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May 5, 2019

This is to certify that the action research study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions as required by
CT Literacy Specialist Program have been made.

College of Education

Department of Leadership and Literacy

EDR 692 - Applied Reading and Language Arts Research

***Spotlight on Using Mentor Texts in Writing Instruction: Turning to Books for
Ideas***

Advisor: Dr. Karen C. Waters

ABSTRACT

Researchers have found a connection between reading and writing instruction and the benefits the instruction has on students' reading comprehension and writing expression. The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of the use of mentor texts on students' writing in grade 3. Data collection consisted of a teacher-made questionnaire and teacher-created pre and post writing assessments for sentence construction and paragraph writing. Additionally, rubrics evaluated the quality of student writing in the genres of opinion, informational, and narrative. The findings confirmed that the use of mentor texts ultimately increased the quality of student writing and students were able to apply the skills across the curriculum.

Keywords: Mentor text, grammar, writing instruction, picture books, author's style and craft, interactive read aloud, writing strategies

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

In 2010, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (NGA & CCSSO, 2010) were implemented nationwide with specific writing expectations and standards. Teachers were asked to include writing not only during language arts, but across content areas. There are clear writing expectations within the science and social studies content areas. Each discipline demands the teaching of specific conventions and ways language is used in each area (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Moje, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Therefore, writing instruction should be tailored to address the kinds of writing that represent the ways of thinking and communicating within each area.

Graham and Perin (2007) emphasized, “Writing well is not just an option for young people—it is a necessity” (p. 3). Writing is necessary and used all through the students’ school and beyond. “Writing well has become a gatekeeping skill across the workforce” (Gallagher, 2011, p. 3). They go on to say, although the ability to write well is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in life, large numbers of adolescents graduate from high school across the country unable to write at the basic levels required by colleges and employers (Graham & Perin, 2007).

The use of mentor texts and the writing workshop model is important for teaching writing because the variety of techniques and strategies used within the construct of mentor text provides a host of ideas to vary instruction within which models and authentic literature are embedded (Gallagher, 2014). Culham (2014) stated that a mentor text is “any text, print or digital, that you can read with a writer’s eye” (Culham, 2014, p. 9). Lynne Dorfman (2013), well-known expert on the use of mentor texts, defined mentor texts as “pieces of literature that both teacher and student can return to and reread for many different purposes.” Mentor text serves as an important

role in instruction, which needs to have a thoughtful and intentional selection process. A mentor text might be a poem, a newspaper article, song lyrics, comic strips, manuals, essays, almost anything (Baker, 2013).

Students need textual models to be used as tools to analyze and copy writing styles and formats. Using textual models “help students examine sentence structure, find the poetry in prose, connect with their own memories, think about how setting creates a mood, or find the places where an author shows instead of tells (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2017, p. 7). Therefore using the book to highlight different aspects of writing or author's craft, specifically a sentence, transition into a conversation, or simply the writing style. Gallagher (2014) reminds the writer that when he is learning a skill. The writer consults experts for guidance and support in the role of apprentice, watches, analyzes, or even copy the expert until he can do it for himself. When individuals are learning a skill, they go to the experts for guidance and support. They watch, analyze, even copy someone who is knowledgeable about a topic or skill. When students are learning to write it needs to be modeled and scaffolded by the teacher in order for the child to be successful. It is through this apprenticeship approach, in which the child can begin to transfer this knowledge into their own writing.

Dorfman and Cappelli (2017) claims that borrowing an idea or imitating the writing style of an author is not cheating, yet it is the way we learn to do anything, by imitating what others do. Using models and authentic literature provides students with the necessary tools to apply their newly acquired knowledge and transfer this knowledge into their own writing. Finding literature that will inspire students to imitate the author's style, focus, or organization is known as literary borrowing and was the most effective model for writing (Lancia, 1997). Gallagher (2014) emphasized how students need to be immersed in writing and have continual access to

mentor texts for them to be successful writers. He also states that students need to be taught how to think like writers.

Background of the Study

According to the National Council for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2011), writing scores for grades 8 and 12 have declined since 2007. Within the four designations of academic performance, including below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced, which imply varying degrees to the extent to which students had demonstrated mastery of reading and writing, 54% of 8th graders and 52% of 12th graders earned a basic level and only 24% of students in both grades scored at the proficient level. In addition, SAT writing scores from 2005-2013 declined almost 10 points for almost all students (NCTE, 2011).

Consequently, students across the country are experiencing difficulties in writing. According to Gallagher (2011, p. 5) seven out of ten students are leaving our schools without the necessary skills to actively participate in the global economy. Teachers need a wide range of resources and strategies for instruction to meet the needs of all K-3 learners in support of common core writing standards and students need to know what good writing looks like, and be able to break down the writing to understand why it is good. Gallagher (2011 p. 5) states “In a time when the ability to write has not only a “predictor of academic success” but also a “basic requirement for participation in civic life” writing seems to have gotten lost in many of our schools. Buried in the avalanche of standards, curricular pacing guides, huge class sizes, worksheets, over-the-top testing, and, yes, even more testing, writing-a necessity a prerequisite to living a literate life- is not being given the time and attention it deserves.

Rationale

To meet the demands of the high stakes testing; Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and implementation of CCSS students need a greater emphasis in writing across the curriculum starting in the early elementary years. In today's world, "a time when unskilled labor is disappearing because of technological advances, at a time when low-skilled jobs are being outsourced, at a time when the ability to write well is more important than ever" (Gallagher, 2011, p. 5). Writing is a lifelong skill that students will need for their school careers, they will need a strong foundation of writing skills for their future careers, most importantly people will rely on writing as a form of communication in this ever-changing world of technology.

With the many changes implemented in writing instruction that have accompanied the adoption of the CCSS, writing has progressed from a focus on personal experiences to that of informational and evidence-based writing to support the goal of preparing students who are college and career ready (NGA & CCSSO, 2010). Using mentor texts for writing instruction supports the goal for students to be able to write well-constructed narratives, convincing arguments, or research papers. Teachers need to show students how other authors have navigated the writing process to produce quality products that are worthy of an audience. Students need to know what good writing looks like. Gallagher (2011) believed "teach your students real-world writing purposes, add a teacher who models his or her writing struggles with the writing process, throw in lots of real-world mentor texts for students to emulate, and give our kids the time necessary to enable them to stretch as writers."

Writing is a lifelong skill that students need to continuously work on early in their educational journey to carry with them throughout the remainder of their education, social interactions, and careers. Gregorian (2007) explained how this writing deficit can lead to other

downfalls as well; “Young people who do not have the ability to transform thoughts, experiences, and ideas into written words are in danger of losing touch with the joy of inquiry, the sense of intellectual curiosity, and inestimable satisfaction of acquiring wisdom that are the touchstones of humanity” (p.1).

The purpose of this action research project is to explore the effectiveness of the use of mentor texts that will ultimately help students increase the quality of their writing to enable them to apply the skill across the curriculum. The expectation is that direct instruction using mentor text will improve student writing in all content areas.

Problem Statement

The National Council for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2011), showed writing scores for grades 8 and 12 have declined since 2007. Consequently, students across the country are experiencing difficulties in writing. According to the 2016-2017 Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), 52% of the 4th graders in Connecticut have met or exceeded proficiency in writing. However, if half of the students have attained proficiency in writing, the converse is similarly true: 48% of the fourth graders have yet to attain proficient levels of writing. Students need to be able to write critically and use types of writing to support their reading.

The writing standards of the CCSS for College and Career Readiness (NGA & CCSSO, 2010), which cut across grades Kindergarten through grade 12, include the categories of informational, narrative, argumentative writing, and the production of writing. The CCSS defines College and Career Readiness standards as anchor standards that all students will need to have mastered in order to be ready for college or a career after high school (NGA & CCSSO, 2010). According to the writing anchor standards instructions involves texts types and purposes, production and distribution of writing, and research to build and present knowledge.

Solution

Implementation of the CCSS requires students in grade three to produce quality pieces of informational, narrative, and argumentative writing. There is a trend that has been identified with schools in our country; most students are not meeting basic writing standards and teachers are at a loss as to how to help them (Gregorian, 2007, p.2). Our nation is facing a literacy crisis (Graham & Perin, 2007). These findings show teachers need to support student learning in meeting these standards in writing to prepare them for life beyond school.

Using mentor texts guides students' independent writing by using exemplar authors to model and support the instruction utilizing the author's style and craft. Mentor texts foster an understanding of the various structures used by authors allowing students to implement the different structures and strategies and infuse into their own compositions (Gallagher, 2014). Writing is a form of communication, which is the ability to express thoughts and ideas in a clear and refined style, in a manner devoid of ambiguity and confusion (Akkaya & Kirmiz, 2010).

Mentor texts give students the ability to be supported by published and award-winning authors along with guidance from educators with specific teaching instruction. Having a positive impact on students' writing production is a necessity in our ever-changing world and utilizing mentor texts during writing instruction could be a pathway to successful writing in the primary grades and beyond. Therefore, the crux of my research project will examine effectiveness of mentor texts as a platform to help students develop competence as writers, and in doing so, increase the quality and quantity of students' writing.

Learning Theory

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist learning theory aligns with explicit instruction, which allows students to develop knowledge and meaning through different experiences. He

believed that children achieve mastery of language through their mastery of the alphabet, words, listening, speaking, and writing. His theory of constructivism, included the Zone of Proximal Development, which Vygotsky (1978) defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level and the student’s potential under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers.” (p.86) The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) allows students to learn concepts or ideas just outside their current capabilities through the support, modeling, and scaffolding of teachers and peers (Vygotsky, 1978).

Teaching students to write through the use of mentor texts will allow me to immerse students in an iterative process through which the modeling, guided practice, and scaffolding enable students to assume a voice, take ownership of their work products, and showcase their intelligence.

Similarly, the gradual release of responsibility learning theory supports Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development. The gradual release of responsibility purposefully shifts the cognitive load from teacher, to joint responsibility of teacher and learner, to independent practice and application by the teacher (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). This theory is allowing for students to take over complete responsibility when they are comfortable and capable of implementing the skills taught, developing independent learners. This creates a natural progression which begins with focused instruction and concludes with students becoming independent learners that will be able to internalize and apply into their own work.

My study, focusing on mentor texts, will allow students to learn from the experts through the support of their examples, the modeling of their expertise and the scaffolding of their teachers and peers through the use of using meaningful literature and activities to support the high demands of writing instruction. By adopting a theoretical framework incorporating a

scaffolded to-with-by approach, I hope to model good writing for my students, work with me as I provide guidance and ongoing feedback and relinquish control through gradual release of responsibility until they become proficient writers.

Research Questions

Writing instruction has seen many shifts and trends throughout the years. The pendulum for writing pedagogy has evolved and changed from and a prescriptive text-based recipe to student-centered writing reflecting the child's interests and talents (Smith, 1983; Turnbull & Butler, 1987; Hansen, 2001). Utilization of mentor texts during instruction influences novice writers to emulate the different qualities, craft, and traits of credible authors to aid in their independent writing supporting their voice of communication. Mendez-Newman (2012) stated that "Mentor texts are powerful tools for helping students contextualize and situate their own language and experiences within the stories of others," which affirms the idea that mentor texts support writing instruction in the primary grades. In light of the research on student writing and the difficulties associated with writing instruction, the following questions will inform my research on the importance of using mentor texts during writing instruction in the primary grades.

1. What types of mentor texts can best support writing instruction in the primary grades?
2. How can teachers use mentor texts in the primary grades while aligning instruction with the common core?
3. How do students interact with the process of using mentor texts in the primary classroom?

Section 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this research study is to explore the viability of mentor texts to teach writing in the primary grades. In doing so, high quality narrative and nonfiction literature will be used as mentor texts during writing instruction. The integration of reading and writing instruction in which the same text is revisited, analyzed, examined, and pondered, allows students to assimilate, borrow, even “steal” the author’s style, craft, and technique as he is developing his skills as a writer. In short, mentor texts can influence students’ writing habits, create a significant relationship between reading and writing, and ultimately lead to an increase in the quality and quantity of student writing (McDowell, 2015).

What are Mentor Texts?

The CCSS has made a major change regarding reading and writing instruction. Culham (2014) asserted that the rejuvenated focus on writing has thrust writing to the forefront, sharing equal priority as reading instruction. Today, the CCSS requires students to write argumentative, informational, and narrative pieces, with increasing expectations in every grade (Calkins, Ehrenworth, Lehman, 2012). Reading and writing instruction goes together, in order to write you must know how to read.

Students’ reading and writing performances are not meeting community or society’s expectations, therefore an effort to find a remedy is necessary and using an integrated approach of teaching reading and writing may be the solution (Culham, 2014). Standards address reading and writing separately, but teachers in every subject area are urged to combine both subjects to maximize time and resources to get better results. Reading and writing can be weaved together to meet several of the Common Core Anchor Standards by utilizing mentor texts. By implementing

reading and writing together, students read closely, analyze, and evaluate the content of complex texts. Then students write short research with models, draw from the evidence, revise, and integrate, all with a natural connection that is beneficial with the use of mentor texts (Culham, 2014).

Culham (2014) defines mentor texts as any text, that you can read with a “writer’s eye.” Dorfman and Cappelli (2007) elaborate by stating that, “Mentor texts are pieces of literature that we can return to again and again as we help writers.” (p. 6) Anderson (2007) suggests that mentor texts provide students and teachers a way to think and act like writers. Using mentor texts to teach writing may rectify writing difficulties within various aspects of topic development and sentence structure (Oczkus, 2012; Robb, 2011). Although there are many different definitions of mentor texts, they all use the basic premise of modeling exemplar writing to support student writing.

Mentor Text as Interactive Read Aloud

Teachers use read alouds as a way of encouraging students to enjoy reading, but also for instructional purposes. Interactive read alouds allow students to verbally interact with the text, peers, and teacher providing a means of engaging while constructing meaning and exploring the reading process (Barrentine, 1996). Current teaching practices and educational research support the importance of interactive read alouds in elementary curriculum (Morrow, 2000; Ray, 2004, 1999; Sipe, 200, 2008). During interactive read alouds there is limited dialogue throughout the reading but concludes with an in-depth discussion regarding the story creating opportunities for students to explore their connections and dissect the layers of meaning developing knowledge about elements of literature forcing the after-reading discussions to be reflective and aim to

deepen, broaden, and personalize the meaning of the story (Barrentine, 1996). Interactive read alouds teach children about various aspects of writer's craft.

Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) stated that "the single most important activity for building knowledge required for success in reading is reading aloud to children" (p.23). Reading aloud not only introduces children to the enjoyment of reading, but it inspires them to read voluntarily (Morrow, 2003). Other benefits to reading aloud includes familiarizing students with the written language of diverse genres (Calkins, 1994; Ray, 1999; Smith 1993b), improving children's language, expression and comprehension abilities (Beck & McKeown, 2001), and establishing student' literacy understanding (Sipe, 2000, 2008). Ultimately, reading aloud to children helps them to acquire a sense of story grammar or the framework for narratives, inclusive of characters, problem, events, resolution, and theme, and deepens comprehension.

Implementing interactive read alouds encourages the teachers to develop a balance between interacting with the text, their peers, and their teacher throughout the entire book (Barrentine, 1996). Throughout the read aloud students become immersed with the sights and sounds of various children's literature and the in-depth discussions surrounding the texts. Discussions after read alouds provide opportunities to clarify ideas and learn about different aspects of literature. Throughout the read aloud questions are posed to enhance the meaning of construction and how one makes sense of a text. Students are engaged in the reading process and allow for spontaneous realizations and comments.

Significance of Mentor Text Instruction

Since the implementation of CCSS, students amongst all grades have been challenged to increase their writing abilities (NGA & CCSSO, 2010). Writing is mainly aimed at expressing feelings, thoughts, desires and plans; allowing people to effectively communicate with one

another (Akkaya & Kirmiz, 2010). Unfortunately, poor student performance of writing skills has forced teachers in America to target their instruction more closely on teaching writing (Lukomskaya, 2015). Based on the 2011 National Council for Education Statistics (NCES, 2011) writing scores are dropping and teachers need a wide range of high quality strategies to target their instruction to meet the needs of their students while supporting the high demands of CCSS writing standards (NCES, 2011). There have been several studies regarding mentor texts as a means of support for teachers to help bridge the gap between reading and writing standards and improve student writing. Using mentor texts throughout the writing process and writing workshop has proven on numerous occasions as a way for students to connect and emulate exemplar authors into their own writing.

The crux of good writing for students is strongly influenced by the example of others (Gallagher, 2011).

Premont, Young, Wilcox, Dean and Morrison (2017) explored the effectiveness of mentor texts using picture books enhanced student writing in a study of 12 students from two low-performing 10th grade English classes. Students not only used words they learned and associated with picture books, but they also represented words found in a thesaurus, or common words used in uncommon ways (Premont, Young, Wilcox, Dean, & Morrison, 2017). In terms of sentence fluency, students exhibited stronger sentence fluency in their final draft rather than their initial draft. Conventions of student writing were also examined to the extent to which the author's style and craft of picture books influenced students' writing. Students participated more willingly during the mentor text activity, particularly when they interacted with texts that sparked their interest, than in previous lessons when picture books were not used (Premont, Young, Wilcox, Dean, & Morrison, 2017).

Picture books are useful as mentor texts because the text is short and is not overwhelming or threatening to older students (Ray, 1999; Rief, 1992; Saunders, 1999). The use of picture books when teaching writing allows students to practice critical thinking skills, visual literacy skills, interpretive strategies (Pantaleo, 2008, p. 67) and picture books have the capacity to strengthen writing skills in developing writers (Dorfman & Capelli, 2009). Picture books are especially important in reaching young people who lack confidence in reading and writing because the text is manageable for them (O'Sullivan, 1987). Most research has been done using mentor texts or picture books in primary settings but Anderson-McElveen and Dierking's (2000) study using picture books with fifty students in kindergarten or fourth grade, found that the quality of students' writing increased when they "borrowed" the powerful word choices of the authors.

In another study, conducted by the U.S. Department of Education with fifth grade students, picture books were used to demonstrate the 6 + 1 writing characteristics and traits (Coe, Hanita, Nishioka, & Smiley, 2011). Two groups of teachers were selected to participate in the study, in which one group used picture books to review at their discretion and the other group relied on training using different techniques to model the various traits in picture books. Results showed that students who used mentor texts out performed students whose teachers utilized the 6+Traits instrument as the the singular instructional pedagogy (Anderson-McElveen & Dierking, 2000).

Turner (2015) examined the impact of mentor texts and the writing workshop with first grade writers. Results supported the use of using mentor texts during writing instruction. Additionally, students showed an increase in engagement and motivation in writing, and they deepened their understanding of the criteria necessary to produce high quality writing, inclusive

of word choice, style, and craft. Further, emanating from the increased collaboration and mutual support within the class, students developed a deep sense of community.

The study took place over the course of four weeks, where students were immersed in the writing workshop enhanced with mini-lessons using different mentor texts. Interviews were conducted at the beginning and end to determine the students' interest level and attitude toward writing. As a result of using mentor texts to enhance the writing workshop students' responses showed a seventy percent increase in their interest as well as an increase in their motivation to write. (Turner, 2015). Students were applying reading skills they were learning to their written composition demonstrating the connections being made between reading, printed text, and writing the students were creation (Turner, 2015). As a result, students used mentor texts to discover other writing styles and techniques.

McDowell (2015) made the connection of how mentor texts brought together reading and writing instruction. The purpose of mentor texts is to give the students a source of inspiration into their own writing, allowing them to examine the different voices of the narrator or characters, explore dialogue, sentence structure and punctuation, giving them the opportunity to mimic different writing techniques observed, critiquing the author's choices, recreating the text to make improvements all while encouraging higher level thinking skills (McDowell, 2015). Four teachers were selected based on their knowledge of mentor texts and the use of mentor texts to teach writing.

The teachers used mentor texts during their writing instruction as models for the students and stated several benefits of using mentor texts. Teachers were interviewed and asked to explain the benefits of using mentor texts in their classrooms. All four teachers expressed that benefits of using mentor texts in their writing instruction; it showed students using grammar in context,

collaboration between students, enhanced student discussion, more exposure to literature, high quality of writing examples, connections with authors, increase understanding when responding to literature, ability to identify techniques of authors in other books, and the integration of this instruction in other subjects (McDowell, 2015).

Based on the results of the various studies mentioned mentor texts have numerous benefits when used to enhance writing instruction at any age group. Educators noticed that student's enthusiasm towards writing improved and their view of writing changed to be more positive. Not only did students become aware of different writing techniques but the students were able to apply the skills and strategies to different subjects, not just reading and writing. It is clear that using mentor texts in reading and writing instruction has a positive impact on student learning and student communication through writing.

Connection to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and the Development of Reading, Writing, and Speech

Vygotsky (1978) established a connection between, thought, speech and writing, stating that communication is learned through sound, interactions, and making associations with words and sounds. According to Vygotsky children go through four stages of speech (Emerson, 1983) imitation, external speech, egocentric speech and inner speech.

In the first stage children learn to speak by imitating words and sounds. As they progress to the egocentric stage, they realize that everything has a coordinating name to which a label corresponds; thus they are able to make a connection between sounds and objects. They typically think in fragments and speak without thinking about the words behind their speech. In the third stage, referred to as egocentric speech, children tend to keep a running record of their behaviors to help direct their behaviors; thus, allowing the child to think-aloud and process organization.

The final stage, referred to as inner speech, enables children to internalize their thoughts and think critically about their next actions, suggesting that speech development mirrors the process of learning to write (Emerson, 1983). As students learn to write they will go through similar stages of writing development.

Children must learn letter sounds and formations in order to write (Emerson, 1983). Early writing emanates from the scribbling stage where children draw lines and scribbling as they attempt to imitate the writing that they observe in grownups, much like the imitation stage of speech. As children enter the letters stage of writing they have a tool for communication, emergent writing at this stage is frequently incomplete. In this stage children frequently write the phonemes they hear in the word, but omit vowel sounds, resulting in a distortion of the sentence. In this second stage much of the writing is unrecognizable to others, but the child is attempting to communicate through association of letter and symbols (Emerson, 1983). In this stage children begin using inventive spelling when they write which can be unrecognizable to others even though the child knows what they wrote.

As children gain understanding of letter combination and words, they are able to create longer sentences and phrases mirroring the egocentric speech stage. As they are writing, children are reading aloud what they write down, as it still may not make sense to others. Becoming fluent writers allows children to internalize their thoughts and turn them into written form. (Emerson, 1983). At this stage writing can look like how the child speaks.

Reading is additionally a significant part of learning to write. Reading and writing are not isolated features; in fact, they are interacting with one another the minute a child begins to play with the most important tool of writing, a pencil. Typically, as children read, they bring their own experiences of reading and the same holds true to writing (Rosenblatt, 1995). The essence

of my study will focus on the interactions between students and texts as students read and respond to literature in ways that require them to write original pieces in the genres of opinion, narrative, informational, and poetry.

The Evolution of Writing for Communication

For several thousands of years writing has been a common mode of communication: from the cuneiform writing on clay tablets in Mesopotamia in 3000 BC, to the obscure Chinese cultures dating back to the Shang Dynasty in 1400 B.C. Today's alphabetic system is actually rooted in Egyptian hieroglyphics (author, 2018) Essential to society, writing is a non-negotiable aspect of civilization that distinguishes humanity from other animals. According to Coulmas (2003), millions of people throughout the world are still unable to communicate through writing, even though writing pedagogy has, and humanity relies on writing to an unprecedented extent (Coulmas, 2003). Today more communication takes place in written than oral modes as writing not only offers ways of reclaiming the past, but it is a vital skill for shaping the future of our country, nation, and the world. (2003).

Providing a clear definition of writing is not an easy task, partly because of the multiple meanings of English words, the history, and its importance, but there are at least six meanings of writing; a system of recording language using visible marks; the activity of putting it to use; the result (a text); the result, a script style such as block letter writing; artistic composition; a professional occupation (Coulmas, 2003). The various uses of writing and the vast scientific fields that use it throughout their disciplines understand how writing works, the functions it serves, and which methods can be applied making writing more complex than ever and harder to culturally understand as it is contingent upon history and cultural circumstances (2003). At the same time the ever-changing culture of technology integrates a variety of media to capitalize on

and establish flexibility in the form of instant messages, web pages, blogs, embedded graphics, and videos, thus creating an impact on writing experiences in humanity (Applebee & Langer, 2006). In today's world of advanced technology our culture has made technology the key component of communication through the creation of word processing tools and internet resources, making it easier for students to write.

A Chronology of Writing Instruction

History influences not only the events or practices once used, but the ways people engage with the past creates the future. Understanding the past allows us to step back and see ourselves within a larger story allowing this knowledge; we are better equipped to critically reflect on our own individual practices thus making purposeful decisions when planning for the future. (Hawkins & Razali, 2012). People believed that writing was the transcript of spoken thought onto a page. There was no formal instruction regarding the mechanics of writing, such as grammar or spelling, yet handwriting was the focus of instruction due to businesses and correspondence were crafted by hand and legibility was greatly valued (Hawkins & Razali, 2012). During this period of writing reflected the spoken word and the act of handwriting was the focus.

From Penmanship to Purposeful Communication

Over a century ago, penmanship was the sole focus as the educational climate was shifting, abandoning the Latin curriculum, allowing English language arts to become a recognized intricate school subject (Hobbs & Berlin, 2001). Instructional practices drew on rote learning, memorization through oral and written repetition, copying models, and "drill and practice" activities as they were positioned as receivers of knowledge made available through

recitation (Hawkins & Razali, 2012; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Writing has now become the copying of models and rote learning.

Penmanship was taught through imitation and practice before allowing students to write original compositions. According to Bryce (1924), allowing pupils to attempt original selections of writing before they have learned to write in sentence units and to spell is allowing them to form bad habits that will cause them and their teachers trouble in the future. He prompted teachers to train pupils to copy words, sentences, and longer models correctly, write sentences from dictation, learn proper rules for spelling, grammar, and punctuation used prior to being able to construct original pieces of work (Hawkins & Razali, 2012).

During the 1930s and 40s penmanship was renamed handwriting and considered to be a smaller subset of writing. The Great Depression had hit America, forcing penmanship instruction to be eliminated and for new practices to be established to relinquish the cost, but still provide instruction. Manuscript was brought into the schools which consisted of discrete letter forms that could be quickly mastered without intense practice (Hawkins & Razali, 2012). The change from penmanship to manuscript advocates that the purpose of writing is to communicate, and handwriting should be only a tool (Thornton, 1996). This was a shift for writing to become a way to communicate rather than a focus on penmanship.

In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s education steered away from formal isolated drills in copying handwriting, but instead encouraged the teachers to instruct handwriting with grammar within context of authentic composition (Hawkins & Razali, 2012). Whole language and emergent literacy movements in the 1970s and 80s deemphasized penmanship instruction even more to the point of only commenting on legibility, this once pillar of writing instruction has dwindled down to nothing (Goodman, 1986; Clay, 1975; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Runkel, 1985; Winkeljohann,

1979). Modern day penmanship varies throughout different writing curriculum, while no one believes that penmanship should dominate writing instruction, it is still a vital piece to becoming a competent writer (Feder & Majnemer, 2007; Graham, Harris, & Frank, 2000). Handwriting is re-emerging into the larger story of writing suggesting that penmanship could once again be included in writing curriculum as penmanship instruction lives on, shaping current practices in popular programs (Olsen, 2001). The pendulum swings back and forth between where penmanship should fall in a writing curriculum.

Writing as a product is more understood today as it refers to the actual written product produced. At the turn of the twentieth century, product and penmanship were still hand in hand as the product being produced was often a model of text written to showcase handwriting proficiency (Monaghan, 2005). Lessons in composition and expression emphasized on producing correct words (spelling) and sentences (grammar), through oral experience not written, reinforcing that writing was transposing spoken thoughts into written form (Hawkins & Razali, 2012). Students were taught lessons on sentence syntax, spelling, and punctuation to demonstrate the proper conventions of English language.

From Conventions of Writing to Writing Process

In the 1980s, whole language and emergent literacy and process writing movements gained popularity as emphasis of inauthentic word-and sentence-level writing came under criticism (Calkins, 1986; Goodman, 1986; Graves, 1983). Teachers were encouraged to teach writing mechanics on an individual basis within context of authentic writing, whereas children were encouraged to compose longer texts more often focusing more on the message a piece communicated (Hawkins & Razali, 2012). A greater mention of using correct conventions in

curriculum has been on the rise in recent years while the importance of the written product seems to be diminishing since the 1980s.

Shifts are extremely common in education, happening quite often, yet again we saw another shift in writing instruction in the 1980s from focusing on writing as penmanship to writing as an original piece, to moving away from writing terms and towards focusing on writing as a process (Hawkins & Razali, 2012). The call for process writing paved the way for new methods of writing instruction (Atwell, 1987). Writing now focused on the need to spend more time on individual assignments sustaining involvement over a period of time allowing students to reflect and revise their own works. Students engaged in planning and prewriting, crafted multiple drafts using revision to tweak their works, and finally compose a piece to publication for authentic audiences (Hawkins & Razali, 2012). The writing process provided an opportunity for increased student and teacher interaction through editing and conferencing.

The Refinement of the Writing Process as Used Today

The writing process allows instruction to range from sentence to sentence editing to commenting on the argument of point of view expressed throughout the piece (Hawkins & Razali, 2012). This shift of writing to process writing included ongoing response to a piece of work in progress. The teacher became more of an evaluator to assist students in their writing development supporting students to write in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences (Hawkins & Razali, 2012). This notion of reading like a writer in order to gain a greater understanding of writers' craft and conventions was promoted while educators were encouraged to move away from basal and textbooks. Educators were encouraged to move to providing children with mentor texts such as children's storybooks, magazines articles,

informational texts, and poetry (Smith, 1983; Turnbull & Butler, 1987; Hansen, 2001). The use of children's books to support writing instruction became an integral part of writing instruction.

The Impact of the CCSS on Writing Instruction Today

The inception of the CCSS has ushered in a new journey in education, with a majority of states adopting the Common Core State Standards. The standards are categorized into four broad areas: text types and purposes, production and distribution of writing, research to build and present knowledge, and range of writing. Noticeably penmanship, handwriting, and legibility are missing from the document, yet students must adhere to the ever-changing technology world with the need to demonstrate keyboarding skills to keep pace with a digitalized world (Hawkins & Razali, 2012).

Section 3: Methodology

Introduction

Studies have supported the use of mentor texts as a means of improving students' ability to write various genres independently across different content areas and identify different types of author's craft and implement into their own writing (Turner, 2015; McDowell, 2015). This project aimed to determine the importance of using mentor texts during writing instruction in the primary grades. This action research project served two main purposes. The primary goal was to showcase various mentor texts to provide students the opportunity to identify and implement different writing styles in their own writing. The secondary focus of this project was to motivate and improve students', independent writing of different genres. The outcomes aimed to improve students' excitement towards writing, becoming aware of different writing techniques, enhancing student discussion, and implementing writing strategies into their own writing in the form of sentence structure, word choice, sentence fluency, and organization.

Participants

The participants in this study attended a public, elementary school district located in a low-income urban city in the Northeast region of the United States. The population of the school district was approximately 21,000 students across thirty-six different schools. Of the thirty-six schools in the district; thirty are elementary schools, six are high schools, and one school is a behavior learning center. The population of students within the district was 47.1% Hispanic or Latino, 34.6% Black or African-American, 14.2% White, 2.6% Asian, 0.6 American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.1% Pacific Islander (Connecticut State Department of Education [CSDE], 2017). Within the population, there were 52.5% male students, 47.5% female students, 16.2% who are students with disabilities, and 14.7% were English Language Learners (CSDE, 2017).

According to the District Profile and Performance Report, 51.1% of the student population qualified for free and reduced lunch (CSDE, 2017).

This study will focus on students in a third grade classroom consisting of 22 students; eleven females and eleven males. Out of the 22 students one student receives special education support based on an Individualized Education Plan, three students have a 504 plan in place, three students receive Tier 2 intervention from a tutor in both math and literacy, and three students were retained. All students were between the ages of seven and nine. The population within the classroom mirrors the demographics of the school rather than the demographics of the district. Within the classroom the population is as follows 36% White, 36% Black or African-American, 27% Hispanic or Latino, 0% Asian, 0% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0% Pacific Islander.

Students participating in this study attended a preschool-8th grade urban magnet school with a population of approximately 490 students. This particular school was an Interdistrict elementary school, where 70% of students lived in a low-income urban city and the other 30% of students came from seven surrounding suburban towns. The population of students in this particular school was 33.7% White, 30.2% Hispanic or Latino, 28.4% Black or African American, 5.5% Asian, and 1.2% American Indian or Alaska Native. Students who receive special education services account for 7.8% of the student population, while 1.2% of the student population received EL services. Within the population, there were 51.4% female students and 48.6% were male students (CSDE, 2017). According to the School Profile and Performance Report 19.4% of students are eligible for free or reduced meals (CSDE District Profile, 2016-2017).

As the facilitator of this study, I have dual certification in regular and special education for grades Preschool through sixth grade. I am in my ninth year of teaching, with a master's degree and state certification in remedial reading. The duration of this qualitative study was over a twelve-week period which consisted of closely investigating students' learning through the use of anecdotal notes, observations, surveys, conferences, and student work samples. Even though the small sample was not sufficient enough to provide generalizable results, the intent of the action research was to learn about whether the implementation of using mentor text during writing instruction benefited students independent writing in various writing genres and improve my own writing instruction. If I were successful, then I would be better positioned to conduct professional development around writing instruction and would be able to replicate the study using a greater sample in the future.

Materials

Throughout the study, I used various mentor texts (see Appendix A) to support the genres of writing required by the CCSS in the primary grades. Within the authentic literature selected, I carefully selected rich mentor sentences that would function effectively as I focused on author's craft, word choice, sentence fluency, organization, writing conventions and figurative language. Students used interactive notebooks to take notes and practice a variety of skills and strategies to improve their writing. The notebooks were a reference tool which aided students throughout the writing period. In addition, students had a writing journal where they responded to daily prompts implementing the different skills and strategies learned through using mentor texts and mentor sentences.

Pedagogy

Student teacher interaction during this study mirrored Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, which is the difference between what the learner can do without help and what he can do with help. Teacher-directed instruction of writing skills and strategies highlighted mentor texts and mentor sentences. Students were presented with mini-lessons utilizing authentic literature followed by independent practice, teacher-directed projects and independent projects. Student work included different genres such as basic writing, sentence construction, informational, poetry, opinion, and narrative.

Instrumentation

Before the action research project commenced, I sent home permission slips so that students might participate. The rationale for requesting permission is to inform parents that their children will participate in a study in which results would be discussed and work samples would be shared. Students participated in a teacher-made survey to gauge their feelings regarding writing. Utilizing a survey allows the students to answer open-ended questions and give their opinions regarding a topic without added pressure.

Over the twelve-week study, five units were taught to students; writing basics, informational writing, poetry writing, opinion writing and narrative writing. At the beginning of each unit, students received a writing prompt to pre-assess their writing ability pertaining to the genre of writing. To conclude each unit, students received a post assessment writing prompt to evaluate the extent to which they had learned in-depth strategies and skills from the exemplars provided through the mentor texts and mentor sentences. Pre and post assessments reflected student gains in writing or highlighted the areas that warranted reinforcement through additional instruction.

In order to score student work throughout this study, I created rubrics which I modified from Ruth Culham and Rockin Resources to fit the needs of my students to analyze the various types of writing introduced during the twelve-week period.

I created a 5-point rubric for opinion, which was developed according to the features required for opinion and argument writing. The rubric encompassed the following categories; introduction, organization, supporting details, transitions words, conclusion, and mechanics of writing.

Table 1
Opinion Rubric

	5	3	1
Introduction	Student clearly stated their opinion.	Introduction was evident but needed to be strengthened.	Introduction was not clear.
Organization	Student was able to keep a natural flow by organizing reasons and supporting details.	Student lacked flow of writing and only some details were grouped and organized.	Needed more time for organization.
Supporting Details	Students provided several reasons which were supported by facts and details relating to the opinion.	Only some reasons were supported by elaborating and explaining reasons by supporting with facts and details.	Needed more time to develop and explain details to support various reasons provided.
Transition Words	Student used a variety of transitional words and phrases to link opinion to examples and supporting details.	Student lacked use of transition words.	Little or no transition words were evident.
Conclusion	Student provided a conclusion sentence that was related to the opinion stated.	Conclusion needed to be strengthened.	Conclusion was not clear.

Writing Mechanics	Student spelled grade appropriate words correctly and used correct capitalization and punctuation. Students recognized and corrected inappropriate fragments and run-ons sentences, to make sure complete sentences were used.	Some complete sentences were evident, along with some capitalization and punctuation errors. Some spelling errors were present.	Several incomplete sentences were evident, along with capitalization and punctuation errors. Several spelling errors were evident.
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I created a 5-point rubric for narrative, which was developed according to the features required for narrative writing. The rubric encompassed the following categories; introduction, organization, supporting details, transitions words, conclusion, and mechanics of writing, additional categories of dialogue and description were added.

Table 2
Narrative Rubric

	5	3	1
Introduction	Student used a fun and exciting beginning.	Introduction was evident but not fun or exciting..	Introduction was not clear.
Organization	Student was able to keep a natural flow by organizing sequence of events that unfolded naturally.	Student organized events, but did not have a natural flow.	Needed more time for organization sequence of events.
Dialogue/ Descriptions	Students provided dialogue and description to develop storyline through experiences and events which showed the responses of characters in various situations.	Only some dialogue and description has been developed.	Needed more time to develop dialogue and descriptions of characters.
Transition Words	Student used a variety of transitional words and	Student lacked use of transition words.	Little or no transition words were evident.

	phrases to support sequence of events.		
Conclusion	Student provided a conclusion that follows the narrated experiences or events.	Conclusion needed to be strengthened.	Conclusion was not clear.
Writing Mechanics	Student spelled grade appropriate words correctly and used correct capitalization and punctuation. Students recognized and corrected inappropriate fragments and run-ons sentences, to make sure complete sentences were used.	Some complete sentences were evident, along with some capitalization and punctuation errors. Some spelling errors were present.	Several incomplete sentences were evident, along with capitalization and punctuation errors. Several spelling errors were evident.

I created a 5-point rubric for informative, which was developed according to the features required for informational writing. The rubric encompasses the following categories; introduction, organization, supporting details, transitions words, conclusion, and mechanics of writing.

Table 3
Informative Rubric

	5	3	1
Introduction	Student introduced topic clearly and in an interesting way.	Introduction was evident but needed to be strengthened.	Introduction was not clear.
Organization	Student was able to keep a natural flow by organizing facts and details related to the topic.	Student lacked flow of writing and only included some facts and details related to topic.	Needed more time for organization.
Supporting Details	Student provided relevant information	Only some reasons were supported by	Needed more time to develop and explain

	which were supported by facts and details related to the topic.	elaborating and explaining reasons by supporting with facts and details.	details to support various reasons provided.
Transition Words	Ideas were connected to categories of information using words and phrases.	Student lacked use of transition words.	Little or no transition words were evident.
Conclusion	Student provided a concluding statement or paragraph related to the information presented.	Conclusion needed to be strengthened.	Conclusion was not clear.
Writing Mechanics	Student spelled grade appropriate words correctly and used correct capitalization and punctuation. Students recognized and corrected inappropriate fragments and run-ons sentences, to make sure complete sentences were used.	Some complete sentences were evident, along with some capitalization and punctuation errors. Some spelling errors were present.	Several incomplete sentences were evident, along with capitalization and punctuation errors. Several spelling errors were evident.

A 4-point rubric was used to assess students' poetry writing. Within the rubric the categories were title of poem, format, ideas, conventions, and presentation.

Table 4
Poetry Rubric

	4	2	1
Title of Poem	The poem has a strong title that matches the content of the poem.	The poem has a title related to the content of the poem.	The poem has a title that does not relate to the content of the poem or is not present.
Format	The poem is written correctly according to directions including	The poem shows some evidence of following poetry	Little to no evidence of following poetry directions.

	having the correct number of lines, rhyme, and rhythm.	directions.	
Ideas	The poem has creative ideas and word choices that flow together.	The poem has some creative ideas and word choices.	Poem shows little or no creativity or figurative language.
Conventions	The poem is free of capitalization, punctuation, and grammar errors.	The poem has some errors regarding capitalization, punctuation, or grammar.	The poem has numerous errors in capitalization, punctuation, and grammar.
Presentation	The poem is neat and colorful, with matching illustration (when applicable).	The poem is somewhat neat and colorful, with matching illustration (when applicable).	The poem needs improvement in presentation in regard to neatness and illustration (when applicable).

In order to assess students daily writing journals, I created a 4-point paragraph rubric.

The rubric encompassed the following categories; complete sentences, topic sentence, relevant details, transition words, and closing sentence.

Table 5
Paragraph Rubric

	4	3	2	1
Complete Sentences	The paragraph contains complete sentences.	The paragraph contains one incomplete sentence.	The paragraph contains two or three incomplete sentences.	The paragraph contains four or more incomplete sentences.
Topic Sentence	The paragraph contains a clear topic sentence.	The topic sentence needs improvement.	The topic sentence is not related the paragraph.	The paragraph does not contain a topic sentence.
Relevant Details	The paragraph provided sufficient amount	The paragraph needs more supporting	The paragraph contained little supporting	There was no supporting detail present in the

	of supporting detail related to the topic sentence.	details related to the topic.	details related to the topic.	paragraph.
Transition Words	A variety of transitional words and phrases were utilized to aid the sequence of the paragraph.	Some transitional words and phrases were used to aid the sequence of the paragraph.	More transitional words and phrases are needed to support writing.	No transitional words or phrases are evident.
Closing Sentence	Paragraph includes a conclusion that is different from the topic sentence.	Conclusion sentence needs to be strengthened.	Conclusion sentence was vague or incomplete.	Conclusion was not evident.

I have created secondary rubrics that I used throughout the various lessons that honed in on the 6 + 1 writing traits. Each 4-point rubric was created for a specific trait such as; word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, organization, ideas and content, voice, and presentation.

Table 6
Voice

	4	3	2	1
Voice	Student's writing uses highly expressive, engaging voice. You can get a sense of the writer's personality.	Student's writing is expressive and engaging with a good sense as to who the audience is. A sense of the writer's personality come through in several places.	Student uses expressive voice in a few places and doesn't understand who the audience is. There is little sense to who the writer is.	Student's writing is flat and there is no sense as to who the writer is.
Grade	A	B	C	D

Table 7
Word Choice

	4	3	2	1
Word Choice	Student's writing contains a variety of word choice, successfully experimenting with new vocabulary which creates images or impressions in the reader's mind.	Student uses familiar and simple words, experimenting very little. Words chosen convey the basic idea of topic and there is some attempt at varying word choice.	Student often misuses words and repeats simple vocabulary throughout their writing. Word choice is repetitive and confuses the message of their writing.	Student incorrectly uses words or vocabulary is limited or vague. Word use is repetitive and makes writing difficult to understand.
Grade	A	B	C	D

Table 8
Sentence Fluency

	4	3	2	1
Sentence Fluency	Sentences contain a strong flow and rhythm varying in structure, length, and complexity.	Sentences have good flow of rhythm and sometimes include transitional words and phrases. Most sentences are accurately constructed with occasional use of variation, structure, length, and complexity.	Sentences contain some flow of rhythm and include some transitional words and phrases. Some sentences are accurately constructed with little variation of structure, length, and complexity.	Sentences are disjointed and poorly constructed or incomplete and missing transitional words and phrases.
Grade	A	B	C	D

Table 9
Organization

	4	3	2	1
Organization	Student’s writing contains clear beginning, middle, and end. Transitions are smooth and pacing highlights important ideas.	There is some use of transitions to connect ideas and paragraphs with logical organization. Important ideas are highlighted but often repeats or skips in some places.	Connections between paragraphs are disjointed with loose organization. Structure of writing is unclear and limited important ideas are highlighted.	There is an unclear organizational pattern with evidence of beginning, middle, and end, yet it could be missing. There are little to no transitions and pacing does not flow nicely.
Grade	A	B	C	D

Table 10
Conventions

	4	3	2	1
Conventions	Capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and rules of structure and style are properly used.	Usually capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and rules of structure and style are used correctly.	Missing and/or incorrect capitalization and punctuation in many places. Needs significant editing for misspelled words and following the rules and structure of writing.	Needs significant editing for capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and following rules of structure and style.
Grade	A	B	C	D
<p>For next time, let’s work on:</p> <p>Spelling capitalization end marks commas quotation marks run-on sentences</p>				

incomplete sentence other punctuation
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Table 11
Ideas and Content

	4	3	2	1
Ideas & Content	Ideas are well developed and original while supporting details are thoroughly explained.	Most ideas are effectively explained and original while supporting details are .	Some ideas are developed and original while supporting details generally make sense.	Topic is unclear and lacks originality. Ideas are not explained thoroughly.
Grade	A	B	C	D

Procedure

Before implementation of the study, obtaining parent or guardian permission was a requirement. Once I secured permission, I distributed an 8-question survey to all students to ascertain their feelings about writing. I read the questions aloud to make sure students understood what was being asked. The survey results informed me about students' impressions regarding writing, and what they perceived as their strengths and weaknesses. The survey was given at the beginning of the twelve-week study and will be given at the end of the study to determine if the students' thoughts or feelings changed throughout the course of the study (see Appendix B).

Five units were taught throughout the twelve-week study; writing basics, informational, poetry, opinion, and narrative writing. During the writing basics unit, students received instruction on the difference between fragment, run-on, complete sentences, expanding sentences and the different types of sentences including simple, compound, and complex. Writing mechanics, including capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, and grammar became areas of focus within the unit because students required explicit instruction in the grammatical aspects of

writing. During the implementation of the poetry unit, explicit instruction in figurative language, including metaphor, simile, onomatopoeia, personification, alliteration, and idiom provided students with practice in the use of literary devices that would make their writing interesting. The remaining units of informational, opinion, and narrative focused on the structure of how to write the different types of writing, transition words, topic and conclusion sentences, staying on topic, and using supporting details from textual evidence or elaborating thoughts and ideas.

Each unit began with a writing prompt to pre-assess students' ability. I reviewed and analyzed student work to identify students' strengths and weakness of each writing genre. Lessons were developed based on the needs of students and mentor texts and sentences were selected to support lessons. Interactive notebooks were used to support instruction, allowing students to take notes on various skills and strategies and to practice skills in a non-threatening way. Additionally, students wrote in the journals daily, answering writing prompts to practice new skills learned and author's craft modeled from exemplar texts.

Limitations

As in most studies, this action research to determine the benefits of using mentor texts in writing instruction had limitations. The biggest indicator that could influence the results of this study is due to the fact that I went on maternity leave in the middle of data collection, which could affect students' writing development. Students continued to receive writing instruction with the long-term substitute, however the substitute was not a trained educator and may not deliver lessons as I would. Students may not put forth their best effort when working with another adult, knowing that their expectations differ from their teacher. Upon returning from maternity leave, students needed refresher lessons constraining the time frame of the study.

The study needed to be completed within a twelve-week period, making time a limitation of this study. Lesson planning took one third of the time due to planning high quality lessons around authentic literature selected and implementing the CCSS. In addition, the time included reviewing mentor texts for appropriateness, creating assignments based on the needs of the students, developing prompts and journal topics, and creating various activities to support lessons through center tasks. After providing lessons to students, I collected work samples so that I could begin data analysis and interpretation.

Section 4: Data Collection & Analysis

Introduction

The goal of this study was to motivate and improve students, independent writing of different genres. This was done by showcasing various mentor texts to provide students the opportunity to identify and implement different writing styles in their own writing and determine which strategies are effective in student engagement in writing. In order to measure the improvement of written products of third grade students, I considered three data points. The first data point were my anecdotal notes and observations of students' progress throughout the course of this study in four writing units. The second data point was a survey given to students at the beginning and end of this action research project to determine if the students' feelings toward writing had change based on the implementation of mentor texts. The final data point were the writing prompts as a pre and post assessment tool and student work samples to the measure strengths and weakness of students' writing skills in the different writing genres.

Data Collection

In order to evaluate various writing styles of third grade students at the beginning of each unit, I analyzed the student's writing utilizing rubrics with pre and post writing prompts. Throughout the action research project data collection from multiple sources took place over the course of twelve weeks. Sources included anecdotal notes, observations, surveys, conferences, and students work samples from a daily writing journal, writing skills notebook, and station activities.

I began the study by administering a student writing survey to determine their writing habits and the extent to which students liked to write. The purpose of the survey was to gain an understanding of students' feelings towards writing. Further, the survey provided valuable information on the varying levels of writing within the classroom. I read the questions to the students and students wrote their response. Anecdotal notes gave me more information regarding what students did not understand. At the end of the twelve week study, I administered the survey to identify any changes in student response in regards to writing habits and feelings towards writing.

Throughout the study, anecdotal notes and observations provided me with information regarding the development and instructional needs of student within the classroom. Anecdotal notes supported my instruction as I conferred with students and evaluated student work samples moved through the project. Observations yielded insights to give students quick support during writing instruction and check-ins as I circulated the room.

Over the course of the study, I taught five writing units; narrative, informational, opinion, poetry, and sentence structure. I administered a pre-assessment writing prompt at the onset of each new unit, which was evaluated using teacher created rubrics (See Tables 1-11). While evaluating the students writing pieces, I noted various skills the students were struggling with. The selection of mentor texts included informational, opinion, narrative, poetry, and descriptive, which provided a wide range of authentic literature to model various writing genres, strategies and author's craft and style to support writing development to third grade students.

In order for students to become good writers, showing students what good writing looks like is a necessity. Selection of quality mentor texts, which showcased the various styles of author's craft and genres of writing helped students develop as a writer. Construction of high-

quality mini lessons to teach different writing skills while using mentor texts have been created to allow students to go into their daily writing journal and practice implementing skills prior to publishing their pieces.

For example, first, I reviewed the papers for evidence that students understood the nature of narrative story structure in which I looked for rich descriptions of the main characters and their actions, explanations of the problems inherent within their narratives. Next, I examined students' work a second time to ascertain themes: Did students use descriptive words or action verbs appropriately in the narrative? I examined work products a third time to determine teaching points for my next lesson, and a fourth time to evaluate the follow up lessons.

Finding appropriate mentor texts for the different genres and levels of students was quite labor-intensive, because while there is a proliferation of literary text available and appropriate for narrative writing, a limited selection of non-fiction texts to accommodate students' various levels posed a possible impediment to the study. At the same time the use of too many exemplar mentor texts to represent the various genres or sentence structures has the potential to be overwhelming for young writers as they attempt to write like writers, thereby hindering their ability to grasp intended concepts and lesson outcomes.

Data Analysis

Table 1 represents opinion writing. A total of twenty-two students were assessed with a 5-point rubric. The range of scores from pretesting was from one to five. The mean score for students assessed at pretesting was 3/5 and 41% (n=9) scored at this level. Fourteen (n=3) scored above the mean and 45% (n=10) scored below the mean.

At posttesting twenty-two students were assessed. The range of scores at posttesting was from one to five. The mean score at posttesting was 5/5 in which 60% (n=13) scored at this level.

Nine students (n=9) or 40% scored below the mean. Analysis from pre to posttesting revealed a two-point increase, which indicates that mentor texts improved students' independent writing of opinion pieces. Eight students (n=8) or 41% increased their scores from 1/5 to 3/5, sustaining an increase of two points from pre to posttesting. Forty-five percent (n=10) increased their scores from 3/5 to 5/5 from pre to posttesting.

Table 2 represents informational writing. A total of twenty-two students (n=22) were assessed with a 5-point rubric. The range of scores from pretesting was from one to five. The mean score for students assessed at pretesting was 3/5 and 50% (n=11) scored at this level. Thirteen (n=3) scored above the mean and 36% (n=8) scored below the mean.

At posttesting twenty-two students were assessed. The range of scores at posttesting was from one to five. The mean score at posttesting was 3/5 in which 54% (n=12) scored at this level. Five students (n=5) or 23% scored above the mean and five students (n=5) or 23% scored below the mean. Analysis from pre to posttesting revealed no increase in the mean, which indicates the possibility that more instruction using mentor text might be needed. It can also indicate that the mentor text used should be reviewed to determine if it was a good match to the assignment. Five students (n=5) or 23% increased their scores, three students (n=3) or 13% increased their scores from 1/5 to 3/5, and two students (n=2) or 9% increased their scores from 3/5 to 5/5.

Table 3 represents narrative writing. A total of twenty-two students were assessed with a 5-point rubric. The range of scores from pretesting was from one to five. The mean score for students assessed at pretesting was 3/5 and 54% (n=12) scored at this level. Twenty-two (n=5) scored above the mean and 22% (n=5) scored below the mean.

At posttesting twenty-two students were assessed. The range of scores at posttesting was from one to five. The mean score at posttesting was 5/5 in which 73% (n=16) scored at this level.

One student (n=1) or 4% scored below the mean. Analysis from pre to posttesting revealed that four students increased their scores from 1/5 to 3/5, and eleven students (n=11) increased their scores from 3/5 to 5/5. This indicates that instruction using mentor texts increased students' overall skill in writing narrative pieces.

As a result of this project, mean scores for opinion and narrative writing indicates the use of mentor texts as models during writing instruction increased the overall quality and quantity of student writing.

Section 5: Discussion, Recommendations, Conclusion

Overview

Experts agree that foundational standards of writing are lacking in student work and are not being given the appropriate attention (Gallagher, 2011; NGA & CCSO, 2010; Gregorian, 2007; NCES, 2011; Graham & Perin, 2007). Beginning in kindergarten, CCSS states that with guidance students should have the ability to produce and expand complete sentences, demonstrate command of conventions of English grammar and usage when writing, and compose opinion, informative, and narrative texts (NGA & CCSO, 2010). Throughout the CCSS, each grade level builds upon the previous grade for writing expectations. As early as kindergarten, students are required to express their thoughts and ideas through writing, the CCSS clearly deems writing a valuable communication tool becoming more of a focus in the classroom.

The purpose of this research was to study the effectiveness of using mentor text to support writing instruction in the primary grades. Instructional pedagogy began with a read-aloud in a third grade classroom using various mentor texts, followed by scaffolded writing activities to foster student independence in writing. Embedding and highlighting mentor texts during writing instruction allowed students to assimilate the ideas and craft of the author into their own writing.

The ultimate goal of writing instruction is to be able to clearly express your thoughts and ideas in many different types of writing. This study indicates that the use of mentor texts for writing instruction, taken together with a writers' workshop approach, is an effective means for supporting student writing in a variety of genres. As students acquire the tools for becoming proficient writers, they write with excitement, confidence, and independence.

We now turn to the research questions that informed the purpose of this study to gain further insights into the effects of mentor texts on writing instruction in the primary grades.

Findings and Interpretations for Research Question 1: What types of mentor texts can best support writing instruction?

A mentor text is any piece of literature that both the teacher and student can return to and reread for many different purposes (Dorfman, 2013), and corresponds to the findings for RQ1: “What types of mentor texts can best support writing instruction?” Given the vast amount of literature available to teachers and students in schools the list of mentor texts is endless. Culham (2014) defined a mentor texts as “any text, print or digital, that you can read with a writer's eye” (Culham, 2014, p. 9). Picture books, chapter books, poetry, articles, and short passages gave my novice writers the ability to use the text as a mentor, share the pen with the author, and gaining confidence by taking risks and playing with language in their own writing.

When individuals look to learn something new, they look to an expert to guide and support them through watching, analyzing, even copying the expert until they have the ability to complete the task independently (Gallagher, 2014). An apprenticeship approach, used in conjunction with mentor texts, provided the methodology by which my students began to transfer knowledge of the way writers write into their own practice. They learned that borrowing an idea or imitating the style of an author was not cheating, and that collaboration in the production of a piece of writing helped them to acquire the tools of a writer (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2017). When students encountered struggles in their writing, they learned that they only need look to the experts (the writers) to guide them in their pursuit to become successful in their writing (Appendix A).

Findings and Interpretations for Research Question 2: How can teachers use mentor texts in the primary grades while aligning instruction with the CCSS?

Writing has a strong presence throughout the CCSS, but students are not meeting the basic writing standards and teachers are at a loss on how to help the student succeed (Gregorian, 2007) and corresponds to the findings of RQ2: “How can teachers use mentor texts in the primary grades while aligning instruction with common core?” Several strategies were considered and the commonality they had with the CCSS when selecting mentor texts (see Appendix C).

Writers’ workshop includes daily writing in a writer’s notebook and a writing skills notebook that provides students with examples of writing that they can refer back to. The skills notebook and writing journal are used in conjunction with the mentor text, as reinforcement of the skills being taught through the use of the mentor text. Allowing students time to express their thoughts and using their skill notebook as a reference tool links to the common core anchor standard CCRA.W.10 (NGA & CCSSO, 2010).

Linking reading and writing supports students’ understanding of both subjects. Students often struggle with the organization of their thoughts and ideas, getting lost or off topic in their writing. Using mentor texts helps show students how authors organize their thoughts and ideas in different kinds of texts. Having students utilize the strategy of scrambled sentences or scrambled paragraphs helps students understand how to put thoughts and ideas into the proper order and correctly formulate a sentence or paragraph. As students are reading the words or sentences they need to comprehend what is happening in the sentence or paragraph in order to place them in the correct order aligning with the common core anchor standards for both reading and writing CCRA.R.5 and CCRA.W.5 (NGA & CCSSO, 2010).

Students are shown how published authors construct sentences when writing, providing novice writers with expert examples through the use of mentor texts. By showcasing a mentor text sentence teacher supported discussion of writing, parts of speech, revising, and creating sentences, all based on a single sentence. After selecting a sentence from a mentor text, students will embark on a weeks' worth of activities focused on the sentence. These strategies supported the common core anchor standards for writing.

Findings and Interpretations for Research Question 3: How do students interact with the process of using mentor texts in the primary classroom?

Gallagher (2014) affirmed that students need to learn to think and talk like writers, and become immersed in writing to become successful writers, which answers RQ3 “How do students interact with the process of using mentor texts in the primary classroom?”

When using a mentor text to teach reading and writing, students decomposed the author's thoughts and ideas by utilizing the strategies of close reading and close writing. When students used close reading, they provided thoughtful, critical analysis of a text that focused on specific details and patterns in order to develop a deep understanding of the texts structure by directing the reader's attention to the text. As students practiced close reading they read like detectives, continuously breaking down the components of the author's writing to derive meaning and using their anecdotal notes to compose their own writing samples.

By practicing think-alouds, students see the thought process of an experienced writer and allowed them to have a conversation to better understand their ideas. Sharing the pen or interactive writing is another way students interacted with mentor texts to become stronger independent writers. Students shared the pen with famous authors, taking their ideas and putting

their own spin on it. Interactive writing made the writing process visible to the students, enabling them to borrow the ideas of the author and incorporated ideas into their own writing.

Mentor texts provided students with examples of expert writing. Students used selected mentor texts to analyze the author's craft and then apply these into their own writing. McDowell (2015) shared that mentor texts can influence students' writing habits, creating a significant relationship between reading and writing, which will lead to an increase in the quality of student writing.

Recommendations for Action and Further Study

The action research project highlighted the significance of utilizing mentor text during writing instruction. Future studies might include a larger sample size across several grade levels, since the study sampled a small group of third grade students. Additionally, conducting a study with a control group would help to verify the effectiveness of mentor texts when used during writing instruction. Another step for future research would be to extend the timeframe of the study to capturing an entire year's worth of using mentor texts during writing instruction.

The strategies discussed in this paper can easily be adapted to various grade levels. Further research should include using mentor texts when teaching poetry writing, as the findings were inconclusive due to maternity leave of the teacher. Additionally, conducting a study to include other writing units such as expository, letter writing, and descriptive writing could show additional benefits to using mentor texts to support writing instruction.

As of this writing, I have shared the results of the project at the 7th Annual Sacred Heart University Literacy Conference in April 2019. Additionally, I am seeking to share my research in the form of a publication that will be submitted to Digital Commons, the university repository for scholarly research that is accessed by the public. Finally, I will discuss the results with other

elementary educators at my school to spread awareness around the benefits of, and strategies useful for supporting independent writers and using mentor texts to support writing instruction.

Conclusion

When students have the opportunity to interact with books and authors on a daily basis, and to practice writing in an environment predicated on support and encouragement, authorship becomes real as they imitate their role models and write their own stories. “Literature inspires, influences, instructs young writers by providing examples needed for effective learning” (Lancia, 1997). Mentor texts have had a positive impact on my students and giving them the confidence to try new things. Dorfman and Cappelli (2007) stated that mentor texts “help writers notice things about an author’s work that is not like anything they might have done before and empower them to try something new” (p.3). The more students are exposed to authentic literature categorized as mentor texts, the stronger their writing will become. This study confirmed the significance mentor text has had on novice writers.

Mentor texts supported and increased students’ awareness regarding the craft and structure of writing, which in turn enhanced students’ self-efficacy. Providing students with examples of published writing gave them the freedom of choice, fostered creativity, collaboration, and courage when writing. This study provided evidence that teachers should use mentor texts when instructing students in the area of writing. Not only did students motivation to write increase, but their foundational knowledge of various techniques that authors used were developed. In closing, mentor texts have the potential to play a major role in students’ writing through their educational journey and beyond. There are endless opportunities to what a mentor text can do to activate a child’s writing and thinking.

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Appendix A

Mentor Texts by Writing Genre

Poetry Mentor Texts

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Was mentor sentence used?	Notes, Strategies, or Project
Silver Seeds	Paul Paolilli	2001	Penguin Group		Acrostic Poetry
Santa Clauses: Short Poems from the North Pole	Bob Raczka	2014	Carolrhoda Books		Haiku Alliteration Personification Metaphor Simile
Moosetache	Margie Palatini	1997	Scholastic Inc.	X	Alliteration
Gingerbread Baby	Jan Brett	1999	Scholastic Inc.	X	Alliteration
The Day the Crayons Quit	Drew Daywalt	2013	Philomel Books	X	Idiom
Polar Express	Chris Van Allsburg	1985	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	X	Simile
Snowflake Bentley	Jacqueline Briggs Martin	1998	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	X	Simile
Night Rabbits	Lee Posey	1999	Peachtree Publishers	X	Simile Descriptive language
In November	Cynthia Rylant	2000	Voyager Books	X	Metaphor
Thundercake	Patricia Polacco	1990	Philomel Books	X	Personification Onomatopoeia
Come On, Rain!	Karen Hesse	1999	Scholastic Press	X	Personification

Hello, Harvest Moon	Ralph Fletcher	2003	Clarion Books	X	Personification
Water Dance	Thomas Locker	1997	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	X	Personification Visualization
The Umbrella	Jan Brett	2004	G. P. Putnam's Sons	X	Onomatopoeia

Informational Mentor Texts

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Was mentor sentence used?	Notes
Tornadoes!	Gail Gibbons	2009	Holiday House	X	Close Reading Asking Questions
What if You Had Animal Hair?	Sandra Markle	2015	Scholastic Inc.		Problem/Solution
Actual Size	Steve Jenkins	2004	HMH Books for Young Readers		Math-Measurement Unit
National Geographic Pandas	Anne Schreiber	2010	National Geographic Children's Books		Text Features
Turtle Tide: The Ways of Sea Turtles	Stephen R. Swinburn & Bruce Hiscock	2005	Boyd's Mills Press		
National Geographic Readers: Planets	Elizabeth Carney	2012	National Geographic Children's Books		Text Features

Oil Spill!	Melvin Berger	1994	Harper Collins Books		Text Structure: Cause and Effect
Flash, Crash, Rumble and Roll	Franklyn M. Branley & True Kelley	1999	Harper Collins		Text Structure: Cause and Effect
Shark of Dolphin? How Do You Know?	Melissa Stewart	2011	Enslow Elementary		Text Structure: Compare and Contrast
What's the Difference Between a Turtle and a Tortoise?	Trisha Speed Shaskan	2015	C. Press/F. Watts		Text Structure: Compare and Contrast
Ant Cities	Arthur Dorros	1988	Scott Foresman		Text Structure: Descriptive
What the Moon Is Like	Franklyn Branley	2000	Harper Collins		Text Structure: Descriptive
Fossil	Bill Thomson	2013	Two Lions		Text Structure: Problem & Solution
Where Does the Garbage Go?	Paul Showers	2015	Harper Collins		Text Structure: Problem and Solution
Who Was Neil Armstrong?	Roberta Edwards	2018	Penguin Workshop		Text Structure: Sequential Order
Trapped by the Ice	Michael McCurdy	1997	Walker Childrens		Text Structure: Sequential Order

Opinion Mentor Texts

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Was mentor sentence used?	Notes
Hey, Little Ant	Phillip M. Hoose	1998	Tricycle Press	X	Point of View Oreo Writing Strategy
The Perfect Pet	Margie Palatini	2003	Katherine Tegen Books	X	Paired Reading (Informational Text)
Earrings	Judith Viorst	2010	Atheneum Books Young Readers	X	Author's Message Connections
Dear Mrs. LaRue	Mark Teague	2003	Scholastic Press	X	Sequence Point of View
My Teacher for President	Kay Winters	2008	Puffin Books	X	Debate
The Day the Crayons Quit	Drew Daywalt	2013	Philomel Books	X	Persuasive letter to each crayon
The Great Kapok Tree	Lynne Cherry	1990	Voyager Books Harcourt Inc.	X	Sequencing Point of View letter from animal
I Wanna Iguana	Karen Kaufman Orloff	2004	G. P. Putnam's Sons	X	Letter to teacher for classroom pet
I Wanna New Room	Karen Kaufman Orloff	2010	G. P. Putnam's Sons Books	X	Letter to parent for new room

Narrative Mentor Texts

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Was mentor sentence used?	Notes
A Moment in Time	Jennifer Butenas	2012	The Perfect Moment LLC.	X	Small Moments -Watermelon Seed Writing
Rollercoaster	Marla Frazee	2003	HMH Books for Young Readers	X	Create own rollercoaster
The Best Story	Eileen Spinelli	2008	Dial Books for Young Kids	X	
Owl Moon	Jane Yolen	1987	Philomel Books	X	Figurative Language Story Elements
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day	Judith Viorst	1972	Atheneum Books for Young Readers	X	Character Analysis Cause/Effect Connections
Fireflies	Julie Brinckloe	1986	Perfection Learning	X	
Thank You, Mr. Falker	Patricia Polacco	1998	Scholastic Inc.	X	Theme Synthesising
The Relatives Came	Cynthia Rylant	2001	Atheneum Books for Young Readers		Connections

6 + 1 Writing Traits- Ideas

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Was mentor sentence used?	Notes
Who Is the Beast?	Keith Baker	1994	HMH Books for Young Readers		
Imagine a Day	Sarah L. Thomson	2005	Atheneum for Young Readers		
The Honest-to-Goodness Truth	Patricia C. McKissack	2000	Aladdin Paperbacks	X	Connections Synthesizing Inferencing Idioms
Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street	Roni Schotter	1999	Scholastic Inc.	X	Gives advice
The Three Questions	Jon J. Muth	2002	Scholastic Press		Text Structure Author's Purpose Cause and Effect Themes
Faraway Home	Jane Kurtz	2000	Gulliver Books	X	

6 + 1 Writing Traits- Organization

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Was mentor sentence used?	Notes
Courage	Bernard Waber	2002	HMH Books Young Readers		
The Great Gracie Chase:	Cynthia Rylant	2001	Blue Sky Press		Sequencing

Stop That Dog!					
Plantzilla	Jerdine Nolen	2002	Silver Whistle		Letter Writing
The Paperboy	Dav Pilkey	1996	Orchard Books		Beginning, Middle, End
When Lightning Comes in a Jar	Patricia Polacco	2002	Philomel Books	X	Connections
Dear Mr. LaRue: Letters from Obedience School	Mark Teague	2003	Scholastic Press		Point of View

6 + 1 Writing Traits- Sentence Fluency

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Was mentor sentence used?	Notes
One Tiny Turtle	Nicola Davies	2001	Candlewick Press		Similes Informative/ Narrative
Rap a Tap Tap: Here's Bojangles- Think of That!	Leo Dillon	2002	Blue Sky Press		Word Families(ap)
Don't Take Your Snake for a Stroll	Karin Ireland	2003	Harcourt Children's Books		
Bad Dog	Nina Laden	2000	Walker Childrens		
Come on, Rain!	Karen Hesse	1999	Scholastic Press		Visualization

Twilight Comes Twice	Ralph Fletcher	1997	Clarion Books		Descriptive Language
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6 + 1 Writing Traits- Voice

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Was mentor sentence used?	Notes
The Frog Principal	Stephanie Calmenson	2001	Scholastic Press		Paired Text (Informational -Frogs)
Red Rubber Boot Day	Mary Lyn Ray	2005	HMH for Young Readers		Connections Verbs Plural Nouns
My Big Dog	Janet Stevens and Susan Stevens Crummel	2009	Dragonfly Books		
Straight to the Pole	Kevin O'Malley	2004	Walker Childrens		
Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!	Dr. Seuss and Jack Prelutsky	1998	Alfred A. Knopf		Character Analysis Summary Theme Sequence of Events
We the Kids: The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States	David Catrow	2005	Puffin Books		Vocabulary

6 + 1 Writing Traits- Word Choice

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Was mentor sentence used?	Notes
Max's Words	Kate Banks	2006	Farrar, Straus, & Giroux		Connections & Visualization
My Teacher Likes to Say	Denise Brennan-Nelson	2004	Sleeping Bear Press		Idioms, cliches
Armadillo Tattletale	Helen Ketteman	2000	Scholastic Press		Moral/Lesson
Piggie Pie!	Margie Palatini	1995	Clarion Books		Comparing Text with Zoom Broom
Food Fight!	Carol Diggory Shields	2002	Hand Print		
Mud	Mary Lyn Ray	2001	HMH for Young Readers		Story Map
Hello, Harvest Moon	Ralph Fletcher	2003	Clarion Books		Context Clues
Dog Breath	Dav Pilkey	1994	Blue Sky Press		Fact or Opinion Sequencing

6 + 1 Writing Traits- Conventions

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Was mentor sentence used?	Notes
Punctuation Takes a Vacation	Robin Pulver	2003	Holiday House		Punctuation

Words Are Categorical Series	Brian P. Cleary	2012	Millbrook Press		
Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!	Mo Williams	2003	Hyperion Books for Children	X	Opinion
Duck on a Bike	David Shannon	2002	Scholastic Inc.		Adjectives Point of View

6 + 1 Writing Traits- Presentation

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Was mentor sentence used?	Notes
I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato	Lauren Child	2000	Candlewick Press		Connections
Giant Pandas	Gail Gibbons	2002	Holiday House		Informational text
A Bad Case of Stripes	David Shannon	1998	Scholastic Inc.		Cause and Effect
The Other Side	Jacqueline Wood	2001	G.P. Putnam Sons		Themes: Friendship Tolerance community

Basic Writing Unit: Mentor Sentences

Title of Book or Text	Author	Date of Publication	Publisher	Notes
A Cow on the Couch	Glen A. Penrod	2017	Glen Penrod	Expanding Sentences
Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed	Eileen Christelow	2014	Clarion Books	Story Spin- Fill in the Blanks Recreate

My Many Colored Days	Dr. Seuss	1996	Knopf Books for Young Readers	My Many Colored Days Poem
Officer Buckle and Gloria	Peggy Rathmann	1995	G. P. Putnam's Sons	Proper Nouns
Chrysanthemum	Kevin Henkes	1991	Greenville Books	Plural Nouns Proper Nouns
Stellaluna	Janell Cannon	1993	HMH Books for Young Readers	Plural Nouns Possessives
If You Give a Mouse a Cookie	Laura Numeroff	1997	Harper Collins	Contractions Story Spin- Fill in the Blanks Recreate
The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything	Linda Williams	1986	Harper Collins	Possessives Contractions
Diary of a Worm	Doreen Cronin	2003	Harper Collins	Compound Words
Diary of a Fly	Doreen Cronin	2007	Scholastic	Adjectives
'Twas the Night Before Thanksgiving	Dave Pilkey	1990	Scholastic Paperback	Adjectives
Snowman at Christmas	Caralyn Buehner & Mark Buehner	2005	Scholastic	Capitalize Holidays
Three Cheers for Tacky	Helen Lester	1996	HMH Books for Younger Readers	Ending Punctuation
Moosetache	Margie Palatini	1997	Scholastic	Adjectives (shades of meaning)
Click, Clack, Moo Cows That Type	Doreen Cronin	2000	Atheneum Books for Young Readers	Onomatopoeia
Thunder Cake	Patricia Polacco	1990	Philomel Books	Vivid Verbs

Enemy Pie	Derek Munson	2000	Chronicle Books	Subjects and Predicate
The Man Who Walked Between the Towers	Mordicai Gerstein	2007	Square Fish	Compound Sentences
I Need My Monster	Amanda Noll & Howard McWilliam	2009	Flashlight Press	Quotation Marks Dialogue
Tough Boris	Mem Fox & Kathryn Brown	1994	HMH Books for Young Readers	Simple Sentences -Story Spin- Fill in the Blanks Recreate
The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Eric Carle	1981	Philomel Books	Word Choice -Story Spin- Fill in the Blanks Recreate
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs	Judi Barrett & Ronald Barrett	1994	HMH Books for Young Readers	Complex Sentences
Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun	Maria Dismondy	2008	Cardinal Rule Press	Possessives
Crickwing	Janell Cannon	2000	Harcourt Children's Books	Complex Sentences
My School's a Zoo!	Stu Smith & David Catraw	2004	Scholastic Inc.	Possessive Pronouns
The Keeping Quilt	Patricia Polacco	2001	Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books	Commas in a Series

Appendix B
Writing Survey Pre and Post Results

Questions	Response Prior to Study	Response After Study
Do you enjoy writing? Why or why not?	-5 students like writing because it's fun. -17 students do not like writing because it is difficult and boring.	-3 students still do not like writing because it is difficult -19 students like writing because it is fun and a way to express themselves
What do you like most about writing?	-writing in cursive -drawing pictures	-you can share your thoughts and ideas -writing in cursive -stretching out sentences -adding details -poetry -expressing your feelings
What do you like least about writing?	-It makes my hand hurt -writing homework -writing about myself -Writing paragraphs -writing big sentences -free choice topics	-free choice topics -not having enough time to write
What is your favorite part of our writing block?	-gluing activities in our notebooks -reader responses	-stations -working with peers -using mentor texts -sentence detectives -daily writing
What is your least favorite part of our writing block?	-stations -daily writing -mentor texts -mentor sentences -grammar	-grammar
What is something you do really well when writing?	-adding details -paragraph writing -spelling -handwriting	-staying on topic -elaborating my thoughts and ideas -making revisions
What is something you feel you need to work on when writing?	-writing stronger sentences -writing complete sentences -adding details -spelling	-spelling -capitalization

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -run on sentences -capitalization and punctuation -handwriting -elaborating 	
<p>Is writing important? Why or why not?</p>	<p>-All students believe writing is important because they need it when they are grown-ups</p>	<p>-All students still believe writing is important because they need it when they are grown-ups</p>

Appendix C

Common Core Anchor Standards

Reading

Key Ideas and Details

CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCRA.R.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCRA.R.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

CCRA.R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCRA.R.5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCRA.R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

CCRA.W.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCRA.W.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCRA.W.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured events sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

CCRA.W.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCRA.W.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

CCRA.W.6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Range of Writing

CCRA.W.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Overall Results

Table 1
Opinion Writing

Score	Pre-Writing Assessment	Post Writing Assessment
5	14% (3 students)	60% (13 students)
3	41% (9 students)	36% (8 students)
1	45% (10 students)	4% (1 student)

Table 2
Informational

Score	Pre-Writing Assessment	Post Writing Assessment
5	14% (3 students)	23% (5 students)
3	50% (11 students)	54% (12 students)
1	36% (8 students)	23% (5 student)

Table 3
Narrative

Score	Pre-Writing Assessment	Post Writing Assessment
5	23% (5 students)	73% (16 students)
3	54% (12 students)	23% (5 students)
1	23% (5 students)	4% (1 student)