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TEACHING AND ASSESSING THE WRITING PROCESS

by
Gail H. Biros

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May, 2000

Approved by

Dr. Urban

Date Approved April 10, 2000

ABSTRACT

Biros, Gail H.

Teaching and Assessing the Writing Process
2000. Thesis Advisor: Dr. Stanley Urban
Learning Disabilities Graduate Program

The purpose of this study was to provide valuable information regarding the assessment and teaching of writing skills. Although students spend time writing stories, they do not write frequently enough to learn the basic skills of writing. Just as teachers learned that children needed direct instruction in reading skills to make “Whole Language” successful, similarly writing must be taught utilizing direct instruction of specific skills.

There are few reliable and valid assessment tools in the written language domain. A comprehensive assessment tool is needed at the beginning of the school year to help the teacher focus on the individual student needs. In addition, a rubric of skills or “Writing Checklist” needs to be utilized for each piece of writing during the teacher and student writing conference. A cumulative chart of skills should be kept by the student so they may easily focus on “improved” and “new” skills in writing. Thus the student becomes an active participant in the learning of skills and composition in writing.

The children who participated in this study are eight year old third graders in an upper middle class suburban district. The treatment group consisted of two boys and two girls who had been recommended for the Instructional Support Program (ISP) by their second grade teachers for support in writing. The control group consisted of three ISP students in an other third grade class in the same school. A two-fold assessment tool

consisting of contrived and spontaneous writing was used in September to ascertain the individual writing needs.

The daily curriculum was embedded with writing activities in spelling, phonics, usage, and dictionary assignments. The children responded to literature in complete sentences. They wrote journals, monthly stories, newspapers, and conducted research on Native Americans and the history of their community. On each major piece of writing, they conferenced with the teacher and used writing rubrics, or the “Writing Checklist” developed for this study, to focus and improve their writing skills.

All four children in the treatment group experienced substantial growth in writing ranging from one grade level to two grade levels. They became more comfortable with the writing process and more confident sharing their writing with peers. The control group experienced no growth or a half year of growth in writing skills.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Biros, Gail H.

Teaching and Assessing the Writing Process
2000. Thesis Advisor: Dr. Stanley Urban
Learning Disabilities Masters Program

The purpose of this study was to provide valuable information about the assessing and teaching of writing skills. A two-fold assessment tool (contrived and spontaneous writing) was given at the beginning and end of the year to focus on individual needs. The daily curriculum was embedded with writing activities in spelling , phonics, usage, and dictionary assignments. Major pieces of writing were completed monthly on topics related to reading assignments. Writing rubrics were kept by individual students and utilized during student/teacher conferences on each piece of writing to help them focus and improve their writing skills. The four third graders who had been recommended for instructional support in writing improved their writing skills by at least one grade level. The control group demonstrated no growth or a half year of growth in writing skills.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Writing is viewed as the highest level of human communication by many professionals because it generally develops after a student has mastered reading and spoken language. It is the most desirable form of human communication because it is the hallmark of all literate persons (Hammill and Larsen, 1988).

Writing is the most complex form of communication because it is comprised of so many interrelated elements including grammar, capitalization, punctuation, vocabulary, handwriting, and thought. Surprisingly few comprehensive tests have been developed to assess this ability. Test scores and research suggest little has been done to refine the teaching and assessing of writing skills.

BACKGROUND

In the past eighteen years teaching written language skills has become an integral part of the curriculum in elementary schools. Since 1984 this researcher's upper middle class, suburban school district has supported the literate environment with whole language as its core. Oddly enough, achievement scores district-wide are lowest in writing skills. The statewide mean cluster score on the 1997 8th Grade Early Warning Test in the writing task were just above 5 out of a possible score of 12. In fact, writing scores in this district dropped 24 points on the 1998 New Jersey 8th Grade Early Warning Test from 1997. In comparison, reading dropped five points, and math dropped only two points.

In the 1996 Educational Record Bureau standardized tests (ERB's) which are used in this district, the mean raw score in writing in third grade was 22.7 out of a possible 36 points. The third grade students district-wide scored a mean raw score of 4.1 out of 6 in overall development; 3.9 out of 6 in organization; 3.9 out of 6 in support; 3.5 out of 6 in sentence structure; and 3.7 out of 6 in word choice. The district expected higher scores considering the achievement of their students in reading and math. Moreover, whole language has been such an integral part of their curriculum.

On the May, 1999 Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA), this wealthy, suburban district had only 1.3 percent of its fourth graders score in the "Advanced Proficient" level in Language Arts as compared to 28.4 percent in Math and 54 percent in Science. The state percentage of fourth graders in the "Advanced Proficient" level in Language Arts was only 1 percent.

VALUE OF THE STUDY

Perhaps the low test scores result from an absence of a clear delineation of skills in written expression as articulated in math and reading. In addition, these skills are not being taught along with the process. Children are writing stories, but are not improving their skills.

Another factor resulting in low test scores may be the absence of an in-district assessment tool for writing. Until writing can be assessed objectively, as in reading and math, areas of need in writing will not be addressed, especially at the elementary level.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The study of the writing process has been significantly neglected in regular as well as special education curricula (Bridge and Hiebert, 1985). In fact, the study of written expression, particularly with respect to its development and behavioral expression (i.e., impaired as well as gifted performance), has lagged well behind the investigation of other academic domains such as reading and, to some extent, mathematics (Lyon, 1994).

There are few reliable and valid assessment tools in the written language domain. Although the most recent revision of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV-R) includes a category on Developmental Expressive Writing Disorder, this category is poorly defined, conceptualizes writing problems as a unitary construct, and in general, is not operationalized to a degree to be clinically useful (Lyon, 1994). The ability-achievement discrepancy model is used to determine a writing deficit.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is hoped that this study will provide valuable information about the assessing and teaching of writing skills. Although students spend time writing stories, they do not write frequently enough to learn the basic skills of writing. Mechanics of writing were de-emphasized in order to foster more creativity. Just as teachers learned children needed direct instruction in reading skills to make “Whole Language” successful, so writing must be taught utilizing direct instruction of skills.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to develop a comprehensive assessment tool to be used at the beginning of the school year to help the teacher focus on the individual student needs. In addition, a rubric of skills or “Writing Checklist” needs to be utilized for each piece of writing during the teacher and student writing conference. This tool will be used to develop a cumulative chart of skills recorded by the student so they may easily focus on “improved” and “new” skills in writing. Thus the student will become an active participant in the learning of skills and composition in writing.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the following research questions will be answered:

Research Question 1: Will a daily curriculum embedded with writing activities in spelling, phonics, usage, and dictionary assignments improve children’s writing skills?

Research Question 2: Will writing rubrics kept by individual students and utilized during student/teacher conferences on each piece of writing help them to focus and improve their writing skills?

Research Question 3: Will the use of a two-fold assessment tool (contrived and spontaneous writing) improve the teaching of writing skills according to individual needs?

DEFINITIONS

The following list of definitions have specialized meanings in relation to this study:

Written expression consists of three areas of competence (Hammill and Larsen, TOWL-2, 1988):

1. Mechanics which includes punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and usage.
2. Syntactical competence and automaticity which is writing fluency.
3. Ability to generate meaningful writing to specific task demands.

Contrived assessment tool focuses on the smallest units of written discourse such as spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and word usage. It consists of dictated sentences.

Spontaneous assessment tool determines a student's functional writing ability to compose a message that adequately communicates thoughts, feelings, and opinions.

The Instructional Support Program (ISP): A basic skills program, wherein students in third grade are recommended for added instruction in math, writing, and/or reading by their second grade teachers. There is no standardized testing done in second grade so there are no scores to corroborate the teacher's recommendation. These ISP children are not classified and thus are not eligible for Special Education and Related Services.

LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations which must be taken into account when generalizing the results of this study. They are as follows:

1. There are no special education students included in this study. The students have weaknesses in the writing areas and are recommended for the Instructional Support Program by their second grade teachers. Therefore, the effect of the writing activities and rubrics cannot be definitively extended to inclusion children.
2. The assessment tools are curriculum-based and not standardized writing assessments. Therefore, there are no reliability or validity statistics. The levels of achievement are based upon a class of 27 third graders and not normed on a representative population.
3. The control group of comparable third graders consists of three ISP students. They will be exposed to similar activities in spelling and phonics since the same texts are used. However, the treatment group will receive dictionary assignments and writing projects, as well as the use of the writing rubrics and chart in student/teacher writing conferences once a month.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century writer William Hazlitt said, “The more a man writes, the more he can write.” (Burnham, 1994). The writer needs to value the topics and the writing task. Writing has to be a goal-oriented behavior.

It has to take place in a learning environment where students take responsibility for initiating and directing their efforts. They need to work collaboratively with others, observe the teacher and others grapple with the process of writing and assess and refine their internal vision of writing and themselves as writers. (Graham and Harris, 1994). In addition the students need explicit teaching of skills within this meaningful context. There needs to be a reasonable balance among meaning, process, and form.

Leinhardt, Zigmond, and Cooley (1980) reported on the relatively small amount of instructional time devoted to educating students about all aspects of the writing process, with the time that was spent on writing largely being devoted to copying tasks. Furthermore, Schenck (1981) observed that few individualized education programs (IEP’s) include specific objectives to enhance the writing skills of children receiving special education services. The more recent report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 1990) concerning the nation’s writing skills suggested that high numbers of students in the fourth and eighth grades cannot write more than informative essays.

Many researchers in the field feel that students do not spend enough time on writing as a craft and are given too little choice about what they write. Writing has many negative associations for students because it is often used as a form of punishment and when their writing is returned to them, it is filled with corrections (Bos and Vaughn, 1998).

When students described the characteristics of good writing, they perceived good writing as spelling words correctly, writing “correct” sentences, and having good handwriting, the very skills these students often have the most difficulty developing. None included a purpose for writing. Writing was not perceived by them as a means of conveying a message, which is considered by experts to be the most important element in writing.

A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS

The writing process is multifaceted and thus difficult to define. Any definition must include its underlying skills as well as the subsequent effect on the student’s academic and social development. The quality of written products is increased by a multitude of documented factors, such as an author’s background knowledge and expertise in the writing process as it relates to various genres and audiences (Hammill and Larsen, 1988).

Research has demonstrated that the composing problems of students with learning disabilities go beyond mechanical errors such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar (Poteet, 1978; Houck and Billings, 1989) to include higher-order cognitive and

metacognitive problems (Neucomer and Barenbaum, 1991). Specifically, the students lack knowledge of the writing process and metacognition about writing, such as what writing is about, its purpose, and what constitutes a good writer (Englert and Thomas, 1987; Graham, Schwartz, and MacArther, 1993; Wong, Wong, and Blenkinsop, 1989).

In analyzing the writing of students with learning disabilities, one should note the disproportionate amount of time taken to produce the desired amount of writing, the monotonous and unvarying format of the sentences usually using a subject-predicate form; the paucity of vocabulary; poor spelling; occasional grammatical and punctuation errors; and sentences or parts of sentences that are ambiguous.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AND LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS

We have made much progress in writing interventions regarding enhancement of the quality and quantity of writing in students with learning disabilities. However, much remains to be discovered in intervention research for students with learning disabilities. Less well documented are neuropsychological factors (e.g., attention, language, memory, neuromotor functions, social cognition); personality factors (e.g., motivation, self-esteem); and other endogenous and exogenous factors contributing to the writing process (e.g., teacher-student relationships, amount of writing instruction, teacher knowledge of the writing process) (Lyon, 1994). It's this researcher's experience that a good self-concept is necessary for writing, and writing fosters self-confidence in general. This improved self-image manifests itself in oral expression and social interactions. As

children become better writers and share their writing with their peers, they evolve from “quiet mumblers” to orators delivering their research reports or lines in a play with relish by the end of the school year.

In addition to delineating the skills involved in the writing process and observing its effects on self-concept, one needs to study its relationship to improving reading skills. In 1997 a study was completed by McMahon, Richmond, and Reeves-Kazelskiis comparing the effects of reading readiness skills programs versus emergent literary programs on the literacy acquisition of young children. Previous research had shown that teachers’ perceptions influence classroom practice (Cornett, 1990).

There were significant relationships between teacher’s perceptions of literacy acquisition and children’s involvement in literacy events, the quantity of classroom literacy materials, and the quality of classroom literacy materials. The teachers believed children learn through active engagement by constructing their own knowledge from the world around them, not merely by imitating adults or by rote learning. Language is learned through use rather than through practice exercises on how to use language. Most importantly, the findings indicated that emergent literacy teachers are more aware of the interrelated and concurrent development of the four modes of language, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

THE EARLY LITERACY PROGRAM

Carol-Sue Englert’s Early Literacy Program or ELP integrates reading and writing. It began in 1994 in grades 1-3 and is based on Vygotsky’s theoretical

perspective of the zone of potential development (ZPL). He postulated that children's cognitive development occurs in a sociolinguistic environment in which interactive dialogues with adult caregivers play a pivotal role. Adults shape and scaffold children's cognitive domains and self-regulation, and then fade out of their directive roles.

The following four principles of the ELP explicate how teachers nurture and extend children's cognitive development: (1.) instruction is embedded in meaningful, purposive, and contextualized activities; (2.) strategies are taught to make children into self-regulated learners; (3.) children must be involved in social and dialogic interactions with others, and responsively supporting and scaffolding their learning in their zones of proximal development (Englert, 1994); and (4.) the classroom needs to be a literate community where literacy is shared among all members. Activities in the Early Literacy Program involve both oral and written literacy. Children dictate stories to teachers and listen to stories read aloud. In the written aspect, children read and write stories. Combined oral and written literate activities encompass silent reading, partner reading, and the "sharing chair". The children share stories with the class. If the child has decoding difficulties, a peer helps the child read the story.

Two other activities which combine oral and written expression are "Morning News" and Authors' Center. "Show and Tell" is modeled after "Morning News". In the Authors' Center, the students use strategies previously modeled by the teacher to write their papers on topics about which they know a great deal. All activities are interrelated and contextualized in thematic units that highlight different expository topics such as Turtles, Circus, etc. In my classroom the writing activities are related to monthly units of study centering around the core book from reading.

According to Graham and Harris (1994), students with learning disabilities generate text as ideas come to mind. Each preceding phrase or sentence stimulates the generation of the next idea. Little attempt is made to evaluate or rework ideas or text in light of other goals, such as whole-text organization, the needs of the reader, or the constraints imposed by the topic. This retrieve-and-write process functions like an automated and encapsulated program operating largely without metacognitive control.

The Early Literacy Program believed that learning required an understanding of meaningful relations rather than pieces of knowledge. Thus emphasis was placed on students' composition and comprehension of whole, connected texts. Simultaneously, skills instruction (e.g., word decoding) was provided in a formal structured program, but not to the exclusion of other opportunities to read and write connected texts.

WRITING STRATEGIES

Teachers had to find ways to permit "performance before competence" (Cazden, 1981) by modifying literary tasks and by providing scaffolds that would allow their students to engage in reading and writing in advance of proficient development. Some examples are Author's Chair where they can read picture books, Buddies for Partner Reading, and composing texts using pictures, random letters, initial letters, blank lines, and invented spellings.

MacArthur, Graham, Schwartz, and Schafer (1995) introduced a curricular model similar to the Early Literacy Program for the upper elementary grades. It uses word processing. It results in improved narrative and expressive writing, but has minimal

effect on mechanics. Researchers have observed that issues of form and mechanics may be downplayed by process teachers (DeGroff, 1992; Fitzgerald and Stamm, 1990).

Berninger, Abbott, Whitaker, Sylvester, and Nolen (1990) researched the effects of instruction on composing processes as well as on handwriting and spelling skills. At the end of third grade the students were given tutorials during the summer. The results were improved performance on phonological and orthographic awareness.

Nolet and Tindel (1990) focused more on writing assessment rather than instruction. They used two performance assessments. One was an evaluation essay, and the other was a compare and contrast essay. As a result of the assessments, two weeks of writing instruction were delivered in two sections of seventh grade mainstreamed science classes.

Another strategy for teaching writing is informed training. Students are informed on the rationale of training. The teacher models the strategy with much use of thinking aloud, scaffolding student learning, and guided practice. Collaborative work with peers and teachers and independent work are all part of this strategy. The students memorize the following steps:

- (1.) Think of a story you would like to share with us.
- (2.) Let your mind be free.
- (3.) Write down the story part reminder (Mnemonic)

W-W-W

What = 2

How = 2

- (4.) Write down the story part ideas for each part.

(5.) Write your story; use good parts and make sense.

The mnemonic stands for:

Who is the main character?

When does the story take place?

Where does the story take place?

What does the main character want to do?

What happens when the main character tries to do it?

How does the story end?

How does the main character feel?

Englert uses another mnemonic POWER (Plan, Organize, Write, Edit, Revise, Rewrite). The following are the POWER Questions.

Plan

Why am I writing this?

Who am I writing for?

What do I know? (brainstorm)

Organize

How can I organize my ideas into categories?

How can I order my categories?

Write rough draft

Edit

Reread and think

Which parts do I like best?

Which parts are not clear?

Did I:

- stick to the topic?
- use 2-3 categories?
- talk about each category clearly?
- give details in each category?
- use key words?
- make it interesting?

SKILLS INSTRUCTION

In this study, the researcher modeled TOWER after this strategy so that the students could have an easy way to remember the process of writing. Think, Organize, Write, Edit, Rewrite equals TOWER. I also used the Englert's strategy of individual progress charts. Englert says individual student graphs on writing progress should be maintained so that students could view them daily. In this study a chart of total checks for the Writing Checklist is maintained and kept in each child's writing folder.

Research shows that there are several prerequisites to writing. The child must see, hear, be physically able to manipulate a writing implement and have sufficient thoughts that they want to communicate or express. Children with learning disabilities who lack some prerequisites can still be taught to write through the use of special techniques such as hearing aids, computers, and other assistive and ameliorative devices.

A study done by Englert examined the effectiveness of using cognitive strategy instruction in the context of a process approach to writing in an inclusive classroom. Mini-lessons during writers' workshops taught writing strategy. It had a positive effect on fourth and fifth grade students' writing. The schematic structure and quality of their writing improved over time and remained improved over time even with a different teacher.

Strategy instruction can be incorporated into the school curriculum. It should occur in the context of real academic tasks and processes, instead of teaching strategies in pull-out programs. Students with learning problems may require extensive, structured, and explicit instruction to master the skills and processes critical to effective writing. A considerable amount of research demonstrated that many students with learning problems do not acquire a variety of cognitive and metacognitive strategies unless detailed and explicit instruction is provided (Brown and Campione, 1990).

Students often do little planning in advance of writing (MacArthur & Graham, 1987), have trouble generating content (Graham, 1990; Thomas, Englert, and Gregg, 1987), and fail to frame their stories so that all of the basic elements are included (Barenbaum, Newcomer, and Nodine, 1987). Although normal achieving writers do not have the same degree of difficulty as students with learning disabilities, the processes involved in generating, organizing, and planning texts still create special problems for them. As Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986) noted, young writers often have difficulty exerting deliberate control over these processes, and their knowledge about writing is limited.

A multicomponent strategy instructional model (phonics, spelling, and dictionary) and a self-regulated strategy development (rubric of skills) were used to teach the writing strategy in a study done by Danoff, Harris, and Graham in 1993. Students are provided the level of explicit instruction necessary to learn how to use self-regulation procedures such as goal setting, self-monitoring, self-assessment, self-instruction, and self-reinforcement to evaluate and guide their use of the strategy and the writing process. Although a variety of writing, reading, and math strategies have been effectively taught to students using this model, only two studies have examined the relative contribution of specific instructional components. This investigation demonstrated that strategy instruction can be successfully integrated into the school curriculum, resulting in positive effects on the performance of students with and without learning disabilities. Specifically, incorporating strategy instruction into a process approach to writing can meaningfully augment students' composition skills.

DONALD GRAVE'S WRITING PROCESS APPROACH

In Donald Grave's book, Writing: Teachers and Children at Work, the working atmosphere or writing studio is the most important element in teaching writing. The students need to be independent and yet interact with their peers.

The teacher needs to prepare materials. Each child should have a writing folder. It should contain a list of writing skills mastered, date of conference with the teacher, dates of pieces of writing, and a list of topics for writing. There should be a current and a permanent writing folder.

There should be a daily period of writing and a time to share even drafts. Skills should be taught according to individual needs and in group lessons of 5-15 minutes in length.

Teachers should be writers, too. Graves feels the tone is set by what the teacher does.

The elements of the writing process are as follows. Authors do not follow all the steps, and can backtrack through steps or skip steps.

1. Prewriting includes topic selection and brainstorming. The topic may come from a student's list in his folder. On this list he/she has written things he would like to share with others. He could pick a partner and share his topic. Brainstorming the topic, he may use structured organizers, semantic maps, and story frames or maps. The student does not have to fill it in linear fashion; perhaps the ending will come first.
2. Composing
3. Revising focuses on message and content rather than mechanics. This step is difficult for learning disabilities students. Graves feels teachers often find it is best to allow students initially to move to publication without much revision, and then, through conferencing and reading the work of others, encourage students to see the benefits of revision. Teachers should not focus on spelling until editing.

4. Editing can be done with a peer, the teacher, or with the “class editor”.
5. Publishing- A piece is publishable when it is prepared in some way that it can be read and shared by others. Sharing their published work confirms a student’s hard work.

Other aspects of Graves’s writing process is the writing conference and the creation of a writing community. The writing conference is the “heart of the writing procedure”. The teacher should listen, accept what the child says, and ask questions that teach. Conferences should be frequent and brief lasting only two to three minutes.

The writing community should foster an environment of mutual trust and respect. Children should write every day for 30 minutes and share their writing. Teachers should write and read to their students. Graves feels there is a strong connection between reading and writing.

The child should learn to evaluate his own work. The teacher should make special accommodations for culturally and linguistically diverse students and students with special needs. They should slow the pace, use word processors with spell check or use speech synthesizers.

This researcher disagrees with Graves about two aspects of his strategy. The first is the list of topics that the children use to write about. It’s been this researcher’s experience that children, left undirected, would write about the same topic all year. In this study different genres stemming from the core reading books are used as the topic for writing for the entire class. For example, after discovering the characteristics of a fairy tale, the class will write their own fairy tales complete with a cover done in watercolors.

The second area of disagreement is his suggestion that the teacher serve as a model. A classroom teacher is so busy conferencing and teaching skills, it leaves little time to be a writer herself. The fact that the teacher is so supportive of the child's writing motivates him to proudly share his writing with his peers.

ASSESSMENT OF WRITING SKILLS

Assuming prerequisites are present but the child is still experiencing difficulty, action should be directed toward identifying those aspects of the writing process that are deficient. To do this the student's status relative to the three components of writing should be assessed (Hammill and Larsen, 1988).

The three basic cognitive abilities or components of writing are conventional, linguistic, and conceptual. The conventional component is the use of the accepted rules of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. It enhances the quality of the written product and is sometimes absolutely necessary in conveying the meaning of written communication.

The linguistic component is the use of serviceable syntactic and semantic structures. It includes the selection of suitable words, tenses, plurals, noun-verb correspondences and cases. Otto and Smith (1980) stated there are five levels of English usage. They are literate, homely, informal standard, formal standard, and literate. Informal standard is the level used in the classroom. It includes colloquial expressions.

The conceptual component is the ability to write logical, coherent, and sequenced written products. The written product should be readily understood by a reader, have a

definite introduction and ending, well-structured paragraphs, character development, dialogue, humor, or expression of a moral theme. Because the cognitive aspects of writing are often vague and subjective, test constructors and teachers have tended to overlook this aspect of writing. This is regrettable, for if a person does not write conceptually, effective written communication is virtually impossible (Hammill and Larsen, 1988).

When encountering poor writing, the teacher should evaluate each component to determine the nature and type of problem involved. To do otherwise would encourage superficial and possibly incorrect diagnosis of an individual's problem. The Test of Written Language-2 (TOWL-2) assesses the conventional, linguistic, and conceptual aspects of writing. It is these components that have the strongest relationship to a robust definition of written language. A test of written language must provide a profile of a student's particular strengths and weaknesses on the specific components that constitute written expression. It should yield an estimate of how abilities in these components are combined to permit efficient writing in everyday situations.

The strength of TOWL-2 as an assessment tool for writing in elementary students resides in its comprehensiveness. It covers both aspects of contrived and spontaneous writing in students. In contrived writing, specific component skills are assessed in isolation, and the general quality of student writing is ignored. In contrast, spontaneous writing assesses students' abilities to communicate meaningfully.

There are ten subtests in the TOWL-2. Five subtests assess contrived writing. Five subtests address spontaneous writing.

Contrived writing consists of vocabulary, spelling, style, logical sentences, and sentence combination. It focuses on the smallest units of writing discourse, such as spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and word usage. Many professionals assume that a high correlation exists between a student performance on contrived measures and his overall written proficiency. Others suggest that, when taken by themselves, each lack validity. Considerably more information is needed to be valid approximations of an individual's proficiency in overall written expression.

The spontaneous writing assesses thematic maturity, contextual vocabulary, syntactic maturity, contextual spelling, and contextual style. It determines a student's functional writing ability. Students could know mechanics but still be unable to compose a message that adequately communicated thoughts, feelings, and opinions.

One can compare vocabulary assessment in both contrived and spontaneous writing. In contrived writing, a student must use a given stimulus word in a sentence. In spontaneous writing, the student's score in the subtest "Contextualized Vocabulary" is derived from the number of different words used in the written story that contain seven or more letters. The story is one that the student has written in response to one or two given pictures that depict either a prehistoric or a futuristic scene.

In the subtest on "Spelling and Style" in contrived writing, the tester dictates sentences. Students are assessed on their accuracy in spelling and punctuation. The student receives two separate scores, one for spelling and one for style. In spontaneous writing, a student's raw score for "Contextual Spelling" is the number of words correctly spelled in his or her written story. It is obtained from subtracting the number of words misspelled from the total number of words in his story.

In spontaneous writing, a student is scored in “Contextual Style” on a three point scale. For any punctuation or capitalization rule found in his or her written story, the student can receive 1, 2, or 3 points. For example, periods equal 1 point and colons equal 3 points.

Other subtests included “Logical Sentences in Contrived Writing” where students rewrite stimulus sentences that contain deliberately non-sensical words, i.e., “John blinked his nose.” “Sentence Combining” contains short stimulus sentences to be made into one sentence.

In spontaneous writing, “Thematic Maturity” assesses a student’s ability to write in a logical or orderly manner, to develop a focused theme, to describe the characters, and to use humor and dialogue. There is a choice of two pictures. One is a prehistoric scene, and the other is a futuristic scene. In “Syntactic Maturity” the student’s ability to use complex sentences that contain clauses and adjectival or adverbial phrases and grammatical errors is assessed.

The “Writing Vocabulary” subtest assesses student’s usage rather than his ability to define words. Authors using a word in a sentence yielded the highest test reliability. A student’s word usage rather than its definition provides a more realistic gauge of functional understanding of the word.

The “Writing Grammar” subtest assesses student’s usage of syntax in writing. The skills assessed range from changing tenses, transforming sentences into phrases, to using possessives.

An ability to write requires an integrated grasp of all three components, conventional, linguistic, and conceptual. In order to assess these components, an

assessment tool must test both a contrived and a spontaneous piece of writing. The subtest “Written Expression” on the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT) assesses only spontaneous writing. The child writes for 15 minutes on the topic described in the prompt. It can be scored using both holistic and analytic methods depending on the purpose of the assessment. To obtain a general idea of a child’s writing ability, one can score the response holistically. If the score is lower than expected, one can use the analytic score method as part of the process of determining where the problems are. The age-based reliability co-efficient of “Written Expression” ranges from .76 at age 8 to .83 at 17. The average is .81 which is the lowest reliability of all the subtests in the WIAT. The average intraclass correlations are .89 for Prompt 1 and .79 for Prompt 2. The results of these scoring studies show that responses in those subtests that require scorer judgment can be scored very reliably. However, this researcher found it difficult to score objectively. Therefore, the assessment tool used in this study was modeled after the TOWL-2.

SUMMARY

Writing is a complex and significant skill. It must take place in a learning environment where students take responsibility for initiating and directing their efforts. Teachers have to find ways to permit “performance before competence”, especially for learning disabled students and to utilize special techniques such as hearing aids and computers.

Writing skills should be assessed and taught directly. Students need to share their writing in writing conferences with the teacher and with their peers. Writing abounds in such a community of writers.

CHAPTER III

POPULATION AND METHOD OF SAMPLE SELECTION

The children who are the subjects in this study are eight year old third graders in an upper middle class suburban district. There are two boys and two girls in the treatment group, and all four have all been recommended for the Instructional Support Program (ISP) by their second grade teachers. They need added help and support in writing. The control group consists of three ISP students in the other third grade class in the same school.

Utilizing the assessment tools designed for this study, the children achieved the following scores. An approximate grade level has been assigned to the scores based on this researcher's experience and an analysis of the entire class.

Table 1

Treatment Group Scores on the Spontaneous and Contrived Assessments

September 22, 1999

<u>Name</u>	<u>Spontaneous Wr.</u> <u>#correct/#items</u>	<u>G.E.</u>	<u>Contrived Writing Sample</u>	
			<u>Lang. G.E.</u>	<u>Spell. G.E.</u>
B.B.	5/19	2.1	17/20 3.1	27/30 3.1
L.T.	5/19	2.1	13/20 2.1	22/30 2.1
C.S.	8/19	2.5	16/20 2.5	23/30 2.5
W.S.	7/19	2.1	11/20 2.1	18/30 3.1

Control Group Scores on the Spontaneous and Contrived Assessments

September 21, 1999

J.	9/19	2.5	11/20 2.1	22/30 2.1
T.	8/19	2.5	11/20 2.1	24/30 2.5
C.	6/19	2.1	10/20 2.1	23/30 2.5

INSTRUMENTATION

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The assessment tools used in this study are modeled after the Test of Written Language (TOWL-2). They consist of contrived and spontaneous writing samples.

The contrived part consists of six, dictated sentences. [See Figure 1 contained in Appendix A] The sentences contain spelling words and punctuation and capitalization skills on a third grade level. The student receives two scores; one in language and one in spelling. There are 20 possible points in language (mechanics) and 30 possible points in spelling.

The spontaneous writing sample utilizes the story starter, “The Day I Found the Treasure.” [See Figure 2 contained in Appendix A] The children prewrite for seven minutes. Then they edit their own work and write a story.

This writing sample is then assessed using the “Writing Checklist”. [See Figure 3 contained in Appendix A] The piece is scored for mechanics, composition, and author’s technique. There are a total of 19 possible points. Skills listed at the end of each section are developmentally at a higher level of writing skills. For example, using paragraphs and compound sentences are at the end of the “Mechanics” and “Author’s Technique” respectively.

STUDENT RECORDING OF DATA

Each monthly piece of writing centering on the core book in reading is assessed using the “Writing Checklist.” The “Writing Checklist” includes three parts, Mechanics, Composition, and Author’s Technique. Mechanics includes spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphs. Composition reflects the elements in a story map. It includes setting, main characters, problem, three important events, and the solution to the character’s problem (or ending). The Author’s Technique reflects elaboration of ideas by using descriptive words, conversation, paragraphs, and more complex sentences.

The writing sample is assessed using this rubric. The student will assess each monthly writing project using this rubric and try to focus on a “new skill” to improve each time. He/she may also check a skill they mastered such as capitalization. This is listed under “Improvement”.

These rubrics are filled in while the student and teacher are conferencing about the piece of writing. The child reads the rough copy to the teacher, and they edit it together. Then they check off the skills used and count the number of checks. The child records it on the chart in their writing folder. [See Figure 4 in Appendix A] The student then checks a “New Skill” and a skill that shows “Improvement”.

THE WRITING PROCESS

On major pieces of writing the students will use the “TOWER” process. [See Figure 5 contained in Appendix A] Students will Think of an idea for a story and Organize his ideas on a story map. This story map will then be edited by the teacher for spelling and revised for story sense with the student.

Then the student Writes the rough copy. During a writing conference with the teacher, the piece is Editied for mechanics, composition, and technique using the “Writer’s Checklist”. [See Figure 6 contained in Appendix A]

The student then Rewrites his story into a publishable piece of writing. This story will be shared with his classmates in the author’s chair.

Since the writing projects are directly related to reading, the author may ask his audience of peers to find an example of a particular genre or writing technique. For example, in October, spooky stories are written while doing an author’s study of James Howe. Authors may ask for descriptive words that make their stories scary. While the student reads his story with a flashlight, the classroom is dark. To add to the mood, his friend wears a mask designed by the author to represent his main character.

Prewriting activities are always important and add to the children’s motivation to write. Before writing their own stories, they may listen to the teacher read stories or watch a video. For example, before the children wrote their spooky stories, the teacher

read “The Night Simon Saw the Jersey Devil” to a spellbound class. The next day they watched the video “The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow”. They discussed the genre of legends and could not wait to write their own.

SKILLS ACTIVITIES

An important consideration is that writing becomes increasingly automatic with practice. Research results have indicated that in composing stories, non-disabled students write twice as many words as their learning disabled peers (Nodine, Barenbaum and Newcomer, 1985). To help students develop automaticity, writing must be done regularly beginning at an early age (Samuels, 1986).

The daily schedule should be embedded with the practice and teaching of writing skills. [See Figure 7 contained in Appendix A] The children begin their day with Daily Oral Language (published by McDougal, Littell & Company). They copy two sentences from the board correcting the mechanics errors. Children’s names and familiar places in their community can be substituted to heighten interest.

The children have Show and Tell. They share experiences they have had recently. This oral expression helps to build self-concept. They end each mini-presentation with “Any questions?”.

Then the children do short spelling activities in Working Words in Spelling, Revised Edition, published by D. C. Heath and Company in 1994. The activities are

more challenging than other spelling books and enrich the children's knowledge of other word forms and spelling patterns of the list words.

Next Phonics for Language Learning by Morton Botel and JoAnn Tuttle Seaver provides the link between reading and writing. Through a series of fun activities such as choral reading and making words and sentences, the children learn to recognize, blend, and spell consonants, vowels, and high frequency spelling patterns, use context clues, to recall words, and construct, write, and punctuate sentences using high-frequency words and working with subject-verb agreement.

The children work collaboratively to create words or sentences. Thus the classroom becomes a risk-free environment. A child who may not be proficient at spelling or decoding can learn through the help of his peers.

Spelling, phonics, and reading are daily activities. However, a few times a week, the students practice the mechanics of writing by editing in a workbook entitled Mastering Capitalization, Punctuation, and Usage published by Modern Curriculum Press, 1987. Therefore, the mastery of skills is taught without burdening the children while they are doing their creative writing. They are practicing the skills to make their writing more fluent and legible.

Dictionary skills are also emphasized. The children play the "Dictionary Game". The teacher writes the following on the board:

A-H

I-Q

R-Z

This divides the dictionary into three parts to teach the children where to look for specific words in the dictionary. The teacher asks the children to find the letter "B", for example. If the child opens the book directly to "B" words, he receives two points. If he opens to

“A” or “C” words, he receives one point. The children have fun while learning an important skill.

At first simple alphabetizing sheets are used to familiarize the children with the order of the alphabet. [See Figures 8, 9, and 10 contained in Appendix A] It is surprising to learn how many third graders do not know alphabetical order well.

Then the children progress to using guide words. Each week the students look up ten words from the “Words Most Useful in Writing” list composed by Dr. W. Franklin Jones. [See Figure 11 contained in Appendix A] After this list is exhausted, homonyms are used. In both cases the children look up the word, write its meaning, and then write their own sentence using the word correctly. These sentences are then assessed for language and spelling skills.

One of the two best first writing assignments is the “Name Poem” and the “Interview”. [See Figures 12 and 13 contained in Appendix A] The Name Poem is short but helps the teacher assess writing and spelling skills, as well as get to know the child better. The interview process builds self-esteem. Not only does every child have the opportunity to be a reporter, but he/she also is the star who is interviewed. Each child randomly picks a name of one of his peers to interview. He then writes down the answers on the interview form. The next day the child writes the information into sentences. Spelling becomes easy because of the questions, and the teacher editing the answers the night before. Then the children share their interviews from the Author’s Chair.

READING

Reading is the receptive form of writing. Students who can't read usually can't write. Occasionally teachers encounter students who read adequately but who write poorly.

Core books in whole language are wonderful stepping stones for writing. The daily comprehension questions serve as skill activities for forming sentences and using a text as a reference for spelling words correctly. A unit on Charlotte's Web [See Figure 14 contained in Appendix A] covers descriptive words, personification, conversation, and writing a summary. Using a Wilber paper bag puppet to answer the questions stirs a child's imagination and improves his oral expression.

The newspaper article form [See Figure 15 contained in Appendix A] helps children learn the five "W's" and one "H" of writing (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How). The children describe Wilbur the Pig winning a medal at the country fair and practice writing a summary at the same time.

Reading activities can be integrated with science and social studies. A unit on plants and pollination by bees can lead to a comparison with spiders. Research on insects can enrich the children while advancing their reading and writing skills. [See Figure 16 contained in Appendix A].

Reading for information and writing a research report are two higher level skills. The children can begin by using Ultimate Children's Encyclopedia by The Learning Company. It is a CD for Windows, Version 1.0 for the computer. The children can use a form [See Figure 17 contained in Appendix A] to do research on any topic they choose. They learn the skill of reading and writing information, as well as the meaning of "Related Subjects". This is the first step in teaching the children how to write a topic for a search on the web. The children share an interesting fact from their research at Show and Tell time in the morning. Children's Encyclopedia can be used simply as an interest center when their work is completed.

Next the children may do a research project in a group. For example, the children in groups of four will research various points of interest in their hometown. They have material to read as a group and one member is the recorder who takes notes on the important ideas. Then the group puts the notes into sentences and paragraphs, edits it with the teacher, and word processes it on the computer. The group chooses an illustration of the point of interest. Again jobs are divided with a designer, a drawer, and two people who color in the illustration. The children learn to plan their work and to accomplish a goal collaboratively. At the end of the project, the children have a book to present to the library. [See Figure 18 contained in Appendix A]

Another collaborative research project is the story of Thanksgiving. Each group reads material on each phase of Thanksgiving, i.e., Leaving England, the Voyage on the Mayflower, Landing in Plymouth, etc. The teacher chooses a reader for each group, a recorder for taking notes, a designer, and a drawer. The children may choose any medium they wish to teach the class their part of the story of Thanksgiving. Some ideas

are a game show, play, report, photo album, or mural. The children love the game show with categories such as “Pilgrims for \$500”.

The children then learn to look for information in a book or on a website. They use the table of contents and index to find specific facts about a Native American tribe. They do this individually. [See Figure 19 contained in Appendix A] This study correlates with the core book, Annie and the Old One by Miska Miles which is about a Navajo girl and her grandmother.

After reading Stringbean’s Trip to the Shining Sea by Vera and Jennifer Williams, the children create a travel brochure on a state. Using a form [See Figure 20 contained in Appendix A], the children use books, websites, or the Children’s Encyclopedia to obtain information, maps, or pictures for their brochures. Sharing their brochures with the class increases their self-confidence and oral expression skills.

Each month the class writes their own newspaper. Four children are the editors. They name the newspaper and edit the articles assigned to them using the teacher’s red pen. The content of the articles is chosen by the students. They may want to write about the school fair, assembly, classroom projects, or different staff members. In addition, they may write about the origin of the seasonal holiday or a current event happening in the world. They may choose to write their article alone or with a friend.

The children word process their article on Student Writing Center in the Newsletter mode. They create a title and write their name. Then they choose a picture relating to their article. The entire class word processes their articles in the school computer lab at the same time. Then the teacher cuts and pastes the newspaper together.

[See Figure 21 contained in Appendix A] The editors deliver the newspaper around the school. It is truly their newspaper, and they are very proud of it.

WRITING A CLASS PLAY

By March or April the children have developed into fine writers. Using the writing process with a story map, the children write their own books on any topic they like. They illustrate and bind them. Then they share them with their peers from the author's chair.

The teacher groups the books into genres. Usually the children write stories about sports, family or school life, spy or action adventures, or science fiction. As she reads the books, she takes notes on interesting dialogue or characters from each book. The children share the books in genres so that the class can remember all the ideas.

Once the children are finished sharing their books, the class brainstorms an outline for a play. "What types of adventures would you like to see come to life on stage?" asks the teacher. She reviews the genres to refresh their memories. Once they decide on the Acts or adventures, then the class decides the main characters.

With the outline of the play complete, children are put into groups according to their book's genre. For example, the children who wrote about family or school life would sit around the computer and give the teacher ideas for that act of the play. Each day the play is read for the rest of the class so they can follow the main plot. Each night

the teacher reviews the evolving script for the number of lines per character and that there are enough boy and girl parts. Most importantly, the teacher makes certain there is something from everyone's book, even if it is only a character's name. This play is truly the class's production. All the scenery, sound effects, and ending song are chosen by the students. It is a wonderful culminating activity for an exciting year of writing. [See Figures 22, 23, and 24 contained in Appendix A]

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

The study of the writing process has been significantly neglected in regular as well as special education curricula. There are few reliable and valid assessment tools in the written language domain. It is hoped that this study will provide valuable information about the assessing and teaching of writing skills.

A comprehensive assessment tool was used at the beginning of the school year to help the teacher focus on the individual student needs. In addition, a rubric of skills or “Writing Checklist” was utilized for each major piece of writing during the teacher and student writing conferences. A cumulative chart of skills was kept by the student so he/she could easily focus on “improved” and “new” skills in writing. The student became an active participant in the learning of skills and composition in writing.

The students learned writing skills in activities embedded in the daily routine. They composed sentences in spelling, dictionary, and reading lessons. They shared every major writing piece from the “Author’s Chair” to an audience of their peers.

RESULTS

Utilizing the “Writing Checklist” during the student and teacher conference, the edited rough copy was assessed for Mechanics, Composition, and Author’s Technique. The maximum amount of checks was 19. Below are the results of each child’s major pieces of writing and an approximate grade level.

Table 2

Total Number of Checks from the Writing Rubric and Grade Equivalents

Note: The number above the slash indicates the total number of checks from the Writing Checklist as recorded on the Conference Writing Rubric. The number below the slash indicates the grade equivalent.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Wr.Sample</u>	<u>Spooky Tale</u>	<u>Fairy Tale</u>	<u>Kid Became</u>	<u>Fable</u>	<u>Wr.Sample</u>
	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Jan.	Feb.	Feb.
B.B.	5/2.1	9/2.5	11/3.1	18/4.1	19/4.1	16/4.1
L.T.	5/2.1	12/3.1	12/3.1	13/3.1	14/3.2	11/3.1
C.S.	8/2.5	12/3.1	16/4.1	16/4.1	19/4.1	11/3.1
W.S.	7/2.1	9/2.5	11/3.1	14/3.2	13/3.1	16/4.1

Control Group

J.	9/2.5					11/3.1
T.	8/2.5					8/2.5
C.	6/2.1					8/2.5

The four children in the study improved significantly in their writing skills. B.B. improved two grade levels in her writing skills. In addition, she is more confident and comfortable with the writing process. L.T. improved one grade level although she has still not reached the appropriate level for her age and grade. She should be at a 3.5 level. Her reading skills are below grade level, too, and this may result in poorer writing skills.

C.S. has improved his writing skills one grade level. He has also improved his spelling in his writing. W.S. has improved one and a half grades in writing skills and is grade-appropriate.

Analysis of Results

B.B.'s mechanics and spelling were on grade level, but she lacked fluency and thought in her writing. [See Figure 1 and 2 contained in Appendix B]. Her spooky story in October lacked a good ending, and her thoughts were not separated into sentences. B.B. checked spelling as her "improved" skill and wanted to focus on paragraphs as her "new" skill for her next major piece of writing.

Her fairy tale in November showed improvement in sentences and punctuation. Her fluency was improving as demonstrated in her good ending and conversation. In her story, "The Kid who Became Zookeeper in the Reptile House", her thoughts seemed to flow. She showed much growth in composition and author's technique, including paragraphs, description, and compound sentences. As she read the story, her eyes lit up with excitement.

In February B.B. also wrote a fable. Not only did she use the proper punctuation for conversation, but she also used paragraphs when there was a change in speaker. She used descriptive words such as "hungry", "tender", and "embarrassing". The hens "crowded around". This fable complete with an illustration created on Kid Pix and a

moral demonstrated B.B.'s growth in writing this year. [See Figure 3 contained in Appendix B]

L.T. had the weakest writing skills. In addition to poor mechanics, spelling, and fluency, L.T. had illegible handwriting and did not even write on the lines. Her skills were on a second grade level according to the contrived and spontaneous assessments given in September. [See Figure 4 and 5 contained in Appendix B].

Her spooky story in October was organized but overwhelmed by conversation. Her November fairy tale again contained too much conversation and lacked paragraphs and description. Spelling, however, improved.

L.T.'s story, "The Kid Who Became a Marine Biologist" in January showed significant improvement in composition and sense. She even added the character's feelings. She still loved her conversation, but wanted to focus on her punctuation on her next piece of writing.

In L.T.'s fable the conversation was lively and purposeful. Although she did not separate each new speaker with a paragraph, she used wonderful descriptive words such as "popped out" to describe the interaction of the penguin and the shark. [See Figure 6 contained in Appendix B]

C.S.'s writing skills were at a 2.5 level in September. His spelling was especially poor, as well as the composition of his writing sample in the spontaneous assessment. [See Figure 7 and 8 contained in Appendix B]. His spooky story in October showed improvement in spelling and composition. His story, in fact, also included techniques

such as more than one character introduced and conversation. C.S. was especially proud of the “sense” his story made. He wanted to work on improving his spelling.

“The King’s Gold”, C.S. ‘s fairy tale, demonstrated significant improvement in spelling, composition, and technique. He even used paragraphs to show a change of place or time. The “Writing Checklist” reflected a fourth grade level of writing.

C.S. ‘s writing skills remained consistent in his story, “The Kid Who Became a Doctor.” His mechanics and composition were strong and even included descriptive words. Although his spelling improved, he wanted to focus on his spelling in his next piece of writing. What was truly amazing was the enthusiasm C.S. displayed as he jumped into the Author’s Chair to share his story with his parents and his peers.

C.S. used wonderful imagery in his fable with such words as “pond”, “race”, and “excitement”. He separated each new speaker with a new paragraph, and he punctuated the conversation correctly. [See Figure 9 contained in Appendix B]

W.S. ‘s mechanics and fluency skills were on a second grade level. His spelling skills were on a third grade level in September. [See Figures 10 and 11 contained in Appendix B]. His spooky story in October reflected poor punctuation and capitalization. However, it showed improvement in composition.

His fairy tale demonstrated improved capitalization, description, and sentences resulting in a third grade level in writing skills on the “Writing Checklist”. W.S. showed much growth in his story, “The Kid Who Became the Best Football Player Ever.” His composition and author’s technique included description and conversation. He still

needed to improve his mechanics such as punctuation and capitalization, but exhibited writing skills on a 3.5 level.

W.S.'s fable did not reflect his best writing, but still reflected improvement. His characters were lively, and he used the words, "cold Arctic" to describe the setting of the fable. His plot was good, but he failed to separate some of his thoughts and conversation into paragraphs. [See Figure 12 contained in Appendix B]

The control group experienced less growth than the treatment group. J. demonstrated a half year's growth in the spontaneous writing sample. Her mechanics and spelling skills also improved one grade level as evident in the contrived assessment tools. [See Figures 13 and 14 contained in Appendix B]

T experienced no growth as demonstrated on the spontaneous writing sample and the contrived assessment in spelling. He, however, showed one year's growth in mechanics in writing. [See Figures 15 and 16 contained in Appendix B]

C demonstrated a half year's growth in the spontaneous writing sample and in the contrived assessment in mechanics. There was no growth in spelling as demonstrated on the contrived assessment. [See Figures 17 and 18 contained in Appendix B]

The children in the control group remain at level of writing equivalent to the beginning of third grade or the end of second grade. Little growth was demonstrated, especially in the areas of fluency and spelling.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to provide valuable information about the assessing and teaching of writing skills. Although students spend time writing stories, they do not write frequently enough to learn the basic skills of writing. Just as teachers learned that children needed direct instruction in reading skills to make “Whole Language” successful, so writing must be taught utilizing direct instruction of skills.

There are few reliable and valid assessment tools in the written language domain. A comprehensive assessment tool is needed at the beginning of the school year to help the teacher focus on the individual student needs. In addition, a rubric of skills or “Writing Checklist” needs to be utilized for each piece of writing during the teacher and student writing conference. A cumulative chart of skills should be kept by the student so he/she may easily focus on “improved” and “new” skills in writing. Thus the student becomes an active participant in the learning of skills and composition in writing.

The children who participated in this study are eight year old third graders in an upper middle class suburban district. The treatment group consisted of two boys and two girls who had been recommended for the Instructional Support Program (ISP) by their second grade teachers for support in writing. The control group consisted of three ISP students in another third grade class in the same school. A two-fold assessment tool consisting of contrived and spontaneous writing was used in September to ascertain the individual writing needs.

The daily curriculum was embedded with writing activities in spelling, phonics, usage, and dictionary assignments. The children responded to literature in complete sentences. They wrote journals, monthly stories, newspapers, and conducted research on Native Americans and the history of their community. On each major piece of writing, they conferenced with the teacher and used writing rubrics, or the “Writing Checklist” developed for this study, to focus and improve their writing skills.

All four children in the treatment group experienced substantial growth in writing ranging from one grade level to two grade levels. They became more comfortable with the writing process and more confident sharing their writing with peers. The control group demonstrated less growth in writing and failed to reach a level equivalent to the second half of third grade.

FINDINGS

This study demonstrates that it is possible to systemically evaluate the quality of a child’s writing. A writing process was developed which included a mnemonic (TOWER), a story map, a rubric of writing skills entitled the “Writing Checklist”, and a chart to record the individual child’s number of checks. Utilizing this system for monthly pieces of writing in student/teacher conferences produced substantial growth in all of the targeted children.

DISCUSSION

This study refined a writing process through research and proved it could be successful with children with writing problems. Although there were no classified students in this study, these techniques could be easily adapted through the use of dictation, computers, or stories with blank spaces. The “Writing Checklist” may have to be modified or the story map could be utilized in its place. Sharing stories from the “Author’s Chair” can be done successfully with the help of a “buddy” if a child has difficulty decoding.

For example, this researcher had had a child with Down Syndrome in the class. Instead of dictionary skills, the child had her own vocabulary book with the “Words Most Useful in Writing”. Each page had five words from the list written on a page. The child completed a sentence using the word. She then read the sentence to the teacher and had it edited. Next she copied the corrected sentence on the computer. The child could also write a fairy tale like the rest of the class by filling in a skeleton story beginning “Once upon a time.”

The “Writing Checklist”, writing folder, and skills chart were excellent assessments to show the parents during conferences. Writing could be objectively assessed and therefore various skills could be targeted for improvement.

As a follow-up to this study, exemplars could be gathered to demonstrate writing at various grade levels at least within one school district. Therefore, a piece of 2.5 writing would be the same in every school.

It should also be noted that due to the time restraints imposed on the completion of this study, the second writing assessments were given in February, instead of June. In addition, more direct instruction of writing skills and creative writing would have taken place. For example, the children would write folktales, poetry, and book commercials. They would write and illustrate their own books and write a class play from these ideas. A comparison of writing samples from each child's writing folder shows the substantial growth in writing proficiency. Even the school principal could see the growth in the writing of the class in general from the first edition of the newspaper in September to the January edition.

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APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SPONTANEOUS WRITING SAMPLE
GRADE 3

Read the topic in the box below.

Think about what you'd like to write.

Plan what you want to say and prewrite in a list or web for 7 minutes.

You will have one forty minute session to write the paper. The teacher will signal when to begin and will give a 5 minute warning signal at the end.

Use white lined theme paper and write on every other line. You may write on the back of the paper.

THE DAY I FOUND THE TREASURE

When you finish your rough draft, ask yourself the following questions and use the remaining time to revise and edit your writing.

1. Did I write complete sentences?
2. Does my story make sense?
3. Have I chosen the best words to express my ideas?
4. Is my capitalization correct?
5. Is my punctuation correct?
6. Is my spelling correct?

WRITING CHECKLIST

NAME _____ DATE _____ TITLE _____

A. Mechanics

- ___ 1. Are less than five words misspelled?
- ___ 2. Do most sentences have correct punctuation?
- ___ 3. Do most sentences and proper nouns begin with capital letters?
- ___ 4. Are all of the sentences complete thoughts and have more than five words?
- ___ 5. Do the sentences not begin with "but", "and", and "because"?
- ___ 6. Was the first word of each paragraph indented?

B. Composition

- ___ 1. Does the story tell when and where it takes place?
- ___ 2. Does the story tell who the main character is?
- ___ 3. Does the story tell what the main character wants to do or tells about his problem?
- ___ 4. Does the story tell at least three things that happened to the main character?
- ___ 5. Does the story have a good ending that tells how the main character solved his problem?

Figure 3. Writing Checklist

C. Author's Technique

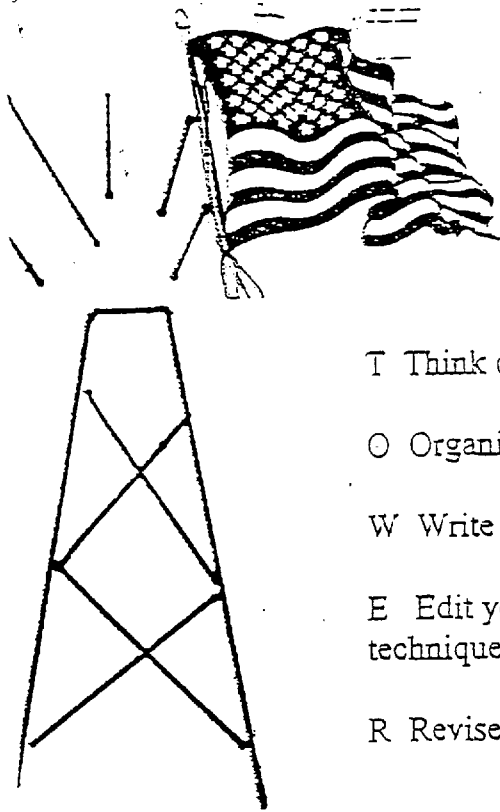
- 1. Does the story make sense?
- 2. Are there more than five descriptive words used to make the story interesting?
- 3. Does the story tell about the character's feelings?
- 4. Is there more than one character introduced and identified?
- 5. Does the story have conversation?
- 6. Does a change in place, time, or speaker begin a new paragraph?
- 7. Does each paragraph discuss one main idea?
- 8. Does the story have at least two compound sentences?

- Total Checks

TITLE OF PUBLISHED WORK

TITLE OF PUBLISHED WORK										
Name										
Date										
Total Checks										
"New Skill"										
Spelling										
Punctuation										
Capitalization										
Sentences										
Paragraphs										
Description										
Conversation										
Sequence										
Sense										
"Improvement"										
Spelling										
Punctuation										
Capitalization										
Sentences										
Paragraphs										
Description										
Conversation										
Sequence										
Sense										

Figure 4. Conference Writing Rubric



AUTHOR _____
TITLE _____
DATE _____

TOWER

- T Think of an idea for a story.
- O Organize your ideas on a story map or web.
- W Write a rough copy of the story.
- E Edit your rough copy for mechanics, composition, and technique
- R Revise and rewrite your story to create a published work

EDITING SYMBOLS










- Circle misspelled words 
- Capitals-underline the letter 3 times 
- Wrong punctuation 
- Insert missing word 
- Indent 
- Margin 
- Paragraph 
- Not a sentence 
- Sentence meaning is not clear 

Figure 5. TOWER Student Writing Process

Story Map

Title: _____

Setting:

Characters:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Problem:

Event 1

Event 2

Event 3

Event 4

Event 5

Solution:

WRITING CHECKLIST

NAME _____ DATE _____ TITLE _____

A. Mechanics

- ___ 1. Are less than five words misspelled?
- ___ 2. Do most sentences have correct punctuation?
- ___ 3. Do most sentences and proper nouns begin with capital letters?
- ___ 4. Are all of the sentences complete thoughts and have more than five words?
- ___ 5. Do the sentences not begin with "but", "and", and "because"?
- ___ 6. Was the first word of each paragraph indented?

B. Composition

- ___ 1. Does the story tell when and where it takes place?
- ___ 2. Does the story tell who the main character is?
- ___ 3. Does the story tell what the main character wants to do or tells about his problem?
- ___ 4. Does the story tell at least three things that happened to the main character?
- ___ 5. Does the story have a good ending that tells how the main character solved his problem?

Figure 6

C. Author's Technique

1. Does the story make sense?
 2. Are there more than five descriptive words used to make the story interesting?
 3. Does the story tell about the character's feelings?
 4. Is there more than one character introduced and identified?
 5. Does the story have conversation?
 6. Does a change in place, time, or speaker begin a new paragraph?
 7. Does each paragraph discuss one main idea?
 8. Does the story have at least two compound sentences?
- Total Checks

Teacher Schedule

Name:

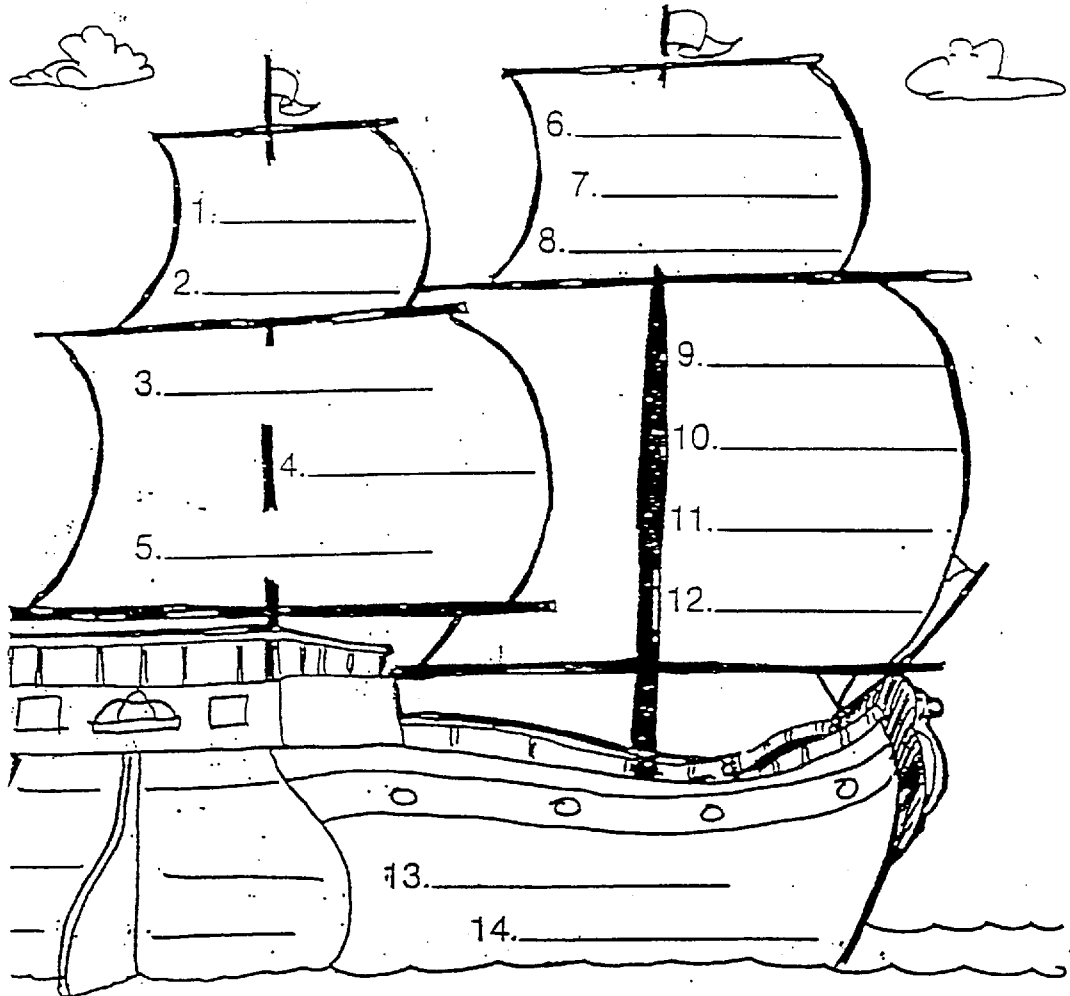
Grade: 3 - 1999-2000

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
8:25-9:00 Attendance,	Lunch count,	Opening	Exercises —	—DOL—	—
9:00-9:40 Spelling Phonics	9:00-9:30 Spelling Phonics	9:00-9:30 Spelling Phonics	9:00-9:35 Spelling Phonics	9:00-9:30 Spelling Phonics	9:00-9:30 Spelling Phonics, Dictionary
9:40-10:25 P.E.	9:30-10:30 Reading	9:30-10:25 Reading	9:35-10:20 Library/Dear	9:30-10:30 Reading	9:30-10:30 Reading
10:30-11:00 Reading	10:30-11:00 Recess	10:25-11:10 P.E.	10:30-11:00 Recess	10:30-11:00 Recess	10:30-11:00 Recess
11:00-12:00 Math	11:00-11:30 Health 11:30-12:00 Handwriting	11:10-12:00 Math	11:00-12:00 Reading	11:00-12:00 Math	11:00-11:30 Music 11:30-12:00 Handwriting
Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00-1:15 DEAR 1:15-1:45 Handwriting	1:00-1:15 DEAR 1:15-2:00 Math	1:00-1:15 DEAR 1:15-1:45 Handwriting	1:00-2:00 Math	1:00-1:15 DEAR 1:15-1:45 Writing	1:00-1:45 Computer
2:00-3:00 Science/Social Studies	2:00-3:00 Science/Social Studies	2:00-3:00 Science/Social Studies	2:00-3:00 Writing	2:00-2:50 Art	1:45-2:30 Math 2:30-3:00 Writing/ Handwriting

Figure 7. Teacher Schedule

Name _____

Put the words in ABC order on the _____ . Start at the top with number 1.



leaves

Pilgrims

Indians

ducks

brave

turkey

fruit

nuts

milk

cup

hat

ship

water

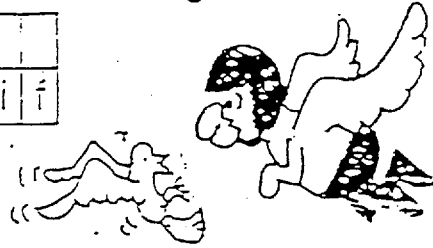
America

Figure 8. ABC Order- First Letter

Write the letter that comes before the letter in the box. Put
 above to find the answer to the riddle.

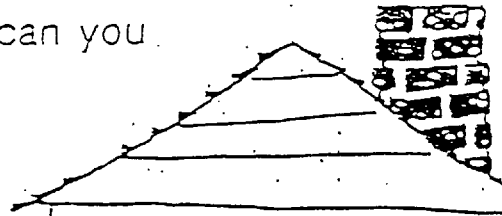
1. Which American president wore the largest hat?

u	i	f	p	o	f	x	j	u	i	ü	i	i
m	b	s	h	f	t	u	i	f	b	e		



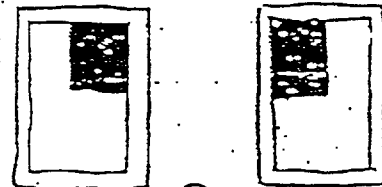
2. Life is tough . . . but what can you
 always count on?

z	p	v	s	g	j	o	h	f	s	t
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---



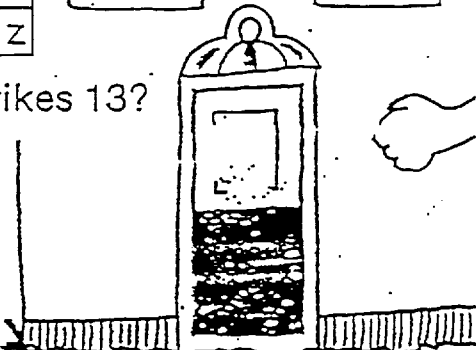
3. What animal can fly higher than a
 house?

b	m	m	p	g	u	i	f	n	g	m	z
i	p	v	t	f	t	d	b	o	u		



4. What time is it when a clock strikes 13?

u	j	n	f	u	p	h	f	u	b
o	f	x	d	m	p	d	l		



5. What is the oldest piece of furniture in the world?

u	i	f	n	v	m	u	j	q	m	j	d	b	u	j	p	o	u	b	c	m	f
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Figure 9. ABC Order-Letter Before

Guide Time

Guide words are listed at the top of each dictionary page. They tell us the first and last words we will find on that page.

Find each of the words listed below in your dictionary. Next to each word, write the guide words on the page where you found the word.

1. decrease _____
2. frame _____
3. hearth _____
4. incident _____
5. merchant _____
6. needle _____
7. otter _____
8. preview _____
9. salvage _____
10. symptom _____
11. trade _____
12. vessel _____



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Figure 10. Practice with Guide Words

WORDS MOST USEFUL IN WRITING

Ten words: I, the, and, to, you, of, a, be, in, and we make up 25 per cent of the running words. That is, one of these words will be found, on the average in every four words.

Fifty words: Make up nearly 50 per cent of all running words. That is, one of these words will be found, on the average, nearly every other word in the writing of adults:

I	have	as	me	one	the	it	at	very
would	and	for	this	my	he	to	that	with
get	had	you	your	but	from	go	of	is
on	our	letter	a	will	if	was	been	am
are	do	time	when	in	yours	all	then	she
we	not	so	can	good				

Some Spelling Demons- Here are several groups of words which should be mastered in the indicated grades. They should be reviewed in all succeeding grades. They are all "demons," the starred ones making up the hundred spelling demons which Dr. W. Franklin Jones found to be more frequently missed than any other words in the language. They should have special attention.

SECOND GRADE

again*	goes	read*(past)	told	any*
having*	running	tonight*	ask	hear*
school	too*	been*	heard*	shining
tried	blue*	here*	shoes*	two*
buy*	knew*	some*	very*	coming*
know*	such	when	dear*	making*
stopped	where*	does*	many*	sure*
which*	done*	much*	taking	whole*
dried	near	their*	whose	dropped
off	there*	write*	every*	once*
they*	writing*	first	only	threw
wrote*				

THIRD GRADE

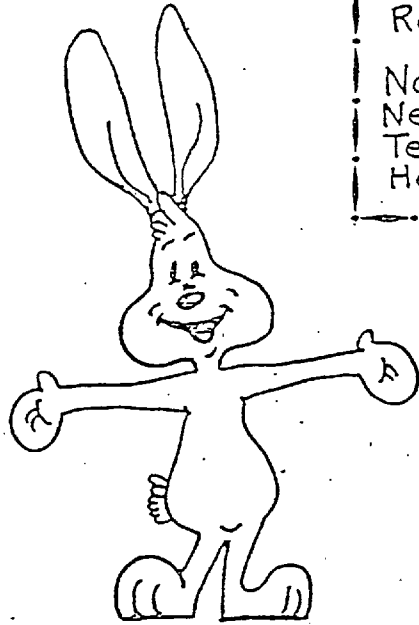
about	doctor*	its	should	afraid
early*	loose*	shows	all right	doesn't
lose*	speak	almost	easy*	loving
sugar*	already	enough*	maybe	than
always*	father	new	though*	asked
forty*	none*	truly	beginning*	friends*
often*	until	children	great	people
woman*	charge	guess*	quite	would*
color*	half	says*	could	have

Figure 11. Words Most Useful in Writing

Name Poem

Take all the letters
Of only your first name,
Write them going down,
Remember, it's a game!

Now, please write some words
Next to each big letter,
Tell about yourself,
Help us know you better!



Example:

Plays with her dogs
Always hungry
Tries to do her best
Teases her sister
Yells when she is mad

Write your Name Poem here:

Make a Name Poem for someone you like!

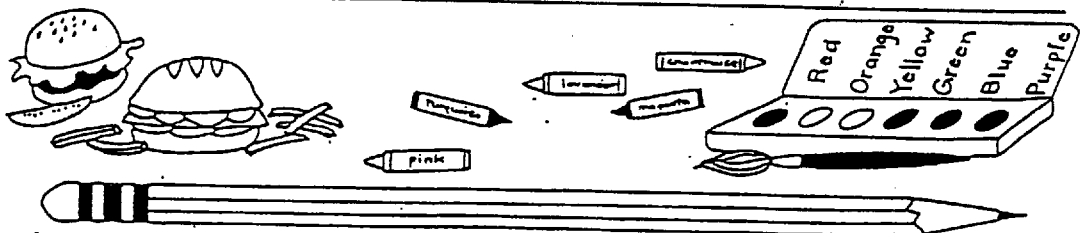
Interview a Friend

1. What is your full name? _____
2. How old are you? _____
3. When were you born? _____
4. How many people are in your family? _____
5. What are two of your favorite colors? _____
6. What is your favorite sandwich? _____
7. What do you like to do when you are alone? _____

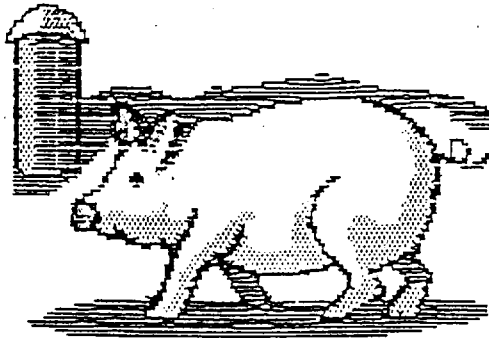
8. Where are you MOST ticklish? _____
9. What do you enjoy doing with someone else? _____

10. What is your most special treasure? _____
11. What was the happiest time of your life? _____

12. What was one of your most memorable experiences? _____



Reporter _____



Charlotte's Web

Name _____

Date _____

I. Chapter 1

What are each of the characters' opinions about the pig, Wilbur?

A. Mr. Arable _____

B. Mrs. Arable _____

C. Avery _____

D. Fern _____

Figure 15. Newspaper Article Form



INSECT REPORT
3.3.4 Page 1

1993 SP 3.3.4-1

Name: _____

Date: _____

Research Team:
Common Name of Insect:
Scientific Name of Insect:
Draw and label pictures of the life cycle of the insect.
Tell about the life cycle of the insect.
Where is the insect found?
Tell some interesting things about the insect.

DOING RESEARCH WITH THE CHILDREN'S ENCYCLOPEDIA

NAME (OR NAMES) _____

TOPIC _____

RELATED SUBJECTS 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

INFORMATION _____



Figure 17. Doing Research with the Children's Encyclopedia



Name _____ Date _____

Research for Native Americans

Tribe _____

Where Lived _____

Occupation _____

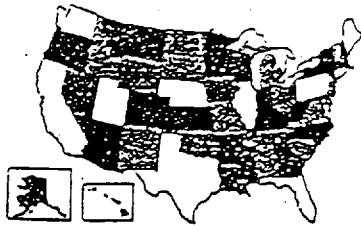
Type of House _____

Crafts _____

Other Interesting Facts _____



Figure 19. Research on Native Americans



NAME _____

RESEARCH ON THE STATE OF _____

CREATING A TRAVEL BROCHURE

You will be creating a travel brochure for your state. You need to include the following information.

Where's it's located in the U.S. _____

Natural Features _____

History _____

Capital _____

Flag _____

Major Points of Interest _____

Main Products _____

Climate _____

Important Cities _____

Nickname _____

Population _____

State Tree _____

State Flower _____

State Bird _____

Figure 20. Research on a State

_____ 's state brochure...

...includes all "MUSTS."	1	2	3
...has an organized and well-spaced layout.	1	2	3
...is colorful.	1	2	3
...has an eye catching front cover.	1	2	3
...has concise wording.	1	2	3
...has captioned pictures.	1	2	3

Total _____

3-B Haddon Times
February, 1999

Editors—

Slide Shows

by

We made slide shows a couple of days ago. First you would make two pictures in Kid Pix. Then you would go to "slide shows" and get your pictures out and put your pictures in order. When we finish our pictures, we are going to share our fables. Our classmates will try to guess the moral.



Laws

by

In February



Our class made laws, but only for a week. We had the House of Representatives and the Senate.

_____ was the Senate Pro Tempore and _____ was the Speaker of the House.

The laws were,

1. If we get five stamps in art, we get no homework for two days.
2. If we are good, we get a special day.
3. If we are good for two days, we get to chew gum for two days.
4. If we get the challenge, we get a choice of a store coupon or a homework pass.
5. If we finish all our work before 2:30, we get to vote on what we want to do.
6. We get gum on Fridays, only if we were good all week.

_____ class had a lot of fun.

Name The Dragon

By:

As you know we just named our new dragon. His name is Mystic. He is a big dragon. He is in the library. We voted for the name.



_____ announced it at an assembly. _____ won a T-shirt that you can color. Someone from every grade won. She was the winner from our class.

Folktales

By:

3-B is learning about folktales. A folktale is a story that is made up and passed down by people. A couple of days ago our class read Stone Soup. Then later on we acted it out as a play. It was lots of fun.

Just So

Stories are a form of folktales, but they are a little different. They tell why animals and things are the way they are.



For an example, Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears is a folktale.



Figure 21. Class Newspaper



Third Grade Class Presents:

Camping Chaos

May 27 and May 28, 1999

Figure 22. Program for Class Play



"CAMPING CHAOS"
Dress Rehearsal-Thurs.,
May 27 at 1:30 P.M.
Play-Fri., May 28 at
9:30 A.M.

Dear Parents,

Our class has written a play entitled, "Camping Chaos". All the ideas and characters come from the books they wrote. We will be presenting it in the all-purpose room on Friday, May 28, at 9:30 A.M. If you cannot attend this performance, you are welcome to attend our Dress Rehearsal on Thursday, May 27, at 1:30 P.M.

Children are responsible for their own costumes. Ask your child about what he or she needs for a costume. Costumes should be brought in by Friday, May 21.

If you can help with make-up on Friday, May 28, at 8:45 A.M., please write me a note in the assignment book. Thank you. Looking forward to seeing you,

Figure 23. Parent Letter about Class Play

Camping Chaos

1999

Narrator: Welcome to _____ class 's third grade play. It is called "Camping Chaos". All the characters and ideas for the play came from the books we wrote.

Act I

Narrator: Act I takes place in Hawaii. A family is getting ready to go camping in the mountains.

It was an ordinary day in the household. Dad can't find his keys, and Mom's trying to do everything at once.

Mom: Come on, Tommy, we're going to be late.

Tommy: Aw, Mom, I forgot my Game-Boy.

Mom: You won't need one, you'll be enjoying the scenery.

Tommy: All right (mumbling)

Mom: Oh, cheer up!

Dad: Come on, Alisa!

Alisa: Dad, remind me again why we're going to this place in the middle of nowhere? I'd rather be staying in that fancy hotel in Waikiki Beach. I'm going to miss my hula lessons!

Bobby: Look, I can already do the hula. (demonstrates)

Mom: Get in the car, children! (family gets into car)

Bobby: Are we there yet?

Mom: Don't be so silly, we didn't even get on the road yet!

Dad: Bobby, being so silly will ruin your brain!
(Bobby shrugs his shoulders)

Josephine: When we get there, can we at least celebrate with MacDonald's?

Mom: Honey, I hate to break it to you, but we're going to the forest, remember?

Alisa: Get it through your brain, there aren't any restaurants in the forest!

Bobby: Yeah, don't be so silly, it will ruin your brain, right, Dad. That's what you always say!

Dad: Right, son. He's got a point, Elizabeth!

Tommy: When are we going to be there?

Mom: Shhh, I made some cookies for the trip. Do you want some?

All children: Yeah!

Bobby: Where's the Sprite you promised? Oh, I forgot, I don't like Sprite.

Dad: You kids are never satisfied. I don't know why we give you anything.

Mom: Calm down, Charles.

Alisa: This dog is bugging me. Get away from me, Tonny!

Dad: If he's bugging you so much, why don't we strap him to the roof!

Bobby: Don't be so silly, Dad, it will ruin your brain. Right, Mom?

Tommy: Dad, why is there steam coming out of your ears?

Tonny: Barking like laughing, pushes Alisa. Alisa falls on Josephine.

Josephine: Get off of me! Oh, no, I lost my spot in my book. I was just getting to the good part. The girl just found the magical fairies..

Alisa: It's not my fault. Tonny pushed me.

Josephine: Don't be ridiculous, a dog can't push anyone. Right, Tonny?

Tonny: Cuddles up to her and whines.

Mom: Look out the window and see the rainbow!

Bobby: All I see is a bunch of colors in the sky!

Tommy: That is a rainbow, Nerd!

Dad: Cut it out, we're almost there!

Tommy: I could be playing Mario right now, instead of just sitting here doing nothing.

Bobby: Tell me how the Game-Boy works.

Tommy: There are tiny computer chips inside.

Bobby: Are there computer chips in Tonny's ear? Hey, I can see all the way through!

Tonny: Crying

Josephine: Stop pulling poor Tonny's ear!

Tonny: Whines and cuddles Josephine.

Dad: All those in favor of strapping the dog to the roof, say Aye!

Mom: Don't be silly, dear!

Bobby: Mom, this trip has ruined Dad's brain!

Dad: We're here, kids. finally....

Alisa: Mom, I have sticky white stuff on my head.

Mom: Oh dear, it's from a seagull.

Alisa: That seagull just ruined my perfect French braid. (runs out of the car)

Act II

Narrator: Act II takes place at the cabin in the forest on the island of Oahu, Hawaii.
The family is sitting around a campfire.

Dad: It all started with a bang, a smash, and a boom! Mark McGuire was the bang.
Sammy Sosa was the smash, and Ken Griffey Jr. was the boom!

Bobby: I think Mark McGuire is the best!

Tommy: No way, hockey is the best sport. John LeClair is the bomb!

Bobby: What does that mean?

Tommy: It means he is the top scorer for the Philadelphia Flyers.

Josephine: Soccer is the best!

Alisa: Dance is better than all of them.

Mom: Actually, I think basketball is cool to watch.

Josephine: Mom, do you watch the WNBA, the Women's National Basketball Association?

Tommy: Who would watch girls play?

Josephine: Why watch boys, when you can watch girls?

Dad: That is enough arguing for today. All of you, go to sleep.

(Children go to sleep)

Act III

Narrator: The children have fallen asleep and dreamt about their favorites sports stars.

Curtains Open

Mark: Hi, I'm Mark McGuire. I hit 70 homeruns.

Cynthia Cooper: Do I hear Mark McGuire bragging again?

Mark: Who are you?

Cynthia: I'm Cynthia Cooper and I scored the highest in the WNBA.

John LeClair: Do I hear Cynthia Cooper bragging again?

Cynthia: Who are you?

John: You don't know who I am?! I'm the highest scorer on the Flyers.

Cynthia: Wow, are you Lindros?

John: Guess again. I'm John LeClair.

(Soccer ball rolls on stage)

Alex: Boy, did I kick that ball hard. I'm the bomb!

John: Who are you and where did you come from?

Alex: I'm the Star of the Women's Professional Soccer League!

Mark: Big deal! I broke Babe Ruth's and Roger Maris's records.

(Tina comes on stage)

Tina: Who are Babe Ruth and Roger Maris? Do they dance for the New York City Ballet?

John: Yeah, right.

Cynthia: Well, watch this! I'm going to make this basket. (She dribbles and shoots) Three points, yes!!

Alex: Wow, that was amazing. You are the bomb! But watch this. (dribbles and shoots off stage)

Mark: Man, that was cool! But this one's going to be gone. Pitch me a ball. (He hits a homerun) What do you know, my 71st homerun!

Tina: Well, you three are good, but watch this. (She dances to music.)

John: You have really good balance. That's something I couldn't do!

Tina: You probably could with practice.

Mark: That's what I always tell my son, If you practice, you can do anything.

John: Gotta go, I have to practice for a playoff game.

Everyone will start practicing.

(Curtains close)

The children are sleeping.

Mom: (from offstage) Wake up, children, it's morning.

Bobby: Wow, what a dream I just had! Mark McGuire was in it!

Tommy: Me, too. I saw John LeClair in mine!

Mom enters with two daughters.

Josephine: Mom, I had the strangest dream. I dreamt about the star of women's soccer.

Alisa: I dreamt about Tina, the ballerina from New York.

Mom: I can't believe it, I dreamt about the basketball star, Cynthia Cooper.

Dad enters: What's going on? Are you all still arguing about sports?

All: No

Bobby: I should go outside and practice baseball so I can be like Mark McGuire.

All: Me, too (and start to run off)

Mom: Not until you eat a healthy breakfast!

Act IV

Narrator: Mom is finishing breakfast. Josephine enters with a book and the dog, Tonny.

Mom: Where have you been? Your brothers and sister are already fishing.

Josephine: I was up late reading my book, Fairies Really Exist.

Mom: Is that the one that the librarian, Miss Book, recommended?

Josephine: Yes, I told her I was doing a research report on fairies.

Mom: Fairies? What is your book about?

Josephine: A girl who is trying to find out if magical fairies really exist. She meets a awful dragon.

Mom: That's nice, dear, how about some fresh fruit for breakfast? Do you want some grapes?

Josephine: Yuck, Mom, you know I get disgusted by grapes. and no bananas, too. How about some Oreos or your homemade cookies for breakfast? I'll have them with a big glass of milk.

Mom: But fruit is good for you, not cookies! You're awfully grumpy this morning.

Josephine: I'm going back to bed! Come on, Tonny!

Tonny: barks and follows Josephine

Narrator: Josephine and Tonny fall asleep and dream about Cookie Land. King Oreo is in his gingerbread castle. Princess Allora, his daughter, comes rushing in.
Curtain opens and sound effects.

King: Oh, there you are, my sweet daughter, Allora. Why are you crying?

Allora: Oh, Father, I lost my magical fairy. X-Rex took her.

King: That terrible spike-tailed dragon!

Allora: Yes, he stuck his tail in my window and stole my fairy. He will make her do evil magic.

King: You mean he could make her destroy all my cookies, Oh no! (cries)

Allora: We need the Good Gryphon to help us.

King: You mean that half-lion and half-dragon?

Allora: Yes, Father, we must summon him at once. Gryphon!! (calls off stage)

Gryphon: How may I serve you, Princess Allora?

King: How about a Hershey bar?

Allora: No, No, Father, not now. We have to get my magical fairy back.

Gryphon: Come, we will begin our journey to find X-Rex and destroy him!

(start walking)

SOUND EFFECTS (They're scared)

King: Oh darn, we forgot the syrup for my sundae!

Allora: Oh, Father, forget about the syrup. We have bigger problems than that!

Gryphon: That's for sure! Look! there's the Forbidden Forest!

King: Oh, big deal! Wait, a minute, I always carry a KitKat bar for emergencies just like this. (starts eating) Ahhh, that's better! Sings: Give me a break.....

Allora: Oh, Father, stop! Look I can see X-Rex's eyes glowing in the darkness of his cave!

Gryphon: Do you see your magical fairy?

Allora: No, we must get closer.

King: No way, I'm not going in there, he's going to take the last of my chocolate!

Gryphon: Don't start singing again! If we don't destroy him, you won't have any chocolate left!

King: What? No Oreos, no candy bars, no nothing, I can't stand it! Ahhh(faints)

Allora: Oh, Daddy, I'll catch you. (Both fall down)

SOUND EFFECTS: X-Rex and the Magical Fairy enter.

X-Rex: I will destroy you. Now I have all the magic in Cookie Land.

Fairy: Oh, Princess, please help me. I don't want to do evil. I want to do good.

X-Rex: I don't care what you want to do, Fairy! You'll do whatever I say. Cookies, chocolate, ice cream, they will all be mine, all mine!! (laughs)

King: My ice cream, too! Ahhh(faints again)

Allora: Forget it, Father, I'm not catching you this time!

Fairy: I want to do good. I want to deliver Halloween candy again so children can have special treats.

King: Did someone say, "Candy"?

X-Rex: All the candy will be mine, King!

King: Oh no! AHHHH(Faints)

Gryphon: I will save Cookie Land. I challenge you to a race through the Forbidden Forest. Whoever reaches Gingerbread Castle first, keeps the Magical Fairy and all the candy.

X-Rex: Fine! I'll win!

Allora: Father, wake up, we have to cheer on Gryphon!

Fairy: Don't worry, Princess, I have some magical chocolate syrup to wake him. (she pours it on him)

King: MMMM, good.

Allora: Wake up, Father. Gryphon and X-Rex are racing for all your chocolate.

Fairy: Look there they go!

SOUND EFFECTS

Allora: Run, Gryphon, run as fast as you can!

King: Yes, they can't catch you, you're like the gingerbread man!

Gryphon and X-Rex run by.

X-Rex: I am winning!

Gryphon: No, you're not! (pulls out)

Fairy: Gryphon won! All hail Gryphon! I am free. (runs to Allora and hugs her)

Allora: Now Cookie Land is safe!

King: And so are my cookies, candy, donuts,.....

SOUND EFFECTS "Give me a break....."

Josephine and Tonny wake up.

Josephine: Oh, Tonny, we better go have some fresh grapes and bananas. We don't want to grow up like the King!

Tonny: Huh? shrugs shoulders and follows Josephine out.

Act V

Narrator: Act V begins with Tommy, Bobby, Alisa, Tonny, and Dad fishing.

Bobby: I got a big one, Dad!

(pulls up a little fish) Never mind!

Dad: Kids, put your lifejackets on and don't stand up in the boat.

Tommy: Oh, why do we have to wear these things, they're uncomfortable?

Alisa: Yeah, it's wrinkling my new outfit.

Dad: If you fall in, you'll stay afloat.

Bobby: I'll stay a...what?

SOUND EFFECTS OF SPLASH (Tonny falls in)

Bobby: I'll save you, Tonny! (Bobby falls in)

Narrator: Tonny falls into the water and suddenly finds himself at the bottom of the ocean.

SOUND EFFECTS

CURTAIN OPENS

Crab: Hello, Mate, I'm Cranky the Crab. What is your name?

Tonny: Hi, my name is Tonny. What? I can talk? Let me try this again. How do you do? Whoa, I really can talk!

Crab: Fine, thank you, Mate.

Tonny: How am I suppose to get back up there?

Crab: Up where?

Tonny: Up to the surface.

Crab: Follow the clues

Tonny: What clues?

Crab: Listen carefully: Don't stay on the floor
The bottom of the sea
And there you will see
A creature unlike me.

Tonny: Thanks. I see something strange over there. Let me open this up.

SOUND EFFECTS, JAMES BOND

000 Gold: Thanks for letting me out. I've got to go save the Great Places.

Tonny: Who are you? The crab said you'd help me get back to the surface.

000Gold: Who am I? I am Agent 000 Gold. I am the greatest Agent on the Earth! Why am I talking to a dog?

Tonny: I don't know why I can talk.

000Gold: Hmm, let me see. (He looks into his ear) Here's the answer. You have a computer chip in your ear.

Tonny: Bobby was right. He said I had a computer chip in my ear.

000Gold: Enough about you. I have a mission to save the Great Places.

Tonny: If you help me get to the surface, I'll help you save the Great Places.

Mr. Mime enters.

Mime: Oh, Agent 000 Gold, Never fear, your loyal sidekick is here! What do you want me to do?

000 Gold: We have to find our way out through the Maze to reach the Gold Potion.

Mime: What good will that do, Chief?

000 Gold: It will make us lighter and raise us to the surface.

Tonny: My computer chip will tell me the way through the Maze to the Gold Potion like a metal detector.

000Gold: I'm on it!

Mime: That's the spirit, Chief!

Tonny: Then let's get to it!

SOUND EFFECTS MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

They weaving around the stage with beeping sounds. Sounds get louder.

Tonny: I found it!

000Gold: I told you I was the greatest Agent in the world!

Tonny: (mumbling) Big Bragger.....I found it.....

Mime: (opens the chest) Let's see, there's a Book of Potions. The table of contents says, "Giant Weeds, Hypnosis, Bad Breath, Flying....."

000Gold: Get to the Gold Potion, we don't have all day. I've got to get back to the surface to save the Great Places. After all, I am the Greatest Agent in the Universe!

Tonny: Here we go again! Big Bragger!

Mime: Here we are, the Gold Potion. Take a gold fish and add water.

Tonny: Well, here's a goldfish Bobby caught. Bobby? I wonder what happened to him?

000Gold: When we get to the surface, we'll search for him. After all, I'm the greatest Agent in the Galazy!

Tonny: Yeah, yeah, give me a sip.....

SOUND EFFECTS

Curtains close

Act VI

Narrator: Bobby wakes up in the hospital. He hit his leg on the boat when he dove to save Tonny.

Bobby: Why am I in the hospital?

Dad: You fell out of the boat and scraped your leg. You were trying to save Tonny.

Mom: Are okay, Bobby?

Alisa: I'm glad you're okay.

Doctor: Hello, Bobby, I'm Dr. Gold.

Bobby: You look kind of familiar.

Doctor: I understand you were all camping. How was your trip, Bobby? Let me take a look under the bandage at your cut.

Bobby: I don't want you to take off the bandaid.

Doctor: I have to. You may need stitches.
(He looks at his leg)

Bobby: That really hurts!

Doctor: Why don't you come with me, and we will make you feel all better?

Bobby: (scared) WHERRRRRE?

Mom: It's okay. It won't hurt. I'll come with you, honey.

Bobby: Oh, Mom, I don't want you to come with me. I'm a big boy.

(They leave.)

Alisa: Dad, why don't you get rid of the dog?

Tommy: No way, Dad, don't listen to her.

Josephine: You can't blame him, he's just a dog.

Tonny: goes to Alisa and nods his head

Alisa: Well, he is kind of cute. I'm just really worried about Bobby.

Doctor, Bobby, and Mom enter.

Bobby: Hey, I got a lollipop! and 5 stitches!

Family run and hug him.

Josephine: We're glad you're alright.

Tommy: Yeah, we were worried about you.

Alisa: Even Tonny, weren't you, boy!

Dad: Well, we better go. We have to pack to go home. It's a long drive.

All kids groan.

Alisa: Oh, do we have to go? I don't care about the hula lessons. I like fishing.

Josephine: Yeah, I had plenty of time to practice my soccer.

Tommy: And we all got to spend time talking. I didn't even miss playing Mario.

Dad: We could always come back here next year.

Kids: Yes!

Mom: Time to go.

Tommy: Look, Alisa, there's Leonard DiCaprio!

Alisa: Where?

Tommy: Fooled you!

Dad: Don't be so silly, Tommy!

Bobby: Yeah, it will ruin your brain!

APPENDIX B

L-17
S-27

B.B.

Sept. 2

1. Bill is here.

2. Did you hear the noise?

3. Mr. Smith yelled too us.

4. May is a pritty month.

5. The little girl said "where is
Dad" ~~xx~~

6. The techer's desk is blue.

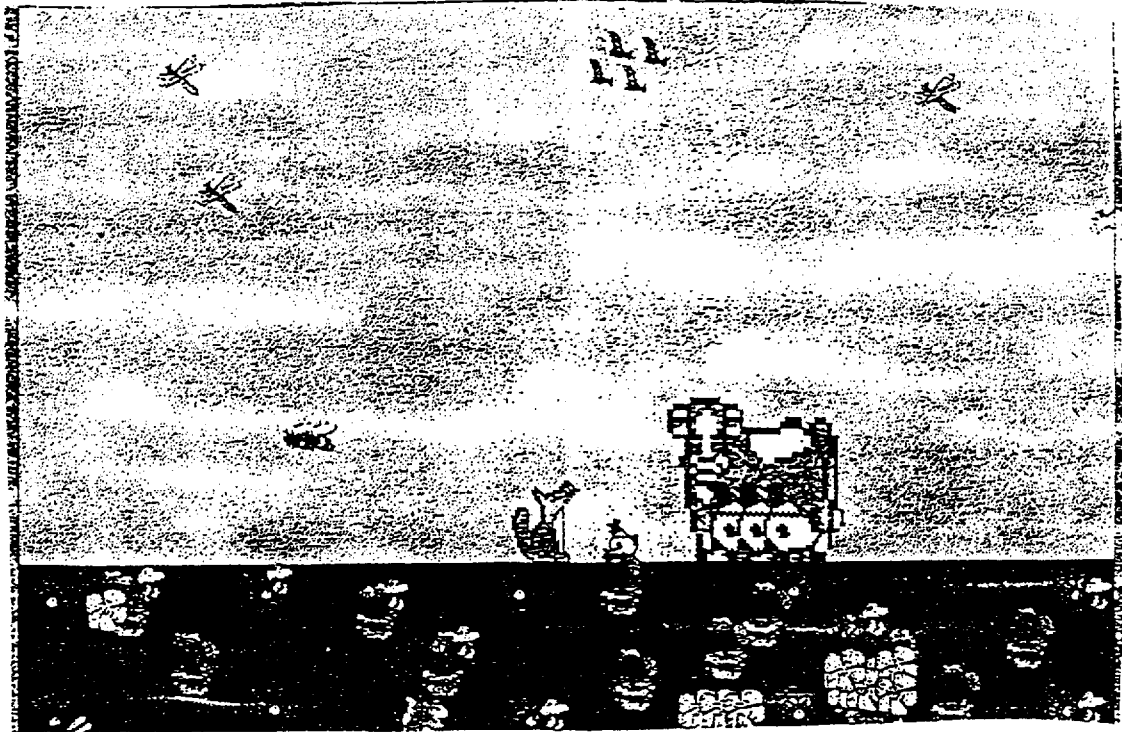
Figure 1

B.B.

See Wed. 22.

→ One day a parrot named Parrot was
just flying around and then he
saw another parrot named Harrot.
Harrot saw Parrot_x.

Figure 2



The Fox in the Barn
By

bb.

One day there was a fuzzy, brown fox. Fox was hungry, so he wanted to eat some tender Chicken, well it's tender Chicken to him.

Fox called out "Hey, Chicken!"

"What do you want!" responded Chicken with a cluck.

"Come have dinner with me. I promise I will not eat you, please, please, I promise!" Fox begged, and pleaded with a growl.

Chicken replied "NO!" Roosters, Cows, and Hens heard her yell. "How embarrassing," thought Chicken.

Fox asked one last time and Chicken said, "Yes, O.K.". When they got there, Fox ate Chicken.

Moral: Don't let someone force you by lying.

Figure 3

L.T.

mon, Sept. 23 1972
L-13/2'
S-22/2'

1. Bill is here.
2. ~~dit~~ You here the nos.
3. Mr. Smith ye led to us.
4. May is a Pritty month.
5. The littel girl sae whier
is ~~day~~ ~~xxx~~
6. The techer's deck is blue.

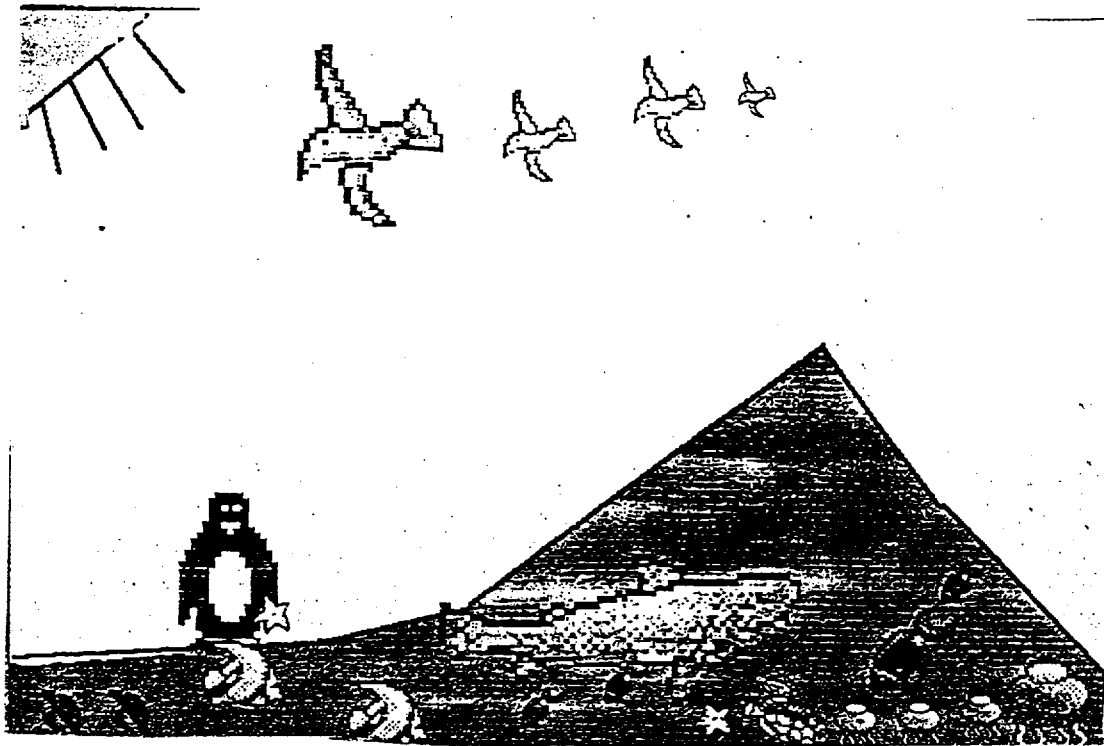
Figure 4

L.T. Wey Sept
22

→ I was in the Oshin when I thot I
I Soe a funey looking shell, I went
to pick it up, and I did not know it
was a chest. My tank of air
was almost out so I for got a
buwt the werd shell and went
up to get a new kenk of air. And
it was fo neve for me, I went
back in the water. I had a shok
to dig the werd shell out. When
I dog it out, I was very sapried.
And I pulled it up filly. I oped
it up and I low ho nat the side
to think I sat in the chest. And
The be dan wigled I tek off the
ooda and found tre she. But
a shark came and tuck a pill
shet is with his fin rite out
of my hand so I took the rest
of the treasure back up to land

Figure 5

hd |



Penguin and Shark

by L.T.

One day Penguin was walking on the ice, and Shark popped out of the water.

"Hey, Penguin!" said Shark

"What?" said Penguin.

"Never mind, just come!

"I don't want to."

"I want to talk to you," said Shark.

"OH ok."

"Penguin, come swim with me," said Shark.

"No!"

"Scaredy cat, scaredy cat, ha ha scaredy cat!" laughed Shark.

"Well, ok" Penguin swam in.

"Shark, why are you swimming so fast!"

"To keep up with you," said Shark.

"Shark, you're in front of me!"

"Here we are at my home," said Shark.

"Wow! you even have a bathroom!"

"Yeah, yeah, let's have lunch."

"What's for lunch?" asked Penguin.

"You!!!" yelled Shark.

"I think you're killing the wrong guy!" cried Penguin. "I don't taste good!"

"You will to me! Yum! Yum!" said

Shark. Shark ate Penguin.

"Shark, let me out of your stomach!" yelled Penguin.

"No way!"

"Oh, yeah?!"

"Yeah!"

"Shark, you should brush your teeth. Your breath smells so bad!" said Penguin.

"Okay," said Shark. When Shark began to brush his teeth, Penguin jumped out of this mouth and swam away.

"Come back, Penguin!" shouted

Shark. Penguin swam home.

Moral: Don't trust strangers.

Figure 6

L-16/
S-23/

C.S

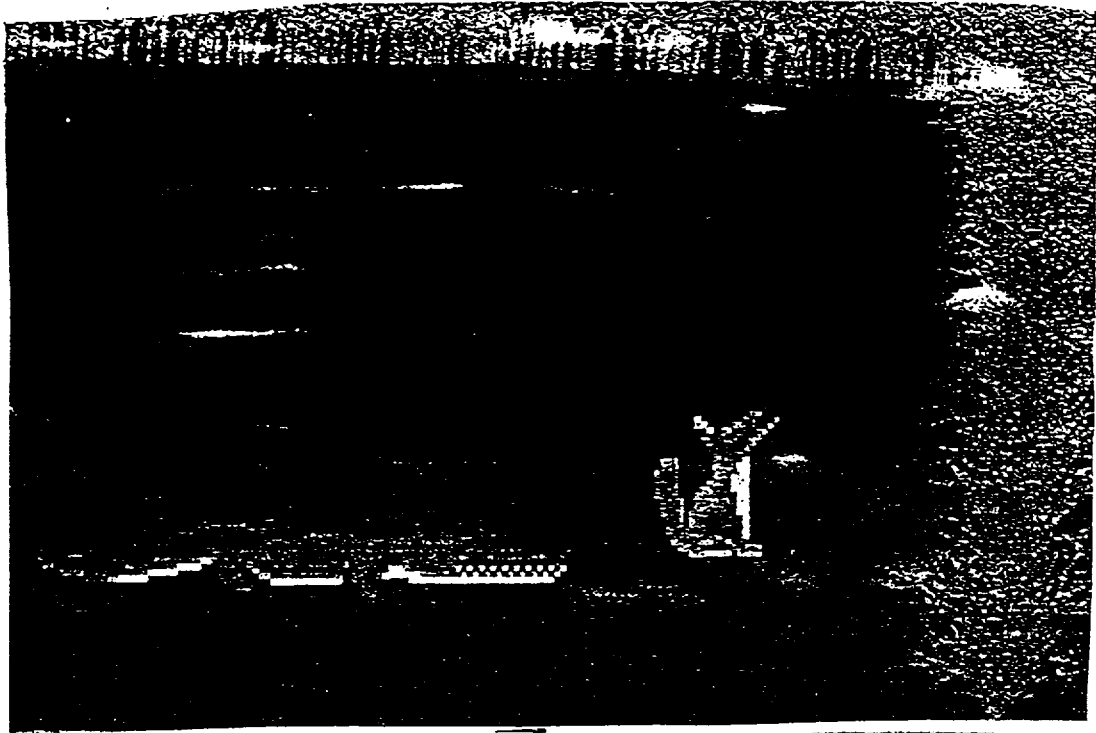
Sept. 23

- ① Bill is here.
- ② Did you hare the nois?
- ③ Mr. Smiet yelled to us.
- ④ May is a pritty month x
- ⑤ The little gell said, Wat is dad x
- ⑥ The tearcher's desk is blaer.

Figure 7

The Day I Found The Treasure ^{C.S.}
Sept. 22

⇒ One day I desided to look for a treasure. So I bel a ship, that had a cauen, a flag, and it was BIG!
The hex day I poot it in the watte and went salind. When we got to the midden of the ocean, we saw pirites, 8 of them. "Ready x me fire!" I said, our shot mest. "Ready, ame fire," they said. I quietly jumped out, and then my ship explod. ~~It~~ we scuba diving and found the treasure. That's how I found the treasure.



The Fox and the Alligator

By: C.S.

One day Alligator was going to the pond, and he met Fox. "Hello Alligator," said Fox with a smile.

"Hello Fox," said Alligator, "do you want to come to the pond with me?"

"Ok," said Fox. So they were on their way to the pond and... Fox said, "I'll race you to the pond."

"Ok," said Alligator. So they ran and they ran.

"I win!" said Fox with excitement.

"I'll race you in a swimming race," said Alligator.

"Ok," said Fox. So they swam and they swam.

"I win!" said Alligator.

"So who is better?" said Fox.

They thought and they thought. "I think nobody is better than anyone," said

"Goodbye," said Alligator.

"Goodbye," said Fox.

Moral: Nobody is perfect

Figure 9

L-11
S-28
W.S.

Sept. 24

1. Bill is here.

2. Did you hear the noise?

3. Mr. Smith yelled to us.

4. May is a Pretty month.

5. The little girl said where is dad?

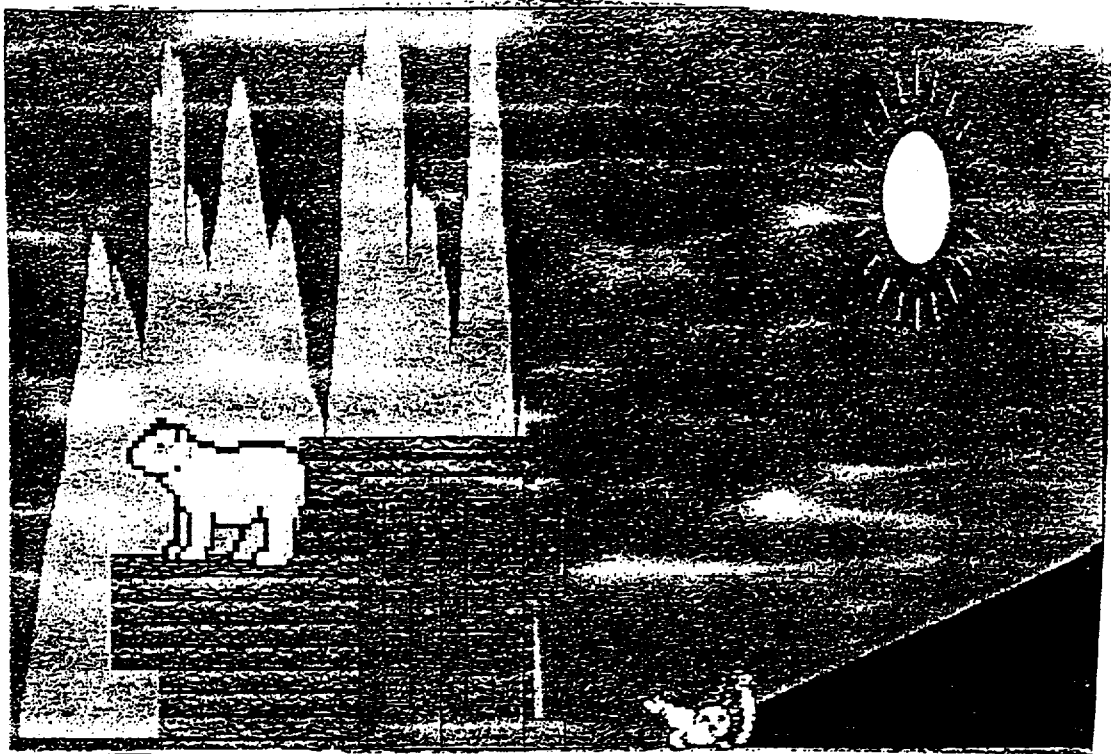
6. The teacher's desk is blue.

Figure 10

W.S.
Sept 22
The Day I found Treasure

One day I was at the top
re I bought a Potion and I went
to sleep and Evan stole it
then he cracked it and was a pig
I woke up the next day and
Evan the pig and me went to
look for a Gold coin to
make Evan a person when
we went in the cave there
were dead Pokemon every
where and we searched
everywhere and no gold coin
and then we all heard
a noise Pokemon were
alive were really mad
and heard some of
us so we looked in a
crack that a Pokemon
made found the Gold coin
and Evan was better

Figure 11



Penguin and Seal

By:

W.S.

Once in the cold Arctic lived Penguin, Seal and their neighbor, Bear. Penguin just moved in and couldn't swim. So Seal came over and said, "Hello, Brother Penguin. Nice day out, don't you think?"

"I'm not that happy today," said Penguin.

"Why not?" asked Seal.

"Because I don't know how to swim."

"That's not good. I know we can teach you to swim. Ask Bear. He'll know what to do," said Seal.

Knock knock knock. "Hello, who's there?" asked Bear.

"It's us, Seal and Penguin".

"Oh I'm sorry. So what brought you here today?"

Seal said, "Well, Penguin can't swim."

"Oh, that's terrible. He can't have food," said Bear.

"OK. Try real hard, Penguin," said Seal. So Penguin tried and tried and could not swim.

Back at Bear's house, he found food for Penguin. Penguin entered a race. When the race started, Penguin found out how to swim. He won. He was the fastest swimmer in the Arctic.

Moral: Never give up when you know you can do it.

Figure 12

L-18/3'
S-26/3'

Writing
Assessment

J
2/23/00

1. Bill is here.
2. Did you here the noise~~x~~
3. Mrs. Smith yelled to us.
4. May is a breaty mouth
5. The little gril said, "Where is dad?"
6. The teachers~~x~~ deck is blue.

Figure 13

writing sample

J
27/25/00

The Day I Found the Treasure

I have a stuffed puppy dog named Nenesy. I got her when I was three ^x when I got her. It was Christmas moring. I sleep with her every night. She is five years old. She has worn out spots, ~~beca~~ because I love her very much. I don't know why I named her Nenesy. Nenesy is a Black Lab Retriever. Nenesy is so cute! I love to have a

friend like Nenesy. Nenesy is not just my friend, Nenesy is part of my family. I will never get rid of Nenesy. My life was a little bit differant, because Nenesy is one of my best friends. If I got a new dog it wouldn't be the same, but the dog would still be my friend, because it is part of my life.

To Nenesy, ~~My~~ Love
J

Writing
Assessment

L-17/3'
S-23/2'

J-33-00

1. Bill is here,

2. Did you here the noise?

3. Mr. Smith yelled ~~to~~ us.

4. May is a preaty gover

5. The little girl said, "we're
is dead,?"

6. The teacher's deast is bitter.

Figure 15

writing

T
2-25-09

The Day I Found my Treasure

One day Oo penguin was
in a jungle temple.
He was looking for ~~a~~
the secret golden talisman.
He was walking when a
tail on the floor snapped and
a arrow shot out of the
wall. It missed Oo penguin.
He stepped ~~on~~ in between
the tiles. When he got stressed

Figure 16

He noticed a hole coming
in. He ~~thought~~ ^{roof} the "Why would
there be a hole in the roof
in the middle of a temple?
He ~~throw~~ a rock in the light.
A spear ~~came~~ out of the wall.
He went a round the light
and ~~finally~~ he got there. When
he got the talisman, the
temple started to ~~collapse~~
He ran to the ~~spare~~ jumped
on top of it. When he
got out he was going to ~~collapse~~
with it. He just jumped on a tree branch.

L-16/2²
S-24/2²

C. wi

6h-22-00

- ① Bill is here
- ② did you hear the no?
- ③ Mr. Smith yelled to us.
- ④ May is a big month.
- ⑤ The little girl said there is a dog.
- ⑥ The teacher's desk is blue!

Figure 17

J moon
Kone

Fik
Kone

Water
Kone

Grass
Kone

C.

Figure 18

THE DAY I Found Treasure

→ One day Giga Sill Mill and Alk were on a trail. They were walking. Boo! A big monster jump out. Alk shot a egg.

but the

back! Then

a tank with water. said, "It's

but the

Colin did



MONSTER shot water egg

Alk was trapped inside

The tank was filled. Then Alk died. "Can the main Kone yes!"

Monster is there,

his Fireball attack.

He's died, then Sill got the main Kone! Now Sill is makes. Read next book to find out what happens!

by

Colin T-B-W

Figure 18