data analysis showed that students also struggled to accomplish this objective. On one occasion only 20% of students were able to spell multisyllabic words correctly, and on another occasion 55% were able to do so. Although there was improvement, I was still disappointed in the fact that not all students were mastering even the adapted objective.

After reflection, I realized that compared to current research, the objectives were well beyond the expected capabilities of emergent writers. Many of the scripted lesson objectives dictated that the students write fully developed and grammatically correct sentences. However, it has been found that emergent writers typically write using drawings, scribbles, and first and last names (Calkins, 1994; Fountas & Pinnell, 1998), only beginning to master basic skills such as writing from left to right, and recognizing that print carries meaning (Clay, 1975). The

research only notes that punctuation may be used sporadically, but not typically in the conventional fashion until after the emergent stage of writing (Clay, 1975). As a result of such misaligned objectives, student learning was minimized in this study.

Students Benefit From Gradual Release Instruction in the Area of Editing Writing

The scripted writing lessons studied in this research were based on direct teaching, in which the teacher models a skill and then the students are to replicate that skill immediately and independently. For example, when the objective was for students to use a checklist to revise and edit their writing, I noticed that when I delivered the lesson plan as scripted, most students were not very successful at implementing the checklist. It was very overwhelming for them, and they understood little to no part of it.

Research suggests that new skills be introduced using a gradual release method. Scaffolding instruction using explicit models, guided practice and independent practice is required to meet the needs of all students (Gambrell et al., 2007). Based on this idea, I adapted the lesson plan, so that instead of direct modeling the entire skill of using a checklist, then asking students to use the entire thing, I broke the checklist down into parts, modeling each one, and then gradually releasing the responsibility of each part of the checklist to the students. I found that this worked much better than the lesson plan's suggested methods, although it was still not a very successfully taught skill because of the lack of foundational prerequisite skills needed in order to do it.

Implications for My Teaching

Teachers Mandated to Use Scripted Curriculum Must be Prepared to Adapt the Lessons to Meet Student Needs

Teachers who are required to use a scripted curriculum must be prepared to make

changes to the lessons as necessary before, during, and after lesson implementation. Frequently in this study, the scripted lesson as it was written was not sufficient in meeting the immediate needs of students, and adaptation was necessary.

Throughout the five weeks of lessons delivered during this study, all of them were adapted in some way. Lessons were adapted to make the content more accessible to students. Sometimes objectives were added or deleted. Sometimes, lesson elements were added in order to scaffold instruction. Other times, the method of instruction was altered in order to provide a more guided practice. Finally, additions and deletions occurred because there was not sufficient time in which to deliver the lesson in its entirety.

In order to prepare for this pattern of adaptation, teachers must be prepared well in advance of lesson delivery. As soon as they receive the lessons, they must review the scope and sequence of them to familiarize themselves with the progression of skills. Then, they must compare the projected path of the lessons to the current abilities of their students. If gaps occur, as they did in the curriculum of this study, teachers must find ways in which to adapt the lessons to close these gaps. Teachers may even want to meet with other teachers in their grade-level to talk about possible adaptations (Tompkins, 2010).

Teachers must also be mentally prepared to make necessary adaptations during the lesson. In this study, there were many times when I had to adapt the lesson on-the-fly. It is important, then, for teachers of scripted curriculum to know the current research on their student population and subject matter in order to make appropriate changes quickly. With this mid-lesson adaptation, teachers must also be mentally prepared to face some frustration. Throughout this study, a common theme of frustration from the teacher (myself) was evident. The frequent need for changes in the lesson became overwhelming. In order to prevent this,

teachers must know that they will likely need to adapt scripted lesson plans to meet students needs. Additionally, they may need to communicate these frustrations with colleagues in order to brainstorm solutions for future lessons. Tompkins (2010) suggests that teachers frequently collaborate with literacy coaches to design instruction to address students' needs.

Finally, teachers need to be prepared to make adaptations after lesson delivery. In this study, I often made adaptations to lesson plans based on the previous day's lesson reflection. Teachers of scripted curricula must build a habit of daily reflection on lessons, instructional practices, and student learning in order to be an effective teacher.

In addition to meticulously preparing lesson plans and collaborating with colleagues, teachers should be self-advocates for their own professional development. As Duffy & Hoffmann (1999) explained, scripted curricula are beginning to strip teachers of their creative and innovative skills when crafting curriculum. Teachers should be proactive in creating and participating in professional development experiences such as workshops, professional book clubs, or teacher-inquiry projects (Tompkins, 2010). These experiences will help teachers continue to expand their teaching knowledge and skills, strengthening their ability to adapt scripted lessons.

All of this adaptation can be overwhelming and frustrating, as demonstrated in my research journal. Perhaps if teachers of scripted curricula are mentally prepared for this ongoing task of adaptation, and well-prepared in advance, they will become less frustrated when delivering the lessons. I think that if teachers view scripted curricula not as a complete resource, but as a starting point from which research-based, reflective teaching is delivered, both students and teachers will be more successful in their endeavors.

Teachers Mandated to Use Scripted Curriculum Must be Prepared to Adapt the Lessons to Make it Research-Aligned and be Well-Versed in the Current Research

Assuming that all effective teachers today are teaching using research-based methods to inform their instruction, teachers of scripted curricula must know that the adaptation of scripted lessons is likely needed in order to align them with the research.

This adaptation takes some extra work on the part of the teacher. Instead of glancing at a day's lesson just prior to its delivery, the teacher will need to familiarize him or herself with the entire scope and sequence of the scripted curriculum, from start to finish, before the school year begins. Although this is not always possible (as was the case for this study), a teacher should try his or her best to know the curriculum inside and out. Knowing the sequence of skills and the ways in which they are scripted to be taught, can help a teacher to pinpoint both strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. This may also give the teacher insight into any gaps in the curriculum, for which he or she can plan accordingly.

Similarly, a teacher of scripted curriculum should be prepared to adapt lessons a few days ahead of time, in case any extra preparation is needed for delivery. This includes preparing for upcoming objectives by reinforcing past skills that are essential to achieving the upcoming objective.

This idea hinges on the assumption that teachers of writing are well-versed in the current research on writing instruction. In order to know whether or not a scripted curriculum aligns with research, a teacher must know what the research is saying in the first place. Only then will the teacher be able to adapt the lessons to make them most effective.

Teachers of Scripted Writing Curriculum Should Create a Daily Opportunity for Skill Reinforcement

A major theme that occurred throughout the results of this study was a gap between the current abilities of my kindergarten writers and the skill-level of the objectives in the scripted lesson plans. This suggests that teachers of scripted writing curriculum will need to create opportunities for students to strengthen their basic writing skills in order to lessen the gap.

One idea would be to create a daily time dedicated to teaching or re-teaching skills that are not directly addressed in upcoming scripted lessons. This time could be spent as a whole-group, in small groups, or working with individual children. However, it would always be driven by ongoing informal assessment. For example, if a teacher notices that during a scripted editing lesson many students are having trouble recalling when writers use uppercase letters, he or she may choose to use the reinforcement time to review this skill and have students practice it.

It is interesting how much this idea resembles the method for choosing daily minilessons of a research-based writing workshop (Calkins, 1994). However, if the scripted writing curriculum does not allow for teacher-chosen and assessment-driven objectives, a teacher will need to create time to do this in order to meet student needs.

Recommendations for Future Research

Conduct This Study Among Multiple Teachers Within My School

This study was conducted using the data collected in the lesson plans and research journal of one teacher – myself. The research data were triangulated, I used prolonged engagement over five weeks, and I reflected in the research journal earnestly and immediately after each lesson. While all of these things helped to ensure that the research is valid and credible, and not

influenced by my bias, it is inevitable that my bias did play a role in the reflections.

In order to eliminate the possibility of bias-influenced results, it would be interesting to conduct this study among more participants. The study was very specific around my school's scripted writing curriculum, so I would suggest recruiting other teachers in my school to participate in an identical self-study. Another option would be for teachers to engage in a study group around teaching within a scripted curriculum. Teachers may want to adapt plans individually, and then compare their adaptations. From there, they could analyze the adaptations, similar to the way in which I did, to see if any common themes or patterns emerge. Teachers may also want to keep a research journal throughout the study group experience and compare those as well. It would also be interesting to recruit teachers from all grades – kindergarten through fourth grade. This may provide some insight into the similarities and differences of implementing scripted writing curriculum throughout different grade levels.

Interview Students Who Receive Scripted Writing Instruction

This study researched the experience of one teacher, and all results were achieved based on the perspective of the teacher. I think gathering the perspective of students who are taught through a scripted writing curriculum would enhance the research. I would suggest interviewing students about their experiences as writers. I think it would be interesting to ask them their thoughts on writing as a whole – its purpose, what writing should look like, what the writing process is, and how they learn to write. I think it would also be valuable to ask them their opinions of themselves as writers. Do they consider themselves writers? Why do they write? Are they good writers or not and how do they know? The students' answers to these questions could provide great insight into what impact a scripted writing curriculum has on students' perspectives on writing.

Conduct This Study Among Teachers Who Do Not Use Scripted Curriculum in Writing

In order to enhance the credibility of this study, I think it would be worthwhile to conduct this study among teachers in schools that do not use a scripted writing curriculum. The research questions would need to be changed to match a non-scripted writing curriculum, but the methodology could stay the same. A teacher would implement his or her lesson plans, adapting as necessary, and then keep a research journal in which he or she reflects on each day's lesson.

It would be interesting to compare the lesson plan data. I wonder about the ways in which teachers plan their writing lessons, and whether or not they adapt them as they go. If they do adapt them, why do they feel the need to do so and what changes do they make?

I also wonder what themes would emerge from the research journal. The research in this study uncovered themes of inauthentic writing experiences, inauthentic writing workshop, too-high standards, and frustration from the teacher. I wonder if the non-scripted teachers would have any of these same experiences, and if so, to what degree?

Finally, it would be interesting to compare how the non-scripted lessons align with the current research on teaching writing. In this study, the data showed that scripted writing plans often do not align very well with the research, so I wonder if the same or opposite is true for non-scripted curriculum.

Final Thoughts

The world of education today is changing. With the most recent adoption of the Common Core standards in many states, it is likely that the implementation of scripted curricula will continue to grow, in order for educators to ensure that their students are receiving instruction of many rigorous standards in all academic areas.

As this study has shown, the mandated implementation of scripted curricula must be done

very carefully. Educators must be prepared to examine the scripted curricula in advance of its use, and compare it to current research, then make necessary adaptations in order to meet students' needs. If this is not done, it can lead to minimal learning on the students' part, and great frustration on the teacher's part.

As educators, we are responsible for ensuring the success of all of our students. With this responsibility, comes the need to evaluate ourselves as educators, and the ways in which we teach. While scripted curricula may be meant to assist us in our mission for student learning, we must use our knowledge as professional educators to assist us as well. Only then, will we be truly meeting the needs of all of our students.

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