

How I Used Lucy Calkins' Units of Study Writing Program to Support my First Grade Students'
Writing Development: A Self Study

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Abstract

In this self study, I examine how I used Lucy Calkins Units of Study Writing Program (2006) to support my first grade students' writing development. In order to reflect on my own teaching using the first two books in Calkins' series, *Launching the Writer's Workshop* and *Small Moments-Personal Narrative Writing*, I collected different types of qualitative data: audio tapes, research journals, student responses and examples, and reflections. The findings indicate that while I used Calkins' Units of Study Writing Program, I supported my students' literacy development by following the framework she provides, my using language and differentiating my writing instruction. The findings also indicate that my students were engaged, were excited about the writing process, developed and improved their listening skills, had opportunities to engage in developmentally appropriate writing practice and use resources in the classroom differently than they would otherwise.

Chapter One: Introduction

I stared at the heap of spiral bound, child created, paper books that my mother handed me. My name appeared to be on each one. Staring at the books, I thought to myself, did I really write these stories? Draw these pictures? Come up with these ideas? When did I have the time to do this?

For an assignment in one of my graduate classes, Emergent Language and Literacy, I completed a project in which I looked at artifacts from my childhood that affected my literacy development. The professor suggested we look at projects from elementary and middle school and find artifacts that both influenced my literacy development and demonstrated my literacy development of reading, writing, listening, viewing, and speaking, and then create a display of my findings. When the professor assigned this project I thought of it as another time filler project that would not be worth my time. I remember thinking that there was no way that I had past projects that showed my literacy development. As I started the project, I found pictures of the television shows that I watched as a child, such as *Rugrats* and *Full House*, and books that I read, such as *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* (Brashares, 2005) and *Pony Pals* (Betancourt, 1995). I began putting these pictures that I felt conveyed very little meaning, other than the fact that I watched the show or read the book as a child, onto my display. My mother took an interest in the project when she saw me working and shared with me that she had kept a stack of my work from elementary school. Minutes later, I was swimming in a sea of papers, projects and handmade books from my childhood.

My elementary teachers must have valued writing because my mother had kept numerous writing journals and writing projects from my years in elementary school. My writing projects

ranged from creative stories about my family and adventures with my friends to reports about animals such as the kangaroo. Reading through these projects helped me see and realize that I went through several development stages while learning to write.

In one instance, my second grade teacher, Mrs. Dinse, created a new journal for each of us every month and required us to write in it about small moment stories that happened in our lives including trips and special events. My mother had saved each of the completed journals from the year. As I looked through my journal entries, I noticed my development and improvement, especially in my handwriting and use of punctuation, from September to June. It was remarkable to see the changes I made. My handwriting at the beginning of the year showed my poor formation of letters. My letters did not sit on the lines, nor did they reach the top of the guiding lines when they were supposed to. Rather than having crisp, effortless looking letters, my letters looked shaky. My sentences often lacked punctuation at the end sentences and my stories and entries lacked details. By looking at these writing samples, I could see how my handwriting looked when I was young and understand that literacy development takes place on a continuum, and that my own writing developed over a period of time. My handwriting went from sloppy to neat, my spelling and mechanics changed drastically, and the amount I wrote on each page skyrocketed with more and more details.

Although I am unsure of what type of writing instruction my teacher followed, I find it important to recognize that she gave me many opportunities to practice my writing in authentic ways, such as through writing stories. One of my journal entries from September had one simple sentence about going to Chuckie Cheese with my brothers and sisters. However, as I learned more about writing, and other literacy skills such as reading, talking, socializing, and vocabulary, my entries became more detailed. All of these experiences impacted my thinking and abilities.

One of my journal entries from June included a topic sentence about going to the 1000 Islands with my family, a sentence telling about how I went go-carting, a sentence about going into town and buying friendship bracelets and a concluding sentence stating that I had so much fun. It was amazing to see the difference one year made on my overall literacy development. It was especially neat to see what I went through because this is not simply unique to me. Rather, it is a process that most second graders go through as part of their literacy development.

While sitting at my kitchen table, during spring semester of 2013, I read a story that I wrote when my dog, Czar, passed away. The girl in the story, Anna, was very upset. The pictures I drew showed Anna crying and even laying next to her dog, Buddy, after he passed. I realize now that writing these stories sometimes served as an outlet to share how I was feeling.

I wrote story after story both by myself and with friends. The amount of spiral bound paper books that my mother kept shows my fascination with writing. Topics of my stories ranged from fiction stories about fairies and castles to non-fiction stories about family trips and car rides. Every story included descriptive words that matched the pictures that were above my writing. I even noticed that many of the stories were autobiographical though with a different protagonist. Some of the stories were related to an issue I was going through at that point in my life; I just used different names so no one knew it was about me!

My writing projects, especially the stories, and my development in the areas of reading, speaking and socializing, helped me think about the writing instruction that teachers chose in the past and choose to teach today. What was supposed to be a graduate class project of finding artifacts, or examples, from my childhood that influenced and displayed my development of literacies, such as seeing, speaking, viewing, and listening, turned into me discovering how

important writing was and still is to me. Without completing that project, I do not think that I would have realized what a significant impact my elementary teachers had on my writing. I would not have realized how much they supported my development as a writer. Seeing how much of an impact my teachers had on me made me want to make this great impact on my own first grade students. I want to inspire my students to write just as my teachers did for me. My goal is to influence my students to become writers.

Significance of the Problem

I believe that writing is a part of life that is needed in order to be independent and successful. Many individuals use writing every day whether they realize it or not. People write a note to remind themselves of things they need to do, they write in forms of text messaging and e-mailing, which enables them to communicate through a quick and easy modern form of technology, or they create signs like Do Not Disturb to place on doors during testing. I believe that writing in these various genres enables people, including me, to communicate and function in various ways with a variety of people.

At the school where I teach now, administrators and teachers have made their “wildly important goal,” or “WIG,” about helping the students improve their literacies especially in becoming better readers. My colleagues and I are supposed to devote time to reading and writing each day in order to meet the “WIG.” During our writing instruction time, I try to balance teaching the three modes of writing, narratives, informational, and opinion writing, with teaching grammar. Teachers must set aside a time to teach writing because without writing instruction, students may not learn how to write and their literacy development will be affected. I use the

Lucy Calkins Units of Study (2006) writing program with my first grade students in order to teach the modes of writing. During this self-study I will be taught my first grade students writing using this program in order to try to inspire them to participate and take a liking to the writing process.

I believe that teachers work hard to choose and implement different writing curriculums. Many schools have begun to implement the new Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), which define what students need to know and learn. The standards were underwritten by the nation's governors and commissioners to help students become college and career ready (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The expectation of the Common Core State Standards is to help all children, no matter where they live, learn the same skills and be held to higher expectations (Engage NY, n.d.).

My colleagues and I are implementing both the ELA and Math modules developed by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). According to NYSED's website, EngageNY, the modules provide a framework and lessons for teachers to follow when teaching specific standards. Although the Common Core offers rigorous standards around which teachers can develop curriculum for these subjects, the New York State Education Department has not yet created the writing modules. Therefore, students from different classrooms in our school are taught writing through different strategies. Students in some classes may be learning about writing using the Calkins' Units of Study writing program (2006) whereas students in other schools may learn writing using fill-in-the-blank worksheets. I believe that teachers within a school should decide on how they want to teach writing and keep it consistent within the grade

level. I think that all first grade teachers in my school should decide on how to teach writing and should be consistent across classrooms so that when they proceed to different grades they will have all been exposed to the same things.

Furthermore, students within schools across the state, and even country, may be being taught writing in different ways. In some schools, it is up to the administrators to decide how writing should be taught while in other schools it is left up to the teachers. Therefore, writing instruction varies from classroom to classroom. Since the Common Core State Standards including writing, teachers need to teach writing, but it is up to them to decide the curriculum in which they choose to follow. I teach writing using Lucy Calkins' Units of Study, while my colleague next door does not. I believe students will not learn how to write unless they are explicitly taught the writing process.

Writing is being taught from very diverse perspectives (Hsu, 2009). Teachers demonstrate multiple ways in which they teach writing such as fill-in-the-blank worksheets and teaching skills such as organization, ideas, and voice. I believe that even though writing is being taught in classrooms, that is not all that matters. What students are taught also matters significantly. It matters significantly if students are solely taught through the use of writing and grammar worksheets or combinations of different approaches to writing. Across many school districts, different teachers are using different methods of teaching writing including the 6 + 1 writing traits, the Daily Five, and "standardized" writing programs such as Lucy Calkins, Nancie Atwell, and Jim Burke (Borthwick, Nauman, & Stirling, 2011).

The 6+1 writing traits model is used to define writing through key qualities such as ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation (Culham,

2003). On the other hand, a different approach to writing is The Daily 5. The Daily 5 consists of a structure that helps students to develop habits of reading, writing, and working independently which will in turn help develop their literacy independence (Boushey & Moser, 2006). The writing component of the Daily 5 provides students with time to practice writing by choosing to work on writing of their choice (Boushey & Moser, 2006). With increased demands in accountability, teachers often adopt “standardized,” or “scripted” writing programs that include teachers allowing student choice in writing topics which are supported by authors like Lucy Calkins (1998) and Nancie Atwell (1987). Within these writing workshops, the teacher presents a mini-lesson on a specific skill then provides students with time for writing. These standardized writing programs follow a “principled direction,” meaning that the program provides teachers will general concepts to teach as they develop their own writing programs (Davis, 2012). Meaning, teachers do not have to follow work by word, rather they can take the concept or skill that is taught in each lesson and create their own lesson from the ideas within the writing program.

Over the past decade, the improvement of writing instruction has highlighted teaching students skills needed to write effectively (Applebee & Langer, 2009). These skills, such as grammar and knowledge of genres, are often taught to students through fill-in-the-blank worksheets that can often become monotonous. I believe that these fill-in-the-blank worksheets leave students no space for creativity. They limit students’ thoughts and can be un-motivating. When students are required to fill in the blank on worksheets, they are being asked to answer literal questions. They are not asked to use their imaginations in order to create unique writing pieces. Furthermore, because teachers want their students to learn these skills, teachers drill them with these skills which can take the joy out of writing for the students.

Overall, I believe that teachers within schools need to choose one type of writing instruction and stick to it so that students across the grade level are exposed to the same thing. I will use the Lucy Calkins' Units of Study in order to teach writing instruction and to meet the standards provided by the Common Core.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this self-study was to learn how I could use the Calkins' Units of Study writing program (2006) to support my first grade students' writing abilities. By observing how I used the Calkins' Units of Study writing program, I found ways to improve how I teach writing. Through this self-study, a goal was to analyze how I respond to certain circumstances that occur during the writing instruction time such as behaviors my students exhibited and the questions they asked. I looked at how I used language during writing instruction with my 16 first grade students as I taught the lessons from Calkins' Units of Study writing program. I also looked at how the students implemented the content from the lesson in their writing so that I could understand how they were developing their skills as writers and what I might do differently to support their development. I focused on and documented my language, responses and behaviors while teaching writing.

Calkins' Units of Study (2003) is a yearlong curriculum that she designed to help teachers teach young writers how to write about real life events and to become authors. Seven books, each about a different genre of writing, including about 15 lessons, comprise the series. The books are: *Launching a Writing Workshop*, *Small Moments: Personal Narrative Writing*, *Writing for Readers: Teaching Skills and Strategies*, *The Craft of Revision*, *Authors as Mentors*,

Nonfiction Writing: Procedures and Reports, and *Poetry: Powerful Thoughts in Tiny Packages*. Each lesson within the books includes a mini-lesson followed by independent writing time. For example, one lesson gives a sample of how to teach stretching out sounds in words. During the first 10 minutes, the mini-lesson, the teacher does the talking. For the remainder of the writing time, the students are able to practice what they just learned.

Through my study, I documented how I used the first two books of the series, *Launching a Writer's Workshop* and *Small Moments: Personal Narrative Writing*, to support my first graders' emerging literacy development. I used *Launching a Writer's Workshop* and *Small Moments: Personal Narrative Writing* from the units of study during this 30 day study. These units of studies are helpful for teachers who are ready to begin teaching writing right away, especially writer's workshop; they are often used by teachers who learn best by simply getting started (Calkins, 2003).

By conducting this self-study and reflecting on my teaching, I gained insights into how I teach writing and how I can improve my instruction. I focused on how I used language when teaching and responding to students so I could improve my own practices. I believe that I should always reflect on my teaching experiences looking at how I taught and what I can do better.

Study Approach

I followed a qualitative, self-study research design. I focused my research on how I used the Calkins' Units of Study writing program to support the literacy development of my first graders. I looked at how I use this particular writing program as well as what decisions I made when teaching. Each writing lesson lasted only 30 minutes due to how the day is scheduled.

During each writing lesson, I documented by observations of the choices and the decisions I made related to language, instructional strategies and formative assessment. I conducted a self-study because I believed the process would enable me to develop a deeper understanding of my professional practices and enable me to construct new knowledge through my experiences (Samaras, 2011). I hoped that by studying myself I would improve my teaching of writing.

I collected data through the use of a research journal in which I wrote daily entries about the Units of Study writing lesson. Based on the structure of the Calkins' program, I taught a 10-15 minute writing mini lesson, which was followed by 15-20 minutes of independent writing time. I focused on a discussion of my teaching when I wrote the research journal entries. I anticipated the data that I collected, which includes my summaries and reflections of the day's events would help me reflect on how I was implementing the Calkins' program. I closely analyzed my teaching practices, such as what I said and how I responded to students, in order to make me aware of how I could improve how I educated my students. I wrote the entry approximately one half hour after I taught the lesson while my students were in music or art, or physical education classes. Writing the entry at that point in the day enabled me to include a detailed account of the lesson.

Because I conducted a self-study, it was imperative that I focus on the language that I use—what I said, how I said it and how I reacted to students, as well as the instructional choices that I made during the lesson. When I had an audio recorder available, I recorded myself during the mini-lesson and then transcribed the lesson verbatim. My goal in conducting this self-study was to improve my teaching of writing by looking closely at my practice. I looked at my current practices in order to determine how my use of the Lucy Calkins' Units of Study impacted my students' literacy development.

It was beneficial to create a self-study based on how I used the Calkins' Units of Study and how my teaching impacted my first graders literacy development because this is the writing system that is used at this school. Moreover, the writing block is 30 minutes. Therefore, my colleagues and I needed to follow the schedules that were approved by the administration team. Writing instruction in my classroom occurred in the morning from 9:00 to 9:30a.m. Therefore, writing was one of the very first things that the students did during their school day.

Rationale

Elementary school teachers have been putting less emphasis on writing because of increased demands on other content areas such as math (Applebee & Langer, 2009). I chose to focus on how I taught writing using Calkins' Units of Study for this self-study because I wanted to improve the way I teach writing. I wanted to look at the writing curriculum created by Calkins and her colleagues (2003), and develop a greater understanding of how I could use it to help support my students' writing development. I believe that writing is one of the most important skills for students to learn in school. I believe that students need to be able to write in order to be successful in life. They need to be able to write in order to fill out applications for jobs, to make lists, and write letters. Therefore, I believed that it would be beneficial to conduct self-study related to how I could better support my students' interest in and abilities with writing through the use of Calkins' Units of Study writing program.

I chose to carry out a study about Calkins' Units of Study because the school where I am currently teaching first grade values her approach to teaching writing to students in the primary grades. I used the first two books in the Units of Study series throughout this six week study. I looked at the lessons and decided based on my students' needs what lessons to teach. It

was important for me to know my students, what they were ready for and able to do so that I could design my instruction appropriately.

Summary

Writing played a large role in my life as a young student. I wrote several stories with the support of my elementary teachers, especially my second grade teacher, Mrs. Dinse. Looking at my own writing development enabled me to become more aware of the processes my students follow as they become writers.

As a first year teacher, I see that teachers choose between several different writing instructions strategies to teach their students (Salvat, 2012; McCarthy & Sun, 2011). I believe that some of the strategies that are chosen can become monotonous for students, which can make them less likely to develop a love for writing. With new emphases on standards and assessments, I believe teachers should make time in their schedules for writing (McCarthy & Sun, 2011).

I chose to use Calkins' Units of Study program to learn how my use of it impacted the literacy development of my students. My colleagues and I are required to use the Calkins' writing program. Therefore, I believe it was be beneficial to look at how I used the program to help support my students' writing development. Throughout this self-study, I documented my use of Calkins' program and the instructional choices in a research journal. . I believe that it is incredibly important for me to reflect on my teaching so I can become a better teacher.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

I realize that it is important to investigate literature related to a topic when conducting a research study because the previous research can help me understand the broader context of what has been written about the topic and give me ideas about what other researcher and authors have studied and discovered about the topic.

In this chapter, I present an examination of five distinct, overarching themes relating to my research question: *How can I use the Lucy Calkins Units of Study writing program to support the literacy development of my first grade students.* The first theme I investigate is the theories and philosophies related to emergent writing. I then discuss the new writing standards that have been put in place by the Common Core. The third theme I discuss is different approaches to writing instruction including the approach of teaching traditional skills such as conventions and grammar and the process approach to writing instruction such as writer's workshop. The fourth theme I discuss is Calkins philosophies about writing instruction. I will then discuss the Units of Study as the fifth theme, its historical context, and its purpose. Within this review of literature, I present strategies, suggestions, and philosophies to address how writing is a valuable part of the curriculum and how teachers use the Calkins' Units of Study writing program to support the literacy development of students.

Emergent Writing

It is important that teachers know how students develop their language and literacy abilities so that the student can receive appropriate instruction that will help the student to meet their fullest potential (Chaney, 2011). Students develop literacy skills differently, yet they go through many similar processes (Langer & Applebee, 1986). Theorists, such as Vygotsky (1962,

1978) Bruner (1976), and Luria (1929/1977-1978) have some similar philosophies and different philosophies about how students develop and learn best. The three theorists believe that having an adult as a demonstrator encourages children in the literacy acquisition process. Adults are able to demonstrate what is expected of the child in order to teach. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) believed that children learn by participating in socially meaningful activities. For example, interactive events in which children work with others is the best way for them to learn reading and writing. They learn with others rather than by themselves. For example, as students work together, they acquire new strategies and knowledge than they would by working by themselves.

Learning through Communicative Relationships

Both Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and Bruner (1976) saw language learning as growing out of a communicative relationship. For example, a communicative relationship includes when an adult helps a child understand and complete a new task by showing the child what to do first then scaffolds the child so that he or she can complete a task in which he or she would not be able to do alone. Vygotsky and Bruner see literacy, speaking, listening and viewing, as encouraging thinking and reasoning of the student that will support higher levels of cognitive development (Langer & Applebee, 1986). Adults will scaffold the child until they can solve the problem alone. For example, adults often model what they want the child to do so that they can soon complete the task alone. Adults might think aloud or show the student a final product of the completed task before expecting the student to do it by themselves.

Both Luria (1929/1977-1978) and Vygotsky (1962, 1978) believe that language learning is the result of social interaction, which can include the adult serving as the facilitator and the child as the learner who has to accomplish a task such as in a school setting when the teacher is a

facilitator and the child may be expected to complete a specific assignment. Luria and Vygotsky believe that the social environment is a critical feature of learning activities because learning takes place in social contexts. Creating an environment that is welcoming would help students to become better learners because students learn best in a social environment (Langer & Applebee, 1986). Luria sees writing as developing from the child's ability to use cues in the social environment as a way to serve meaning (Langer & Applebee, 1986). For example, what a child sees in his environment may influence what he chooses to write, or draw about. Luria found that children's writing often imitated adult behaviors. Young children often create marks on a page as a form of imitation of what perceive adults are doing. Although many forms of writing included scribbles, these scribbles were acquired behaviors of what the children did and what they saw.

The way both written and oral language is used around children will help to determine what skills they will obtain through observation (Langer & Applebee, 1986). When children begin to use writing as a way to encode meanings, they build upon their prior knowledge of their earlier scribbles and are able to write in more complex ways (Langer & Applebee, 1986). Building on their first forms of writing, such as scribbles that imitate adult behavior, children eventually create piece of writing that convey meaning. Their writing pieces often come through in the form of stories, both fiction and non-fiction.

To demonstrate the power of communicative interaction in learning in general, Vygotsky (1962, 1978) stated, "What children can do with the assistance of others might in some sense be even more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone" (Langer & Applebee, 1986, p. 174). This means that with the help, encouragement, and interaction with adults, children can learn so much. For example, a teacher or parent guiding a child through the writing process would be much more beneficial and successful than if the child was expected to

do the task on his or her own. A teacher or parent may teach the child how to form letters, then how to form sentences. The child would have much more success with the assistance of the adult.

Theorists such as Luria have studied patterns of how students learn how to write and discovered that distinct stages emerged (Puranik & Lonigan, 2009). Before students learn how to write, they scribble on a piece of paper to convey meaning through print (Puranik & Lonigan, 2009). Although the term scribble is generally thought of as random marks on a paper, these particular scribbles are not random at all. These early scribbles that children make have universal features including characteristics of writing such as linearity, discreteness and lack of iconicity (Puranik & Lonigan, 2009). Linearity means that they can make organized marks in straight lines, discreteness means the marks are separated by spaces, and iconicity means the writing units are abstract. The markings indicate that students realize that writing and drawing are different (Puranik & Lonigan, 2009).

Linearity and Unified Hypothesis

Although not one specific theory of how writing develops has been accepted, two hypotheses, the *Linearity Hypothesis* and the *Unified Hypothesis*, have emerged (Puranik & Lonigan, 2009). The Linearity Hypothesis, supported by Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) hold up the idea that the development of a skill takes steps (Puranik & Longian, 2009). First, early features are mastered, such as being able to create marks on a page also known as scribbles and mock writing, which in turn contribute to the acquisition of later developing skills including creating more uniformed lines. The following step includes invented spelling (made up spelling by writing sounds heard in words), then finally readable and gradually more complex texts

(Mackenzie, 2011). With this method, children will demonstrate universal features of writing such as writing that does not contain letters but does have simple marks on a page. Nor does the writing show the length of a spoken word before the child demonstrates knowledge of language specific characteristics of the writing system (Mackenzie, 2011; Puranik & Lonigan, 2009).

Supporters of the Unified Hypothesis believe that children do not acquire knowledge of print in a predictable sequence (Puranik & Lonigan, 2009). This hypothesis suggests that children learn about general and language specific knowledge at the same time and in no particular order (Puranik & Lonigan, 2009). Supporters of this hypothesis, such as Gombert, Fayol, and Trieman (1992), believe that children focus on the characteristics of writing that attract their attention and are visually prominent. They believe children are more aware of visual characteristics including capitalization patterns and print orientation (Puranik & Lonigan, 2009). Trieman (2007) found that children younger than four can demonstrate knowledge of universal features, such as linearity of writing, and language specific features, such as knowledge of specific letter shapes of their names and left to right directionality, at the same time (Puranik & Lonigan, 2009).

English Language Arts and Literacy Common Core Learning Standards

Beginning in 2010, states within the country excluding Texas, Alaska, Virginia, Nebraska, and Minnesota have begun to use Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010). The standards are research and evidence based, aligned with college and work expectations, rigorous, and evidence based guidelines that teachers are required to follow when teaching in order to ensure that students will have the skills needed to be successful in life (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010). Teachers

are to use these educational standards to ensure that their students have the skills and knowledge that they will need in order to be successful in school and to be college and career ready (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010). In order to be college and career ready, elements of the Common Core State Standards state that students should be able to demonstrate independence, build strong content knowledge, comprehend as well as critique, and understand others' perspectives and value evidence (Engage NY). These standards are easily understandable so that anyone who reads them can understand the expectations (Engage NY). For example, the writing standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.1 states that students should be able to “write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010).” Evident expectations for each grade level are listed so that educators know exactly what students should be able to do.

The creators of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, including Governors and Commissioners, have established a set of educational standards for grades kindergarten through 12th grade in English Language Arts and Mathematics (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010). The Nation's Governors and Education Commissioners have led the development of these new standards and will continue to lead further development (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010). In addition to governors and commissioners, teachers, principals, and superintendents involved in the National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

(NCTM), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) are helping to create and improve the standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010).

Several different criteria are essential to the development of the standards. Creators of these new standards studied comparisons to standards from high performing states and nations, trends in international math and science curriculums, and also survey results on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010).

Researchers concluded that traditional US curriculums must become much more consistent and focused in order to improve student achievement (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010).

Currently, school districts in New York, as well as 44 other states, are implementing and following these new standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010). The standards were made to hold students to a higher accountability and promote equity meaning that no matter where a student goes to school, each student will be prepared with the same skills and knowledge. Furthermore, the standards provide a clear and reliable expectation of student learning across the country. Students will be provided an equal opportunity for education because of the consistency within the standards across the nation (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010).

Each grade has a unique set of standards for English Language Arts, ELA, and math. Within ELA and math are several components and features that specify distinctive standards that students are required to meet in order to achieve certain skills. The standards for each grade level

were made by creators to define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010). Grades K-5 follows the anchor standards, or a broad set of standards, related to college and career readiness that consist of specific standards that address skills that students need to learn. The writing standards focus on purpose and audience, the writing process, and organization (McCarthy & Ro, 2011). The anchor standards for writing are Text Types and Purposes, Production and Distribution of Writing, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, and Responding to Literature (Engage NY).

The anchor standards that teachers of grades K-5 are required to follow offer many specific focus points for instruction in order to ensure that students master the concept. In first grade, there are specific focus points within each anchor standard. For example, the anchor standard, Text Types and Purposes, comprise writing opinion pieces in which students can state an opinion and reason for it, writing informative/explanatory texts and state facts, and writing narratives in which they can appropriately sequence events. The anchor standard of Production and Distribution of Writing indicates that first grade students must be able to, with guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic and respond to questions from peers, and use a variety of digital tools to publish writing.

Specific standards within the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard for Writing of Research to Build and Present Knowledge for first graders consist of participating in shared research writing projects (how to books), and recall information with guidance and support from adults provided sources to answer a question. In the anchor standard, Responding to Literature, first grade students have to be able to create and present a poem, dramatization, or art work (Engage NY).

Writing Instruction: Traditional Versus Process

Writing is an essential part of the school day as it is a vital skill students need to learn (Atta & Salem, 2013). Teachers have the choice between many different ways to teach writing and are required by administrators to choose the type of writing instruction that they wish to follow. When a child is taught how to write, with the assistance of another person, he or she will eventually be able to write it by themselves. Therefore, teachers are careful to choose which type of writing instruction that they choose to use in their classrooms (Hsu, 2009). Although teachers know the importance of writing instruction, many do not agree on the best methods in which to teach (Hsu, 2009).

Traditional Approaches to Writing

About 25 years ago, writing instruction was only taught through technical aspects of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other conventions (Troia, Lin, Cohen, & Monroe, 2011). Grammar instruction was supposedly the only essential part of writing that students needed to learn in order to be able to write (Troia, et. al., 2011). Traditional approaches to writing instruction included teacher directed lessons about these specific grammar skills, which rarely required students to write texts longer than a few paragraphs (Troia, et al., 2011). However, researchers including Cutler and Graham (2008), Graves (1983), and Atwell (1987) found that although these skills are important, this type of instruction lacked creativity and engagement for the students (Alber-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007; McCarthy & Ro, 2011). When writing instruction lacks creativity the students are often disengaged (McCarthy & Ro, 2011). These researchers, including Cutler, Graham, Graves, and Atwell, believe that writing instruction falls

into two categories: traditional skills instruction and process approach writing in the form of writer's workshop (McCarthy & Ro, 2011).

Teachers began to see that rote repetition was not as beneficial for their students as other types of writing instruction (McCarthy & Ro, 2011). Teachers began to find and use more holistic approaches to writing instruction, which encouraged student to use the writing process: pre-writing, drafting and writing, sharing and responding, revising and editing, and publishing (McCarthy & Ro, 2011). During the pre-writing stage, the writer plans and organizes for writing. The drafting stage includes students creating drafts of their writing pieces. For each draft, the student makes more improvements, corrections and details than the last draft. Sharing and responding include students working with peers to offer feedback to each other. Revising and editing includes when students focus on correcting mechanical errors. Publishing consists of many different forms such as submitting work, or reading a piece of work to an audience (Alber-Morgan, et al., 2007).

Traditional approaches to writing instruction can be characterized by students completing fill-in-the-blank worksheets that target specific skills defined by the teacher (McCarthy & Ro, 2011). The approaches emphasize grammar and conventions. The teacher typically teaches the entire class at one time and picks the topic of what is taught rather than having the students work at their own pace through the writing process (McCarthy & Ro, 2011).

Process Writing and Writer's Workshop

Writer's workshop is often referred to as process writing, a form of holistic writing instruction (Chaney, 2011). Process writing means that writers use stages as they learn to write for an audience. Process writing emerged in the 1970's and originally was not favored by many

researcher including Pritchard and Honeycutt (2006), who believed that the approach had minimal effect on raising writing achievement because basically no direct instruction was implemented (Chaney, 2011).

In today's classrooms, process writing involves much more than the stages of writing (Chaney, 2011). Teachers use process writing to teach self regulation strategies, help students understand genre constraints, guide students in editing surface errors, provide feedback, develop audience awareness, and deal with emotional barriers (Chaney, 2011). Students who participate in process writing, or writer's workshop, have shown significant achievements in their ability to craft expository writing (Chaney, 2011).

Authors like Atwell (1987), Calkins (1998), and Graves (1983) have created a path for the adoption of process writing instruction by creating books that teach, give strategies, and promote writer's workshop (Troia, et al, 2011). In her book, *The Middle*, Atwell (1987) provides strategies, suggestions and success stories for teachers who wish to conduct writer's workshop. Suggestions include what to do when holding writing conferences with students (Taylor, 2000). Graves, like Calkins and Atwell, believed in the writer's workshop approach as well. He believed that children will write only if they see adults writing too. Children will learn to like writing if they are given choice much like what they are given when following the writer's workshop approach (Graves, 1994).

Writer's workshop is currently a favored writing approach because it was created to provide students with choices over many things within the workshop (Chaney, 2001; Hsu, 2009). Currently, writing workshop and different variations of the process approach are the most noteworthy writing instructions that teachers are using in the United States (Hsu, 2009). The choices that the students are given keeps them engaged in the writing process. Most educators

use some form of process writing including writing workshop in their classrooms (Troia, et al., 2011). Furthermore, writing workshop always includes key elements including mini-lessons on workshop procedures and writing skills, a longer (usually about 30 minutes) period of writing time every day, teacher-student conferences, frequent sharing with others, and structure so that it could run itself independently (Troia, et al., 2011; Hachem, et al., 2008; McCarthy & Ro, 2011).

Scaffolding and Explicit Instruction

Another approach to process writing involves scaffolding and explicit strategy instruction. Scaffolding is a term that highlights the role an adult can assume when assisting students so that they can carry out tasks that they usually could not do independently. Similar to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal development, a student can achieve so much more when assisted by an expert (Hsu, 2009; McCarthy & Ro, 2011). Teachers who use scaffolding often model what they want the student to do, demonstrate what the student will be doing, and question the student using dialogue in order to help their students learn writing (McCarthy & Ro, 2011). The scaffolding strategy, or the Cognitive Strategy Instruction, is much like writer's workshop instruction because the teacher models and thinks aloud using strategies for planning, drafting, and revising (McCarthy & Ro, 2011). For example, if the teacher wants a student to learn to put spaces between words when writing, they will first show the student what to do and demonstrate how to put the spaces between words. The student will be able to practice the task before being required to do it on his or her own.

Interactive Writing

Interactive writing is another type of process writing that is commonly used by teachers in primary grades, more specifically pre-kindergarten to second grade (Hsu, 2009). Early childhood teachers often use interactive writing to support emergent learners developing awareness of reading and writing (Hsu, 2009). This type of writing is a collaborative literacy event in which students and the teacher create a writing piece together (Hsu, 2009). They think of the most appropriate words and organization for their text as a group. Students take turns sharing the pencil or marker with the teacher during the writing process (Fountas, McCarrier & Pinnell, 2000).

The goal of interactive writing is to help students develop writing skills, strategies, and conventions that will help them become independent, successful writers (Hsu, 2009). Unlike writer's workshop, interactive writing does not follow a set sequence or process. Yet, the teacher decides what to focus on during the writing activity based on his/her understanding of the students' strengths and weaknesses such as teaching conventions of writing such as capitalization, spacing, and punctuation.

During interactive writing, each lesson begins with the whole class. The students work alongside the teacher to decide what should be written. The teacher and students then share the work in writing the text. During this process, the teacher often thinks aloud for processes related to writing such as how to spell a word (Hsu, 2009).

Lucy Calkins and the Units of Study

Lucy Calkins (1998), author of several books and many articles about reading and writing, and a founding director of the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project, is a

major contributor to the research related to children's writing development (Chaney, 2011). Her Units of Study (1994) curriculum is based on a writer's workshop approach to writing instruction. Calkins (1998) is a strong supporter of the belief that students' lives and abilities are starting points for writing and that students are more engaged in writing when their writing is personal (Calkins, 1994). She created the Units of Study program so students can invest in writing by sharing personal experiences. Based on her belief that student authors also need to be heard, she has included opportunities within several lessons for students to share their writing pieces.

Calkins has created her own version of writer's workshop. She states that "writing is meant to unfold, stretch into, and disturb every aspect of a writer's world...The challenge we've taken on in establishing reading-writing workshops is not only to help children write well, but also to help them live well" (Calkins & Harwayne, 1991). Calkins supports the idea that by learning how to write through meaningful ways, students can also live well. When students are able to write well, they are, according to Calkins (1994) able to be successful in life.

In her book, *The Art of Teaching Writing*, Calkins (1994) states that it is essential for children to be deeply involved in writing, and for them to share their writing so that they can think of themselves as authors. They take pride in their work and are able to spend time on the writing process by revising and publishing their pieces. Writing is a journey through which students, and adults travel (Calkins, 1994). Through writing, they can hold their lives in their hands and keep it as treasures (Calkins, 1994). Because of Calkins' beliefs about writing, she has created her Units of Study for teachers to use to guide them through writing instruction.

With the new demands from the Common Core State Standards, administrators from schools across the United States have adopted commercial reading and writing programs, such as

America's Choice: Writer's Advantage, Success for All, The Six-Trait Model, and Units of Study for Primary Writing, so that they can meet the Common Core Standards (McCarthy & Ro, 2011). Furthermore, Calkins developed the Units of Study so that teachers could focus their instruction on specific genres in order to provide systematic writing instruction.

The Units of Study is a yearlong curriculum that helps to guide teachers' practices. It was created because she as well as her colleagues believes that writing matters and children need to be given opportunities to grow as strong writers. She states her reasoning for creating the units by saying,

“We've written this series because writing matters... These books reflect our effort to hand over what we know so that more children can be given opportunities to grow as strong writers and more teachers can experiences the extraordinary benefits that come from participating in a community of practice that involves shared inquiry into the teaching of writing (Calkins, 2006, p. 4).

Included in the Units of Study are seven units, which teachers can teach across the year. The contents of the books follow a sequential order, building on skills that were taught previously. The first book in the series is *Launching a Writing Workshop*, followed by *Small Moments: Personal Narrative Writing*, *Writing for Readers: Teaching Skills and Strategies*, *The Craft of Revision*, *Authors as Mentors*, *Nonfiction Writing: Procedures and Reports*, and *Poetry: Powerful Thoughts in Tiny Packages* (Calkins, 2006).

Teachers can use the first book or unit to set the stage of the writer's workshop for their students. In the book, Calkins offers language and pacing tips that teachers can use to guide their

lessons. The material in the next unit, or book, *Small Moments: Personal Narrative Writing*, helps the teacher to guide students to take events from their everyday lives and make them into small, focused stories. The third book, *Writing for Readers: Teaching Skills and Strategies*, helps the teacher to guide students to focus on conventions of language and make their writing readable. The fourth book in the series, *The Craft of Revision*, helps teachers to support and encourage the idea that good writing needs to be revised. Students learn how to use editing marks so that they can improve their writing. In the fifth book of the series, *Authors as Mentors*, teachers help students learn that they can look at the work of other authors in order to become better writers. In the sixth book of the series, *Nonfiction Writing: Procedures and Reports*, teachers help students learn how to write different nonfiction stories. They learn about How-To and All-About books. Finally, in the last book of the series, *Poetry: Powerful Thoughts in Tiny Packages*, teachers help students learn to write poems using rhythm and visualization in order to make their writing powerful and clear (Calkins, 2006).

Calkins has designed the units to follow a predictable writing workshop approach. Each unit of study is divided into about fifteen teaching sessions. Calkins identifies a topic of study for each session. Calkins has provided each session is provided with clear examples of what and how to teach and detailed descriptions of one day's teaching. Within each section, Calkins has created an introduction, a mini-lesson, writing/conferencing time, a mid-workshop teaching point, and sharing of work (Calkins, 2006).

Within each session of the units, Calkins includes a ten minute mini-lesson is included in which an example is given so that the teacher can get an idea of the actual teaching language and children's responses. Each mini-lesson is separated into four parts: connection, teaching, active engagement, and linking (Calkins, 2006). Calkins created the mini-lessons to begin with the

teachers assessing the students' prior knowledge followed by instructional language of the lesson, then the children trying what they've just been taught, then finally figuring out what has just been taught into a larger context of what they have been doing.

Summary

All the themes and information that have been presented throughout the chapter are essential philosophies, standards and methods that aid the concept that writing is a valuable part of the curriculum. Teachers need to be aware of how their students develop their emergent literacy and language skills (Chaney, 2011). Teachers should be aware of the different types of writing instruction so that they can help their students to reach their fullest potential by teaching them through appropriate writing instruction. It is necessary for teachers to know this so that they can create a curriculum that is developmentally appropriate for them.

Not only do teachers need to know the stages that children go through when learning to write, they also need to keep up to date with new standards that are mandated. Currently, the expectations and outcomes for students in the United States are changing. Writing standards, even in early grades like first grade, have become much more rigorous, in hopes that the students will in turn become college and career ready. Therefore, it is important to continue keeping up to date with new curriculum and standards that districts and states follow

Since it is required that teachers follow new standards and get their students college and career ready, they need to choose a writing approach for instruction to follow. In the past, traditional approaches such as teaching grammar and conventions through worksheets were very popular. However, an approach to writing instruction, called the process approach, has become much more popular. The process approach includes writing instruction including writer's

workshop and interactive writing. These types of writing focus more on the process that writers go through when writing rather than the final product.

Calkins is one supporter of the process approach. She is an author and teacher of several books about writing. Calkins created the Units of Study in order to serve as a guide for teachers when teaching writing. The Units of Study is a yearlong curriculum that sets the stage for teachers and writers to be successful during writing instruction.

Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

I believe that all teachers benefit from reflecting on their teaching practices. As teachers, we expect students to practice math facts, grammar rules, and other important skills in order to become better at what they do and succeed in life. I believe that teachers are a lot like students. Teachers must practice and reflect upon what they do and how they do it in order to become more effective. We might not complete worksheets in order to practice and become better, however, we must spend time practicing the craft of teaching and looking closely at what we say in order to teach more effectively and how we say it so that we can reflect and improve our practices.

The purpose of this self-study, then, was to reflect on my own teaching, specifically my teaching of writing. I believe that by reflecting on my teaching practices, I will be able to improve myself as a teacher by analyzing the choices that I provide students, the language I use during my instruction and how I respond to their questions and support their growth as writers. More specifically, through this study I looked at and analyzed my use of Lucy Calkins' Units of Study writing program (Calkins, 2006). A goal for this study was to investigate how I could use the Calkins' Units of Study writing program to support the literacy development of my first graders by helping them become better writers and also to help myself become a better teacher of writing.

Throughout this chapter, I added how I reached the study's research question. I discuss the specific data that I collected as well as how I analyzed the data. I discuss my background as the participant and the researcher and the context in which the study took place. I conclude the chapter by discussing the criteria of trustworthiness and the limitations of the study.

Participant

Since I conducted a self study, I was the only participant. I am a first year teacher in a suburban school district, teaching first grade. I strongly support the work of Lucy Calkins and her beliefs about children and writing. Similar to Calkins, I believe that all students deserve to learn how to tell stories on paper. Students should learn how to write without limitations. Meaning, students should not be told what they can and cannot write about. They should be allowed to choose a topic that interests them and write about that given topic. They should be encouraged to push limits. By pushing limits, the students are encouraged to write more than they did the week before. They are encouraged to focus more closely on a specific topic rather than write a generalized story. Therefore, in order to do this, I believe that I need to be constantly developing and looking at how they teach and why they teach certain ways

Context of the Study

This study took place in a small, suburban school district in western New York. The population of the community is very small, as of 2009 the population is 8,769 people. The socioeconomic status of the community is middle class and the median household income in the county is \$76,960.

In 2010, the school consisted of 1,162 students enrolled from pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade. The demographics of the student population are three percent Black or African American, three percent Hispanic or Latino, two percent Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 92 percent white. Twenty percent of students in this school district receive free or reduced price lunch.

My class had 16 first grade students, nine boys and seven girls. There was one Hispanic student, two African American students, and 13 white students. The age of the students ranged from five years old to seven years old. Three students repeated kindergarten. Two students were diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, ADHD. One student received Occupational Therapy, OT, services two times a week. Two students received speech services two times a week. The majority of the students were from primarily middle class families with some children coming from lower income families.

I conducted this study in a first grade classroom in the elementary school in this particular school district. The study took place four days a week, Monday-Thursday, from 9:00-9:30a.m.during our writing block portion of English language arts (ELA). I anticipated that the study would last 30 days.

Students arrived at school at 8:20a.m. After morning work, phonics, and calendar, I began writing instruction, which lasted a half hour. Writing time followed a consistent routine, based on Calkins' (1986) Units of Study. All of the lessons and choices I made were based on the first two books of the Units of Study. For the first 10 minutes, I taught a mini lesson that targeted a specific skill. For the remaining 20 minutes, the students wrote independently, implementing the skill that I taught that day, or during a previous lesson, in their writing. The students had specials at 10:00-10:40a.m.every day. During that time I completed journal entries and began to reflect on my teaching of writing that day.

The classroom was a spacious room with three large rectangular tables in the center of the room. The tables were arranged in a horseshoe layout with five or six students at each table. The tables were all facing toward the smart board so the opening of the horseshoe was open to the smart-board. Since five to six students sat at a table, each table had its own writing supply

bin. In the corner of the classroom was a kidney shaped table where some students chose to complete their writing. In the back of a classroom was another rectangular table that we had designated as the “writing center” table. Some students worked at this table when it was writing time. The writing bulletin board was on the wall to the right of the table and displays posters with content that related to our writing lessons such as suggested posters in the Lucy Calkins Units of Study writing program including what writers do when they think they are done and what writers do when they are writing small moment stories.

In the front of the room was the SMARTboard. On the floor in front of the SMARTboard was a small carpeted area. To the left of the smart board was a writing easel and a teacher chair. The easel and the teacher chair were turned to the side in order to set off the carpet from the rest of the classroom. To the right of the smart-board, also turned to the side, were bookshelves and two special “butterfly” chairs that served as our author’s chairs during writing and just special chairs to sit in throughout the day. This special area that was offset from the rest of the classroom by the unique carpet, bookshelves, and special chairs were where all of the mini-lessons take place during writing block.

My Positionality as the Participant and the Researcher

I am a 23 year old white woman living in a large suburb of western, New York. I have been raised in a middle class family. I attended SUNY Oswego from 2008 to 2012 where I received my bachelor’s degree and certification in childhood education, grades one through six. After graduating with my bachelor’s degree from SUNY Oswego, I began master’s degree in

childhood literacy at The College at Brockport, SUNY in the fall of 2012 and plan to complete my master's degree in the summer of 2014.

Presently, I am in my first year of teaching first grade at the elementary school in which I will conduct this study. I was a substitute teacher for one year after completing my bachelor's degree.

I believe that my teaching philosophies shape the way that I guide my students. As stated in chapter one, writing is incredibly important to me. I realized my passion for writing during a graduate course about emergent literacy at Brockport. I recognized how much time I dedicated to writing as a child. Becoming aware of my enthusiasm for writing has made me want to learn about the ways that I teach writing and how I can do so most effectively.

I believe that all students should learn how to communicate in and through writing. Students need to be able to write in order to be successful in life and college and career ready. I support Lucy Calkins' (1986) idea that it is essential for students to be deeply involved in writing and to think of themselves as authors (Calkins, 1986). Writing allows students and adults to hold their lives in their hands and make something of it (Calkins, 1986). I believe that writing is not simply recording words on a page, but making importance and significance of them and creating meaning behind the words and stories. Writing allows us to turn the commotion from our lives into small selected moments that can be uncovered and written down in order to be celebrated (Calkins, 1986).

It will be one of my lifelong goals to help my students develop a passion for writing, similar to what I had. I hope to help my students become passionate about writing by allowing them to choose their own topics to write about and not giving them limits and constraints. However, I know that not all students will develop the same enthusiasm that I had for writing.

Therefore, I chose to complete this study in order to improve and reflect on the ways that I can teach writing so that I can potentially make a positive difference for my students. I hope to create a positive way of thinking about writing for my students by making writing fun, creative and unique to each student's life through the use of the Lucy Calkins Units of Study writing program.

Data Collection

Throughout this study, I collected different types of qualitative data. Qualitative research is one strategy researchers, including myself, use to answer questions about a social context. While conducting a qualitative design, researchers ask themselves what they have learned from doing interviews, studying transcripts, marking and labeling them, and organizing categories. Through qualitative data, researchers are able to understand experiences and reconstruct events. Furthermore, qualitative research does not involve looking for principals that are always true; yet, the goal is to understand specific circumstances and how and why things actually happen (Dielly, 2004). I will collect qualitative data through a research journal, student examples and responses, and reflections in order to help myself understand and reconstruct events.

I recorded what happened throughout my lessons through things like a research journal, student responses/examples, and reflections. I anticipated that documenting my teaching would help me understand the experiences and would enable me to understand how and why I responded to students the ways that I did.

Audio Tape

I tape recorded the mini-lessons that I taught. Then I transcribed the recording to fully understand how I taught the mini-lessons that I taught each day.

Research Journal

I kept a research journal of what I was saying as I taught my mini-lessons. My journal entries consisted of several other forms of data as well. Within these journals, I recorded student responses to what I said, my reactions to students, and some student examples of writing.

Student Responses and Examples

Because I conducted a self-study, the main data source was my entries in my research journal. It was important to also look at how my students responded to my teaching, so I would review student writing pieces that they worked on during writing time to help guide my teaching and re-teaching as a part of my every day work as a teacher. I made notes about the student responses throughout my mini-lessons and throughout the independent writing time.

Reflections

In addition to writing a journal entry about each writing lesson, I wrote a short reflection of the event where I discussed what I thought went well in terms of my instruction, the choices I made, how I differentiated my instruction to support different students, and what I would do in the next lesson. I anticipated that the reflection would provide a space to think critically about issues of my language, my instructional choices and strategies, and how I could continue to support my students. I used the journal not just as a place where I recorded events and my thoughts, but I used it as a means for reflection where ideas can be generated and discoveries could be made (Borg, 2001).

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data from this study, I anticipated that I would engage in the process of reading and re-reading would help to code and organize data. I coded the data as I read, marking parts of the data with descriptive words or categories that come to mind when I read them. I then looked back through my journal entries and found the most frequent comments and I looked closely at the language I used, creating themes. After coding as I read and re-read the entries and reflections, I searched for recurring themes that spanned throughout the data in which I then used to help me to answer my research questions.

I also conducted a discourse analysis related to how I used language during the mini-lessons as a way to deconstruct what I did and did not say and how that may or may not support my students' abilities. I looked at the types of directions I gave, who I called on or interacted with, the types of verbal feedback I used, the types and kinds of questions I asked, and how I responded to students' questions or comments. I read the transcripts that I wrote and looked critically and carefully at the specific language that I used.

Procedures

Throughout the self-study, the students and I followed a consistent routine for writing time by following the Units of Study created by Lucy Calkins (1986). All of my lessons and choices I made as I taught were based on the first two books of the Units of Study. For the first 10 minutes, I taught a mini lesson that targeted a specific skill. For the remaining 20 minutes, the students wrote independently, implementing the skill that I taught that day, or during a previous lesson, in their writing. The study lasted for 30 days.

Week One, Book One: Launching the Writing Workshop

Day 1: I taught a mini-lesson about starting the writing workshop. I modeled the process of choosing a topic, drawing a picture, and then writing a small amount. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 2: I taught a mini-lesson about carrying on independently as writers. I showed the students that they can keep working by adding detail to their pictures, words, or by starting a new piece. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 3: I taught a mini-lesson about telling stories in illustrations. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 4: I taught a mini-lesson about drawing even hard-to-make ideas. After the mini-lesson, I will give the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Week Two, Book One: Launching the Writing Workshop

Day 5: I taught a mini-lesson about using both pictures and words, like famous authors. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 6: I taught a mini-lesson about stretching and writing words. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 7: I taught a mini-lesson about stretching and writing words by listening to initial sounds. After the mini-lesson, I will give the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 8: I taught a mini-lesson spelling the best we can then moving on. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Week Three, Book One: Launching the Writing Workshop

Day 9: I taught a mini-lesson about using the alphabet chart as a writing tool. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 10: I taught a mini-lesson about creating a place for writing in progress. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 11: I taught a mini-lesson about writing using booklets. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 12: I taught a mini-lesson about writing lists and letters. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Week Four, Book One: Launching the Writing Workshop

Day 13: I taught a mini-lesson about writing for real world purposes. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 14: I taught a mini-lesson about fixing up and revising writing. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 15: I taught a mini-lesson about editing and rereading their writing so that they could “fancy up” their writing. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 16: I taught a mini-lesson about using the “author’s chair.” Students took turns celebrating and chose a piece of writing to share with the class.

Week Five, Book Two: Small Moments-Personal Narrative Writing

Day 17: I taught a mini-lesson about understanding a small moment story. I showed students how to stretch an action across several pages to show importance. After the mini-lesson, I taught the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 18: I taught a mini-lesson about discovering one small moment. I modeled how to write a story about a small moment in my life. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 19: I taught a mini-lesson about establishing long term partnerships. I showed students how to use each other to check each other's work. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 20: I taught a mini-lesson about stretching on small moment across many pages. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Week Six, Book Two: Small Moments-Personal Narrative Writing

Day 21: I taught a mini-lesson about stretching and writing words. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 22: I taught a mini-lesson sketching rather than drawing. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 23: I taught a mini-lesson about planning details. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 24: I taught a mini-lesson about internalizing story shapes. I showed students how to use their fingers to show that stories have a beginning, middle, and end. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Week Seven, Book Two: Small Moments-Personal Narrative Writing

Day 25: I taught a mini-lesson about practicing telling stories to partners in order to prepare for structure within stories. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 26: I taught a mini-lesson about writing some words quickly because we just know them. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 27: I taught a mini-lesson about focusing on the most important part of a story and getting rid of all the rest. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 28: I taught a mini-lesson about guidelines for writing story endings. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Week Eight, Book Two: Small Moments-Personal Narrative Writing

Day 29: I taught a mini-lesson revising and editing with partners. After the mini-lesson, I gave the students approximately 20 minutes for independent writing.

Day 30: I taught a mini-lesson about publishing parties. After the quick lesson, the students had a publishing party in which they will read their stories aloud to buddies or the rest of the class.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

I recognize that it is incredibly important that I ensure that my research design is valid. Validity is a way for a research to know that data that has been collected has been appropriately measured while reliability is apparent as well. It was essential that my self-study's quality and

credibility were preserved. In order to maintain credibility in this study, I engaged in practices related to triangulation, prolonged engagement, persistent observation and transferability.

I practiced triangulation by collecting several sources of data. The data for this study was triangulated with the use of different data collection methods including journal entries, student work, student examples and reflections. I also anticipated using rich descriptions of what I taught and how I taught writing that may offer readers the ability to transfer what I have done to his or her own setting in order to ensure a valid research design. I included as many detailed descriptions in my journal entries as I could so that the data could be visualized and could be repeated without question. Furthermore, I used prolonged engagement because my study lasted 30 days which occurred over eight weeks. Because of the duration of this study, prolonged engagement increased the validity of my research. The final element that was ensured throughout my study was persistent observation. I created 30 different journal entries, or observations. I would create one for each day of the study. Each journal entry included what I said and how I interacted with my students. They included my 10 minute mini-lesson as well as my interactions with students during the 20 minute independent writing block.

Furthermore, as LaBoskey (2004) states, research design of a self study must be self-initiated and focused, improvement aimed, interactive, qualitative methods, and exemplar-based validation (Samaras, 2011). This study was self-initiated and focused because I was the one conducting the research and studying myself within that research so that I could improve my practice and help to support the literacy development of my students. This study was improvement aimed because one of the goals of this study was to improve my first graders literacy development as well as to improve my own teaching of writing. This study was interactive and exemplar based because the students would be interacting with me as I took

examples of their writing pieces that showed that they are implementing the skill or idea that I taught that day.

Limitations of the Study

Just like many other research studies, this self-study had limitations; especially with myself study research design. In the school district where the study took place; all teachers are required to follow a specific schedule that has been approved by administration. The timeframe for this study, six weeks at the beginning of the school, was a limitation because of my study ran six months or the entire school year then my data set would be more inclusive of examples of my teaching and interactions with students during writing time.

Another limitation was the fact that the study was taking place in a first grade classroom in a suburban setting, which limits the generalizability of the findings. In other words, what I found would be unique to the setting, participants, and most importantly, me.

Summary

Throughout this self-study, I would be both the researcher and participant. I believe that students need to practice learning how to write. I need to be teaching writing in ways that will support their literacy development. It is important that teachers, including me, are reflective when teaching. I must practice and improve the way that I teach, just like students.

Through this self-study, my goal was to look at and analyze the way that I taught my students writing through the use of Lucy Calkins' Units of Study writing program in order to support their literacy development. I conducted a 30 day study that spanned over the course of

eight weeks. During each day's mini lesson, I audio tape recorded what I said so that I could later transcribe what I said and how I responded to students throughout the lessons.

Although there were some limitations to the study, such as the timeframe of the study and the context in which I taught, I believe that it is still important to look at how I can help to support the literacy development, more specifically the writing development, of my own students. Although the study cannot be generalized to others, the results of the study will still be important and valuable to look at when improving writing instruction to better support the literacy development of my own students.

Chapter Four: Findings

In this chapter, I present daily lessons I taught to my first grade students during writer's workshop. After each lesson summary, I reflect on what went well, what was challenging, what I noticed about my use of language, and finally what I would do differently next time.

Please begin the chapter with a brief discussion of what the chapter contains

September 16, 2013: Launching the Writer's Workshop

I say in a calm, clear voice, "Friends, please come join me on the carpet in your special spots."

All of the students finish what they were doing and come and sit in their assigned "special" spots on the carpet. I wait until they are all sitting and I have their attention, before I say "Friends, today is a very special day. Today, you are all going to become writers. We are going to start something very special in our class called a writer's workshop."

At this point, I pause because I hear several "oohs and ahhs" from the students and a couple of "I did that in kindergarten!" I remind the students to "Show me a 'me too' sign" in sign language if they have done something like this before. I notice a few students eagerly show me their "me too" signs while some others look confused.

I then tell the students, "Every day during writing time we will meet right on our carpet in front of the SMARTBoard because this is the most special part of our classroom. Look at all of the amazing things we are surrounded by. [Pointing to the easel] We have our writing easel right next to my teacher chair, and look at how many books we have around our carpet. Today, my

friends, is going to be the start of a very special journey. [Holding up several different books, including *The Chrysanthemum*, by Kevin Henkes, 1991] We will be learning how to write books like these very soon. Very soon, each one of you will become an author! Hmm, who can remind me, what is an author? ” I proceeded to tell the students why today was going to be the start of a special journey.

Several students, including Zach, Matt, and Dayna, raise their hands while some still seem to be looking at the books that I am holding. The students remind me correctly of what an author is. Dayna shares that “Authors write the words.”

I proceed, “Today, we are going to be authors. Watch what I do when I write.” I pick up a dry erase marker and position myself close to the writing easel. I begin to think aloud: “Hmm, I am not sure what to write about. Maybe I could write about riding horses?” I stop to question myself, “But wait, I don’t know much about horses. And you know what? I really don’t know how to even ride a horse. So, I guess that would not be a good idea for me to write about. Yea, writing about riding horses is not a good idea for me.” I continue to think out loud, “You know, maybe I should think about something that is important to me and that just happened. I know! Every morning I get to play with baby Chase and baby Charlotte before I come to school. They always make me laugh and I have a lot of fun with them. Would it be a good idea to write about them?” The students excitedly respond, “Yes!”

I then tell the students that I will draw my story first. “Let me think of what happened this morning. Well, this morning when I got up, I played with baby Chase and baby Charlotte. Then Charlotte spit up on me. So, I am going to draw a picture of me playing with them.” I quickly draw a picture of me playing with the babies. I continue, “Now, I need to write words to show

what my drawing represents.” Pointing to the picture, I say, “Well, I should tell who each of us in this picture is so that someone who wasn’t sitting her just now would know who they are. Here I am so I’ll write me.” Stopping to say the word me, I sounded it out, “mmm-ee. m-e.” The students chimed in with the spelling of “me.” Looking at and pointing to the picture of Chase and Charlotte, I ask, “What should I write here?”

Christina raises her hand and shares that I need to write “Chase” and “Charlotte.”

Reassuring, Christina, I tell her “Yes! I need to write Chase and Charlotte so that we know who they are. Hmm. Chase. I know how to write Chase, so I will just write it.” I write down “Chase.”

“Now, I should tell my story.” I point to the lines underneath the picture and slowly say the words, “I played with baby Chase and baby Charlotte. Then Charlotte spit up on me.” Saying each of these words very slowly, I repeat myself when I need to sound out words. “I, played-pp-lll-aaay-ed, with- wi-th, baby-bbb-aaa-bbb-ee, Chase and Charlotte. Then-th-eee-n, Charlotte, spit-sppp-iii-tt, up, on, me. Occasionally Christina, Matt, and Zach chime in on words they know how to spell.

After completing the sentence I ask, “What did you notice I did?”

Dayna shares, “You thought about what you wanted to write.”

Trevor shares, “You wrote about something you did.”

Christina shares, “You drew a picture first then you had to write it.”

I respond to the students, “You are right, first I thought about something I did that I wanted to write about, then I drew a picture of it, then finally I wrote about it.”

I then tell the students, “Today and every day you will be writing about something from your life. You will write just like how I showed you. You will think about something you have done. Then you will draw a picture of it. Then finally you will write about it. Now, do you think you are going to be writing about baby Chase and baby Charlotte?”

The students giggle and say, “No!!”

I then ask my students for some examples of what they might write about. “What are some ideas you might write about? Take a minute to think about something you have done and would like to write about.”

Giving about one minute of wait time, I ask, “What are some ideas you have come up with?”

Zoe shares, “You could write about going to get ice cream.”

I smile, and say, “Yes, if you went to get ice cream, you could certainly write about going to get ice cream!”

I then tell the students, “Now I would like you to close your eyes nice and tight! Think about something that you just did this weekend. Keep thinking! Okay, now you may open your eyes.”

I continue, “Boys and girls, in just a few minutes I am going to send you off to get started on your writing. But, since this is a very special time of our day, I am going to put on quiet music to help remind you that your voice level should be at 0.” When I call you, please come get your paper, go back to your seat and get started. Let’s see who can show me what to do.”

I call each student up to get his or her papers and admire how he or she goes back to his or her seat and gets right to work.

About ten minutes into the workshop, I come to Zoe, who is sitting there with nothing on her paper. I begin to talk to her about what she is going to write. I ask, “So tell me about what you did this weekend.” She tells me that she did “nothing.” I know that this Zoe did a lot over the weekend because she told me about it earlier. I ask her what she did with her siblings, “Tell me about what you did with Joey and Maranda on Sunday. What was it like?” Without her realizing, she begins telling me a story with such enthusiasm. As she finished telling the story, I ask her “Do you think you can draw what you just told me?” Giving me a little smile, she shakes her head yes and begins to draw.

The students continue to work until I say: “Hocus pocus.” They repeat with “Everybody focus.” I tell the students, “Wow, you all did an amazing job during your first writer’s workshop! I want you to all take a look at Ken’s work. [Holding up Ken’s paper]Wow, first Ken drew a picture about boating, then he began to write, ‘I went boating.’ We will continue to work on writer’s workshop tomorrow. But for now, please put your papers in your writing folders and bring me your folders as you come back to the carpet.”

Reflection

What Went Well

Overall, I think that this lesson went well. I followed Lucy Calkins (2006) suggestions that she gave in her units of study. I stuck closely to what she suggested including getting the

students interested in writer's workshop by telling them what a special day it was and explaining how the carpet would be our special meeting area. I chose to write about Chase and Charlotte because whenever I mention them my students seem to be so much more interested. They seem to love knowing about my personal life, so I will continue to write about actual events and stories about my family so that my students can see that I, too, do this type of writing.

Additionally, I had minimal interruptions during the lesson, which made the lesson flow. The students wanted to participate as much as they could and liked to help me sound out the words I was writing. Having them want to sound these words out made me think that they will really enjoy writer's workshop because they were already acting engaged.

What Was Challenging

One time I found challenging was when I was talking with Zoe. She had nothing written on her paper. Luckily, I knew some things she did over the weekend, so I was able to talk with her. However, if I did not know her fun story about going apple picking with her family, then I am not sure that I would have known how to get her started. During this writer's workshop time, she did not write any actual words, however, she did begin to draw her picture. I hope that tomorrow, she will finish her picture and label it. I know that sometimes students begin writer's workshop just by drawing for the first few days, so I am not worried. I found it challenging to assist her in her writing.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

I think that I kept my language for the most part precise and to the point. For example, I told the students what they would be learning and the purpose for learning it...I realize that when I writing my sentence I sounded out the words that I could have just written some of the words so that the students were not sitting as long. However, I felt that it was necessary at that time for them to see that we can sound out our words so that they would be exposed to this one strategy of writing words.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

As I taught this lesson, I noticed that I modeled stretching out several words as I wrote. Doing this made the lesson last about 15 minutes and the students only had about 15 minutes of independent writing. Next time I teach, I will pick maybe one or two words to model how to stretch out, and then I will move on as a way to provide more writing time.

September 17, 2013: Carrying On Independently as Writers

I say in a calm, clear voice, "Boys and girls, let's put on our writers' hats." They put on their imaginary writers' hats, tying them securely to their heads. I can hear Christina and Dayna say, "Yes! It's writing time!" which makes me smile.

I remind the students, "Just like yesterday, today and every day from now on we will start our writing time with a quick mini-lesson here on the carpet. We will start every day right here

because this is the most special spot in our classroom. When you are sitting right here, your job will be to listen and learn.”

In an attempt to help the students connecting the learning from yesterday to today, I say, “Yesterday, you all did an excellent job with your first day of writing time. Writers, yesterday you did what real authors do. You thought of something in your life, got a picture in your mind, and then you drew and wrote about it. Ken drew a picture of boating with his family and Zoe went apple picking with friends.”

I continue, “You all did the same things- you thought, you drew, you wrote, and then...we had a problem. Do you know what it was?” [Pausing and looking at the students]

Carly quickly puts her hand over her mouth as if something awful just happened. Ken and Trevor look at each other with puzzled looks.

“After you thought and drew and wrote, a lot of you came to me and said, ‘I’m done.’ Well guess what! Today, I am going to teach you what writers do when they think they are done.”

I continue, modeling Lucy Calkins (2006), “Writers have a saying, ‘when you are done, you’ve just begun.’ Can you say that?”

All of the students, including Zoe with the loudest voice, repeat in unison, “When you are done, you’ve just begun.”

I explain, “This means that when you think you are done writing, there is always more you can do! [Pointing to a blank piece of construction paper] Let’s write this saying here so that we can put it up on our writing wall.” I quickly write down the saying. [Looking confused at the

paper] “Hmm, I am not exactly clear what that means. [Thinking aloud to myself, tapping a finger on my head] What more can be added if I am done? [Looking back to the students] Let’s look back at my writing piece from yesterday.”

Before turning the easel around to show my story about Chase and Charlotte from yesterday, I tell the students, “Close your eyes. We are going to go back in time, all the way to yesterday’s writing time when I was writing about playing with the babies. [Pausing for ten seconds and turning the easel around to show the writing] Okay, open your eyes. I want you to watch what I do when I think I am done.”

Moving my hand across the paper as if writing, I act as if I am just finishing writing my story from yesterday. I begin to think aloud, “Hmm, maybe I should add more to my picture. I was not the only one playing with the babies. My sister Stephanie was there, too. I should draw her and write her name on my paper and say that she played with us, too.” I quickly sketch a picture of Stephanie and write her name. I continue to think out loud “When I just drew a picture of Stephanie that reminded me of how I went shopping with her last weekend. Maybe I can write a story about that when I am done with this one.”

Looking at the students, I ask, “What did you notice I did when I thought I was done with my writing?”

Ken lowered his eyes, appearing not to want to participate. Christina raised her hand and shared “You drew a picture of your sister and said she played too.” Zach shared, “You said you could write another story.”

I respond, “Yes! You are right. First, I checked to see if I could add more to my picture. Then I checked to see if I could add more to my words. Then , I decided that I could start a new

piece. Let's write these three things under our new saying so we will know what to do when we are done!" I quickly write "1. Add to the drawing. 2. Add to the words. 3. Start a new piece."

Looking back at the students, I say, "Imagine you are just finishing your writing. Think about what you can do when you finish. [I wait about 20 seconds for the students to think] Remember, when you are done, you've just begun! [Pointing to the writing station] Writers, you can find paper write here when you are ready for a new piece. So, I should not see or hear anybody come to me and say 'I'm done' because you can always add more! Let's see you get started on your writing quickly and quietly."

The students walk to their seats and begin writing as I turn on calming music at a low volume.

Reflection

What Went Well

When I told them the saying "When we're done, we've just begun." they caught on to it quickly. Calkins (2006) suggests introducing this phrase early on to students so that they know that writing is an on-going process. I followed her suggestion by introducing it in the second lesson. I think telling the students to repeat the saying helped them to learn it. Therefore, my instructional choice was what went well. I think that I kept my mini-lesson very short, about 8 minutes, and stuck right to the point. My goal was to teach the students that they can add more to their writing pieces or they can start a new one when they think they are done. I think that my

goal was reached because I noticed the students writing the entire time, which was for about 20 minutes.

What Was Challenging

One thing I found challenging during this lesson was time management. Since we only have 30 minutes for writing time, it is difficult to fit in all aspects of the writer's workshop. I found myself continuously checking the clock, about 4 times, which may have taken away from the quality of my teaching. I believe that I could have expanded more by giving more examples of writing topics and called on more students, however I made a choice not to because I wanted to keep the mini-lesson brief. I spent 15 minutes on the mini lesson and about 15 minutes of independent writing time.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

Looking back at what I did and didn't say, I noticed that I kept my language simple and precise. I told the students the point of today's lesson and kept my mini-lesson very short and direct, about 15 minutes. I told the students the saying "When we're done, we've just begun." and had them repeat it so that they knew the purpose of today's lesson as well. As I was teaching, I noticed that I kept a very calm voice. Rather than simply telling them what they need to know, I engaged them by repeating after me and by telling me what they noticed I did.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Next time I teach, I will try to manage my time a little bit better. Since we only have 30 minutes for writing, I need to include the most important parts of the writer's workshop- the mini-lesson and independent writing. Writer's workshop usually includes an end of workshop share, where the teacher or student shares a piece of work that demonstrates that learning has occurred. Although this is a very important part of the workshop, because the students take ownership for their work and see peers examples, I will not have time to include it every day. Some days, I will need to end writing time a little bit earlier so that I can include an end of workshop share with the whole group. Other days , like yesterday and today, I will let this part of writer's workshop go so that I can create a balance between the mini-lesson, writing time, so that the students are writing for as much time as they can.

September 18, 2013: Telling Stories in Illustrations

I start the lesson by saying, "Friends, let's put on our writing hats and show me that we are ready to start writing! [Pausing] Are they fastened on?" The students slip on and fasten their imaginary writing hats to show me that they are ready to learn. James tries to trick me by telling me that he forgot his at home. He then quickly finds it.

I tell the students, "You have been doing an amazing job during writing time. I have noticed that Christina closes her eyes and thinks about what she wants to write before she writes it. I noticed that Carly got a new piece of writing paper when she was ready to move on. These are both awesome things to be doing during writing because they are showing the steps of creating new writing pieces!

Today, I am going to show you what I have been seeing some of you do during writing time and what I hope that you will keep doing. I'm going to close my eyes and think of a story about something I have done." I close my eyes and tilt my head up, thinking of something I have done. "Okay, I think I have something. I am going to write the story about yesterday during our fire drill. We were all eating snack when the fire alarm went off. I remember seeing James get up first to get in line. His had a very surprised look on his face.. We all lined up and finally went outside. We did an awesome job during the fire drill and earned a gumball for our gumball machine."

Situating my body close to the writing easel and picking up a marker, I say to the students, "First, I want to draw my whole story on the paper." I move closer to the writing easel with the marker in hand. "So I should draw the tables in our classroom because that's where we all were. [Sketching as I speak] Oh, maybe I should draw some of us sitting at the table with our snacks because that's what we were doing." Pausing, and then looking at the students, I ask "Do you see how I am putting the whole story into my picture?"

Ken and Trevor shout out, "Yes!" I remind them to raise their hands by raising my hand and pointing to my arms saying "Oops!"

I proceed, "Can you help me finish? Turn and talk to the person next to you about what other parts of the story I can put into the picture." [I wait about one minute for the students to talk] Maranda tells me, "You should draw Joey getting in line with a funny face." Zoe tells me, "You should draw a bell with a noise so that we know it's a fire drill." I smile at them and say, "Great ideas!" I quickly sketch their suggestions into my drawing, labeling each one.

Turning back to the students I say, “Today and every day as you write, make sure you picture what happened and then put details of your story in your illustrations. Close your eyes and think of something you will be writing about. Think about details that you could add to your illustrations. Give me a thumbs up when you are ready to get started.” [I wait about one minute before asking all of the students to get started on their writing.]

As the students work, I walk around and stop to talk to different students about their writing and drawings. Zoe raises her hand to tell me, “I can’t think of anything to write! My tooth hurts too much!” I say, “Hmm, sounds to me like you could write about something right there. Could you draw a picture of your tooth hurting them tell me about it?” She groaned and says, “I guess.” I check back in with Maranda about 10 minutes later. She has a picture of herself with a giant tooth on her paper and the beginning of a sentence about her tooth hurting.

As I continue to walk around, Christina shouts to me, “Miss Schimpf, I am done.” I ask her to walk with me to our writing wall. We read the saying, “When I’m done I’ve just begun.” I ask, “Christina, what should you do when you are done?” She responds, “I should see if I can add more or start a new story.” I smile and send her back to her seat so she can continue writing.

Reflection

What Went Well

I think that the mini-lesson that I taught went smoothly. I taught them what they will be learning in today’s mini-lesson which lasts about 12 minutes today and then give them about 20 minutes of independent time to write. I kept it short and to the point.. I used precise language

that was age appropriate. I have begun to use a reoccurring pattern as I teach the mini-lesson. I try to connect what they are learning to what they have already done. I believe that this routine helps show the students what to expect every day so that they can have time to apply the strategy or idea that I am introducing.

What Was Challenging

In this lesson, I found it challenging working with Zoe. She does not seem to like writing time yet and seems to always have reasons not to write. Her tooth was hurting today and she did not want to write because it was aching. I felt badly that her tooth hurt, yet there was nothing that I could do about it. Therefore, I chose to ask her to write about her tooth. She did not seem happy with this, but she was able to write a sentence telling that her tooth hurt.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

I have begun to notice my reoccurring pattern of my mini-lessons. I connect the students' learning to the previous day's lesson, and then I explicitly teach what the students are expected to do, followed students writing independently. I believe using a pattern enables the students to know what is coming so that they can learn be successful.

When I worked with Zoe, I gave her an idea of what to write about instead of allowing her to think of what to write about on her own. I could have prompted her to come up with her own idea rather than steering her towards writing about her tooth.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

When I worked with Zoe, I told an idea to write about. Next time I will try to encourage her to think of her own idea rather than prompt her with my own ideas. Having her come up with her own ideas might engage her and hold her interest a little bit better. She may also be able to develop a strategy for generating her own ideas in the future and take ownership in her own work.

September 19, 2013: Drawing Even Hard-to-Make Ideas

In a calm, clear voice, I tell the students, “Writers, I have been so impressed with how hard you have been working the past couple of days. I remember seeing Christina get so excited yesterday about an idea that she had. She closed her eyes and thought about how she was going to draw her picture then she got right to work. She drew the picture of her with her dog, Bauer, playing outside in her backyard and tried her best to write what everything was in her picture. I have seen many of you do the same thing. But writers, sometimes, I have seen some of you get so excited about a great idea that you had, but then when it came time to draw your idea, some of you did not know how to draw it. So, you decided not to write about your idea because you were not sure how to draw it. When I see that happen, I get so sad because we miss out on some really cool ideas! Today I am going to show you what I do when I get that ‘Oh-no, I don’t know what to draw’ feeling.”

[Moving closer to the writing easel and picking up the marker] I tell the students “ I want to tell the story about yesterday when my foot fell asleep and I couldn’t get up to pass out the papers for our math sprints. Remember how I tried and tried to get up but my whole leg had

fallen asleep? Olivia told no one to come help me because she didn't want to do the sprints and everyone laughed! But then, Maranda came over to me and said 'Miss Schimpf, I will help you up!' I finally got up and I was walking funny until my foot woke up. You all kept giggling at me, especially Olivia and Zach!"

Olivia and Zach giggle. Zach shares "It was SOOO funny." The rest of the students wait eagerly, with eyes wide open, ready to see what I will say next.

I proceed, "Now that I have thought of a story, let me draw it. I can make the carpet where we were sitting. Oh, and I can draw me on the carpet. But, oh no! I don't know how to show Olivia laughing and saying not to help me. Ahh, forget it. I'll just draw the stars that I saw outside last night since I know how to draw stars."

I stop my think aloud and look at the students. I shake my head back and forth and say "No, I can't give up. Let me think. I am just going to draw the best I can!" I pick up my marker and start to draw Olivia sitting at her desk with a big smile on her face. I tell the group, "I am not sure if you can tell what is going on, but I will do my best and keep trying my best."

I want the students' advice, so I ask, "Writers, will you tell the person next to you what I could do next time I think about giving up?"

[I wait one minute to let the students talk. I hold up my hand showing five fingers and silently count down 5 to 0 with my fingers to show the students we are ready to discuss.] The students shift their bodies so they face me once again. Sarah shares, "You should do your best even if you can't do it. Just try your best!"

I praise Sarah, “That is great advice Sarah. Writers, let’s all repeat what Sarah told me to do. Always try your best!”

All of the students repeat “Always try your best.”

I wrap up the lesson by saying, “So boys and girls, today, if you think of a story that you want to draw but you come to a tricky part of your picture, I want you to do just what Sarah told us to do, always try your best and don’t give up! Let’s go get writing!”

Reflection

What Went Well

As I walked around, I was not sure what the students were drawing because they really did try their best to show their story. Even though I could not tell what they were drawing, it made me happy because they really were trying their best. As I stopped to talk to them about what they were drawing and writing about, they were able to explain in full detail. Even though I couldn’t tell at first, they knew exactly what they drew. They tried their best and did not give up because of the emphasis I put on telling them to try their best.

Since the students were really trying their best, it shows me that my teaching was effective. If it wasn’t, the students would not show that they knew what they were doing but trying their best with their drawings.

As the students were working on their pieces, I stopped and talked to Breanne about 10 minutes into the writing. She told me “Miss Schimpf, Look! I wanted to write about how my dad made me pancakes with sprinkles. But I didn’t know how to draw the pancakes being special.

But I tried my best!” I told Breanne how happy I was that she did not give up and that she added different colors to her pancakes to show that they had sprinkles. By having Breanne say this, it showed me that she was able to learn the point of this lesson: to try her best and keep moving forward.

What Was Challenging

Some of the students were having a tough time catching on that in writing we are never done. Therefore, I found it challenging to teach the students and further assist them into understanding this concept. I keep referring them to the writing board on the wall and going over their different options. This shows me that I need to repeat this expectation so that they can learn it and not keep saying they are done. I would like to the students to be able to independently figure out what to do next when they think that they have finished a piece of writing. My goal is to encourage them to do this on their own by emphasizing each lesson that writers say, “When I’m done, I’ve just begun.”

Additionally, when the students think they are done, they seem to have a tough time coming up with ideas to write about. I am finding it challenging to be helping these students as well as conferencing with other students. I am wondering if my teaching of how to come up with ideas was not effective, or perhaps I need more lessons on this idea so that they have more time to apply it during independent writing. Perhaps I need to take time to talk about this.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

In this lesson, I notice myself using repetitive language, such as “Today you will be learning...,” within the lesson as well as from previous lessons. This repetitive language will hopefully help the students become familiar with writer’s workshop. I think this way because the students will know what to expect every day and they will be able to get started a lot easier. Additionally, as I modeled the lesson, I tried to show the students how to think about their work by thinking about my own think aloud. I pretended to have that “oh no” feeling and work out a solution out loud so that the students could learn and try on their own when they are writing on their own.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Next time, I might discuss how to brainstorm more topics. I still have students who seem to have trouble coming up with ideas. Next time I have a student who does not know what to write about, I have decided that I will suggest keeping a small notebook at home. They can use their notebook to write down little things that happen so that they can look back in it during writing time and choose something to write about.

Since there are several of the students who are struggling coming up with ideas, I am not going to move on to the next lesson. I will have a short mini-lesson on how to come up with ideas when writing.

September 23, 2013: Brainstorming Writing Ideas

In a calm, clear voice, I say, “Boys and girls, let’s put on our writing hats and begin writing.” [I wait a moment as the students fasten their imaginary writing hats, headbands, or visors.] “I have been so proud of all the work you did last week. You have been showing me what real writers do. You have all thought about an idea, drawn it, then wrote about it. I have been so impressed. But, I have noticed that some of you are still having trouble coming up with ideas about what to write about. Today, I want to brainstorm some ideas that we can write about and write them on a list. We can look at the list [pointing to a blank piece of easel paper] when we are stuck and ask ourselves if we can write about one of the topics. When I am ready to write, I first close my eyes and think of something that happened to me. I think of the lunch room, dinner with my family, weekend activities, recess, and my friends. Usually when I think of those things, I am able to come up with a story about something that has happened. So, let’s create a class list of possible ideas that we could write about. Does anyone have any ideas that we can add to a list when we are stuck and can’t think of an idea?”

Jeffrey and Christina look puzzled. Olivia’s hand shoots up and she shares, “You can think about what you did over the weekend. Like I went to my Nana and Papa’s so I will write about that.”

I smile and ask the rest of the students, “Give me a thumbs up if you think you could write about what you did over the weekend.” I wait for thumbs to go up and say, “Yes, I think that is a fantastic idea! I am going to write ‘What did you do over the weekend?’ so that you can ask yourself this question.” [I write this question on the easel.]

I ask, “Let’s think of some other ideas that we can think about when we are stuck. Who has some other ideas?”

Jaclyn shares, “You can write about what you did over summer vacation!” I smile and say, “Great idea, I will write, ‘What did you do over summer vacation?’” I write Jaclyn’s idea.

Zach shares, “You can write about what you had for breakfast, or lunch!” I respond, “Another great idea! I will write, ‘What did you have for breakfast or lunch?’” I write Zach’s idea.

Maranda shares, “We all go to recess. You could write about what you played at recess.” Zach, Matt, and Trevor seem to get excited and murmur a quiet, “Yeah!” I tell Maranda, “Awesome, I will write, ‘What did you play at recess?’” I write this down.

After writing Maranda’s idea down, I stop and look at the list. I think a loud to myself, “Wow, it looks like we have a lot of ideas that we could look at when we are stuck. Let’s go over them again. Give me a thumbs up if you think that that idea might work for you.” I read through our list, watching for thumbs up.

“Boys and girls, it looks like we now have a list to look at when we are stuck and can’t come up with an idea. Today, I want you to think about something to write about. If you can’t think of something, look at our list and maybe that will help you! Let’s see you go back to your writing spots and get right to work!”

As the students are writing, I notice Trevor has closed his eyes.. I bend down next to him and ask him what he is thinking about. He replies, “I had to think about something to write about. I couldn’t think of anything. But then I closed my eyes and thought about the zoo. I am

trying to remember what it looked like this weekend.” I smile at Trevor and tell him, “I like how you are thinking about an idea in your head.” I ask questions like who did you go with and what animals did you see? I try to help him paint a picture in his head. Once he has it, he begins to draw.

Next, I move over to Christina. “Miss Schimpf, I need your help. I drew my picture, but I need help with the words.” I look at Christina’s picture and could clearly see her mom, her, and homework sitting in the kitchen. I ask Christina to tell me about her picture. She tells me “I had to help mom with her bag. Then mom helped me with my homework. Then we got to play ponies.” When she finishes telling me, I say, “Well, I think you just told me the words you need to write. Let’s start back at the beginning of your story. I want you to tell me the story slowly as you write down each word.” Christina moves her pencil toward her paper and begins to write the words that she said aloud to me.

Finally, I move over to Zach. Zach is waiting patiently for me with his hand in the air. “Miss Schimpf, I want to write about how I went apple picking. But I don’t know what to draw or what to write.” I pause, thinking that Zach has a great topic to write about and wondering if it was just a lack of confidence. I say, “Well, I want you to start by telling me all about apple picking. Who did you go with? Did you just pick apples, or did you do other things?” Zach begins to tell me all about his trip apple picking and how an apple even fell on his twin sister’s head! He has such an elaborate story. When he is done telling me, we brainstorm different ways that he could draw his trip. I encourage him by asking, “When you think of your apple picking trip, what can you see?” Zach draws a picture of an apple tree with apples falling down with his family around.

Reflection

What Went Well

During independent work time, I was able to work with several students. As I worked with them, I noticed that they were coming up with ideas to write about. This made me think that this lesson and the words I chose such as how I came up with ideas to write about were actually helpful to the students.

What Was Challenging

I found it challenging when I teaching the mini lesson and connecting what they would learn today to previous knowledge. It was hard not to give the students ideas to write about, but rather, have them come up with ideas on their own.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

In this lesson, I notice myself using repetitive language within the lesson as well as from previous lessons. For example, I connect the lesson to the previous day then tell the students exactly what the purpose is for today. Additionally, I noticed that I gave examples of what I was looking for first.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

As I taught this lesson, I felt as if I made my connection part of the lesson, where I reminded the students of their learning from yesterday, was too long. It lasted about 5 minutes. I told the students what I do when I write. I think that this is ok, however, the point of this lesson was to encourage the students to come up with ideas on their own. We tried to generate a list that they could draw from in the future. They came up with some examples, but not many. My students need support coming up with ideas to write about because they are only beginner writers. Providing topics they can write about is important to do. I may give big ideas, but not specific ones because they are only first graders.

September 24, 2013: Using Both Pictures and Words, Like Famous Authors

In an excited, upbeat voice, I say, “Boys and girls, please put on your writers hats and fasten them on nice and tight.” Trevor shares that his imaginary hat is in the shape of a halo today whereas Christina shares that her writing hat is in the form of pig-tails.

I continue, very excited to share the news, “Writers, I have really enjoyed reading your stories that you have been drawing and writing. I have learned so much about you and I am so glad that you have been putting pieces of your life into stories to share with me and your classmates. Today, we are going to learn how writers use pictures and words when they write. Let’s take a look at this book.” [Holding up *Have Fun, Molly Lou Melon* by Patty Lovell (2001)] I continue “We see that the author, or the person who writes the story, uses pictures and words to tell this story. [Flipping through the pages slowly and pointing directly to pictures and words] You can see that Patty Lovell has pictures AND words to tell about her pictures. I am telling you

this because you can and will do the exact same thing that Patty Lovell, this author, has done. You can draw pictures and write words, too!”

Several students, including Christina, Olivia, and Zach, give me a look that seems to suggest “Come on, I know this stuff.” whereas Jaclyn and Maranda look at me with wide eyes, ready to hear more.

I say, “Today, I want each one of you to draw a picture AND write words to tell a story about your picture just like Patty Lovell does. I am going to walk around and admire the work that you are doing. Let’s see you get right to work.”

Right before the students get up, Zach shares, “Miss Schimpf, I know why you said that. You want us to think then write a story about what we draw.”

I smile and nod at Zach and say, “Thank you so much for reminding us Zach. We all need to think first, draw our picture, and then finally write about our story.”

As Zach begins to get up and the other students disperse, he tells me, “I know what I’m going to write about. I want to write a story about the story you told us earlier!” I encourage him by saying, “That is an excellent idea Zach, I can’t wait to read what you write!” Then, I send Zach on his way.

Before everyone is back to work, Matt, whose seat is right next to our meeting area, holds up a writing piece and shares, “Miss Schimpf, this is my favorite writing piece. It’s me and my dad and we are playing swords.” I tried to talk with Matt about his writing piece and why it was his favorite. I ask questions like, “What makes this your favorite? What are you doing in this part

of the picture? Can you read me your favorite part?" I learn that Matt's favorite part of the day is writing time because he gets to write about memories with his family.

The children are busy writing their stories. Jaclyn's hand shoots up about five minutes into independent writing. "Miss Schimpf, I have a brother Jack but I need help spelling Jack." We discuss the initial sound that she can hear in the word "Jack." Then, since we just learned about the -ack word family last week, I ask "Jaclyn, if we know that J says the /j/ sound, and we know that -ack says /ack/ then, how do you think we can write Jack?" Jaclyn spells it out for me and I praise her good thinking.

After 20 minutes of independent writing time I stop the students and tell them, "Boys and girls, I am so happy with what I have seen today. I have seen EVERY ONE of you draw and write a story. I noticed that Jaclyn drew a picture, labeled it, and wrote a great story to go along with it. Jaclyn, could you hold up your writing piece and share it with the class?" Jaclyn reads her story to the class: "Me and Jack played on the swings. He pushed me high up. Then I pushed him high up." I smile at her and turn to the rest of the class, "Wow, Jaclyn drew a picture AND wrote words to go along with her picture to tell a story!"

Reflection

What Went Well

As I shared how writers have pictures and words, I noticed that the students seemed to understand the concept. I was able to look at the students' expressions and judge based on their reactions whether I should spend more time on this idea or if I could shorten the lesson up. Since

I was able to see that they understood that stories should have words with their pictures, I did not have to give several examples. I did, however, give the example of Patty Lovell's book. I think showing an example of real writer's work helped the students grasp this skill of using pictures with words.

What Was Challenging

A few students seemed surprised when I told them that some writer's use words with their pictures. These are the students who spend most of their time during writer's workshop focusing on their pictures rather than getting started on words. I wanted these students to understand that they need to write, too.

I found it challenging to find a way to better explain that they need words to tell the story along with their picture. I picked a well known book in our classroom so that these students could see an example. I could not tell if these certain students really understood until after the independent writing time. The use of mentor texts teaches helps students to see real life examples.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

In this lesson, I notice myself using repetitive language by telling the students what they have accomplished and what they will be learning today, within the lesson as well as from previous lessons. Additionally, I showed the students examples of real writer's work so that the students could associate this skill with real writers.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Next time I teach a new type of writing such as opinion writing or informational writing, I will have several books on display for the students to see. In this lesson, I had one book that I used as an example because I could tell that most of the students understood the concept that some authors and illustrators use words to describe their pictures. However, next time, I would like to have several books that I could show the students so that the struggling students who struggle with writing could come reference the books as they write in order to see more examples.

September 25, 2013: Stretching and Writing Words

In a very enthusiastic, upbeat voice I say, “Writers, yesterday we learned how to draw pictures AND write words just like how authors. We are going to keep working on writing words and drawing pictures. Today, I want you to watch what I do and how I decide what letters to write on the page when I am writing my story.”

[Flipping over the chart paper to reveal my drawing of me making bracelets at my kitchen table] I say, “I decided that I wanted to tell the story about how I made math bracelets for our class for one of our math lessons. Right here [pointing to my picture] I drew me making the math bracelets, or our rekenrek bracelets, at my kitchen table at home. I am going to write in front of you. Watch how I write my words.”

I begin think aloud , “Hmm. I think I will write ‘I made math bracelets for the class.’ Alright. *I*.” I look back to the students and say “Great, I wrote *I*. Now I should reread. ‘I.’” I

quietly say the next word aloud then begin to break the word down to the sounds I hear. I continue thinking aloud and writing, “M-aa-dde. Mmm [writing an m] Adeee [writing ad].” As I do this, I reread what I write then say the next sound.

Turning back to the students, I say “Did you notice what I did first? I said what I wanted to write. Then I broke it down to the first word, then the second word. Then I wrote and reread what I had. Next, I said the next word and I broke down the sounds. I wrote them then I read it again. Will you help me keep going?”

Trevor’s hand rises into the air, “But Miss Schimpf, made is spelled m-a-d-e.”

Thanking Trevor, I explain, “Some words you will know how to spell because you have already learned them, or because they are on our word wall. But, some words we do not yet know how to spell. So, we are going to practice listening for the sounds when we stretch out our words. If you know how to spell a word then, perfect-write what you know!”

[Positioning myself back to the easel] I reread what I wrote and say the next word, *math*. I ask the students to help me, “Will you all help me write the word *math*? Mmm-aaa-th. What sound do you hear first?” The students tell me to write an *m*. “M-aa-th. What sound next?” The students tell me *a*. “M-a-th. What two letters make the /th/ sound?” The students tell me *th*. I write the letters as the students respond to my questions. I continue to finish my sentence by modeling and stretching out the word *bracelet*, quickly writing *for and the*, then stretching out the word *class*. “I made math brr-a-c-l-i-t-s for the cl-a-s.” As I write, I reread the sentence every time I say a word.

Upon finishing, I turn to the class “Today, I want you write just like how we practiced. Say them, stretch them, and write what you hear, reread and say more. Let’s see you get right to work at your writing spots.”

As the students disperse to their writing spots, I heard Ian share enthusiastically, “Oh! I have an idea. I’m going to write about selling my Legos!”

Five minutes into writing time, I see Dayna’s hand raise, “Miss Schimpf, watch me.” Dayna re-reads what she had written to me then proceeds, “Me, mommy, and Ella went to…” Dayna begins to write the word *catch*, but as she does she stretches out the word and writes the letters she hears: *k-a-ch*. She continues to show me how to write butterflies. She stretches out the word and repeats it slowly and spells it as *butrfliys*. I praise Dayna on the great work that she had been doing.

After 15 minutes of independent writing, I stop the students and tell them, “Boys and girls, I am so happy that I have seen several of you stretching out your words to write the sounds that you hear. I could see Dayna saying her words and slowly writing them on the paper. You all have been working so hard!”

Reflection

What Went Well

As I taught about how writers stretch out the sounds they hear, I feel as if I kept right to the point. Calkins (cite) emphasizes that teachers should teach writers to stretch out their sounds when writing words, yet we should not make it too long of a lesson because it can become

draining for the students. I picked a short sentence to demonstrate how to stretch out some words and how to simply quickly write other words. I was able to model for the students as well as have them help me. When Dayna showed me what she wrote, it made me realize that she understood the concept.

What Was Challenging

One thing I found challenging was using inventive spelling when modeling for the students. I obviously knew how to spell the words that I wanted to write. However, I had to think as if I was one of the students and model for them how they should be doing it. Calkins (2006) suggests stretching out words while spelling; otherwise I would have modeled correct spelling. Even when I knew certain spelling patterns and silent letters, I needed to demonstrate stretching out words because that is what this lesson's goal. I could have used this as a teachable moment to reinforce vowel sounds and silent letters.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

In this lesson, I notice myself using repetitive language within the lesson as well as from previous lessons. I continue to model and ask the students to help before having independent work time. Before sending the students off to work, I re-stated the purpose of the lesson and told them to write just like how we practiced.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Today, I only had the students stretch words out. Trevor told me that I spelled a word wrong because he knew how to write the word “made.” Next time, I will be sure to emphasize that if the student knows how to write the word, then they should spell it correctly. I will also spell the word by stretching it out, and writing the correct spelling underneath. Perhaps next time I will also take this opportunity to talk about long vowels and silent letters. Also, next time, I would like to emphasize that they should be using their knowledge of spelling patterns and word chunks when they are writing-not just stretching words out. I might even create an anchor chart to remind students how to figure out words they might not know how to spell yet. I will also remind the students to use the word wall in our classroom in order to spell first grade sight words.

September 26, 2013: Stretching and Writing Words: Initial Sounds

In an energetic voice, I explain to the students, “Writers, yesterday we talked about writing our words the best we can. We talked a lot about strreeettchhhhhinggg our words so that we can hear sounds in them. Today I am going to show you how to listen for the first sound that you hear in your words so that you can write them down on paper.” [Positioning myself toward the easel, picking up the marker,] I said, “Today I want to write a story about how I read that really funny book, *Skippy John Jones- Class Action*, by Judy Schachner (2011), to you. I remember Jaclyn and Dayna laughing so hard when Skippy John Jones pretended to be with all of the Chihuahuas.” [Pausing for a minute] I tell the students, “I think I am going to start by writing ‘I read a funny book to the class.’ Watch me say the words and write down the sounds I

hear. Hmm. *'I read.'*” [After writing the word I, I stop.] “Hmm, let me say the word again and write down what I hear in the beginning. *'Read. /r/. I hear an r.'*” [Writing an r] I say “Now I should say it again and listen to what else I hear. *'Read.'* I hear the short e sound that we have learned about. Let me write an *e*. *'Read.'* Oh, I know! I hear a *d*. Let me write a *d*. *'Read.'* Okay, I think I've got it.” [I pause and look at the students to make sure they are watching.] After writing the word by stretching it out, I write the correct spelling of the word underneath.

“Can you help me finish my sentence? Let's start by reading the sentence from the beginning.” All of the students read along, *"I read...I read a."* Jaclyn and Maranda giggle. Maranda shouts out “That is easy. Just write a!” I follow her direction and write *a* then re-read what I have on the paper. I finish the sentence by saying the word *book*.

I ask, “Who can raise their hand and tell me, what is the first sound we hear in *book*?” Everyone's hands raises, I call on Matt. He shares *“/b/ so you have to write a b!”* I do as I am told.

“Okay, let's start from the beginning of *book*. *'Boooooook.'* What do you hear next?” Only a few hands went up this time. Jaclyn mutters underneath her breath “This is so easy. Its b-o-o-k.” However, I call on Maranda who shares “I hear a u!”

At this point, I write the *u* and share with the boys and girls “Remember friends, there are some words we know how to spell because we have already learned them, or we have them on our word wall, or we just know them. But we all do not know how to spell the same words. So, if you do not know how to spell a word, it is very helpful to stretch out our words and listen for the sounds we hear. Now let's finish writing *book*. Help me stretch out the word again.” The students say the word slowly, “Boooooook.” I then ask “What is the last sound we hear?” Zach

shares “It’s a c or k. I think it is a k because I have seen that word before.” We continue this process until our entire sentence is written.

Finishing the last word of the sentence, I turn to the students and say “Today, I want you to practice stretching out your words and first writing the first sound that you hear. Then go back, stretch it out again and listen for the next sounds you hear. You may go get started.”

Reflection

What Went Well

In this lesson, I reinforced stretching words out that students do not know. I was clear and concise when I told the students that the point of this lesson was to start stretching out words by writing the initial sound. I think that this is an important skill in stretching out words because so many young students do not always listen to the first sound in words. Since this is the beginning of the school year and most of my students are new to writing stories, I thought that it was important to teach writing down the initial sounds in words.

What Was Challenging

Today, I had trouble getting one of my students, James, to write. Like Zoe, he does not seem to like writing. I finally chose to offer James to use a fun pen to write because he often refuses to write. He is usually pulled out during writing time for OT services so he rarely gets to participate. I felt that giving James a pen was a good choice because it got him writing. He was interested in using a pen because in first grade, we usually only use pencil. At this point in the year, I do not particularly care what the students are writing with this early in the year, as long as they are writing something.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

In the mini-lesson, I linked today's lesson to yesterday's lesson before teaching anything new. After I connected the students to their previous lesson, I told them specifically that they will be learning how to write words using initial sounds. This is a pattern that I have been using throughout lessons-connect, then teach.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

When writing the word *book*, I should have asked the students if anyone knew how to write the word. I modeled stretching out the word even when other students knew how to spell the word. Next time, I will write the correct spelling, rather than telling the students that sometimes we know words that other students do not. Additionally, I might have highlighted the "ook" word family. I could say something like "Book has a three letter word family after the b. The same family that is in look, took, cook. Let's think about what those three letters might be."

September 30, 2013: Spelling the Best We can...and Moving On

In a calm, clear voice, I say "Boys and girls, we have been learning about streeeeetccching [stretching an imaginary rubber band] out our words and listening for the sounds we hear as we write. Do you remember how awhile ago, we talked about those hard to draw pictures and just trying our best then moving on?" [I pause and look for student reactions]

I continue, "Well today, I want to remind you that when we write words, we just need to try our best. We need to think to ourselves that sometimes our words might not be perfect, but we will just try our best and keep going. Today, I want to write the words that go along with my picture from when my foot fell asleep and some of you laughed at me." "I am going to write 'My

foot fell asleep. Then I could not get up.’ Watch what I do as I write.” [Motioning myself toward the easel, I begin to quietly talk to myself.] “My. Hmm. I know how to spell *my* because that is one of our sight words.” [I quickly write down *my*.] “*My foot*. Hmm. I heard the /f/ sound in foot so I am going to write an f.” I finish sounding out the letters I hear in foot and write it down. I quickly write the word *fell*, stretching it out then move on to the word *asleep*. I think aloud, “Hmm. This one is tricky.” Quietly sounding out asleep, I write down the sounds I hear. [I pause after writing it] “Well I am not sure if it is right. But I am going to leave it like that and keep going.”

[Turning back to the students,] I use the phrase Calkins’ suggests and say, “Did you see how I tried my best and kept going? We do not want to spend too much time worrying about tricky words. I want you to be able to write more of your story without getting caught up on these tricky words. I am going to give you each a whiteboard and a dry erase marker and we are all going to finish my story.” [I pass out whiteboards and markers to each student]

“Okay, we are all going to write the sentence ‘Then I could not get up.’” I slowly say each word to the students letting them stretch out the words and move on after they try their best. While writing the sentence, Holly shares “But, guys remember what Miss Schimpf says: if you know how to spell the word, make sure you spell it right. You don’t have to sound it out if you know it.”

Upon finishing the last word in the sentence, I ask, “Please hold up your boards so I can admire all of your hard work.” I quickly glance at the students work. I say, “Wow, I can see that you all tried your best, then moved on even on those tricky words like *could*. Today, I want you to practice stretching out your words, then moving on so that you can keep writing your story.” The students then go right to work on their pieces.

Reflection

What Went Well

The mini-lesson lasted about 10 minutes, which is shorter than my previous lessons. I kept today's lesson concise by giving one example of how I stretched out my words then moved on. Calkins uses the phrase of "moving on," therefore, I did too in order to model her. I felt that I made a good choice by actively engaging the students in practicing the skill of moving on after stretching out tricky words. Rather than correcting the students spelling on their sentences, I chose to write the word *could* on the word wall because it was misspelled by almost all of the students.

What Was Challenging

Today it was challenging because I wanted to work with Zoe and James on stretching out their words and talking with them about their writing pieces during a conference but I could not because they were pulled out for other services. It is important that I meet with them to practice these skills and discuss their writing, but I know that it is also important and necessary for them to be pulled out for their services.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

Like in other lessons, I connect the students learning to the previous lesson, then state the purpose of today's lesson, which was to try our best then move on. I did not go on and on about this, which in other lessons I have done. Rather, I gave one example then moved on. I repeated words from previous lessons such as the phrase, "stretching out our words." By using the same phrase, the students will hopefully know what I am talking about from lesson to lesson.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Next time, I do not think that I will have the students write a sentence on the white boards even though it went ok. My reason for this was to quickly observe and assess how they stretch out their words. I could have assessed the skill of stretching words out their words simply through their writing. I check their writing pieces almost every day, using rubrics from Calkins, so it would have been easy to look at how they stretch out their words. Having the students use the whiteboards helped me to see how they stretch out words; I just think that I could have had more time for independent writing if I simply observed their writing pieces instead of the whiteboard sentence as well.

October 1, 2013: Using Writing Tools: The Alphabet Chart

In an enthusiastic voice I say, “Friends, it is time for writing! Please show me that you are ready to begin. Today we are going to learn how to use things in our room to help us write. Look at this chart over here. This is our alphabet chart. I have noticed that many of you have already seen and used this chart. Today, we are going to learn how to use it as a tool during writing. When we are stuck and can’t figure out what letter makes a certain sound, we can use this chart! Watch what I do. I wanted to write a story. Here is part of my story: ‘I went out to dinner to my favorite restaurant.’ Let’s pretend I was writing the word *favorite*. If I know that I hear the /f/ sound in favorite, but I forgot what letter says the /f/ sound. Watch what I do.”

I say what each picture is under each letter on the chart. [Pointing to each letter on the chart], “Apple, boat, car...” I continue down the chart until I come to the picture with the /r/ sound.”

[Stopping] “Hmm. Rrrrake. That has the /r/ sound! So it must be this letter above the rake. Oh I know! That’s and r. So I know that restaurant starts with an r.” [I pause briefly] I continue, “Now I want some of you to try what I have just done. Let’s start with the word *have*. I want you to go through the alphabet chart and find the picture that starts with the /h/ sound like in *have* so that we can figure out what letter *have* starts with.”

Olivia demonstrates what I have just done by saying all of the names of the pictures until she gets to the picture of the hat. She pauses and says “*Have* starts with an *h* because *hat* sounds like /h/.

After completing a couple more examples I share with the students, “Today while you write, I want you to use the alphabet chart if you get stuck on a letter and do not know what a word starts with.”

Reflection

What Went Well

Today, I made sure to keep the lesson short so that the students could have the majority of the time for writing. Calkins (2006) suggests introducing the alphabet chart to students. I chose to use this lesson because several of my students struggle with letter sound correspondences. I felt as if showing the alphabet chart as a tool during writers’ workshop was important because students can reference it whenever they get stuck or confused.

What Was Challenging

I found it challenging deciding whether or not to teach this lesson. Most of my students seem to have a good letter sound correspondence. However, a good chunk does not. I did not

want to waste a mini-lesson on something that would not be useful to my students. However, I ended up deciding to teach this because of the challenges of some students I noticed in previous lessons.

What Did I Notice About My Use of Language

In my mini-lesson, I told the students that we were going to pretend that I wanted to write a story. Instead of pretending, I think it would have been more beneficial to have the beginning of the story written out. I could have explained that I got stuck because I did not know what letter made a particular sound. This may have helped to explain the purpose of an alphabet chart a little bit better.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Next time I teach a lesson like this, I may save this type of lesson for a group conference. I felt as if not all of my students benefitted from this lesson. Next time, I may choose to group students during a small writing conference to teach them how to use the alphabet chart.

October 2, 2013: Creating a Place for Writing-in-Progress: Long-Term Projects

In an energetic voice, I say “Boys and girls, I have noticed you all working so hard. Yesterday, I saw that Zach had so much to say in his story that he had to go get a second piece of paper to finish it! Guess what he did with his two pieces of papers?” [Pausing for the students to think] I call on Zach to tell the students what he did. He shares enthusiastically, “I got to staple them!”

I smile and say, “That is exactly right! Writers and authors have lots and lots to say. A lot of times, they can’t fit their whole stories on one piece of paper. So, they get a new one and put them together. I saw Zach do just that! He wanted to add more and more to his story so that his story could grow and grow!” [I pause shortly as the students smile and congratulate Zach]

I continue, “Today, I am going to show you what to do when you are not done with your story even if it is time to clean up. I know lots of you have more to add to your story even when I ask you to clean up. Today, we are going to learn where to put our writing that is not finished in our folders so that we can pick up where we left off tomorrow.”

[I pick up my own writing folder and hold it up to show the students] “Look at the inside of my folder. I have placed a green star on one side and a red star on the other side. Usually, when we see red it means....” Christina, Jaclyn, and James shout “STOP.”

I continue, “Great. So when we finish a piece of writing, it will go in the pocket with the red sticker. If we do not finish a piece of writing and have more to add, where should we put it?”

[I give about 30 seconds so that more students raise their hands] I call on Matt. He shares, “You can put it on the green side because in our math game, green means go!”

Looking at Matt and the rest of the students, I say, “Awesome! I like that idea. So, I am going to show you the pieces of writing that I have done. I would like you to tell me which side of my folder to put it on.” [I begin holding up and explaining the pieces of writing that I have already completed.] Some were clearly finished and some were not. The students tell me where to put the writing pieces in my folder.

Picking up the student folders I explain, “In your folders, you will see that you have a green star and a red star on your pockets. I would like you to please sort your papers where they

belong then begin writing. Remember, the red side is for writing pieces that you have finished and the green side is for pieces that you are still working on.”

Reflection

What Went Well

Today, I stuck to the plan of a short, 10 minute mini-lesson. I kept my explanation of the red and green stickers short.. I did not over-explain what the red and green stars mean in their writing folders. I figured that this is something that can I can remind the students at the end of every writing workshop time.

Ten minutes into the independent writing time of the workshop, I walked over to observe the progress that James was making with his writing. He used to be a student who refused to write. However, after being able to use a fun pen, he has been finding enjoyment in writing. Without any guidance he wrote: Wen I frst strtd frst gad I wez NrVis!! Nw I lik it!! This made me reflect back to the previous lesson when I decided to give him a pen to write. It made me realize that this was a good choice, because now I can see based on my decision to give him a pen, he was writing sentences! He used to never write because he did not think writing was fun, however, he liked using the pen because it was a special writing utensil.

What Was Challenging

As I was connecting the students to their work from yesterday, I had a hard time sticking to the purpose of today’s lesson. I sort of got side-tracked and went a little bit further than I would have liked to about how Zach got a second piece of paper and stapled it together. Once I

realized I was doing this, I tried to end this connection quickly and introduce what they would be learning about today. I did not want to spend too much time on this new idea of getting more paper since that was not the purpose of the lesson today.

What I Notice About My Use of Language (check)

As I taught this lesson, I tried to encourage the students to help me introduce the purpose of this lesson. Rather than simply telling them that green means go and red means stop, I paused and let them finish my sentences. I did this so that they would be actively engaged and would hopefully remember what the colors mean in further lessons.

Additionally, I felt as if I talked a little bit too much about how Zach got a second piece of paper and stapled it together. I feel as if this may have taken away from the purpose of the lesson, or may have got the students thinking this would be the purpose of the lesson instead of using the different colors to show what writing is done or not done.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Next time, I will try to be brief with my connection from the previous lesson. This will make the purpose of the lesson more clear. Also, I was thinking that rather than introducing the students' different sides of a folder in the beginning of the lesson, I could possibly do this at the end of the workshop. If I did this, I could use the time for the mini-lesson to teach something else that may be more beneficial. However, this unit, *Launching the Writer's Workshop*, is all about launching writers' workshop, so perhaps this is an important stage. This is something I will have to watch for.

October 3, 2013: Introducing Booklets

In a calm clear voice I say, “Boys and girls, please turn and face me and...” Zoe finishes my sentence before I can, “put on your writing hats!”

Laughing slightly to myself I continue, “Thank you Zoe. Yesterday we learned where to put our writing that we are not finished with yet and where to put our writing pieces that we have finished.” [Holding up my own folder and pointing to the red and green sides] I continue, “Today we are going to take a BIG step towards becoming authors. Remember *Skippy Jon Jones, Lost in Space*, (Schachner, 2011). The author writes on lots of pages. She does not use just one page to write her story. She spaces it out and puts different things on each page. Look here, [picking up the book and flipping through the pages] she writes that Skippy went to space. Now look on this next page. She wrote about how he saw dogs in space. Then on this page she wrote how Skippy had so much fun! [Pausing a moment] Do you see how she wrote a little bit on each page?” Turning to look at the students, I can see Christina and Zach nodding their heads while the rest said “Yes.”

“I am telling you this because you can do the exact same thing! You can stretch stories out and tell them across many, many pages. Pretend I wanted to write a story how I went apple picking. Listen to my story: ‘Last weekend I went apple picking with my sister. I had to climb the ladder to get the apples on top. After picking the apples we got to eat them. They tasted so good!’ [Pausing shortly] Now, do you think I should write that all on the same page?”

Zoe, James, Zach, Jaclyn, and Dayna respond with “Noooo.”

I say, “Right. I should write a little bit of my story on each page. I should write one sentence on each page so that I can tell the story across pages. [Holding up a booklet] My first page should say ‘Last weekend I went apple picking with my sister.’ [Turning to the next page]

Then, I should write, ‘I had to climb the ladder to get the apples on top.’ [Turning the page again] Next, I should write, ‘After picking the apples we got to eat them.’ [Turning to the last page] Finally, I should write, ‘They tasted so good.’”

[Putting all of the papers down and looking at the students] I say, “So friends, if you are starting a new piece today, I want you to take a booklet and think about how you can make a story that goes across lots of pages. Yesterday, you all did an amazing job. Let’s see if we can all write again! Go ahead and get to work!”

Reflection

What Went Well

I kept the lesson very short, about 8 minutes, so that the students could have more time with independent writing. I connected their learning to yesterday’s lesson then stated the purpose of today’s lesson: writing across pages. By keeping the same pattern throughout lessons, the students will know what to expect. This was apparent when Zoe even finished my sentence to how I begin writers’ workshop.

As I conference with Christina today, I noticed her using some of the language I had used in my mini-lesson. She told me that she was going to plan her story so that she could have a little bit on each page. This showed me that she understood what I said and the purpose of the lesson.

What Was Challenging

I wanted to conference with more students during independent writing time. However, I was only able to conference with Christina. Calkins advises conferencing with several children during each writing workshop. However, because our independent writing time is only about 15

minutes, I am not able to conference with as many students as I would have liked. I ended up conferencing with Christina for about 7 minutes, which is the normal time for a conference. However, this took up a lot of her writing time.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

In this lesson, I pretended to write a story across several pages. I simply told the students, “on this page I will write...” Instead of doing this, I could have actually had a story written and shown them exactly what I meant. Showing rather than telling may have been a better strategy.

Additionally, as I sent the students off to get started on their writing, I felt as if I was a little informal. I told them “Go ahead and get to work.” I should have been clearer and perhaps may have told them, “Let me see you get started on writing using booklets today.”

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Next time, I will make sure to conference with at least two students. It is important to conference with different students so that I can see what they are working on and how I can help them. Additionally, next time, I might have an example of my writing written out rather than pretending what I will do.

October 7, 2013: Widening Writing Possibilities: Lists and Letters

In an energetic voice, I say “Friends, so far you have been writing stories that have really happened. We know that there are lots of kinds of writing in the world. For example, we know that the author of *Skippy Jon Jones*, by Judy Schachner (2011), is not writing about real things. He is writing stories to entertain us. When I really care about a topic, I usually want to write

more than one piece of writing about that topic. You are going to learn that you can do that too! You all know that I LOVE writing about my niece and nephew. I have written so many stories about them. Instead of writing a brand-new story today, I am going to write about Chase and Charlotte in new ways. Can I show you what is inside my writing folder?” [Holding my folder close to me, I look at the students with excitement] Dayna gasps and says “Yes!”

Continuing with excitement, I say, “Okay. Well here is one piece of writing that I have done. It is a list of all the things I need when I babysit Chase and Charlotte. It says, ‘Things I Need to Babysit.’” Pointing as I read what I have, “On each line, I wrote things that I need: ‘1. Bottles, 2. Toys, 3. Pacifiers, 4. Food, and 5. Diapers.’ Do you see how I took something that I love and I made a list about it? Can I show you something else?”

Holly and Matt’s faces light up and are eager to see what else there is.

“This is a letter I wrote to my sister. It says ‘Dear Stephanie, I love watching the babies. Next weekend do you want to take Chase and Charlotte pumpkin picking? I think it would be fun! Love, Miss Schimpf.’”

I can hear Matt quietly say to himself, ‘I want to write a letter!’

Continuing I say, “Boys and girls, I am telling you this because you can do the same thing! You can take topics about things that you really love and write lists of letters about those topics or any other topics. I know that Zach loves LEGOS. He really likes to play LEGOS with Trevor. Maybe Zach could write a list of LEGOS he needs for when he plays with Trevor. Or maybe he could write a letter to Trevor about playing LEGOS. I also know that Dayna’s dad made pancakes with sprinkles. Maybe Dayna could make a list of all the ingredients she and her dad needed to make the pancakes. Do you see how you can use topics about what you have already written to make lists and letter? I would like you to close your eyes and think about a

topic that is important to you and think ‘What else could I write on my topic?’ Once you have an idea, you may get started with your writing.”

Reflection

What Went Well

Today, I was able to engage the students and keep them interested during the mini-lesson. I created suspense and shared real pieces of my writing with the students. I continued to follow the pattern of my lessons- connection, teaching, and then independent writing.

As I have looked through students writing pieces, I have noticed that several students, including Jaclyn, Trevor, and Ken, have created booklets and have begun telling stories across pages. Other students like James and Zoe have really been working on stretching out their sounds. I can see that they are taking knowledge from previous lessons that I have taught and are still applying them to new pieces of writing.

What Was Challenging

Today it was challenging during independent writing time. Another teacher came into my room with a question, so I was unable to conference with any of my students. This teacher took up my time and I could not hold a real conference with any of the students.

In the beginning of independent writing time, I was able to quickly work with Zoe. She is still having trouble getting started with writing. She loves to work with me; however, I need to work with other students as well. Since she is a developing writer and struggles with coming up with ideas, I suggested writing a note to me about what she had for breakfast, then I will write a note back to her. She loved the idea because I would be writing a note back to her.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

After reflecting, I think that I was a little bit confusing in my connection. I talked about how writers write about different topics and how they write several pieces about the same topic. This may have been confusing for the students and I need to be clearer next time.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Toward the end of the 12 minute mini-lesson, I gave suggestions to the students about what they could write about. Rather than telling them actual suggestions to write about, I could have asked them to brainstorm ideas. I could have created a list for the students to refer to. Next time, I will try to do this. I think that it is important to guide my students in coming up with ideas since they are still very young and developing their writing. However, I think it may have been more beneficial for them to give some suggestions.

October 8, 2013: Widening Possibilities: Real-World Purposes

In a calm, clear voice I say “Boys and girls, yesterday we talked about how when we have a topic that we really like, we can create a lot of different kinds of pieces of writing. I saw Holly writing a letter to her mom about her shopping trip and Christina made a list of things that she needs when she cheerleads. Today I want to tell you more about these different types of writing. Sometimes, I think of things that I am already doing that day and think about how writing could help me do that specific thing better. For example, today before you came to school, I had to find the short /o/ songs that you listened to this morning. I wanted to remember to play the songs for you so I wrote a quick note to myself that reminded me to play them for you. Here is my note. [Holding up a sticky note] When I looked for the songs, I realized that I could not find one of the songs. I decided to write a letter to Miss Mader asking her if she knew

how to find the song about short /o/. [Pausing] Do you see how I wrote about things that I was actually doing today? I wrote even when it was not writing time!”

Olivia and Dayna shake their heads and excitedly say “Yessss.”

I say, “Today, I heard Christina talking about how she had cheerleading practice. Maybe Christina could write about something she needs to remember how to do for cheerleading. Today, I want you to think about what you have been doing in your life and think about how writing could help you with it. Everyone close your eyes and think of things you have been doing in your life.”

All of the students closed their eyes. Matt and Zach squeezed their eyes shut tightly until I continue, “When you have an idea ready in your head, you may go get started on your writing.”

Reflection

What Went Well

Today, I kept the mini-lesson brief- about 5 minutes long. Calkins (2006) suggests widening the possibilities of writers in this lesson by showing them that we write in all areas of the classroom and throughout our day, not just during writing. I believe that I stuck to the point and shared a specific example of how I wrote a note to myself and then to another teacher to remind me to find the phonics song. I told them that I wrote this note while it was not writing time, but I still had to write to help myself out.

Zoe, who had been having a rough morning, walked over to the closed door and stood staring out of the door window into the hall. Knowing that Zoe struggles with writing, I knew I had to make a decision quickly if I wanted to her to write. I walked over to Zoe and told her that today for writing time she could sit at the teacher’s desk in order to write her stories. She thought

this was a great idea. She quickly got her supplies and got right to work. Five minutes later, I saw that she had written, 'I love the calss.' This made me realize that even though Zoe needs special things to write, it is ok, as long as she is writing.

Furthermore, I was able to check in with James on his writing progress. When I was able to conference with James, about 10 minutes into the workshop, he was just finishing his story about his trip to Long Acre Farms. He wrote: 'I went ON a bick rid tO lonNackfows aND I Got to Go oN a HayrwiD.' I told him how proud I was of all the hard work he has been doing. Through his writing, I was able to see that he applied what I taught about stretching out sounds from the previous lessons.

What Was Challenging

Today, I found the mini-lesson a little bit challenging. I did not know if I needed to elaborate more about how we can use writing to help ourselves. However, I decided to simply give the one story about the sticky note then the note to the other teacher. I decided to do this because I did not want to add to much and confuse the students.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

I told the purpose of today's lesson: learning about using other types of writing to help us learn to write. I did not call on many students; therefore, they did not get to interact. I kept my mini lesson short, and then sent them off to write. The story I told about my sticky note reinforced that we can write for different purposes and we can write in more than one way. It also showed that we can write for a variety of purposes. Perhaps asking the students to provide

examples of when they, their siblings or their parents write for different purposes would be a way for them to understand the different genres of writing.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Next time, I move on to the next lesson because it seems as if I made the point of being able to write about real life purposes.

October 9, 2013: Fixing Up Writing

In a calm, clear voice I say “Boys and girls, yesterday we learned how writing helps us with things that we are doing in our life. We learned that sometimes we need to write to other people or even write notes to ourselves. When other people are reading our writing pieces, we want to make sure that we tried our best. Today, I want to show you how to fix up your writing and make it fancy so that we can WOW our friends and families! Have you ever seen your families dress up for a wedding or a special event? [Pausing for the students to respond] Well, we can make our writing fancy too! Today I want to show you what real writers do. Real writers read their writing, fix it up then make it fancy!

[Positioning myself to face the easel] I was writing this story earlier and I was hoping you all could help me fix it up. Here is my story.” [Pointing to my pre-written story, I read each word carefully and slowly aloud to the students.] “‘Today we art. We need to bring our.’ [Pausing and scrunching my face as if I am very confused] When we want to fix up our writing, writers ask themselves different questions. Repeat after me. Does it make sense? [Pausing for the students to repeat] Does it look right? [Pausing for the students to repeat] What can I add? [Pausing for the students to repeat]”

Zoe and Matt lead the students in repeating the question.

I continue after the students repeat me, “Writers ask themselves these questions because they want to make sure their story makes sense so others can read it. They want to make sure their words sound right and have all of the sounds the word has. And finally, they want their writing to have capitals and periods where there should be. Would you look at my story, does my story make sense?”

Zach and Trevor shout out an energetic, “Nooo!”

I smile and say, “I agree with you. What could I do to make it make sense?”

Matt shares “It’s supposed to say we need to bring our art smocks!”

I say, “I think that makes it sound a lot better. I am going to cross off my period because I need to add more to that sentence. [I write the words art smock] Here. Now I made this sentence make sense. But wait. Something doesn’t look right here. What do you all think?”

Trevor shares, “You need a period!”

“Ahh, you are right! Our sentences always end with a...”

Trailing off my voice so that the students can finish my sentence, Olivia and Holly lead the class with saying “A period!”

“Perfect, now I am going to re-read my story. ‘today we art. We need to bring our art smocks.’ Does it make sense?”

Maranda shares, No! You have to say today we go to art!”

I say, “Ahhh that does make more sense. Watch what I do. I am going to put this little symbol that we call a ‘carrot’ between the two words to show that I need to put more words in. Then I am going to write the words I am missing.” [I quickly draw the carrot and add the words.] “So now my story makes sense. Does it look right?”

I hear Zach and Dayna say, “Yess!” While some other students including Holly and Olivia say, “Noo!”

I continue, “Friends, remember our sentence buddies always wear a cap to remind us that our sentences should always start with a capital letter. Do I have capitals where I need them?”

This time, Zach and Olivia shout out, “No!” Zach shares, “You have to make an upper case ‘t’!”

[I cross out the ‘t’ and write an uppercase ‘T’.] “So now my story makes sense and looks right. But I am wondering why we need art smocks today. Maybe I could add why we need them? What do you think?”

Dayna shares, “I think you have to put more. You could write ‘we need them for painting.’”

In an excited voice, I say, “I really like that idea. Let me write that.” [I quickly wrote what Dayna suggests.] “Let me read my story one more time. ‘Today we go to art. We need to bring our art smocks. We need them for painting.’ Wow, I think that sounds good. Boys and girls, today I want you to fix up and fancy up some of your writing pieces. Ask yourself: Does my story make sense? ? Does it look right? Can I add anything? Just like how you might make yourself dress all fancy for special events, I want you to make your writing all fancy by fixing it up and adding more! Let’s see what you can do. Go ahead and get to work!”

Reflection

What Went Well

I think that the language I chose was very helpful in today’s lesson. In the beginning of the lesson, I compared how the students may see adults get dressed up in order to impress others.

I related this to how we need to “fancy up” our writing so that we can make it the best we can. Calkins (2006) suggested teachers have students ask themselves, “Does my writing look right, sound right, and what can I add?” Therefore, in my mini-lesson, I was sure to include each of these steps. Additionally, I chose a topic that the students could relate to and help me fix. I chose to write about art, because that is their favorite special and they know that they always need their art smocks.

What Was Challenging

I have found it very challenging to get to work with all of my students. My students are all at different developmental points in writing and I need to remember what is required of me to support each one of them. I find myself constantly working with Zoe and James with either behavior issues or trying to get them to write somehow. This is challenging because I need to conference with other students, however, these two students require a lot of my time.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

Today, I notice that I use similar language from previous lessons such as, “yesterday you did...” and “today, you will learn...”

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Today during the mini-lesson, the students did a great job at finding my mistakes. However, I noticed that several students kept forgetting that sentences start with capitals and end with end marks. Rather than moving on to the next lesson, which still talks about editing writing, I think that I am going to re-visit the “fixing up my writing” lesson in order to teach one specific

skill. I want the students to really practice writing capitals in the beginning of sentences and end marks at the end of sentences. Also, some students add too many periods. I think that for tomorrow's lesson I am going to create a mini-lesson on when capitals and periods, and when to place periods. This is important because developmentally, first grade students often forget to use capitals and end marks. I will only briefly touch on the idea of when to put periods because that is a difficult concept sometimes for students.

October 10, 2013: Fixing Up Writing 2

In a clear and energetic voice I say, "Boys and girls, yesterday you learned how to fix up and even fancy up some of your writing pieces. Some of you took out what you thought was finished work and fixed it up. But, some of you forgot some important pieces of your sentences. Some of you left your sentence buddies without a cap or any shoes! Remember, our sentence buddies that are attached to our desks remind us that our sentences always start with a capital letter and end with a end mark! Today, I want to practice using capitals and periods so that you can go back through your work and make your sentence buddies happy by making sure each of your sentences start with a capital and end with a end mark!"

[I position myself toward the easel, which displays pre-written sentences] I say, "Boys and girls, my story needs a lot of fixing up. I was hoping that you could all help me fix it so that it looks and sounds right! Let me read it to you first."

I read the pre-written words on the easel,

“last Night i played outside

I took Charlotte and Chase with me

I pushed them on the swings”

[I pause to look at the student's expressions, I notice several students including Olivia, Dayna, and Zach scrunching their faces as if they know my story was all wrong.]

[Pointing to my own sentence buddy] "I have my sentence buddy sitting right here to help me fix up my story. I also have my sentence buddy chant. Can you all sing the sentence buddy chant so we can remind ourselves what a sentence needs? [I pause and listen to the students sing the chant.]

I say, "Awesome singing. So, after singing our song, does anyone notice anything that I need to fix?"

Trevor shares, "My sentence buddy would be really sad with your story. You need a capital 'I' in that word right there. [Getting up and pointing to the word 'last']"

I say, "Ahh, you're right Trevor, I forgot a capital letter in my very first word of my sentence! Let me fix that. [I cross out the lower case I and write an upper case L.] What else do you notice about my story?"

Zach gets up and points to the end of the first sentence and shares "You need a period right here." [He points to the space right after the word 'outside.']

I say, "That is right Zach. I always need an end mark at the end of my sentences. Let me put a period right there. So now I have a capital letter and a period. Is this first sentence ok now?"

Olivia quickly shouts, "Noo!" After I ask why, Olivia continues, "That sentence is silly! That lower case I needs to be capital because I is supposed to be capital! And look! You have a capital in night. You need to change that!"

Smiling at Olivia, I continue, "Ahh I am so glad you caught that. Boys and girls, we have learned that when we write the word 'I,' it always needs to be capital. I am going to cross out this

lower case i and change it to an upper case I. And Olivia is right about the ‘n’ in night. Why should that be a lower case n?”

Dayna shares as she giggles, “You aren’t supposed to have upper case letters in the middle of sentences unless it’s an I or the name of a person or place!”

“Thank you Dayna! That is right! Boys and girls, look at our sentence buddy. He just tells us that we need a capital letter in the first letter of our first word. So, I should not see capitals in words that are in the middle of your sentences unless it is the *word* I, or it is the name of a person or place!”

The students continue to raise their hands and correct my errors until they are all fixed.

After finishing the last correction, I tell the students, “Boys and girls, today when you are writing, I want you to remember your sentence buddies. You need to start your sentence with a capital letter and end it with a period. I should not see random words inside your sentences with capital letters. So be very careful. I want you to practice fixing up and fancying up your writing today. I am going to walk around to admire all of your hard work. You may go get writing!”

Reflection

What Went Well

I decided to write each sentence on a new line of the chart paper because I felt that if the sentences were all next to each other, then that would bring up a whole new lesson of what makes a sentence. I think that I made a good choice of putting each sentence on a new line.

Additionally, Calkins 2006 suggests repeating any lesson that the students may need more work on. Since this is the beginning of the workshop, it is important for the students to

understand what is being taught, even editing our writing. Therefore, I wanted to teach specifically capitalizing and putting end marks.

What Was Challenging

Today, I found it challenging having time to meet with other students for conferences. My mini-lesson lasted about 15 minutes. It was a little bit longer than expected because I began talking about things more in depth, such as how letters should be all lower case inside sentences unless it is a proper noun. This could have been something that could have been a topic for a conference with a group of students who needed more support with using lower case letters.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

I noticed that I repeated myself often reminding my students that sentences should start with capitals and end with end marks. This repetition is important for first grade students because they do not simply learn something the first time they hear it. They need a lot of reinforcement and practice in order to actually learn something.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

I think that I should have taught tomorrow's lesson before repeating yesterday's lesson. I should have worked with students who were struggling with capitals and periods into a writing conference rather than teaching it to the whole group. Calkins (2006) suggests holding writing conferences with students; therefore, I think this may have been a better choice.

October 15, 2013: Editing and Fancying Up Writing

In a calm, clear voice I say “Boys and girls, we have been practicing becoming great writers. Last week we learned some ways to fix up our writing. Today, we will learn another way to fix our writing. When writers fix their writing, they say that they edit writing. Can you say the word *edit*? When we edit our writing, we check over our entire story so that people can read our story. We ask ourselves if our story makes sense, sounds right, and if we can add more. Remember friends, we have a word wall right over there where we can find all of our sight words so that we can spell them right. Today, I need your help editing my story. Here is my story:”

[Positioning myself toward the easel, I place a finger under each word as I read] I say as I read the words “‘Ovr thu weekend mi friend came to visit me. Wee wnt on a hayride.’ Watch what I do when I edit my writing. First I am going to reread my first sentence. ‘Ovr thu weekend mi friend came to visit me.’ Hmm.” [Pointing to the word *ovr*] “That word does not look right. Let me try to make that word look right.” [I cross off the word *ovr* and rewrite the word *over* then I reread my sentence quietly to myself and questioned whether the word looked right again. I turn back to the students] “Writers, do you see what I did to make sure my words looked right?”

Olivia excitedly yells out, “Yes! I have an edit button on my DS and fix my pictures.”

Smiling at Olivia, I say, “Nice connection! You can edit pictures and fix them up, just like we can with our writing. Can you all help me finish editing my story? Let’s re-read what I have and see if it looks right. ‘Over thu weekend mi friend came to visit me.’ Who can help me edit this sentence?”

Matt's, Olivia's, Dayna's, and Maranda's hands quickly rise into the air. Matt shares "You spelled *thu* wrong! Look at the word wall. It says t-h-e.!"

"You are right! Matt, could you come cross off the word that is spelled wrong and write it correctly above the word?" I ask.

Matt eagerly takes hold of the marker puts one line through the word *thu* and wrote *the* right above it.

We continue until all of the sight words were spelled correctly.

After we finish correcting the words, I say "Writers, today I want you to look again at your writing. I want you to edit your writing and ask yourselves if your writing looks right, makes sense, and if you can add more. If you have a word that does not look right, rewrite it above so that it does look right. You may go get to work!"

Reflection

What Went Well

As I taught this lesson, I believe that my use of language was something that went well. I connected the students' learning to last week's learning by reminding them that we worked on fixing up writing. However, today, I told them that when we fix up writing, we call it editing. I focused on using the word wall as a tool to edit our words. I believe that by doing this, I was able to focus in on one skill rather than many skills.

What Was Challenging

Today was the third lesson centered around editing. Calkins (2006) suggests having two editing lessons at the end of the first unit. However, I repeated a lesson last week, focusing in on

capitalization and punctuation. I felt as if having three total editing lessons right in a row was a little bit redundant and the kids seemed to be bored.

Additionally, most of my time today was spent with James trying to get him to write. He simply was not listening and only wanted to play with his crayon box. He eventually took out a piece of paper but because of the short writing time, he was not able to do any work. It is very important for the students to be writing and for me to be meeting with them all, however, I am having challenging time doing this.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

I notice that I have been using repetitive language. I began the lesson by telling the students that last week they learned about fixing up writing. This activated their prior knowledge about editing. I was then able to tell them the purpose for today's lesson: editing. I had the students repeat the word "edit" so that they could learn it better. I told them what they would be learning rather than have them figure it out for themselves.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

I noticed that today I did not ask many questions about how the students knew what my errors were. I simply asked what they noticed and how to fix it. This did not lead into a discussion, rather it lead them to simply correct my mistakes. Next time, I might try to ask more probing questions to get the students thinking more deeply.

October 16, 2013: Reading into the Circle: An Author's Celebration

In an excited, energetic voice, I say “Writers, today is our special day. I am so proud of all of your hard work. Each and every one of you has been working so hard during our writer’s workshop. You have learned how to draw pictures and write words about things that you care about. You have also learned how to add to a writing piece, how to fix it up, or edit it. I have seen such hard work! You have all done a fantastic job so far! Today, we are going to take turns reading into the circle. The past few days we have been working on editing and fancying up our favorite writing pieces. Today it is your turn to share your writing piece to the rest of us, just like real writers do! Remember, when we read into the circle, the rest of us are very quiet, and we listen to the person reading. When you are done reading, you look to the person next to you and this lets them know that it is their turn. Watch me demonstrate. [I practice reading a story, then I look next to me and whisper], “This shows Trevor it is his turn.” Let’s start reading into the circle with Trevor.”

Trevor looks up, his face gleaming with excitement to be the first to share. He picks up his piece of writing and reads: “I had fun at the Big E with Jeremy and Ashley and mom and momma B. It was fun because I got to play a video game and it was lots of fun and we went home and we had lots of fun.”

As Trevor finishes, he turns his head to the right and looks at James. James knows that this is his signal to start, so he picks up his writing and reads, “I made a necklace. Beads went everywhere.” Olivia and Dayna giggle because they remember when this happened to James. The students continued taking turns reading their favorite writing pieces until everyone has a turn.

After Maranda finishes up our reading into the circle, I look at each of the students and continue, “Wow, boys and girls, that was awesome! I learned so much about you from your stories! I learned how Zach gets special rewards for his calendar choices, and I learned how Olivia likes playing Ninjago with her brother. You have all worked so hard. I want you to all give yourselves a pat on the back for all of your hard work. Now, I would like us to give a round of applause to the entire class for everyone’s hard work!” The students clap enthusiastically as they look at their friends.

After the applause, I continue, “Writers, let’s celebrate with some juice and a story. Carefully take one cup of juice and come join me back on the carpet to listen to a story from a real author, just like you are learning to be!

Trevor was the first to grab a small Dixie cup of Hawaiian Punch and come back to the carpet. The rest of the students follow Trevor’s actions. As soon as all the students are seated back on the carpet, I conclude our celebration by reading *The Problem with Pumpkins* by Barney Saltzberg (2001).

Reflection

What Went Well

I think that I made the students feel proud of their work by how enthusiastic I was during this lesson. I tried to be very upbeat and create a celebration that showed that it was not like any other day during writing. I brought in small decorations to hang around our meeting area so that the kids could feel special. I praised them a lot, which made them feel special and proud of their work. Calkins (2006) suggests ending every unit with some type of celebration so that the students can feel a sense of ownership and pride. I chose to have the students read into the circle,

then to have juice and listen to a story. I felt that reading into the circle would allow them to share their work and create a sense of pride. The juice and story would add more excitement because we do not have juice often in class and the students absolutely love listening to stories.

What Was Challenging

Before today, I was contemplating whether or not I should tell the students that they could pass if they did not want to read into the circle. I did not want any of the students to feel embarrassed or shy when reading. However, I decided not to say anything. I simply told the students what they needed to do. I felt that if I told them that they were allowed to pass, then many of them would and we would not have as great of a celebration.

What I Notice About My Use of Language (check)

I activated prior knowledge about how hard my students worked by telling them all of their hard work they have done so far. I told them that today we would celebrate. Also, I explained how to read into the circle, and then demonstrated it. I told the directions then demonstrated so that students would better understand.

What I will do Differently Next Time (check initial caps)

Next time I have an author's celebration, I may choose to use a different type of celebration. Perhaps I will invite parents into the classroom and have the students read their pieces to their parents and families so that they have a sense of pride in their work.

October 17, 2013: Book 2- Understanding a Small Moment Story

In a warm, calm voice, I say “Boys and girls, today we are going to listen to how one author took one small idea from her life and created an entire story out of it. I would like to read *A Chair for My Mother*, by Vera Williams (2007). As I read the story to you, I want you to be thinking about what the small idea is that Vera is writing about and how she added lots of details to make it into a story. Listen carefully because tomorrow, I will ask you to do the same thing. I will ask you to think of one small moment, or one small thing that happened in your life, and then I will ask you to stretch that story across many pages in order to create a story.”

[I hold up the book]I begin to read the story to the students, beginning with the title and author.

Zach raises his hand several times and even begins to shout out, “Miss Schimpf, Miss Schimpf, I know someone who had a fire!”

Gently reminding Zach, I tell him, “For right now, we are just listening to the story and we are thinking about the small detail that Vera created a story out of.” I then finish reading.

[I turn to face the students after finishing the last page of the book]I say, “I want you to close your eyes and think hard about what that one small moment could have been that help Vera to create her entire story that we just read.”

Matt shares, “It was about her and her mom. That was the small moment.”

Looking at Matt, I assure him, “You are right Matt. It was about the girl and her mom. But, I want you to think about one small moment, or one small thing that caused this whole entire story to be written.”

Right then, Matt had an “ah-ha” moment and says “Ohhh! The fire. It was the fire! They had to get a new chair because of the fire!”

I smile back at Matt and say, “Yes! Boys and girls, the author, Vera, took one small moment which was the fire in the apartment, and turned it into a whole story! She wrote about what happened before the fire, during the fire, and after the fire. Tomorrow, we are going to look more closely at how Vera stretched her story across many pages of her book!”

Reflection

What Went Well

I chose this book because it was recommended by Calkins in her units of study. It is important to choose books carefully when we are teaching students to write in certain ways. This book shows the students one small moment that was stretched across several pages, just like Calkins says. Therefore, I think that I made a good choice in using this book. Some of the students were able to figure out what the small moment was in the story that set the purpose for the rest of the story.

What Was Challenging

Since I only have half hour for writing, it is hard to fit in all parts of what Calkins (2006) suggests in her units of study. She suggested reading *A Chair for my Mother* prior to the writer’s workshop. However, I did not have time to do this. Therefore, I chose to read it during writer’s workshop to set the foundation for the next unit in Calkins’ units of study, *Small Moments*.

I also found it challenging reminding Zach that he should only be listening during the story. I think it is so important to discuss read alouds, however, I felt rushed on time and was disappointed that I did not let him share and discuss what he wanted to say.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

Today, I limited the students' thinking by telling them that they were to only listen to the story. We could have had great discussions about the story that I read, however, I rushed through it. Additionally, I expected the students to know what I was talking about when I referred to the words, *small moments*. I should have explained it better- or I should have not even mentioned small moments, and saved the discussion for tomorrow, when I introduce small moments.

In the beginning of the lesson, I told the students that they were going to listen to a story and listen for the small moment. It set the purpose of today's lesson and let them know what to expect.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Next time, I will not rush through a story. Calkins suggests using mentor texts when teaching writing. Since I do not have much time, I may need to take a writing block to read one of the mentor texts. Rather than rushing through, I should plan ahead and prepare questions to engage the students in thinking more in depth about the text.

October 18, 2013: Understanding a Small Moment Story Two

In an energetic voice, I say "Boys and girls, I want you to think of one small moment that happened in your life." [I pause and let the students think. Then I raise my hands in the air as if I am catching a ball.] "Now, I want you to pretend you are catching that small moment in your hands." [I pause for the students to catch their small moments] "Great, we've got them." [I begin to pull my hands apart as if stretching a rubber band] "Now, imagine streeetcccchingg that small moment into an entire story! Friends, as writers, we have been thinking of stories that have

happened in our lives. Today, we are going to learn how to catch a small moment from our life and stretch that moment out across several pages so we can make a story!” [I hold up the book, *A Chair for My Mother*, by Vera Williams (2007)] “Remember this book? Today, I want to take a closer look at how Vera Williams, the author, takes the one small moment about the fire and stretches it across a few pages. Remember that part where the mom and daughter were coming home from shopping and saw their house on fire? Well, Vera could have written that part super quick and it could have gone like this, ‘We got home. We saw the fire. Everyone was ok.’ [I pause] Would that be a fun story to listen to?”

Many “Nooo’s!” were lead by Olivia and Matt.

I smile and say, “I agree! Instead, she decided to stretch out the moment by telling us lots and lots of tiny details. Listen closely to how Vera stretched the small moment across many pages.”

[I open the book and begin to read slowly , beginning with the part where the girl and her mom were coming home. I pause through the excerpts to admire the details. I read the students two pages from the book before continuing.]

I say, “Wow. I can really picture this in real life. There are so many details! The girl talked about how they were coming home from buying shoes. And they passed the, umm...ummm...”

[I purposely wait for the students to finish my sentence] Matt and Trevor shout out “the tulips!”

I say, “Ahh, yess! Could you all turn to a neighbor and talk about other small details that Vera added to stretch out her small moment about the fire?”

After about one minute of discussion, I get the students' attention back on me to share what some of the tiny details were. Christina shares that "the girl gets flip flops and high heels." James shares that "they comed home from the bus and saw the fire. They were saying 'where's my grandma!" Matt shares, "She saw red and yellow roses. The mom wanted red and the girl wanted yellow." Dayna shares, "They were walking home from the shoe store!" I say, "Writers, do you see how the author took one small idea and added a lot of details to tell about the story? She told what happened in the beginning, middle and end of her small moment. Today, I want you to think of that small moment you caught from earlier, and think about how you can try to stretch it out by writing in detail. When you have your small moment, you may go back to your seat to work."

Reflection

What Went Well

I believe that taking the time to read the story yesterday was crucial for this lesson. I would not have been able to fit in all parts of Calkins (2006) suggested lesson if I did not. Her purpose for today's lesson was to teach writers that they need to "stretch one small idea across several pages." This means that they need to pick one small detail, and tell several parts of that detail, spreading it out across pages in a booklet.

Today, before the students came in, I added new booklets to our writing center. Some were horizontal, some were vertical, and some had very small areas for the pictures. The booklets are important in writers' workshop for this unit because Calkins suggests that students "write stories across pages, rather than squishing it all into one page." I made a good choice by

providing different booklets because some of my students like to write more and want more writing space, where as other students needed more room for their pictures.

What Was Challenging

After this lesson, I collected my student's writing pieces in order to see how they did with small moment stories. I noticed that many of them were still telling large stories without really focusing in on one small moment. I considered re-teaching this lesson; however, the second unit in Calkins' Units of Study is all about practicing small moment stories. Therefore, I will not repeat the lesson, but I will emphasize taking one small moment rather than a big idea.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

In this lesson, I told the students what they would be learning. I told them this in order to create clear expectations. Additionally, I attempted to activate their prior knowledge of the book that I read so that today's lesson could be successful. Before telling the students what they would be learning today, I reminded them about the book, *A Chair for my Mother* (2007). I re-read parts of the book to show one small moment about the fire in the book. Re-reading really emphasized the objective of the lesson: small moments.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

I noticed that I did not ask many questions at all during my mini-lesson. I simply told the students what they would be doing. Tomorrow, or in later lessons, I will try to ask questions to my students in order to actively engage them.

October 21, 2013: Discovering One Small Moment

In a warm, energetic voice, I say, “Last week, we read and talked about the story *A Chair for My Mother*, by Vera Williams (2007). We noticed how she took one small moment from her life and made it into a story. She didn’t talk about her entire day that the fire happened right? She picked one part of the day and told us lots of details such as how she was coming home from buying shoes, then when she turned the corner she saw a fire truck. Today, I am going to show you how I write about small moments in my life because you are all going to be doing that too.”

“This weekend, I took my cousin, Caden, to Wicham Farms. I could write about all of the different things we did at Wicham Farms. But I am not going to do that. I am going to zoom in on one thing we did. I am going to just write about the hayride that Caden and I went on. I am going to do that because that is what writers do. We zoom in on one small part. So, before I write my story, I have to put on my binoculars so that I can zoom in on one small story and give lots of details about it!” [I pretend to put on and zoom in my binoculars.]

[I position myself toward the easel, where a larger version of the student’s writing packets is displayed.] I begin to model my process of writing a small moment story. I say, “Hmm, so first I need to think back and picture what happened in my head, just like a movie. What came first?” [I lean over to touch my head with my hand] I continue, “Oh yeah, first we had to stand in line to get tickets. Let me quickly sketch that here so that I remember what happened first in my story.” [I sketch quickly then turn to the next page.] “Ok, then I remember the tractor wasn’t back yet. Caden and I had to wait in the mud until the tractor came back. But Caden got really cold, so I picked him up to warm him up. Let me sketch that here.” [I quickly sketch a picture of me holding Caden on the next page.] “Hmm. Finally, I remember the tractor

came. We got to sit on giant hay bales. I will finally sketch that here.” [I point to an empty space on my paper.]

[I turn back to the students.] I ask, “What did you notice I did as a writer when I wrote my story?”

Jaclyn shares while acting as if she was adjusting binoculars, “You thought of a story and zoooooomed in then streeeeetched it across your pages.”

I smile and say, “Exactly. I have created a chart to add to our writing wall that shows what writers do when writing small moments.” [I pick up a small poster and clip it to the easel] I continue, “It says: 1. Writers think of something that happened to them. 2. They picture it in their minds. 3. They sketch in on the paper. 4. They write words.”

[I turn back to the students.] I say, “Today, and from now one (?), you will do all of these things. Think back to your story that you began last week and remember the small moment you are writing about. Use your imaginary binoculars to zoom into details that happened during your small moment. When you have your ideas, you may get started with your writing!”

Reflection

What Went Well

I think that I chose a good example of a small moment story to stretch out. I chose something that actually happened in my life in order to engage the students. Also, it is so important that I model things that actually happen to me, because then I am more enthusiastic about it because I got to experience it. When I am more enthusiastic about something, my students will be too. Calkins (2006) suggests modeling a small moment story to the students in

this lesson. Her goal is to let students further practice and get to know what a small moment is. Therefore, I chose a good story that really emphasized stretching on details in one small moment.

What Was Challenging

Today was challenging because I decided from yesterday's lesson that I would create more opportunities for students to answer questions. However, I did not create as many opportunities as I would have liked. This is going to be something that I work on. It is difficult to ask the students questions because a mini-lesson is only supposed to last about 7 minutes. When I start to ask questions, my students and I begin discussing things and the mini-lesson ends up longer.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

In this lesson, I told the students what they would be learning. I attempted to activate their prior knowledge about small moment stories by asking them to think about last week and the story that we read. This created an opportunity for them to start thinking about small moments again.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

I thought that this lesson went well until I looked at their work after school. I modeled very carefully how when I went to Wicham Farms that I did a lot of different things. However, I picked just one of those things and wrote a lot of details about it. During the mini lesson, Jaclyn really impressed me by what saying that I zoomed in on an idea and stretched it across many pages. I noticed that many of the students were really picking one small moment and zooming in

on the details. However, many of the students really had a tough time picking one small moment and sticking with it. I noticed that James took a booklet of papers and told a completely different story one each page. Other students understood that they are supposed to add lots of details; however, they just squeezed it all on one page. Because only a few students really grasped this idea, I decided that I would like to re-teach this lesson. In tomorrow's lesson, I will choose a different small moment example from my life and demonstrate again. It does not hurt to practice this concept and keep writing using small moment stories.

October 22, 2013: Discovering One Small Moment Two

In a warm, energetic voice, I say "Writers, yesterday I showed you how I write about small moments in my life. I showed you how I would write a story about my cousin, Caden, and me and how we went to Wicham Farms. I could have written about everything we did there. But instead, I picked one thing and wrote all the details about that." [I pick up my writing piece from yesterday and I show the students my example of how I zoomed in on one small moment and spread the story across several pages by adding all of the details.]

[I place a new writing packet on the easel] I say, "Today, I want to show you again how I write about a small moment from my life. Let me first think about what I should write about." [I close my eyes and tap my head with one finger.] I begin to model the process of re-telling the story in my head, "Oh, I got it! On Sunday, I wanted to bake cookies. Let me zoom in with my binoculars to remember all of the details about how I made cookies." Using my imaginary binoculars, "Ohh, I can see it. It is like a movie replaying in my head! Now I remember, first I wanted to make the cookies, so I got out my mixing bowl and started to mix the ingredients. But, oh yeah! I was missing butter! I had to call my sister Stephanie to see if she could bring over

some butter. Finally, when she got to my house, I was able to make the cookies. They tasted sooo good!”

[I look at the students] I say, “Friends, do you see how first I thought about a small moment and pictured it in my mind? Now watch as I quickly sketch my story and plan what I am going to say.”

[I quickly sketch a picture of me with a mixing bowl on the first page, then me on the phone with Stephanie on the next page, and finally a picture of me with a tray of cookies on the third page. I tell the words that I would put on each page.]

[I turn back to the students and point to our writing poster from yesterday] “Do you see how I followed all of the steps of what writers do when they write small moment stories like our poster? Today, I want you to practice again writing small moment stories from your life. Remember, a small moment story is a TRUE story that really happened in your life. When you are writing, I want you to think about what happened in the beginning, middle, and end of your story. This is just like sequencing center, where you have to put the pictures in order and tell what happened first, next, then, and finally. But, you get to write about a story that happened to you! When you have an idea of what you would like to write about in your head, you may go get started!”

Reflection

What Went Well

I think that I made a good choice by re-teaching this lesson. This whole unit in Calkins’ Units of Study is centered around small moment stories. Calkins always suggests re-teaching a lesson if the students do not grasp a concept. Therefore, I chose to re-teach this concept using

another one of my own small moment stories. I told the students my story and I asked them about what they noticed. By asking the students what they noticed, I gave them an opportunity to think about what was being done. In this mini lesson, I had the students facilitate their own thinking by answering questions about what I had done, rather than telling them what to do.

Additionally, when I looked through the students' writing, I could tell that they were beginning to understand small moment stories. For example, in James' story, I could tell that he was apply what I taught about stretching out sounds in words as well as stretching one small idea out across several pages. James wrote about going to Canandaigua for his brother's birthday: Page 1- *I WeNt to CkaNuDu for My Bruchrs Brshdae.* (I went to Canadaigua for my brother's birthday) Page 2- *We staD at GraT wuF log.* (We stayed at Great Wolf Lodge.) I could see that James started to understand that he needed to pick one true story from his life and use lots of details.

What Was Challenging

Today I found it challenging when modeling my small moment story. Calkins (2006) suggests verbally telling the small moment story to students. She also suggests showing the students sketches in order to demonstrate stretching the story across pages. However, I found it difficult doing this because I wanted to write my story, too. However, I needed to think about the point of my mini-lesson: making the students more aware of small moment stories. If I actually wrote out my story, it would have taken a while and I may have lost my students' attention. Therefore, I believe verbally telling my story as I touched the pages was more beneficial.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

In this lesson, I noticed that I asked students questions about my story. By asking questions, I created an opportunity for the students to help their own learning. They were able to notice how I stretched a small moment across pages and they were able to discuss with partners.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

I noticed that my lesson was very fast paced today. If I slowed down a little bit and paused between my examples, the students would have been able to let information sink in. Tomorrow, I will try to slow down, rather than telling things right after one another. I anticipate that this will help the students to process what I am saying.

October 23, 2013: Establishing Long-Term Partnerships

In an energetic voice, I say, “Boys and girls, please come find your name on a card and sit right next to your new writing partner.”

[I signal with my hand in the air for the students to quiet down] I continue, “Writers, today, I have given you each a writing partner who you will be seeing a lot of during writing time from now on. We have learned that writers need tools like pencils, papers, and word walls to write. They also need something else. They need someone to talk to so that they can get their ideas going and help each other out. Writers often get together to talk about their writing and to help each other plan. Today, I am going to show you how you and your new writing partner can help each other. Watch as Olivia and I talk about our writing.” (Earlier in the morning, I had prepared Olivia to help me.)

[I get out of my chair and sit criss cross applesauce on the floor.] Olivia comes to the front of the room where I sit, prepared with her writing.

I say, “We start meeting with our partners by finding our own personal spots in the classroom. Then, we sit knee to knee, just like Olivia and I are sitting. When it is your turn to meet with your partner, you will all find a spot to meet every day. Now let me show you how writers plan with their partners. Watch closely because you will be doing this very soon. On your card that you and your partner are sitting on, I have written the numbers 1 and 2 next to each of your names. The first person whose name is on the paper is partner one and he or she will go first. The next person will be partner two and will go second.”

[I pick up my own writing and begin to read my story to Olivia.] After reading my story I say, “Now, I am going to tell my partner my plans for today. Part of this means that we will talk about if I am done with my story that I just read or if I will add more to it. I will also tell Olivia what I might say in today’s story. Watch what I do.”

I begin, “I do not think I am done with my story. I have not finished telling about how I carved my pumpkin. Today, I want to write that I had to take out all of the seeds. Then I got to start carving.” [I look at Olivia who has already rehearsed what to say] She says, “I think that is a good idea. Maybe you could tell what you carved your pumpkin into.”

Smiling at Olivia, I say, “That is a great idea! I think I will add that detail into my story. Now it is your turn.” Olivia reads her story. I demonstrate that partners need to ask if they are done or if they will add more by asking, “Are you done or will you add more do that story?” Olivia tells me her plans. The rest of the students watch and listen.

I thank Olivia for her help and turn to the rest of the students and say, “Writers, do you see how Olivia and I first found our own personal space, sat knee to knee, then took turns

reading our stories and talking about what we plan on doing? Today, and every day, you are going to start writing time by meeting with your partner and talking about what you worked on the day before and what your plans are for today. Remember, writers like to talk with other people so that they can help make more ideas for their writing. Remember to ask, ‘What did you write yesterday’ and ‘Are you done or will you add more?’ Please find your own personal space and get started!”

Reflection

What Went Well

Today I modeled the mini lesson very well. In past lessons, I would simply tell the students what they would be doing and briefly model, usually verbally, how to write a certain type of story. However, in this lesson, I had a student help me model. I prepared this student earlier in the day so that she would demonstrate what I wanted her to. I explicitly showed the students how they need to sit when conferencing with a peer. I also told them what they need to do in a conference. By modeling all aspects of this type of conferencing, I think that the students were able to really understand what they needed to do.

What Was Challenging

As I was giving directions, I realized that I was telling the students a lot that they needed to do in a conference. I felt like I gave several directions. Calkins (2006) recommended introducing everything that I did in one lesson. However, I felt that it was a bit much for my students. After the mini lesson, I created a chart that the students could refer to if they forgot what they needed to do when meeting with their peer. I hung this up on our writing wall.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

In this mini lesson, I noticed how I reminded the students how important tools we use every day during writing. I introduced the today's lesson by telling the students that they would learn another important part of writing time. I did this in order to engage them and to spike their curiosity before telling them what they would be learning. I modeled Calkins' suggestion of connecting their learning, teaching, then actively engaging the students.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Today I modeled how to conference with a peer. The mini-lesson and practice ended up taking our entire writing time (30 minutes). Therefore, the students did not have any independent writing time. Calkins recommends having the students practice conferencing with peers, but modeling first. That is why I chose to spend more time on this. Tomorrow, and in other lessons, I will give my students only a few minutes to discuss with their partners so that they will have time for independent writing.

Additionally, I noticed that I did not ask my students about what they noticed about Olivia and my modeling. I should have asked them what they noticed, rather than told them what we did. I will try to ask them to make observations rather than tell them things.

October 24, 2013: Stretching One Small Moment

In a warm, calm voice I say "Boys and girls, today we are going to listen to how another author took one small idea and created an entire story out of it. I would like to read *The Kissing Hand*, by Audrey Penn (193). As I read the story to you, I want you to be thinking about what the small idea is that Audrey Penn is writing about and how she used details to make it into a

story. Listen carefully because tomorrow, I will ask you to do the same thing. I will ask you to think of one small moment, or one small thing that happened in your life, and then I will ask you to stretch that story across many pages in order to create a story.”

[I hold up the book and begin to read the story.]

Jaelyn and Zach begin discussing that they have read this story in kindergarten. Elliot eagerly and excitedly shares, “Miss Schimpf, I know this story! The boy is nervous for school and, and his mom gives him a kiss!”

I gently remind Elliott that for right now, we are just listening to the story and are thinking about the small detail that Audrey Penn created a story out of.

[I turn to face the students as I finish the last page of the book] I say, “I want you to close your eyes and think hard about what that one small moment could have been that helped Audrey Penn to create her entire story that we just read.”

Several students including James, Jaelyn, and Holly raise their hands. James shares that “It was about the raccoon and he was scared to go to school. That was the small moment.”

I say to James, “You are right James, it was about the raccoon and he was scared to go to school. But, I want you to think about one small moment, or one small thing that the author used for whole entire story.”

Right then, Olivia shouts out, “It is when the mamma raccoon gives Chester, when she gives Chester, a kiss!”

I say, “Yes! Boys and girls, the author, Audrey, took one small moment, which was when the mom raccoon gave Chester a kiss, and turned it into a whole story! She wrote about what

happened before, during, and after. Tomorrow, we are going to look more closely at how Audrey Penn stretched her story across many pages of her book!”

Reflection

What Went Well

I believe that it is important for the students to listen to and read books that were created by known writers. Calkins (2006) recommends using mentor texts when teaching genres of writing. Therefore, I thought that it was important to read this book that was recommended in Calkins Units of study.

What Was Challenging

I think that it would have been more beneficial if I was able to elaborate more on small moments after I read this story. However, I simply chose to read the book today so that I could re-visit this text tomorrow.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

I noticed that I praised James for thinking of something that was true but then guided him to think deeper about the small moment in the story. I did not give the students many hints about what the small moment was. If I gave them hints then that would not facilitate their learning. I would be simply telling them again what it was that they listened to. However, I let them come up with the small moment themselves.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

I noticed that I did not ask many questions during the story. Next time, I will ask questions throughout the story in order to help aide comprehension.

October 25, 2013: Stretching One Small Moment 2

(Earlier in the day, I read aloud *The Kissing Hand*, [Penn, 1993] to prepare for today's writing lesson.)

In a calm, clear voice I say, "Writers, you have been practicing becoming real authors. You used to use one page and cram your whole story onto that one page. Now, you are practicing telling your story and stretccccccching it across lots of pages, just like real authors do! Last week, we saw how Vera Williams (2007) stretched her story about the fire across several pages in *A Chair for My Mother*. Earlier today, we read *The Kissing Hand*, by Audrey Penn (1993). Now, we are going to look closely at how Audrey Penn stretched a small moment out in her story. I am going to re-read part of the story to you. Listen for and think about how Audrey Penn streeeeeetched this moment across several pages."

[I pick up the book, I open to the page 7] I read, "*That night, Chester stood in front of his school and looked thoughtful. Suddenly, he turned to his mother and grinned. 'Give me your hand,' he told her. [Flipping the page] Chester took his mother's hand in his own and unfolded her large, unfamiliar fingers into a fan. Next, he leaned forward and kissed the center of her hand. [I turn the page] 'Now you have a Kissing Hand, too,' he told her. And with a gentle 'Good-bye' and 'I love you,' Chester turned and danced away.*"

[I close the book and look back at the students] I say, “Audrey Penn took one small moment from when Chester gave his mother a Kissing Hand, and she told little by little just like you are all practicing.”

[I fan through the 3 pages that I read] I say, “Do you see how she told details about what happened first, next, and then on each of the pages?”[I pause for students to respond.] “Now, I want you to watch how I plan the way I will take a small moment and stretchhhhhh it across pages. Trevor, will you pretend to be my partner and sit knee to knee with me?”

Trevor nods as I sit criss cross on the floor with him. “Notice what I do. Ready?” [Picking up my blank writing booklet and touching the page as I say each word] I continue, “I am going to write this: ‘At the dentist, I laid in the big leather chair.’” [Turning the page and continuing to touch the page as I read] “Then the dentist told me to open my mouth.” [Turning the page again] “‘ I opened my mouth really wide.’”[Turning to the last page] “‘Finally, he started to clean my teeth.’”

[I turn back to the students] I say, “Raise your hand and tell me what you noticed I did?”

Dayna shares that I “Streeetched the story across the pages.”

Matt shares that “You touched the pages when you told your story.”

I say, “Exactly. Today I want you to practice planning what you will write with your partner. Please practice stretccching out your story by touching each page and saying your story just like I did. When you are done with this, you may begin writing. Please find your meeting spot and get to work!”

Reflection

What Went Well

Today I was able to conference with students. When I looked through the students writing in their folder, I noticed that Christina had written a great story. . It read: *My Gramu is cuming to nite. Wan she gets her I am going to giv her a big hug Wen she gets hir. Me and my bruthr went to longancrs. Me and my bruthrue went down the pull. I twist id on the pull.*(My grandma is coming tonight. When she gets here I am going to give her a big hug when she gets here. Me and my brother went to long acres. Me and my brother went down the pole. I twisted on the pole.)

Today, I decided to pull her to the side table in order to conference with her. I pointed out to her that she had two small moment stories crunched into one. I told Christina to pick one of the stories tomorrow and to zoom in using her binoculars and tell all of the little details. I demonstrated to her how she could tell the story about her grandma and stretch it across the pages by using a blank booklet and touching the page as I spoke the words. I then had her try what I just did. She did. Her plans for tomorrow are to tell the story in a new booklet and just tell about her grandma coming.

What Was Challenging

Part of today was challenging because today's lesson was sort of a repeat of when I read *A Chair for my Mother* (2007). It was challenging because the students who did not understand what I was talking about when I introduced small moment stories, still did not seem to understand when I read this book. Calkins (2006) suggests repetition when teaching small moments. She suggested using *The Kissing Hand* (1993) in order to help teach small moments.

However, I found it challenging because I did not use a different approach to teaching a small moment story for the students who are struggling.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

As I demonstrated with Trevor, I noticed that I asked the students what they noticed we did. By asking them what they noticed, I allowed for the students to actually think about what I did. By having them tell me what I did, they will hopefully remember it better. I usually tell the students what I do, however, today I asked them to tell me what they noticed.

What I Will Do About My Use of Language

Calkins (2006) suggests using mentor texts to help students understand genres in writing. However, I am wondering if there are other strategies to teaching writing genres. I might look into other strategies, and possibly talk with co-workers in order to get suggestions on how to help the students who are struggling with small moments.

October 28, 2013: Stretching and Writing Words

In a calm, clear voice I say “Boys and girls, you have been working so hard on writing these awesome small moment stories. We know that writers need to write words in a way that people can read stories. Remember, writers say the word slllloowly, stretchingggggg out the word like a rubber back, and writing all the sounds we hear. I am going to show you how to do this again. First, I want you to watch what I do, then we can all practice stretching out words.”

[I position myself toward the easel then I continue pointing to each page where I had already drawn pictures showing my small moment story.] I say, “I drew this small moment: I drove to the outlet mall. It took so long. So we sang songs to pass the time.”

[I turn back to face the students] I say, “Watch and listen to the strategies I use to write words.”

[I position myself back toward the easel, with a marker in my hand] I say, “I want to write *drove*. Watch how I do it. I am going to listen to the sound I hear at the beginning of *drove*. *Drove*. *Ddrove*. /d/. Now I am going to say it slowly and write a letter that makes the sound I hear.” I practice saying the word slowing to exaggerate the sounds, I finally write *drov*. “Let me reread what I wrote to make sure I have all the sounds I heard. D-r-o-v. Hmm, but I know that there needs to be that silent sneaky e at the end of the word to make the o say /o/. What do you think?”

I ask, “What did you notice I did as I wrote my words and sentence?” [I wait for the students to respond.] Then I say, “Now it’s your turn to help me. Please pass back the white boards and markers.”

[I wait until everyone is situated] I continue, “Now, I need to write *the*. That’s easy because it is one of our sight words, t-h-e. I need your help to write outlet mall. Can you practice stretching out the word *outlet* on your whiteboards?”

[I wait 30 seconds] I continue, “Please hold up your boards so that I can see.”

Zach holds up his board which reads: *owtlit*. Olivia holds up hers which reads: *owtlet*.

The students and I continue to write words that needed to be stretched out. We discuss using the word wall and not needed to stretch out certain words that we just know.

After writing and spelling, I ask the students, “What did you notice I did ask I stretched out the sounds in the different words? And what did you do when you stretched out the sounds in words?”

Christina shares, “You kept going back and saying it over and over so you could hear the sounds.”

Zach shares that in one of the words, “You heard the short e sound. Since you knew that, you wrote the e.”

Holly shares, “You used the word wall instead of stretching out some words.”

After our discussion I say, “Boys and girls, now that you have shown me that you know how to stretccccch out words, I want to see you practicing this tomorrow!”

Reflection

What Went Well

Today, I allowed the students to practice stretching out words on the whiteboard. This went well because I was able to see what the students could do when they practiced this skill. It allowed me to see how individual students stretched out sounds in words. Calkins (2006) suggests teaching how to stretch out words in sentences in most of her units. This was the next lesson in her sequence and I thought that my students could benefit from practicing.

What Was Challenging

One thing I found challenging was using inventive spelling when modeling for the students. I obviously knew how to spell the words that I wanted to write. However, I had to think as if I was one of the students and model for them how they should be doing it. Calkins suggests

doing this; otherwise I would have modeled correct spelling. Even when I knew certain spelling patterns and silent letters, I needed to demonstrate stretching out words because that is what this lesson's goal.

What I Notice About My Use My Use of Language

In this lesson, I provided the students with opportunities to practice and actively participate in what I spelling. . By giving them whiteboards, the students were able to practice right then and there. I could see how they stretched words and actually spelled that words out and what I might need to emphasize, or if I could move on.

Additionally, I noticed that at the end of the lesson, I summed up the lesson by asking the students what they noticed I did when I stretched out sounds. By asking them questions, I enabled them students to reflect on what we did during the mini-lesson and develop strategies that they can use during future writing activities.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

I spent a lot of time on practicing stretching out sounds. Next time I teach this, perhaps in the next unit, I will spend less time on stretching out sounds in words. Tomorrow I will briefly remind them to stretch out words, then I will give them the entire writing time to write since they have not had much time for writing lately.

October 29, 2013: Stretching and Writing Words Two

In an energetic voice, I say "Writers, remember how we learned and practiced yesterday that writers stretchhhh out words so that readers can read them? Well today, I want you to practice stretching out words like a rubber band as you write your small moment stories. But

before we begin, I want to see what you can do with big words when we don't know how to spell them. Now, this is a really tricky word that I do not expect you to know how to spell. But, if we use our strategies that we learned yesterday, I think we can write down all the sounds we hear! So, on your white boards, I want you to write *whisper*."

[I wait about a minute] I ask the students to hold up their boards.

Zach had written: *wispr*. Olivia had written: *whisper*. Matt had written: *Wrisper*.

Maranda had written *whispr*.

I say, "Wow, I see that you all stretched out the word and wrote down the sounds that you heard. Today, as I walk around, I want to see you stretching out your words. You may start writing!"

Reflection

What Went Well

I was really impressed with how well the students stretched out the word *whisper*. I chose to briefly connect today's writing time to yesterday's because yesterday I had the students practice stretching words out the entire time. Today, I kept the mini-lesson very brief. I picked one word for the students to demonstrate how to stretch out.

Calkins (2006) has many lessons that repeat throughout the Units, this being one of them. This seems beneficial because the lessons go back and forth which reinforces the concept that is taught. This lesson, the students seemed to demonstrate that they were able to stretch out sounds much more successfully.

October 30, 2013: Sketching Rather than Drawing

In a calm, clear voice, I say, “Writers, today I am going to teach you a special kind of drawing that writers usually use when they want to save more time so that they can write more. It is called *sketching*. Writers like to sketch instead of draw so that they can have more time to write stories. I am going to show you what it looks like when I draw, then what it looks like when I sketch. Watch and I am going to first draw Chase (My nephew).” [I mutter to myself as I take my time to draw in great detail a picture of Chase sitting next to Elmo, because that is his favorite toy.]

I say, “Waa-la, there is my picture. But now, watch me sketch.” [I turn to the next page and pick up a pencil rather than crayons. I draw a few bold lines that outline a baby boy (a circle for a head, an oval for a body and 4 straight lines for arms and legs) and Elmo. I finish within a minute.]

I ask, “What did you notice was different from the first page to the second?”

Maranda shares, “You drew a nice picture of baby Chase at first. But then on the other one you just did a quick one because you want to show us that we can’t spend too much time on our drawings ‘cause you want us to spend more time on writing.”

I say, “Yes, writers sketch drawings so that they can spend more time on their words. Today and every day from now on, I want you to practice sketching. I know that you can draw beautiful drawings. But, during writing time, I want you to sketch a picture so that you can spend more time on your writing. Before you go off to write, I want you to think about what you are going to do when you get to your writing spots. Give me a thumbs up when you know what you will be writing about today.”

Reflection

What Went Well

I have been noticing that many of my students spend a lot of the writing block working on their drawings for their writing pieces. Rather than drawing such intricate pictures, I would rather the students sketch a drawing and spend more time on their writing. Therefore, I thought that this mini lesson was extremely beneficial because it reinforced the idea of what I want my students to do. Calkins (2006) suggests teaching this lesson as a mini-lesson in the Small Moments unit in order to help steer students away from taking so much time on writing. I think that I demonstrated the difference very well.

What Was Challenging

In order to truly show the students the difference between drawing and sketching, I really took my time on my first drawing of Chase and Elmo. This took some time. I felt a little anxious as I did this because I did not want to waste the students writing time. However, Calkins (2006) says that it is important to demonstrate both drawing and sketching.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

As I taught this lesson, I told the students what they would be learning today. I then modeled the difference between drawing and sketching. Rather than telling the students the difference, I let them watch and observe what the difference was. I asked questions in order for them to share with me what they noticed.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

I questioned whether I should have partially drawn my drawing of Chase and Elmo. Next time, I might do this in order to save on time.

November 4, 2013: Planning Details

In a clear, energetic voice I say, “Writers, we have been working so hard on creating pieces of writing with lots of details. We have seen how Audrey Penn (1993) and Vera Williams (2007) have added lots of details to their small moment stories so that we can picture what is happening in our heads. Today, we are going to practice making sure that our stories have a lot of details so that we can picture what is happening in the story in our heads. I want you to learn today that writers plan stories so that they can be sure to include details. Remember our Halloween parade last week? Well, I want to write about it because I keep remembering how we had to get ready quickly and there were so many of us that had to get costumes on and our costumes were scattered all around the room because we had so many pieces. Do you remember that?”

Olivia and Zach shout, “Yes!”

I continue, “Great. So if I was planning my story with my partner, Maranda, I would begin by telling everything that I want to put in the story. So Maranda, I am going to tell you my story: First we had to get ready. There were a lot of us. We lined up to go.”

[I look back to the students, away from Maranda, and I scrunch up my face to show I was confused] I begin, “Hmm. I planned a small moment story about the Halloween parade, but I am wondering if I added enough detail to give a clear picture of what it looked like in the classroom

before the parade. Could you help me think of some details that I could add so that someone who was not here could picture what happened?”

Olivia shares, “We all had so many parts to our costumes.”

Matt shares, “We had so many pieces and they were all over the floor.”

Holly shares, “You and your sister, ‘Miss Schimpf Two,’ had to help us because my costume was tricky.”

Dayna shares, “Our costumes were so cool and no one had the same one!”

After the students share their examples, I continue, “Wow! I did forget a lot of details. I said what happened, but I didn’t give you readers good details so that you could picture it in your mind! So boys and girls, today, before you write, I want you to talk to your writing partner and suggest details that they could add to their small moment story to make it better. After you talk with your partner, you may start writing. But, don’t forget, your story should include details so that the person who reads your story can picture it in their minds!”

Reflection

What Went Well

In this lesson, I chose an example of an event that my students could relate to and remember. They were all present for the Halloween parade, so they could think back to what it was like. I chose this topic for a small moment story because the students had fun and it allowed them to share what they remembered about it.

What Was Challenging

After I taught my mini lesson about the small moment story and adding enough details, I noticed that several of the students were writing the same small moment story. I found this challenging because I wanted them to come up with their own small moment story.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

In this mini lesson, I asked the students to help me remember details from the Halloween parade. . I believe this enabled the students to think about what actually happened and actively engaged the students in the lesson and they were able to help me remember details of the event that we could use to create a small moment piece.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

Since I noticed several of my students using the same small moment story, I might create a chart of ideas for students to refer to if they are stuck on ideas.

November 5, 2013: Internalizing Story Shapes

In an energetic voice, I say, “Writers, we have been learning that we can see stories everywhere! Where ever we go and whatever we do, we have stories. We can write a story about how we picked out the clothes to wear today. We can write stories about what we did in P.E. class. We can write stories about the short /u/ song we sing in the mornings. We can write stories about lunch, recess, homework, family, anything! Anything we do, we can create a story out of it! Whenever I think of a story, I catch the story idea in my hands and put it in my pocket, just like this.” [I pretend to gently catch a story in two hands and place it in my pocket] I continue,

“We want to catch our story ideas so that we do not forget and we can write about them later. But, when we write our stories, I want to show you one way that we can tell our stories. This is what I use to tell my stories.”

[I pull my fist out of my pocket] I say, “When I remember a story, I reach in my pocket, and pull it out using my fist. Watch how I tell my story across my fingers.” [I raise my thumb] “Last Friday, I went out to dinner at Otto Tomottos.” [I raise my pointer finger] “We had to wait so long to sit down.” [I raise my middle finger] “After about 30 minutes, the waitress called us over and brought us to a little table by the window.” [I raise my ring finger] “I was so hungry, I couldn’t wait to eat!” [I raise my pinkie finger, “I picked the buffalo chicken pasta and finally got to order my food!”

As I finish my story, I can see Christina pretending to “catch a story” from the air.

[I lean over to Christina.] I ask, “Did you catch a story?”

Smiling, she nods her head.

I continue back to my story and ask, “What did you notice I did?”

Olivia raises her hand and shares, “You used one finger for each part.”

I say “Perfect! I told one part of my story on each finger. My first finger showed the beginning of my story and my last finger showed the end of my story. Now, I want you to catch a small moment in your mind and turn to your writing partner and practice telling a story across your fingers. Go ahead.”

After about three minutes, I say. “Wow, I saw you all using your fingers to tell stories across your fingers! Nice job! Elliott, I heard you telling Maranda your story and I thought it was awesome! Could you share it with the class?”

Elliott, holding his fist up and putting one finger up for each idea, begins “I was playing Mario with my brother. I was Mario. He was Luigi. We played a hard level. There were falling rocks and he died.”

Elliott looks back to me for approval, so I quickly begin, “Boys and girls, did you see how Elliott used his fingers to tell each part of his story? That was awesome! Now that you have all told your moments across your fingers, I want you to all write a story about what you just shared with your partner. Let’s see who can get to work the quickest and quietest.”

Reflection

What Went Well

I was able to engage the students in today’s mini lesson by modeling how to “catch” small moments. I made today’s lesson exciting and engaging by telling the students that they could catch their stories. As I told my story across my fingers, Christina could hardly wait to catch her story because she was so excited.

Furthermore, I demonstrated a clear and concise story that could be told across my fingers. By choosing a story carefully, I believe I enabled the students to really understand how stories can be told across your fingers.

What Was Challenging

Calkins (2007) suggests using the language “catching a small moment” like a ball. I tried to do this as I taught the mini-lesson. However, my students are so young and they take language literally. Therefore, I found it challenging deciding whether or not to take Calkins suggestion or

not. I ended up using this language and the students understood that it was pretend because of the explanation I gave.

What I Notice About My Use of Language

After teaching that stories could be told across fingers, I asked the students to turn and try with their writing partners. This allowed them to be actively engaged and it allowed me to see if my students understood what I was asking them and teaching them.

What I Will Do Differently Next Time

After giving the students one example of telling a story across fingers, I asked them to practice with a partner. Some of my students struggled with this. Next time, I may give another example but have them help me tell a story across my fingers before having them try on their own with a partner.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided summaries of the mini lessons I taught from the first two books in Calkins' Units of Study: *Launching the Writer's Workshop* and *Personal Narratives: Small Moment Stories*. I reflected on each mini-lesson about what went well, what was challenging, what I noticed about my use of language, and what I would do differently next time.

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Through this self study, I wanted to learn how I could use the Calkins' Units of Study Writing Program to support my first grade students' writing abilities (2006). As I conducted my study, I found answers to the following question:

- How can I use Calkins' Units of Study Writing program to support the literacy development of my first graders?

In this chapter, I present the answers to my research question and discuss the evidence that has led me to the conclusions. I also discuss ways that I see myself and my students benefiting from the concepts and ideas behind my research. I finish the chapter by discussing recommendations for future research.

Conclusions

Capitalizing on the Framework Provided Structure and Continuity

By using the first two books in Calkins Units of Study (2006), *Launching the Writer's Workshop* and *Small Moments: Personal Narratives*, I was able to follow a framework that provided specific writing instruction every day. The framework that Calkins suggests allowed me to create an environment that generate student excitement, while supporting their writing ability, motivating their interest in writing.

I followed a similar structure every day when teaching writing. I began each lesson with a mini lesson in which I attempted to help students connect their learning from the previous day, and then I taught a new skill, followed by active engagement, then finally independent writing

time. Most writing workshops include these key elements within the mini lesson every day. These consistent key elements create a sense of predictability that allows the workshop to be able to run itself independently (Calkins, 2006). This type of framework, where the students are explicitly taught a new skill then given the opportunity to practice is important because classrooms that have children as active participants create value in writing and allow kids to increase their investment in writing (Chaney, 2011).

My use of Calkins Units of Study allowed me to create a routine in my classroom. Routine is so important for young students. When their routine is predictable, I believe that more learning can occur because the students already know what to do. The structure of each workshop session is predictable and clear which helps to give students the opportunities to grow as strong writers (Calkins, 2006). Beyond the mini-lesson, students are given the opportunity to write stories independently. While Calkins Units of Study provide a framework, I was able to create structure, routine and excitement for my students about writing.

Attending to My Language Enhanced Learning Opportunities

As I conducted this study, I engaged in an ongoing process of reflection on how I used language and I was able to notice that my word choice could support my students develop as writers. The words I used created possibilities for my students to reach out and implement lessons that I taught. For example, at the end of every lesson, before I sent the students off to work on independent writing, I said some sort of closure like, “Today, I want you to try...” By saying this, I reminded the students of the concept of the lesson and invited them to implement what was learned.

In the beginning of each of my lessons, I noticed that I would often set a purpose for the lesson. I did this by reminding the students of the content from the previous day, which activated their background knowledge. I then told the students exactly what they would be learning today. I believe this set a purpose for the lesson and helped the students make a connection to the content of the previous experiences.

Within Calkins (2006) mini-lessons in her Units of Study, she suggested that teachers begin with assessing the students' prior knowledge, followed by using instructional language of the lesson by explicitly teaching what they will be learning, then by letting the students try using the content from the lesson (Calkins, 2006).

All of my mini-lessons consisted of the students listening the entire time, which was about 10 minutes. I gave the opportunity for students to develop their listening skills because they had to listen, and then try to implement what they heard. Therefore, by beginning writer's workshop with the students listening to me, I gave them the chance to work on other skills than writing, such as listening. I also engaged them by asking questions and having them participate in activities such as stretching out words using white boards.

The questions that I asked during my mini-lessons provided opportunities for the students to think about the lesson's concept and then apply it to their own writing. For example, I asked questions like "What did you notice I did when I thought I was done with my writing?" and "What should I add here?" I tried using open ended questions rather than yes or no questions. For example, I asked "What more can I add if I think I am done?" When students responded, I gave specific follow up, such as "That is great advice. Writers, let's all repeat what Sarah told me to do," rather than saying "good job." I believe that the language I used during the mini lessons created enthusiasm for writing. I was able to get the students to think about the types of

questions I had and I got them to want to implement what they learned to their independent writing.

Through my reflections, I was able to notice that what I didn't say sometimes created an opportunity for my students to practice and think for themselves. For example, I would leave pieces of information out while I was teaching, so that the students had to figure things out for themselves. I also noticed that in many of my lessons, I did not create an opportunity to have students respond. I could have created and planned better questions so that my students could respond and think for themselves.

Facilitating Opportunities for Differentiated Writing Instruction Enabled Success

My use of language in individual conferences also supported student's development. All of my students need different things, for example, James needed to use different writing utensils to write, whereas other students needing prompting on what to write about. I was able to get to know them as writers and realize that they are all in different parts developmentally. During conferences, I was able to support my students' development by differentiating my language. For example, Maranda needed a lot of guidance during our conferences. She did not know what to write about often and I needed to prompt her. I differentiated conferences purposely because I needed to do different things with each student because of their needs.

Opportunities for differentiation are built into Calkins Units of Study. Not all students use the same process in writing but they were all able to create some sort of story on the page. Some students, like Olivia, used many sentences with pictures, whereas other students, like James and Maranda used pictures with a few words. Since Calkins gives time for independent writing time,

I am able to conference with individual students and work on what they need. This allows for these students to grow because I am able to work specifically on what they need.

Throughout this self-study, I had two students, James and Maranda, who struggled during writing time. Both James and Maranda often refused to write. It took a lot of my time and energy to get them to write or even draw. However, I decided to have these two students use different types of tools than the rest of the students. The rest of the students use pencils to write. However, in order to engage these two students, I had them use things like fun pens with special toppers, grippers, special handwriting paper, and special pencils that help with handwriting. Although I gave these students these tools to enhance and support their engagement in the writing process and to improve their handwriting, they thought it was fun to use them.

Additionally, I supported their needs by helping them come up with writing ideas. Since my students are first graders, developmentally it is my responsibility to help them come up with ideas for writing as long as they are writing. Therefore, I created different learning opportunities for these two students by giving them different tools and differentiating how I help them including helping them to stretch out their sounds.

Implications for Student Learning

I believe that even though I conducted a self-study, my students benefitted. The ways in which I used Calkins' Units of Study engaged my students, developed their listening skills, and both enhanced and reinforced their writing skills.

Opportunities to Become Excited and Engaged in the Writing Process

In this study, I used the first two books in Calkins' Units of Study, *Launching the Writer's Workshop* and *Small Moments: Personal Narratives*. I used *Launching the Writer's Workshop* to introduce the concept of writer's workshop while I used *Small Moments: Personal Narratives* to provide my students with a framework for writing small moment stories. Several of my students, including Olivia and Matt told me that their favorite part of the day was writing time. I believe that their favorite part of the day was writing time because of Calkins' Units of Study and the framework that it uses because it was predictable and they knew what to expect. The students loved when I asked them to put on their imaginary writing hats; Whenever I asked them to do this, it automatically engaged them and got them ready to learn and listen to what I would have to say.

Additionally, the framework of Calkins' Units of Study provides an engaging way for students to learn. Writer's workshop is believed to inspire and motivate students (Chaney, 2011). It follows a predictable pattern day after day. While I did do most of the talking in the mini-lesson, I did provide the students with opportunities to be actively engaged in the lesson's content by using whiteboards, talking with peers, or sharing ideas. They were then able to implement what they learned during independent writing time. After talking to my students, I could tell that they really enjoyed writing their stories.

Opportunities for Developing Listening Skills

The lesson began by me connecting student learning to the previous day, teaching a new skill, active engagement, independent writing time, followed by an end of workshop share. During this mini-lesson, I did most of the talking. I reminded the students of the content from

yesterday and what they would be exposed to today. The students had to sit and listen for most of the time. This helped them to work on their listening skills because they had to sit for the entire mini-lesson and listen to what I taught, and then they had to implement what I taught during their independent writing time.

The students were expected to listen for directions. During my mini-lessons, the students were usually expected to listen to specific examples of what to do. I usually showed the students my own example of writing and they were expected to watch and listen. I modeled what I wanted them to do. This reinforced what they needed to do. Theorists such as Vygotsky (1962, 1978) Bruner (1976), and Luria (1929/1977-1978) believe that students need an adult as a demonstrator or guide in the literacy acquisition process (Langer & Applebee, 1986). Therefore, modeling for students, just like I did, was very important in supporting their literacy development.

Furthermore, the students were able to get more information auditorily, but I provided a visual model to go with my verbal directions. I reinforced what the content of the lesson through my use of language and word choice. Every day, they listened to me as I set a purpose for the lesson. They also had to listen to understand other aspects than just the purpose.

Opportunities for Developmentally Appropriate Learning

Calkins (2006) designed her Units of Study so that each lesson would build upon skills that were taught previously throughout the unit. Each lesson introduces new skills but always puts review lessons into the sequence. By introducing new skills and reviewing previous skills, students are able to practice writing and reinforce what they have learned.

In the beginning of the study, many students struggled writing simple sentences, which is appropriate for emergent learners. However, as time went on, many of the students built upon

their skills and skills that I taught in mini-lessons to create writing pieces with both pictures and sentences

Opportunities to Develop Self-Monitoring Strategies

I provide many opportunities within the structure of writer's workshop to use resources within the classroom. Writer's workshop provides more of an authentic experience for students because they are able to implement what they learned right then and there. They are not ever using worksheets. Writing is not just a process of recording, but it is one of developing meaning into stories or ideas (Calkins, 2006). Rather, the students are constantly problem solving and applying themselves.

The students are able to use a word wall in order to check the spelling of common first grade sight words. I taught them how to use an alphabet chart and they were given the opportunity to use it. Furthermore, the students were able to conference with their peers and they were able to use me when they had questions. Through the lessons that I taught on using these classroom resources, the students were able to learn how to use these resources on their own in order to become better writers.

Implications for My Teaching

By conducting this self-study, I benefited from the concepts, ideas, and findings of my research. I have learned how to adjust my use of language to help students develop their writing and that Calkins' Units of Study can help me to continue to grow as a teacher of writing.

Enhancing My Use of Language Can Help Develop Students' Writing

Throughout this study, I was able to notice that my use of language supported my students' writing abilities. The words that I used and did not use may have helped or confused my students. I noticed that when using the Calkins' Units of Study, it is important that I have time to talk and to teach the students. However, I also recognized that I did not ask the students many open ended questions. I learned that I need to choose my words carefully when teaching, especially writing. I need to choose clear and concise words that will teach the students what they need to know as well as words that will engage them and activate their minds. For example, in each of my mini-lessons, I started by saying, "Today you will be learning____" in order to tell the students exactly what they would be learning.

Enhancing My Growth as a Teacher of Writing

While conducting this self-study, I needed to research and read literature on writing, emergent literacy, and child development. By reading literature on these topics, I was able to learn and inform myself, which has helped me to become a better teacher.

I learned that Calkins follows state standards and even allows teachers to hold their students up to higher expectations. I hope to continue to implement Calkins' Units of Study and research Calkins' latest work so that I can stay up to date with my teaching of writing. My research on Calkins made me teach the way of her Units of Study which is much different than I did before using her Units of Study.

Differentiate Writing Instruction

While conducting this study, I had many times when I had to think on my feet and decide what would be best for the students. I had several instances where two of my students, James and Maranda had behavior issues. They often refused to write or participate. I had to think quickly so that they did not just sit there and waste their time. I was able to come up with fun and engaging ways to help these students engage in the writing process. Before conducting this self-study, I have never had students write with pens, markers, and on special paper. However, in this study I did, and it worked.

Calkins' predictable framework is developmentally appropriate because I believe young students need predictability. I was able to teach the students' skills then let them work and apply these skills. While the students worked independently, I was able to conference with students and provide differentiated instruction for students and help them with what they needed. For example, I was able to conference with Christina on stretching out her sounds whereas I was able to conference with Maranda on coming up with idea to write about.

Recommendations for Future Research

Increase Length of Study

I believe that a longer study would be more beneficial in order to draw conclusions about my use of language that I used throughout the study and how I supported by students literacy development. Having extra time would allow me to notice patterns as I taught using Calkins' other units in her Units of Study. I was only able to use the first book, *Launching the Writer's Workshop*, and half of her second, *Small Moments: Personal Narratives*, during my study. I believe that it would be beneficial if I would be able to use more of her books in a study in order to notice my use of language and how I support my students writing development.

Provide Examples of Student Work

I believe that if student work is provided, it would be beneficial to see what students were implementing after lessons that were taught. Since this was a self study, I would not want to focus on their work. However, including some student work would show how I supported their writing development. Perhaps expanding the demographics of the study or interviewing students about their perspectives regarding the Units of Study would be beneficial.

Final Thoughts

In the opening of chapter one, I told a story of reading through my own pieces of writing that I created in my second grade class. I inferred that my teachers must have valued writing because of the types of writing projects I completed.

The design of my self-study in which I used Calkins' Units of Study to teach writing involved 30 days of lessons. Throughout the study, I collected audio recordings of what I said while I during each lesson and I took notes on my interactions with students. By conducting this self-study I was able to develop my abilities as a teacher of writing and I was able to learn how to support my students' writing development by using Calkins' Units of Study.

I believe that I have achieved my goal of learning how to support my students' writing abilities. I analyzed how I responded to certain circumstances that occurred during writing instruction such as behaviors and questions that students asked. Additionally, I looked at how the students implemented the content from the lesson into their writing so that I could understand how they applied the concept and develop their skills as writing and I focused on my language, responses, and behaviors while teaching. As I progress through my teaching career, I hope to

continue to develop and grow as a teacher of writing and I hope to continue to help support my students' writing abilities in many ways.

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