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Writing workshop in a whole language classroom: Effects on reading comprehension, written language, and writing skills

Kathleen Muriel Dodd

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WRITING WORKSHOP
IN A WHOLE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM:
EFFECTS ON READING COMPREHENSION,
WRITTEN LANGUAGE,
AND
WRITING SKILLS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education: Elementary

by
Kathleen Muriel Dodd
September 1995
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ABSTRACT

Kathleen Muriel Dodd
California State University, San Bernardino, 1995

The essential issue at hand is that too many American students have exited the public school system without adequate reading and writing skills. Corporation managers complain that a large percentage of workers entering the work force are inadequate in reading and writing (Fiske, 1992). The results of current research tends to support this criticism and to urge major changes in Language Arts instruction. Basically, the studies call for a meaning-centered approach to the Language Arts program in which the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and the teaching of language skills in meaningful contexts is emphasized. Writing programs specifically need to include attention to the various stages of the writing process—from prewriting through postwriting and from fluency and content, through form and correctness.

The purpose of this project is two-fold. First, the study will research the historical perspectives of educational philosophies and how they have affected Language Arts curriculum development. Since writing is essential to learning and becoming literate, elementary teachers must involve all of their students in meaningful writing. Thus secondly, the project will examine and test the theories behind writing workshop within the context of a Whole Language, second grade classroom.

The research question to be examined is: Do second grade students in a whole language structured classroom, who participate in writing workshop activities, develop and demonstrate greater improvement in writing skills and reading comprehension than those who are not involved in writing workshop activities?
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In 1987, California adopted the English-Language Arts Framework which was based on research that indicated a need for a change in the way reading, writing, listening and oral language was taught in the California public schools. In the two decades prior to the implementation of the framework, writing had been essentially taught through a skill-based program that used brief, unfocused narratives. Worksheets which lacked meaningful content or that were constructed to teach writing skills in isolation were commonplace. Even at the peak of its popularity, programs such as Power Writing primarily emphasized the structure of writing and did not concentrate on meaning. Teachers became disenchanted with the rigidity, the lack of spontaneity, and the lack of creativity with this formula type writing. Many teachers felt the writing curriculum failed to motivate students’ desire to write, failed to provide enough experiential practice in writing, and failed to connect learning in meaningful ways (Gursky, 1991).

In his study of the state of education in American schools, John Goodlad (1983) in A Place called School recognized that “American schools are in trouble” (p.1). He stated that the American population has lost faith in the school system and it seems that over the past fifty years public criticism has escalated to a dismal view of uncertainty and a lack of confidence in both those who staff the schools and the institution itself. In his study of elementary school classrooms, he found writing programs in which students were merely assigned low-level tasks. Papers were read only for corrections and to locate mistakes.

The current English-Language Arts Framework calls for a departure from
this ineffective, mismatch of writing instruction. There are several models for
teaching writing in the elementary grades, but, clearly, no single model or
method is a panacea for the teaching of writing. However, in terms of
addressing the framework criteria, writing workshop or process writing does
offer an extensive, open-ended, child-centered, meaning-centered approach to
the teaching of writing so that it becomes an integral part of whole language
instruction. It is the intent of this study to examine the effects and outcomes of
learning on students who are taught to write using writing workshop and to
research the historical perspectives of educational philosophies and how they
have affected curriculum development.

Statement of the Problem

The essential issue at hand is that too many American students have
exited the public school system without adequate reading and writing skills
(Fiske, 1992). Corporation managers complain that a large percentage of
workers entering the work force are inadequately prepared in their reading and
writing skills. Through the research of Kenneth Goodman, Donald Graves, Lucy
McCormick Calkins, Andrea Butler, Jan Turbill, Regie Routman, Marie Clay,
Nancie Atwell, and Carol Avery, it became evident that a change in Language
Arts instruction was eminent. Their studies call for a meaning-centered
approach to Language Arts. They advocate instructional programs which
emphasize the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and the
teaching of language skills in meaningful contexts. Writing programs
specifically need to include attention to the various stages of the writing
process, from prewriting through postwriting and from fluency and content
through form and correctness.

The purpose of this paper is to examine and test the theories behind
writing workshop within the context of a whole language, second grade classroom. Since writing is an important part of the whole language approach to learning and becoming literate, it is essential for elementary teachers to choose a method for teaching all of their students to write. Therefore, this study asks the question: Will the implementation of writing workshop in the classroom prove to be a significant factor in increasing writing competency and reading comprehension?

Significance

Writing is an essential element of communication. In the past decade, writing skills of high school graduates have been on the decline (Goodlad, 1983). A meaningful model of writing is needed throughout the elementary grades to help students improve their ability to write and to view themselves as successful writers. Positive attitudes towards reading and writing by students, daily practice, and self esteem, are an important part of success. Instruction is more meaningful if it is given in a timely manner exactly when the child needs it. Writing should be based on the students’ experiences and embedded in the whole language approach to learning. A better understanding of how children learn to write will assist teachers to make effective decisions for classroom instruction.

Statement of Hypothesis

The national percentile reading and writing scores derived from the CTBS test, writing sample rubric scores, and Reading Recovery test scores (for Chapter 1 students) who have experienced writing workshop will reflect a significant growth compared with students who have experienced a traditional skills-based
method of instruction. This will be validated through pretesting and post-
testing.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, it was assumed that:
1. Learning to write complements learning to read.
2. As writing improves so will reading and other language skills.
3. Young children can write.
4. Children want to write and will write with more frequency.
5. Children possess knowledge, interests, and experiences to write about.
6. The instruction of language structure, grammar, and spelling are
meaningfully embedded in the writing process.

Limitations

1. The study was restricted to implementing and examining writing
workshop in the authors’ second grade classroom and the growth was
measured against another second grade classroom which did not use this writing
process model.
2. Using the CTBS test to assess growth in reading and written language
is not a form of authentic assessment.
3. Using a writing rubric to measure growth in writing leaves some room
for personal judgment and is not absolute.
4. The study is an in house study.
5. The study does not include any limited English students.

Delimitations

1. Both classroom teachers are equally capable as measured by the
principal's assessment and have been teaching for over fifteen years.

2. The two classes have been equalized by gender, special needs students, Chapter I students, and average (mean) reading scores.

3. The duration of the study was nine months.

**Definition of Terms**

1. **Writing Workshop** - Writing workshop is a daily time during which the students work on writing, struggle with evolving texts, develop writing skills, and learn to use writing as an effective tool for communication and learning (Avery, 1993).

2. **Whole Language** - Whole language is an entire philosophy about teaching, learning, and the role of language in the classroom (Gursky, 1991). It uses authentic literature and real books. It puts learners in control of what they read and write. It also demands new roles for teachers and learners and a new view of how learning and teaching are related. Whole language emphasizes the need for an integrated, problem-solving curriculum (Goodman, 1992).

3. **Chapter 1 Student** - A Chapter 1 student refers to any student who is educationally deprived because of his/her social-economic situation (Federal Register, 1989). These students are of normal ability but they are low in achievement.

4. **Process Writing** - Process writing refers to the process when a writer goes through five steps towards finishing a writing project: Prewrite, Organize, Write, Evaluate, and Revise (Solomon, 1986).

5. **Reading Recovery** - Reading Recovery is an early intervention program for severely at-risk first-graders who are identified early in the fall of first grade. Students spend thirty minutes a day in intensive, one-to-one instruction on reading and writing for fifteen to twenty weeks. The goal is to
accelerate the student to the average level of classroom peers and to make him/her an independent reader with a self-improving system. The program was developed, researched, and tested by New Zealand psychologist and educator Marie Clay, where it is a nationally instituted and funded program (Routman, 1988).

6. **CTBS** - The Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills is a standardized test series designed to measure achievement in the basic skills commonly taught in schools throughout the United States. The subject areas measured are reading, language, spelling, mathematics, study skills, science, and social studies.

7. **Writing Rubric** - A writing rubric is a tool used to assess a student’s written composition by converting it to a numerical score based on predetermined criteria. This criteria helps rank students into categories such as beginning writer, emerging writer, practicing writer, experienced writer, and exceptional writer. A writing rubric can be designed by anyone who needs to assess student writing and convert it to a numerical score.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

During the last 100 years of American public education history, there has been an ongoing struggle to define the purposes of education, promote learning theories, improve teacher education, define classroom environment, demand accountability of what is being taught by teachers and how well students are learning, and prepare students for the workforce. At this point, one might think that the United States public education system should be characterized as an institution well grounded in educational philosophy, learning theory, and one which shows clear evidence of student learning. With so much effort and concern focused on the schooling system, the United States should rank among the highest echelon worldwide in this arena.

However, to the dismay of many educators, current statistics reveal that a great deal of what has been done in the name of education has not worked very well. The 1988 National Assessment of Educational Progress, provides statistics that show over 23 million adults in our country cannot read well enough to fill out tax forms, read a menu, or read the warning labels on medicine bottles (Larrick, 1987). Over half of the unemployed in this country lack the basic reading and writing skills necessary to get a job, and according to the U.S. Department of Education, the number of functional illiterates in this country grows by 2.3 million yearly. Furthermore, over one million students drop out of school each year. In education, the United States ranks 49th of 159 U.N. members in its literacy rate (Larrick, 1987). In light of such dismal findings, supporters of whole language theory offer some insights into the failure of
American public schools.

Kenneth Goodman (1992) suggests the struggle to attain literacy in other English-speaking countries has surpassed the United States. New Zealand, for example, has had an admirable history of citizens who have attained literacy through a progressive educational system that dates back to the 1930’s. Today, New Zealand is credited with having the highest literacy rate in the world. Changes in the English school system since World War II are grounded in progressive education. Australia has reconstructed their literacy curricula based on the research from Britain, North America and New Zealand. Following their lead, Australia has created a dynamic educational community in only a few short decades. In the 1960s, Canada rejected the use of the American basal reading texts, reading theory, and curriculum development in general, and began producing its own language arts program based on the ideas of whole language theory. Canada was strongly influenced by the Bullock (1975) report, _A Language for Life_ and its holistic premises. Whole language instruction seems to be the common thread shared by these leading nations in the advancement of literacy (Goodman, 1992). Is it possible that the United States needs to more carefully examine whole language theory as an important change agent in curriculum development?

Goodman (1992) also concludes that this restructuring of education has been an easy evolution for these countries; but, for the United States, joining this struggle against overall illiteracy can be compared to a revolution. Change is inevitable, but as Goodman reflects, the United States is so politically entrapped by a traditional structure, that the country has been fruitlessly trying to change the wrong things in its educational system. Consequently, even though the whirlwinds of change in curriculum are ever present, they seem to have had little effect on the schooling institution in the past four decades.
The United States is a nation that demands that the public school system equip its students with the ability to read and write well, demonstrate critical thinking skills while being creatively ingenious, and exhibit exemplary proficiency in mathematics and science (Fiske, 1992). According to John Goodlad’s (1984) findings in A Place Called School, Prospects for the Future, there is no need to recreate the wheel as a set of substantial goals for schooling in the United States has already been identified. He outlines these goals as:

**Goals for Schooling in the U.S.**

A. Academic Goals
   1. Mastery of basic skills and fundamental processes
   2. Intellectual development

B. Vocational Goals
   3. Career education-vocational education

C. Social, Civic, and Cultural Goals
   4. Interpersonal understandings
   5. Citizenship participation
   6. Enculturation
   7. Moral and ethical character

D. Personal Goals
   8. Emotional and physical well-being
   9. Creativity and aesthetic expression
   10. Self-realization (pp. 51-56)

If these goals do in fact represent the broad umbrella for education in American schools, why does the United States seem to be so far off target according to the statistics reported in numerous studies on the status of our
school system? Goodlad suggests, “...we should be addressing ourselves to such questions as the significance and meaning of these goals, whether or not they are adequately comprehensive, their implications for educational policy and practice, and whether or not we intend to carry out what they imply for teaching and learning” (p. 51). Goodlad continues with this observation, “What I find missing in the state and local pronouncements is a definition and clarification of what I call the education gap: The distance between man’s most noble visions of what he might become and present levels of functioning” (p. 57).

In describing this dichotomy, Daniel Gursky (1991) suggests that this gap exists because of an entrenchment in traditional views of education. He contends that in reality schools function within a given set of ineffective, philosophical operatives:

- Children learn by mastering the component parts of complex material before mastering the entire subjects.
- Curriculum is carefully sequenced from kindergarten to graduation.
- Teachers and textbooks transmit information to students.
- Students are generally docile recipients of information.
- Textbook materials are primarily of the drill and exercise type.
- Skills and knowledge are often perceived by the student as having no relevance to real world or the learner’s experiences.
- Emphasis is on the memorization of facts, rather than problem solving.
- Students are tested, drilled, and retested regularly.
- School and learning is hard work and students must be persuaded to stick with it.
- Incentives to achieve are largely external rewards and punishments.
- Learning is primarily an individual activity.
• Collaborating with other students is often viewed as cheating
• The role of the teacher is to maintain order and control students so that teaching and learning can take place

The above description should sound familiar to most teachers across the United States as it is not only the legacy of traditional educational theory but also current practice in most classrooms (Gursky, 1991). To better understand the evolution that is taking place in educational practices today, a historical review of education in America is appropriate. Within the parameters of this author’s study, a brief discussion of historical curriculum evolution will be limited to: traditional curriculum theory, progressive curriculum theory, and behavioral curriculum theory. In addition, a more extensive discussion concerning the historical development of whole language theory will be examined in order to understand current curriculum development.

Historically, the early Greeks provided the earliest foundations of traditional curriculum in education. Aristotle set the stage for determining who the learners should be and what they should learn. Upon reflection, Burridge (1970) offered a historical perspective of Aristotle’s thinking by stating: “But what is education? The answer varies from time to time and place to place. Its aims and methods are closely related to the values of the society that produces them, and if that society is in a state of profound change, the more disagreement there will be about education” (p. 2).

Politically, socially, and economically, Aristotle’s thinking was directed at the elite social class and the philosophers. Aristotle struggled with the problem of determining the purposes of education as he reflected:

Mankind are by no means clear about the things to be taught, whether we look to virtue or the best life. Neither is it clear whether education is
more concerned with intellectual or moral virtue. The existing practice is perplexing; no one knows on what principle we should proceed—should the useful in life, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the aim of our training; all three opinions have been entertained. Again, about the means there is no agreement. (cited in Burridge, 1970, pp. 2-3)

Eventually, a curriculum in the studies of mathematics, science, astronomy, logic, reading, writing, and philosophy became embedded in Greek education.

This classical interpretation of curriculum remained basically unchanged until the nineteenth century. In 1837, a significant societal change came about when Horace Mann became an outspoken advocate for the creation of a public education system for the masses. Burridge (1970) emphasizes the importance of this revolutionary concept as he states:

Never before in history have so many people been formally educated to such an extent for so long. Never before have such a large proportion of people in any society come to expect and demand education as a fundamental human as well as social right. The twentieth-century world has come to agree with Comenius that “all men should be educated fully to full humanity; not any one individual, nor a few nor even many, but all men together and singly, young and old, rich and poor, of high and lowly birth, men and women - in a word - all whose fate it is to be born human beings.” (p. 115)

With the concept of mass education in place, traditional understandings of curriculum based upon the Greek model came under scrutiny. Tanner and
Tanner (1980) describes traditional curriculum as “the body of subjects or subject matters set out by teachers for students to cover....Holding that there are ‘permanent’ or ‘essential’ subjects or bodies of knowledge, and that any conception of curriculum must embrace these ‘permanent’ or ‘essential’ studies” (p. 6). They also discuss the concepts of curriculum as held by the perennialists and the essentialists who were closely aligned to the philosophy of the traditionalist. In the perennialist view, the scope of elementary curriculum should consist of the “permanent studies”, rules of grammar, reading, rhetoric and logic, and mathematics and at the secondary level the greatest books of the western world. The essentialist held that the curriculum must contain a disciplined study in five areas: (1) command of the mother tongue and the systematic study of grammar, literature, and writing; (2) mathematics; (3) sciences; (4) history; and (5) foreign language. With the exception of some modifications, this was the operative curriculum until the beginning of the progressive education movement. These theories of traditional curriculum were deeply embedded in the public school system when John Dewey began to formulate his theories at the turn of this century.

In their book, Curriculum Development: Theory into Practice, Tanner and Tanner (1980) provide a comprehensive analysis of curriculum development. From their perspective, curriculum is the driving force which shapes and molds our philosophy of education, learning theory, and teaching practices. Grounded in the ideas of John Dewey, they offer their view of a tentative working definition of curriculum as: “That reconstruction of knowledge and experience, systematically developed under the auspices of the school (or university), to enable the learner to increase his or her control of knowledge and experience” (p. 38).

The Tanners’ research suggests that the progressive educational
movement during the first half of this century brought about significant changes in the definition and concept of curriculum. Kenneth Goodman (1992) acknowledges Dewey’s foresight concerning curriculum. He states simply the choices schools face are, either, adjust the school to the needs of the learners or require learners to adjust to the single narrow school curriculum. According to the Tanners, embodied within the progressive philosophy of education there is a recognition of “…the need to link formal school studies with the life of the learner and the changing demands of the larger social scene” (p. 6). In recent years, the traditionalist’s views emerge each time there is the public outcry of “back to the basics” because of the perception that public schools are faltering in light of permissive teaching/learning practices. Hence, the balance of power is restored to its proper place for those who agree with the traditionalists.

In his book, Dewey on Education: Selections, Martin S. Dworkin (1971) states:

In education, progressivism brought together several familiar tendencies--but with contemporary modifications. One tendency was a romantic emphasis upon the needs and interests of the child, in the tradition of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel--but now colored and given scientific authority by the new psychology of learning and behavior. Another was the democratic faith in the instrument of the common, or public school, inherited from Jefferson and Mann--but now applied to the problems of training the urban and rural citizenry for industrial and agricultural vocations, and of acculturating or Americanizing the swelling masses of immigrants. (p. 9)

Collectively, but certainly not exclusively, Dewey was in agreement with
these premises. Moreover, from the above description there are two important functions of schools which were not inherent within the traditional framework: (1) schools became responsible for training the urban and rural citizenry for vocations, and (2) acculturating the masses of immigrants. For Dewey, education was essentially a social process inseparably co-mingled with social and political affairs. Briefly, Dworkin (1971) summarizes the social and political scene in which Dewey emerged as:

The changes in Dewey’s thinking are one evidence of how deeply the scientific and intellectual movements of the time were involved in volcanic turbulences in American life. This was a period of national consolidation following civil war. The expanding nation was overflowing the continental frontiers to gather in new territories and responsibilities, while the population grew explosively as multitudes of immigrants continued to pour into the country. It was a time of accelerating innovation in technology—along with the growth of industrial complexes of such gigantic size and pervasive power as had never been seen before on earth. In rural, agricultural America, life was being transformed by railroads and farm machinery. In urban, industrial and commercial America, traditional ways of family living and the still immature political institutions of the young democracy were being confronted by strange, often terrifying, problems. Throughout the country, forces for social and political reform were working to organize farmers and industrial laborers, or striving to arouse the interest of the conscience of the propertied, professional, and commercial classes. (p.7)

Dewey found himself in strong opposition to the prevailing traditionalist
in terms of what a curriculum should encompass. Dewey envisioned schools as institutions which should reflect social and political affairs. Therefore, he established a curriculum which would support this philosophy. In co-founding the Laboratory School with Alice Chipman Dewey in 1896, Dewey had the opportunity to put his philosophy of education into practice. In sharp comparison to traditional schooling, Dewey put the child at the center of all teaching and learning activity. This radical departure had several implications. First, it puts the child in control of his learning to the extent that his schooling experiences are connected to his every day life. Second, the child learns through experimentation and is encouraged to test the assumption; thus the child becomes an active participant in the learning process. Third, the role of the teacher is to be a catalyst, a resource, and one who shares power with the learner. Fourth, the school has an inherent responsibility to enable the child to share in the total social inheritance of his community. Fifth, the curriculum is to include all social experience and it is not limited to a narrow scope of a perceived body of necessary knowledge unrelated to experience (Dworkin, 1971).

Dewey’s influence, as related to his theories of learning, curriculum development, and his belief that schools are change agents in the larger social setting, was widely acknowledged for the first four decades of this century. Undeniably, he amassed a great number of followers both in the United States and abroad. However, this is not to indicate that Dewey’s concepts of schooling were not challenged by other important educational leaders of this time. Most notable among those who opposed Dewey’s philosophy were the advocates of disciplinary inquiry. They included Edward Thorndike, Joseph Schwab, Philip Phenix, Jerome Bruner, and Bentley Glass. These theorists held that specific knowledge was to be contained within the curriculum of math,
science, language arts, the social sciences, and the fine arts disciplines. Daniel and Laurel Tanner (1980) suggest that this “doctrine of disciplinarity” began at the university level. Eager to emulate higher education structure, the secondary schools organized the curriculum to align themselves with the universities. In time, this practice filtered down into the elementary classroom where curriculum was divided into specific subject areas with specified content to be taught.

In part, the industrialization of America’s work force during the 1940’s and 1950’s, gave the supporters of the traditionalist/essentialist’s view an opportunity to proclaim the virtues of the traditional curriculum which was most prominent in the factory-model schools. Once more, a return to a skill based, heavily structured, and measurable curriculum became the dominant force in our public schools. Edward B. Fiske (1992), former education editor of the New York Times, writes about the factory-model schools in his book, *Smart Schools, Smart Kids: Why Do Some Schools Work?*

The breakdown of agrarian society and the unplanned expansion of cities created a yawning social void, and labor unrest intensified the fears of middle-class Americans that their stable life was threatened....Rigidly controlled public schools were the first line of defense against anarchy and the destruction of democratic values. The first requisite of the school is order,...Each pupil must be taught first and foremost to conform his behavior to the general standard....For their part, students were seen as products moving along an assembly line. Put them in a room, do something to them, ring a bell, put them in another room, do something to them, ring a bell...every one of the fundamental building blocks of public school grew out of an attempt to make schools every bit as efficient as the factories of the time....The factory-model school succeeded because
no one ever asked it to educate large numbers of students to a high level.
No one ever asked it to teach most American students to think.
(pp. 31-34)

An important influence which intensified the efforts to make the schools models of efficiency, productivity, and accountability was the establishment of nation-wide standardized testing. This became the most important element in developing curriculum and measuring learning. The legacy of standardized tests remains as a crucial element in today’s public school system. Additionally, the factory-model gave rise to the whole arena of the behavioralists of which B. F. Skinner became the most visible supporter. Innumerable models of behavioral modification were implemented in schools throughout the nation in a further attempt to control the behavior of the learner and to control the outcomes of learning in our school setting. Furthermore, the writing of educational objectives clearly defined what was to be taught and what was to be learned. This attitude prevailed throughout the late 1950’s and 1960’s in response to the space race and unheralded technological advancements.

A focus on specialization came into being during this time as indicated by the increasing number of specialized courses offered in a given discipline at the secondary and university levels. At the secondary level, students were often separated into three general groups: (1) college preparatory, (2) vocational, and (3) general education. With some degree of success, students were conveniently labeled and their course of study was predetermined with some assurance of expected educational outcomes. However, the importance of the learner’s needs and interests was virtually ignored and the traditional curriculum model maintained a firm grip on curriculum development practices (Tanner & Tanner, 1980).
Responding to the learner’s needs and interests did not seem to become a matter of concern until the mid 1960’s when pressing social issues such as the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, the rising crime rate, drug abuse, the ecology, and poverty came to the forefront of sociological concerns which gave rise to the humanistic movement. Again, through social pressure, the schools were forced to examine the curriculum in light of changes which demanded schools become more relevant to the needs of the student and the larger society. This encouraged those in education who felt the basic structure and goals of education were dehumanizing for most of the students. The humanistic movement, although relatively short lived, attempted to individualize curriculum, and to treat learners with dignity and respect. Values clarification, character education, the “magic circle”, family life programs in light of the rise in teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, and career education became popular entities within the school curriculum.

Even though teaching practices, teacher training, learning environment, and subject matter of the humanistic movement reflected a moderate degree of influence, the majority of public schools clung to the traditional factory-model school structure. Fiske (1992) contends that, “...the principles of the factory-model school still provide the basic organizing structure under which all educators function.” Justification for doing so may have been, in part, based on the rationale that standardized test scores were in decline which threatened the United States’ status as a world leader. Also, during the period of the 1960’s and 1970’s the United States was in the “cold war” with its Russian adversaries. The Cuban missile crisis challenged the military leadership and authority of the United States. The space age was at its peak and technology was rapidly expanding, particularly in the computer sciences. These factors reinforced the call for a return to the traditional structure with mathematics and
science as a focus within the curriculum. In an attempt to regain its stature, the United States once again gave credence to the back to the basics movement in the hope that this would cure the problems of a failing educational system. However, in retrospect, the best hopes of this movement were not to be realized.

The continuing failure of the public school system was further illuminated by the publication of, *A Nation at Risk* (1983). The report indicated that American schools had slipped into further decline, as reported by standardized test scores. This report was both a shock and an embarrassment to the United States’ educational community. Its disturbing findings became the catalyst for numerous educational reform efforts during the 1980’s. Legislatures and state boards of education in every state tightened the course requirements for a high school diploma, raised teacher salaries, and set new standards for those entering the teaching profession. However, the effect of these reform efforts were minimal at best. According to Fiske (1992), United States students were still “bringing up the rear in science achievement”, were rated as “poor writers”, and were not improving. Fiske suggests that this is because the report contained no new ideas. “It was evident that the existing system of public education had been pushed to its limits and that more of the same would not make any difference” (p. 24.) Fiske continues his analysis of the reform movement with the following comment:

The reforms of the 1980’s were doomed from the outset because they asked American public schools to do something they were never designed to do, never did do, and never could do. We have been asking schools to prepare students--all students--for demanding, fast-changing jobs of the future with rigid structures and teaching methods designed for the factories of the industrial age. We have been asking a nineteenth
century institution to educate people for life in the twenty-first century. Public schools as currently organized are as archaic as a turn-of-the-century Model T Ford rattling down a thruway. (p. 25)

The gloom and doom statistics of John Goodlad’s study (1984) provided a clear mandate that some sort of dramatic change in education was necessary if the public school system was to survive intact. The essential question is: What is the nature of the change necessary to accomplish this task? At about the same time as Goodlad published A Place Called School, a relatively small contingent of educators firmly believed that the answer to the educational crisis in America could be effectively remedied by following the principles of whole language theory. Among these educators, Kenneth Goodman became a leading spokesperson for the whole language movement. In 1977 Jerome C. Harste and Carolyn Burke collaboratively coined the term whole language. As indicated in Chapter 1, whole language instruction was enthusiastically embraced by Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain and Canada. In the United States, however, whole language had its beginnings as a grass roots movement. In The Whole Language Catalog, Kenneth Goodman, Lois Bridges Bird and Yetta Goodman (1991) concur:

Whole language is nothing short of a grass-roots revolution in education. It brings together a scientific study of learning, of language, of teaching, and of curriculum with the positive, people-centered, historical traditions that sensitive, caring teachers have always upheld. A whole language classroom is a democratic community of learners, and its curriculum is embedded in the culture and social experiences of the larger community. (p. 4)
In *What’s Whole in Whole Language?*, Goodman (1986) contends that whole language draws from a significant body of scientific research concerning language development, learning theory, curriculum development, methodology and psycholinguistics. Although the formal term, “Whole Language” has only been in use for about fifteen years, the ideas supporting the philosophical foundation of the whole language movement are not new. According to Gursky (1991), it has its origins deeply rooted within the field of education. Whole language derives its intellectual heritage from the following:

- John Amos Comenius, a 17th century education who believed that learning should be enjoyable and rooted in students’ experiences.
- John Dewey’s theories of progressive education
- Friedrich Froebel, the founder of kindergarten, which have much in common with ideal whole language classrooms
- Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who emphasized the social aspects of learning and the role teachers and peers play in supporting or thwarting it
- Dorris Lee and Lillian Lamoreaux, whose language-experience approach encourages teachers to use students’ stories as classroom reading material
- Donald Graves, a writing scholar and pioneer of “process writing”, who encourages both teachers and students to write more

Although, this is an array of noteworthy contributors to the basic ideas of whole language, they do not address the matter of whole language as a powerful change agent for restructuring schools in the United States. Two important questions arise. The first being, what is whole language theory? Secondly, how do the advocates of whole language view it as catalyst for
restructuring?

Gursky (1991) clarifies the position of whole language advocates by defining it as, “...an entire philosophy about teaching, learning, and the role of language in the classroom” (p. 23). Goodman (1992) summarizes whole language in the following terms:

- Whole language learning builds around whole learners learning whole language in whole situations.
- Whole language learning assumes respect for language, for the learner, and for the teacher.
- The focus is on meaning and not on language itself, in authentic speech and literacy events.
- Learners are encouraged to take risks and invited to use language, in all its varieties, for their own purposes.
- In a whole language classroom, all the varied functions of oral and written language are appropriate and encouraged. (p. 40)

Goodman and his colleagues are in direct opposition to those who still believe that language acquisition is best learned by instructing students from a part to the whole concept. Goodman firmly believes that children learn to use language in a natural manner which is derived from their ability to learn language in the context of whole, authentic, experiences. Goodman (1986) states that, “In homes, children learn oral language without having it broken into simple little bits and pieces. They are amazingly good at learning language when they need it to express themselves and understand others, as long as they are surrounded by people who are using language meaningfully and purposefully” (p. 7).
He also believes that language development must be functional and purposeful to meet the needs of the learner, and the learner has an intrinsic motivation to learn based on the need to communicate. If educators address the learner’s natural need to know and want to learn, then real learning does in fact take place. However, if these aspects are ignored and the status quo practices of teaching reading are used, then meaningless abstraction leads to nonlearning. Moreover, Goodman claims that when language is taught apart from authentic speech and literacy events, the learning becomes obscure, meaningless, and difficult.

Frank Smith, a leading authority of literacy and a strong supporter of whole language theory, also believes children learn language fluently and structurally in the context of meaningful activity. In his essay “How Education Backed to Wrong Horse” Smith (1988) argues:

The vast discrepancy between the fluent way in which children naturally learn and the plodding and unproductive manner in which they are frequently treated in school is a topic I’ve already discussed....I have described how children learn continuously, and learn exactly what is demonstrated to them. Children learn collaboratively by apprenticing themselves to more experienced “members of the club” who help them to engage in activities that are manifestly worthwhile and meaningful....In place of club activities, schools offer instructional programs and tests. Prespecified objectives, not immediate relevance, determine what students and teachers must attend to next. Students are often taught and tested on one decontextualized thing at a time, in a predetermined sequence, in the false expectation that sooner or later this will make them expert readers and writers. Such mindless ritual has never been shown to
produce anything but disabled learners, although it is the basis of the “excellence” that contemporary programmatic instruction is expected to “deliver.” (p. 109)

Smith (1988) links programmatic instruction to the space program in the United States. He contends that, “The technological roots of programmatic instruction lie in systems analysis and program planning. The fractionalization of major goals into sequences of small steps...was expected to boost every American child into an orbit of literacy” (p.109). However, in his view, the practice of programmatic instruction has failed miserably, and it is the direct cause of the failure of public schools in America to attain literacy. Smith suggests that during the past thirty years this thinking is;

...so pervasive that many teachers and administrators cannot contemplate an alternative. What makes education so vulnerable? The answer is that education considered its choices and made its decisions on the basis of an inappropriate theory. Every profession--every science and every art--needs a philosophy, a theoretical paradigm, on which to base its actions. Education made the wrong choice. (p. 110)

Where education made the wrong choice, according to Smith, is that it chose psychology as its theoretical paradigm. Experimental psychologists such as Hermann Ebbinghaus, Ernest Hildgard, Benjamin Bloom, and B.F. Skinner have been successful in persuading educators that psychology provides the foundation for educational philosophy. Smith (1988), in refuting the basis of experimental psychology, states:
Education looked for a theory of learning—and it backed the wrong horse. It put its faith in experimental psychology. Psychology persuaded education that the way to teach was to break complex subjects down into small unrelated parts, to be practiced until tests showed that learning had occurred and to be reinforced by the immediate feedback of grades or other marks of approval. (p. 111)

For many educators, this marriage of programmatic learning and experimental psychology is at the very heart of the debate of how learning takes place and how literacy is to be achieved in American public schools. Gursky (1991) remarks, “Although the debate is ostensibly over the most effective method of teaching reading, it goes much deeper, raising profound questions about pedagogy, the nature and purpose of schooling, and the role of teachers, students, parents, and administrators” (p. 23).

In his support of whole language theory, Goodman (1986) says that whole language is supported by four humanistic-scientific pillars: (1) a theory of learning, (2) a theory of language, (3) a view of teaching and the role of teachers, and (4) a language-centered view of curriculum. Within each area, Goodman clarifies the major operatives. The following is this author’s summarization his vision of what a whole language classroom exemplifies. For a complete listing refer to Appendix A.

A Theory of Learning: Goodman believes that learning language should be presented to the student in its easiest and most natural form. Language learning is easy when it is whole, real, and relevant to the learner. Language becomes functional when it serves the individual’s personal and social needs to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Language is learned as students learn through language and about language, all simultaneously in the context of
authentic speech and literacy events which enables the student to make sense of his/her world. Language development is empowering when the learner owns the process, makes the decisions about when to use it, for what purpose and with what expected results.

A Theory of Language: Goodman contends that whole language teachers are effective because they are firmly grounded in appropriate learning theory. Whole language teachers understand that there is no language without symbols and system. Language is inclusive, and it is indivisible. Whole text, connected discourse in the context of some speech or literacy event is crucial. Writing and reading are both dynamic, constructive processes. Writers decide how much information to provide so that readers will be able to infer and recreate what the writer created in the first place, bearing in mind that the readers will bring their knowledge of the text, their own values, and their own experiences. Whole language teachers know how language works. They work with language that is whole and sensible, and makes learning easy and natural for the student.

A view of Teaching and the Role of Teachers: Goodman views the process of teaching and learning as the primary responsibility of the whole language teacher. Whole language teachers have a respect for and understanding of learning and language which is matched by their respect for and understanding of teaching. Whole language teachers vary the use of adopted texts, prescribed curricula, and teaching methods to meet the needs of their pupils, and to determine the potential effects of the learning on their students. Whole language teachers understand that learning ultimately takes place one child at a time. They create appropriate social settings and interactions, which are intended to influence the rate and direction of personal learning by the student; but, arbitrary standards of performance are not
imposed. Whole language teachers guide, support, monitor, encourage, and facilitate learning opportunities in which the student is in control of the language development.

A Language Centered View of Curriculum: Goodman suggests that the curriculum of schools must be based upon a philosophy which provides a dual curriculum. Language is learned best and easiest when it is whole, integrated, and in natural context. When this occurs, language development and content become a dual curriculum serving the needs of the students in meaningful learning experiences. Language processes are integrated. Children speak, listen, write, or read as they need to, thus, learning opportunities to develop the language processes should be integrated into every content area of the curriculum. Authenticity and relevancy are essential elements which enable the learner to use language in meaningful ways. Furthermore, students must be involved in the process of planning authentic, relevant activities within productive studies.

Given these parameters of whole language teaching, the task now becomes one of planning and implementing these concepts within the daily structure of the classroom. Within the scope of this author’s research project, the focus will be on the utilization of writing workshop in order to establish an understanding of the writing process and how it relates to increased reading comprehension.

Within the past three decades, science and math seemed to have dominated the educational focus of schools. Learning to read and write has consistently been viewed with importance, but it has only recently been seen as the driving force in curriculum development in schools throughout the United States. Traditionally, language arts has been considered as a content area in which students were expected to learn specific knowledge and skills in order to
attain literacy. Goodlad’s study (1984) refutes the claims of those who say that students have always been reading and writing in classrooms. He found that, although students in the elementary grades did spend considerable time in reading and writing activities, upon closer examination, much of this was “answering questions in workbooks, filling in blank spaces in short narratives, and so on.... Students’ experience with writing decreased, then, as they moved from the upper elementary to the senior high school grades... Reading occupied about 6% of class time at the elementary level and then dropped to 3% and 2% for junior and senior highs, respectively” (pp. 106-107).

Furthermore, from the self-contained elementary classroom to the secondary level, there was no real expectation that language arts should be integrated across the curriculum. However, in consideration of the research by John Goodlad (1984), Kenneth Goodman (1986), Donald Murray (1985), Donald Graves (1983), Lucy McCormick Calkins (1986), Jane Hanson (1992), Mary Ellen Giacobbe (1981), Nancie Atwell (1987), Regie Routman (1988), and Carol Avery (1993), public schools across the country have finally recognized the need to establish a framework in which reading, writing, listening, and speaking provide a foundation for an integrated curriculum.

The California Department of Education publication, It’s Elementary (1992), provides support for this research by stating:

...it must be remembered that reading is only one of the language arts skills. Language development in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing is an integrated process in which gains in any single area contribute to gains in all the rest. Writing activities, in particular, can powerfully contribute to reading proficiency, especially when teachers have children communicate in a variety of ways to real audiences.
Reading is crucial to the ability to write, and systematic reading and writing instruction in many different modes of discourse is central to children’s intellectual development. Unlike skill-sheet seatwork, writing can involve students in original thinking about the material they have just read and, consequently, can stretch their mental processes in beneficial ways. A knowledge of punctuation, spelling, and grammar is important because it facilitates written communication to a broad public; but it is not the first competency a child must master in learning how to write nor should it be treated as an instructional end in itself. (pp. 6-7)

The California English/Language Arts Framework (1987), and The Framework in Review (1994) established the following essential elements of an English-Language Arts Program:

While in the past we may have been tempted to reduce knowledge to microbits and see education as the learning of parts, current studies have taught us much about how goal-oriented language use is. We know that human beings use language in these ways:

1. Constructively, when they create new meaning by integrating new knowledge with old
2. Actively, when they become involved with learning enough to relate it to their own goals and purposes
3. Interactively, when they communicate what they learn to others
4. Strategically, when they plan language to suit their purposes and perform a task effectively
5. Fluently, when they approach each new reading and writing
task easily and confidently. (The California English/Language Arts Framework, 1987, p. 5)

From the perspective of whole language teaching, California’s framework facilitates the crucial components of an integrated language arts curriculum. It recognizes that teaching reading and writing interdependently in ways that are natural and meaningful to the learner will have a far greater impact in promoting literacy. The framework also presents writing as a process rather than a simple product which may or may not have meaning for its author. Essentially, the concept of process writing is attributed to the research of Donald Graves (1989). His book, Writing: Teachers & Children at Work, establishes writing as a central part of literacy education. In the same manner that Goodman (1986) described children learning to speak, Graves (1989) describes children learning to write:

Children want to write. They want to write the first day they attend school. This is no accident. Before they went to school they marked up walls, pavements, newspapers with crayons, chalk, pens or pencils...anything that makes a mark. The child’s marks say, “I am.” (p. 3)

From Graves (1989) research in whole language teaching involving the writing process, this author drew the following observations.

- Children want to learn to write in order to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas.
- Time allotment and frequency of varied writing activities must be provided for all students on a regular, daily basis.
- Writing and reading are interdependent.
• Children must be in control of their own writing and have the freedom to determine the writing topic, its purpose, and the intended audience.
• Ownership of the writing is crucial to the writer and it has an experiential basis.
• Writing is not bound by a predetermined, artificially contrived hierarchy of rules which must be mastered before writing can begin.
• Writing conventions will be learned as the need arises to facilitate meaning.

Although Graves (1989) warns against using a dogmatic, programmed approach to writing, he does suggest a process which includes: (1) selecting the topic and gathering ideas, (2) writing the rough draft, (3) conferencing with peers and/or teacher or other adults, (4) revising for meaning and clarity, (5) editing, (6) publishing the writing if desired, and (7) sharing with an audience through the use of “the author’s chair”. Above all, children’s experiences with writing should be pleasurable and without risk.

Jane Hanson, co author with Donald Graves (1983), describes the importance of the “Author’s Chair” as a symbol connecting the reading and writing processes for the participants. Their studies indicate that readers, who were also writers, developed a sense of authorship and ownership of their work and the author’s chair expressed this relationship. Their observations constitute the following concerning the relationship between reading and writing as it developed in beginning readers:

1. Children’s concept of author changes from a vague notion about some other person who writes books to the additional perception of themselves as authors to the realization that they have choices and decisions to make as authors.
2. Children’s concept of authorship becomes more pronounced as their concepts of reading and writing become more differentiated.

3. Authorship concepts become more differentiated because children actively compose in both reading and writing. Composing in each of these processes consists of imitating and inventing during encoding, decoding, and the making of meaning.

4. Children change from imposing their own understandings of process and content upon authors, to realizing various authors can use process and content differently.

5. Children realize authors have options because they do the following in both ether reading and writing processes; exercise topic choice, revise by choice, observe different types of composing, and become exposed to variant interpretations.

6. Children who learn to exercise options become more assertive in dealing with other authors. At first an author is distant, then an author is self, finally the self-author questions all authors and assertive readers emerge. (pp. 182-183)

Teaching writing as a process in which the notion of authorship is firmly embedded is shared by many researchers in the field. Donald M. Murray, a Professor of English at the University of New Hampshire, is an accomplished author who won the Pulitzer Prize for Journalism. In his study A Writer Teaches Writing (1985), he focused on writing at the high school and college level. Like Graves, he found that teaching writing primarily addressed mechanics, grammar, form, and structure. There was seldom an implication that writing could be taught as a natural, meaning-centered process which has value for the writer.
Lucy McCormick Calkins focused her research on the middle grades. In her books, *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1986), and *Living Between the Lines* (1991), she concurred that curriculum and teacher goals often discouraged writing in the schools because they ignored the children's desire to use writing for satisfaction of their own needs and experiences. She discovered that students cared more about writing when it was “personal and interpersonal” (1986, p.5). She also found that in the writing classroom, students and teachers teach and learn from each other. They share a mutual respect for one another. Students are encouraged to express their writing without fear, but rather with the expectation that growth and literacy are probable results. Calkins (1991) affirms this belief as she writes:

> Teachers and children need to bring the great cargoes of our lives to school, because it is by reading and writing and storytelling and musing and painting and sharing that we human beings find meaning. When children bring the work of their lives to school, they will invest themselves heart and soul. (p. 304)

Nancie Atwell’s research is widely known and respected in educational circles with regard to the teaching of process writing. Through her classroom experience and research, she is credited with coining the term “writing workshop.” Her book *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents* (1987) closely examines the effective teaching of process writing. As a high school writing teacher, she encourages teachers to write along with their students and to use themselves as a writing resource for students. She found that when writing occurs on a regular basis, writers are able to use the writing process more efficiently and effectively to produce writing that students
care about. She initiated the concept of the mini-lesson, which she describes as, “a brief meeting that begins the workshop where the whole class addresses an issue” (p. 77). Thus, the writing process actually begins as a discussion in which students express their ideas through speaking and listening. She also incorporates the ‘group sharing time’ at the end of the workshop. This class meeting provides an opportunity for writing to be shared. She contends that this sharing time has two purposes: “to bring closure to the workshop” and “to find out what other writers in the workshop are up to” (p. 85). Again, instilling the idea of authorship within writers is an integral concept in Atwell’s view of process writing. Students’ writings are valued and based upon authentic speech and literacy events.

Carol Avery, a first grade teacher was influenced by advocates of whole language teaching. She authored the book...And With a Light Touch: Learning about Reading, Writing, and Teaching with First Graders (1993) in which she addresses the writing process, the reading process and children’s literature. As a practitioner of whole language teaching, Avery provides an understanding of the practical application of the elements of whole language in a primary classroom situation. Her expertise in this area will be more closely examined in Chapter Three of this study.

The review of the literature has attempted to examine the historical research and to bring a perspective to language arts curriculum development in order to better understand the evolution of change and restructuring in public schools across America. Will the whole language movement survive as the change agent necessary to transform the nature of education in the United States? Time will be the only true measure. Goodlad (1984) reminds educators that, “this nation has not outgrown its need for schools. If schools should suddenly cease to exist, we would find it necessary to reinvent them...the
schools we need now are not necessarily the schools we have known” (p. 2). Lucy Calkins (1991) eloquently presents her vision for the future of education as she states:

For a great many teachers, the teaching of writing and reading has become important because in this field, in this community of educators, in this reform movement, we are finding the interior resources to dream new dreams. When any one classroom teacher dreams new dreams, it can widen the horizon for all of us. A single wonderful classroom or school can make an amazing difference...This is, after all, the power of literature: In the story of one person learning to write and to read, we see what is possible for all students. In the story of one wonderful classroom, we see the potential for all classrooms. (p. 303)
CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES

During the past two decades there has been substantial research conducted regarding young children and the reading and writing process. Much of the research has been done by educators who have gone into classrooms and observed students as they worked. Carol Avery, a leading practitioner of whole language, has been a first grade teacher for twelve years, has taught high school English, has been a school librarian, and is a parent. From personal experience, she describes and documents her own progress in transforming her first grade classroom from a traditional skills based curriculum into a whole language learning environment.

Donald Graves describes Carol Avery’s book, *...And With A Light Touch.* (1993) as a practical approach to whole language teaching written from an “inside-the-classroom” perspective about the educative process during the primary years. He suggests that Avery’s book is a guide for primary teachers, just as Nancie Atwell’s, *In the Middle,* (1987) is for middle school teachers. In his foreword to Avery’s book, Graves remarks:

...Her premise is simple: Children are meaning makers; listen to them; observe the world through their eyes, and then help them express what they wish to say. We see the author in myriads of learning situations with all kinds of students ranging from the learning disabled to the gifted...She connects the child’s fundamental urge to make meaning with the long-term view of what reading and writing are for--a lifetime of enjoying and learning to live in the world. This is no filmy-eyed work
that ignores child problems. You will meet angry children; troublemakers
crying, moaning, and swearing; and children of divorce. There are
children with severe learning problems who at first don’t want to read
and write. We follow their progress from troubling moments through first
scribbles and stuttering decodings to fluency. (p. xi)

In an effort to assess the educational impact of whole language upon her
students, Carol Avery (1993) follows the students from day to day over an
entire school year as they learn to read and write. She even documents a child’s
learning right in the midst of a conference. Over a long period of time, she is
able to observe the gradual upward spiral to confidence and achievement in her
students and to evaluate their growth and progress. To Avery, books become
the common ground that hold a class together and the entire curriculum in her
classroom is literature based with the instruction guided by whole language
theory. She invites the reader to learn with her and witness what doesn’t work
as much as what does. Donald Graves sums up this book with these
observations:

“...And with a Light Touch” is a liberating book. Carol Avery listens to
children, their wantings and intentions, and helps them to become lifetime
readers and writers. As Carol frees the children to enjoy their world, we
learn with her how to become professionally free ourselves. (p. xii)

It is with Carol Avery’s (1993) book as a practitioner's guide for whole
language teaching, coupled with recent research about the writing process that
this author made a commitment to implement daily writing workshop within the
context of a second grade class at an elementary school in Southern California
for the 1994-95 school year. As documentation of the results of this approach to the teaching of writing, students’ work will be compared with another comparable second grade class where writing is being taught in a more traditional style with an emphasis on skill development.

The purpose of this study was to determine if the instructional strategy used for teaching writing through writing workshop and the consistency of daily writing practice will reflect a significant growth in writing and reading fluency. To assess growth, the pretests and post-tests of student writing samples, CTBS national percentile scores for reading and language, and reading recovery test scores of the class involved in writing workshop and the control class will be examined and compared in June, 1995. The duration of the study was approximately nine months.

In structuring the classroom to facilitate whole language teaching with writing workshop as an essential component, this author basically utilized Avery’s model. The assumptions, structure, and routine, are outlined as follows:

**Assumptions**

1. The students always have the right to choose their own topic.
2. Students must take part in the writing time. They do not have the choice whether or not to participate.
3. Invitations or suggestions to write about a topic are sometimes given.
4. Children want to write when it meets their needs, fits their purpose, and is experiential.

**Writing Workshop Daily Routine**

**Literature:** (Approx. 15-20 minutes)

Each day begins with a selection of literature which is read orally by the
teacher. Books that are recognized by teachers and other experts in the field as good children's literature are carefully selected. The books may serve as a connecting point to a current study in social studies or science. Some books may be selected because they are seasonal or because they are just plain fantasy and fun to read. Full length chapter books are often read to the students and, if multiple copies are available, students are encouraged to read along with the teacher.

Discussion: (Approx. 10 minutes)

After reading the literature, a discussion takes place. The class may discuss the reading, the characters, what was happening and how it makes them feel. In addition, the students are invited to share anything that they want to tell the class. In this way, students have an opportunity to connect the literature to a personal authentic experience. This is particularly valuable if it leads to something that they can write about. A standard comment by this author is, “That is very interesting! Are you going to write about that today?” It is important to note; this is NOT a show and tell time. For example, if a child has something that he/she wants to show the class, a toy for example, but it does not contribute to the writing time coming up, the child is told to save it for a more appropriate time.

Mini-lesson: (5-10 minutes)

During this time, this author presents a short teacher directed lesson on some aspect of writing. The topic is chosen by the teacher and it is related to the development of writing based upon samples of student work. Often, it is necessary to repeat a lesson (i.e. use of capital letters and periods, neatness, quality, and staying on the topic). Over time and practice, students
will learn how to increase meaning and clarity in their own writing as they strive to communicate their thoughts and feelings more effectively to others. Learning to use appropriate writing conventions becomes a natural part of the writing process and it is beneficial as the students move into the self-editing stage of writing. A list of suggested topics for mini-lessons is included in the Appendix B of this study.

**Writing/Illustrating/Book Making/ and Word Processing: (20-30 min.)**

Throughout the writing process, individual students progress at varying rates according to their skills and needs. This factor puts a classroom of students working simultaneously on a variety of writing tasks and the classroom becomes a hubbub of activity. Teacher monitoring of the activities is necessary to ensure that students are actively working on tasks related to their writing. The teacher has opportunities to meet with individual students in a conference to discuss the student’s writing. These conferences provide one-on-one instruction and often lead to those teachable moments where meaningful learning takes place. Suggestions may be made and encouragement is constantly provided.

At the start of a new writing project, all students begin at the prewriting stage. Mini lessons taught by the teacher focusing on topic selection, brainstorming story ideas, and story webbing are appropriate topics to be addressed at this time. They write for the entire time on a self selected topic and must produce a minimum of five sentences a day. Once this initial activity is underway, students progress at their own rate. For example, while some students may be still working at the prewriting stage, others may be actually writing their stories. Those students who are ready for editing and revising may be engaged in self-editing, peer-editing, or working with the teacher or another adult. Creative spelling and grammatical errors can be fixed at this time. This
needs to be done in collaboration with the child to reinforce ownership and
authorship. It may also provide another valuable teachable moment.

The Illustration Center is always available and it is supplied with crayons,
felt markers, colored pencils, paper, glue, and scissors for the students to use. At
the Illustration Center, students are allowed to sit together and to discuss their
stories and illustrations. During the literature time of the morning, the
importance of illustrations to a story may be emphasized if the teacher reads the
class a book which has been particularly praised for its illustrations.

When the students have finished a story that they want to type, the story
must have been read to two other individuals before an author can sign up for
the Computer Center. In the final writing stage, students may be at the
Computer Center typing their stories. Having computers readily available
provides students with exciting opportunities for becoming familiar with a
computer, acquiring typing skills, and learning word processing programs.
Computers are also tools for helping students use technology in a real-life
situation which has purpose and meaning.

Writing workshop is not a quiet work time. Children are enthusiastically
engaged in conversation and discussion about their writing. However, it is
necessary to monitor this verbal exchange to ensure that the students are
focused on the task at hand. The rule is that if they are talking about the
writing, then it is not only acceptable but actively encouraged.

The completed books are laminated by the classroom teacher. The
students then put their pages in order. Plastic bindings are put on the books.
Finally, the books are complete and ready to be read to the group. All writing is
stored in the writing portfolio and all completed and illustrated books are logged
on the Student Author Cards.

The cycle of writing a finished product is complete!
Not all writing becomes a “finished product.” This is primarily the decision of the author. The process is the important part of teaching writing, not necessarily having a finished product. However, the students are required to write. They do not have the choice not to participate during writing workshop time.

Author’s Circle: (10-15 minutes)

The students are responsible for rearranging the classroom furniture for writing workshop circle. They set up the special author’s chair that is kept only for this purpose and time. A child sits in this author’s chair and reads his/her writing to the group. Any completed new books are always the first to be read. Then, if time allows, others can share their daily writing. Children can raise their hands to comment or ask questions about the writing. The students are encouraged to READ LOUD, CLEAR, and ENTHUSIASTICALLY to make it interesting to the listeners. Reading, speaking, and listening skills are reinforced. There is rarely enough time for all authors who want to share their writing. This is a further affirmation that writers do want to share and communicate.

The Subjects

The participants in this study are forty-six second grade students, comprised of four RSP students and forty-two regular education students. These students were a part of two second-grade classes at an elementary school in Southern California. The class experiencing the traditional method of instruction originally consisted of twenty-eight students. However, because of student turnover and absenteeism, the group was limited to twenty-one regular education students and two RSP students. The class experiencing the writing workshop technique originally consisted of thirty students. The number
included in the study was limited to twenty-one regular education students and two RSP because of student turnover, absenteeism, and to equalize the number of subjects in the two groups.

Both of the classes involved were randomly formed in June of the previous school year. As with all classes at this elementary school, students were placed in classes to achieve a balance of academic ability, achievement and behavior. Therefore, each class represented an ability level from high to low and a comparable range of student behaviors. Gender ratio was the same in both groups. Each group consisted of ten boys and thirteen girls. The ethnic groups represented in the sample included Anglo (44 percent), Hispanic (41 percent), Black (11 percent), and Asian (1 percent). The two groups were approximately proportionate in their ethnic breakdown (See Table 1).

The Teachers

The two classroom teachers in this study are employees of the same district. The school principal rates them both as extremely capable and outstanding teachers in their field. Both have been teaching primary grades for over fifteen years.
### Table 1
Ethnic Breakdown of Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Writing Workshop</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglo</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The scope of this project was limited to the writing workshop, a classroom application of whole language theory. This author contends that the basic premises of whole language instruction, particularly, writing workshop, have proven to be a viable method in teaching children skills in written language. Writing workshop was initiated on the first day of the 1994/95 school year and it became a major part of the language arts curriculum in this author's second grade classroom.

The question for this study was: Will the implementation of writing workshop in this classroom situation prove to be a significant factor in increasing writing competency and reading comprehension? The hypothesis was that the students who experienced writing workshop would reflect a significant growth in literacy when compared with students who have experienced a more traditional, skills-based method of language arts instruction. The hypothesis has been supported by all test results which included the second grade CTBS Level 12, Total Reading and Total Language Battery; second grade writing rubric scores; and Reading Recovery scores for Chapter 1 students. The statistical t-Test (III) for paired samples was used to determine if the difference between the writing workshop group and the control group was significant based upon the two styles of teaching literacy. The t-Test (III) for paired samples was chosen because the students in the writing workshop class and the control class were matched based upon the CTBS reading pretest scores. Both class means were at the 34th percentile for the reading pretest. The one-tail test was selected because the hypothesis suggested a direction of change.
The students in this study were pretested in June, 1994. A writing prompt was given to all students, the CTBS tests were administered, and the Reading Specialist gave the oral reading test to rank the Reading Recovery reading levels of the Chapter 1 students. The post-testing was conducted in May, 1995. All results of the testing indicated that students who were exposed to writing workshop made substantial gains in writing and reading competency when compared with the control group.

**CTBS Testing: Pretest and Post-test**

The Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills is a battery of standardized tests generally designed to rank students. The Reading and Language sections of CTBS were used in this study to determine the effect of writing workshop on the development of written language skills and reading. The national percentile scores for the total battery in both language and reading were used to compare the individual student growth in both the writing workshop class and the control class. The individual student scores were then averaged to obtain a class mean score to be used as a comparison to judge the overall class growth. The test data of the two classes could then be evaluated.

The CTBS Reading pretest was given prior to the beginning of the 1994/95 school year. The data revealed that both the writing workshop class and the control class began the year with a class mean at the 34th percentile (See Table 2). A t-Test (III) for paired samples was used to test for differences between the two groups. The test showed that there was no significant differences between the two classes \((t = -0.26, df = 22, \text{table value} = 1.717)\) (See Table 3). The post-test was administered a year later to both groups. Analysis of the test data showed that the mean from the writing workshop class was significantly higher than that of the control class. The mean of the
Table 2
CTBS Total Reading Pretest
Individual Student Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CTBS National Percentile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Class Mean of Both Classes is 34

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Workshop Class</th>
<th>Control Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3

**t-Test (III) for Paired Samples**

Comparison of CTBS Reading Pretest Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Group I</th>
<th>Group II</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
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<td>81</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>-17</td>
<td>289</td>
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<td>P</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>196</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q</td>
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<td>65</td>
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<td>289</td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
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<td>225</td>
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<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**N = 23**  
Σ D = -11  
Σ D² = 1777  
\[ \bar{D} = -0.48 \]

\[ t = -0.26 \quad df = 22 \quad table value = 1.717 \]
writing workshop class was at the 57th percentile where the mean of the control class was at the 40th percentile (See Table 4). This indicates that, while both groups demonstrated growth in reading, the writing workshop class scored 17 percentile points higher than the control class. A t-Test (III) for paired samples was used to test for significant differences between the writing workshop and the control group. This difference was significant at the .01 level ($t = 3.32, df = 22, table value = 2.508$) (See Table 5). The results support the whole language contention that writing is closely connected to reading and growth in both areas can be an expected outcome of whole language teaching.

The CTBS Language pretest was also given prior to the beginning of the 1994/95 school year. The pretest scores for total language indicate that both groups were similar at the beginning of the 1994/95 school year. The national percentile mean for the writing workshop class was at the 39th percentile and the national percentile for the control class was at the 37th percentile (See Table 6). A t-Test (III) for paired samples was used to test for significant differences between the two groups. The test showed that there was no significant differences between the two classes when the pretest was given ($t = 0.58, df = 22, table value = 1.717$) (See Table 7). The post-test class mean was at the 52nd percentile for the writing workshop group compared with a class mean of 39 percent for the control group (See Table 8). A t-Test (III) for paired samples was used to test for significant differences between the writing workshop group and the control group. This difference was significant at the .01 level ($t = 3.55, df = 22, table value = 2.508$) (See Table 9). This spread of 13 percentile points and the t-Test gives support to the validity of using writing workshop as a method to teach writing and written language skills.

The CTBS data indicates that both classes showed growth and progress in their reading and language development. However, the writing workshop
Table 4
CTBS Total Reading Post-test
Individual Student Performance

CTBS National Percentile

Individual Student Scores

Mean of W. Workshop is 58
Mean of Control Class is 40

Writing Workshop  Control
Class ———— Class ————
Table 5

\textbf{t-Test (III) for Paired Samples}

\textbf{Comparison of CTBS Reading Post-test Scores}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Group I Writing Workshop</th>
<th>Group II Control Class</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>24</td>
<td>576</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>1521</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>625</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>-8</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3844</td>
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<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(N = 23\) \hspace{1cm} \(\Sigma D = 414\) \hspace{1cm} \(\Sigma D^2 = 22336\)

\(D = 18\)

\(t = 3.32\) \hspace{1cm} \(df = 22\) \hspace{1cm} \textit{table value} = 2.508
### Table 6
**CTBS Total Language Pretest Individual Student Performance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CTBS National Percentile</th>
<th>Individual Student Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Class mean of W. Workshop Class is 39
| Class mean of Control Class is 37

![Graph showing Individual Student Scores for Writing Workshop and Control Class](image)

Writing Workshop | Control Class |
### Table 7
**t-Test (III) for Paired Samples**
Comparison of CTBS Language Pretest Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Group I Writing Workshop</th>
<th>Group II Control Class</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>$D^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
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<td>256</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
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<td>196</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>S</td>
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<td>196</td>
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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$N = 23$ \hspace{2cm} $\Sigma D = 39$ \hspace{2cm} $\Sigma D^2 = 4347$

$D = 1.70$

$t = 0.58$ \hspace{2cm} $df = 22$ \hspace{2cm} *table value* = 1.717
Table 8
CTBS Total Language Post-test
Individual Student Performance

CTBS National Percentile

Mean of W. Workshop is 52
Mean of Control Class is 39

Individual Student Scores

Writing Workshop  Control
Class  Class
### Table 9
*t*-Test (III) for Paired Samples
**Comparison of CTBS Language Post-test Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Group I Writing Workshop</th>
<th>Group II Control Class</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>27</td>
<td>729</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
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<td>784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
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<td>53</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**N = 23**  
**$\sum D = 361$**  
**$\sum D^2 = 15549$**  
**$D = 15.70$**

$t = 3.55$  
$df = 22$  
*table value* = 2.508
class showed a greater growth (See Table 10).

**Writing Prompt: Pretest and Post-test**

All students in the experimental and control groups were given the same writing topic. The writing prompt pretests were given in June, 1994. These writing samples were then examined by a committee of teachers and the school reading specialist. Each student’s writing prompt was assigned a numerical score according to a predetermined writing rubric (See Appendix C). The rubric ranges from a 1 to 6 scale with a score of 6 being the highest score possible. The mean rubric scores for both the writing workshop class and the control class were similar. The mean pretest score for the writing workshop class was 2.2, and the mean score for the control class was 2.3, based on the second grade rubric (See Table 11). A t-Test (III) for paired samples was used to test for significant differences between the two groups. The test showed that there was no significant differences between the two classes at the beginning of the year \((t = -0.72, df = 22, \text{table value} = 1.717)\) (See Table 12).

The writing post-test showed substantial growth for the class that experienced writing workshop. Minimal growth was indicated for the control class that experienced a skills method of instruction. The writing workshop class averaged 4.2 on the second grade rubric as compared to a 2.6 mean for the control class (See Table 13). A t-Test (III) for paired samples was used to test for a significant difference between the writing workshop and the control group. This difference was significant at the .01 level \((t = 6.54, df = 22, \text{table value} = 2.508)\) (See Table 14).

The results of the writing prompt, rubric scores in this author’s study tend to support the literature and research studies which support the idea that daily writing practice with instruction given in a meaningful context will produce
### Table 10
CTBS Growth Comparison of Class Averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CTBS National %</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workshop</strong></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Class</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11
Writing Pretest
Second Grade Rubric Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of students</th>
<th>Writing Workshop</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12  
t-Test (III) for Paired Samples  
Comparison of Writing Sample Rubric Pretest Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Group I Writing Workshop</th>
<th>Group II Control Class</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\[ N = 23 \quad \Sigma D = -3 \quad \Sigma D^2 = 17 \quad D = -0.13 \]

\[ t = -0.72 \quad df = 22 \quad \text{table value} = 1.717 \]
### Table 13
Writing Post-test
Second Grade Rubric Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric Score</th>
<th># of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Bar Chart
- **Writing Workshop Class**
- **Control Class**

The bar chart shows the distribution of students across different rubric scores for the Writing Workshop and Control classes. The data indicates a higher number of students in the 4 rubric score category for the Writing Workshop class compared to the Control class.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Group I Writing Workshop</th>
<th>Group II Control Class</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**N = 23**

**ΣD = 36**  **ΣD² = 86**

**D = 1.57**

\[ t = 6.54 \quad df = 22 \quad \text{table value} = 2.508 \]
more positive learning outcomes for students. The results also suggest that when skills are taught in isolation, they do not transfer into writing practice. Therefore, the conclusion reached by this author is that the daily practice of writing workshop has made a significant difference in promoting literacy.

**Reading Level According to Reading Recovery**

At the school where this research was conducted, the Reading Recovery teachers tested all Chapter I students. The reading level of these students was determined by criteria established by the Reading Recovery program. The evaluation criteria used was an oral reading test consisting of a series of levels ranging from 1 to 32. By the end of second grade, students reading between the levels 30 to 32 would be considered at grade level by the school site reading specialist. This author wanted to ascertain if writing workshop had any effect on the reading level of these Chapter 1 students. At the beginning of the 1994/95 school year, eighteen students, identified as Chapter 1 students, were selected for this portion of the study. There were nine students in each class. The average reading level of these students was similar in both classes. The Chapter 1 students in the writing workshop class had a mean reading level of 9.6 compared with a mean of 9.4 for the Chapter 1 students in the control class (See Table 15). In May, 1995, these Chapter 1 students were post-tested by the Reading Recovery teachers. From the results of the oral reading post-tests, every student demonstrated growth. The writing workshop Chapter 1 students showed a mean reading level of 25.6 as compared to a mean reading level of 21.1 for the control class Chapter 1 students (See Table 16). This author attributes much of this success to the early intervention techniques that are administered through the reading center at the research school. However, the writing workshop instruction may have affected the higher reading level of the
Table 15
Reading Recovery Reading Level: Pretest Chapter One Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Level</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Class mean of W. Workshop Class is 9.6
- Class mean of Control Class is 9.4

Individual Student Scores

Writing Workshop Class
Control Class
Table 16
Reading Recovery Reading Level: Post-test
Chapter One Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual Student Scores

Writing Workshop  Control Class
Chapter 1 students in the writing workshop class.

**Teacher Observations**

In addition to using testing scores to determine student achievement in writing and reading, this author was able to make numerous and frequent observations of the students throughout the year as they learned writing skills and were then able to put these skills into practice. Based upon test data and observation, this author contends that whole language teaching was validated and that it did provide students with a natural way to learn and to use writing skills.

From the beginning, the students were encouraged to view themselves and other students as authors. Careful attention to teacher modeling of constructive criticism and praise techniques regarding a student’s writing proved to be beneficial. The students quickly incorporated these strategies into their own experiences as they talked about their writing and the writing of other students. Consequently, four positive effects were readily observable by this author: 1) students felt comfortable and not threatened in situations where their writing was being discussed; 2) students became a source of encouragement to each other; 3) students learned to value all writing that was produced; and 4) students valued their own writing because it had significance to their personal experience and their need to communicate with others.

Since writing workshop teaches writing as a natural process, as discussed in Chapter 3, most students demonstrated the ability to write with ease and confidence in a relatively short period of time. As the students became accustomed to the morning procedure of writing workshop, many of them entered the classroom already knowing what they would be writing about. The students’ verbal eagerness to write further supports the whole language premise.
that students will write when the writing serves their purpose and it has personal meaning related to their life experiences. By the students’ enthusiastic response, it became apparent that they looked forward to their daily writing time. On the rare occasion when writing workshop was canceled due to a conflict in scheduling, the students would invariably ask if there would be time to write later in the day.

Writing workshop also provided a meaningful context and sensible way to teach writing conventions because the lessons dealt with their writing as opposed to some unrelated worksheet task. The students’ development in using appropriate writing conventions, writing for meaning, clarity, and fluency became evident in their weekly writing samples. A specific skill weakness in an individual’s writing or a general weakness across the classroom could also be readily detected and used as a teaching or reteaching lesson. A portfolio of a student’s writing samples was also used as relevant documentation of a student’s progress during parent conferencing as the samples were evidence of growth in written language based upon authentic student achievement.

As an important part of writing workshop, the Author’s Chair became a significant symbol of writing success for the students. The students were anxious to sit in this designated chair because it gave them an opportunity to share their writing with classmates. As an audience, the students truly enjoyed listening to their peers and they offered verbal encouragement to the designated author. Positive approval, reassurance, and encouragement by their peers and teacher were the rewards of this experience for those students who shared their writing. As an added benefit, listening skills also tended to improve. The students were interested in what was being shared and they could easily relate to what they were hearing. This observation was supported by the nature of the verbal exchanges among the students. Furthermore, students would
frequently elect to read the stories that their peers had written. Completed student authored books were always a favorite during silent reading time. Consequently, an expanded interest in reading became a natural by-product of the writing experience.

In conclusion, while conducting the research for this study, this author shared many of the concerns of whole language advocates regarding how writing and reading is currently being taught at the elementary school level. This author was gratified when the findings of the test data supported the hypothesis of this project.

The experience of implementing writing workshop has provided this author with a broader knowledge base of how students learn. Furthermore, it has had a significant influence on restructuring this author’s educational philosophy and teaching direction. While no single program, idea, or curriculum can be the panacea to correct all of the problems in American public schools, this author contends that writing workshop and whole language theory enables teachers to better meet the needs of students. By concentrating on teaching situations which provide meaning for the students, learning takes place in a more natural way. For those in education who are still entrenched in traditional teaching practices, this author offers this study and the following quote from Jane Fraser and Donna Skolick (1994) as a stimulant to encourage these people to reevaluate their practices:

Reading and writing are flip sides of the same coin. Both rely on language and creating mental images. Both depend on the reader or the writer to construct meaning. Both require practice and experience to become more fluent. Both deepen and take on new dimensions when they are discussed and shared. It amazes us that we did not understand
the inseparable relationship between reading and writing for the first fifteen years of our teaching. Like many other educators, we thought in terms of separate subjects. We thought the reading/writing connection was having students write about the books they read. Now we observe how being a writer supports and helps the young reader and how a child learns about writing from the stories that are heard and read. (p. 97)
Appendix A
Whole Language

A View of Teaching and the Role of Teachers:

- Respect for and understanding of learning and language is matched by respect for and understanding of teaching.
- Whole language teachers are confident in their teaching and in their decision-making because they are confident in the humanistic-scientific bases of their practice.
- Whole language teachers vary the use of adopted texts and prescribed curricula to meet the needs of the pupils.
- Whole language teachers apply criteria to methods, materials, and curricula and evaluate their potential effect on their pupils.
- Whole language teachers understand that learning ultimately takes place one child at a time. They seek to create appropriate social settings and interactions, and to influence the rate and direction of personal learning.
- Whole language teachers guide, support, monitor, encourage, and facilitate learning, but do not control it.
- Whole language teachers are aware of the universals of human learning, of language and cognitive processes.
- Whole language teachers expect and plan for growth and do not impose arbitrary standards of performance.
- Let's not beat around the bush. Whole language teachers find basal readers, workbooks, skills sequences, and practice materials that fragment the process unacceptable.

A Theory of Language:

- Whole language teachers understand that there is no language without symbols and system.
- Whole language is whole. It does not exclude some languages, some dialects, or some registers because their speakers lack status in a particular society.
- Language is inclusive, and it is indivisible. Whole text, connected discourse in the context of some speech or literacy event is crucial.
- Writing and reading are both dynamic, constructive processes.
- Writers must decide how much to provide so that readers will be able to infer and recreate what the writer created in the first place.
- Readers will bring to bear their knowledge of the text, their own values, their own experiences, as they make sense of a writer's text.
- Whole language teachers know how language works. They work with language that is whole and sensible, making learning easy.
A Language Centered View of Curriculum:

- If language is learned best and easiest when it is whole, integrated, and in natural context, then language development and content become a dual curriculum.
- Individual growth, not achievement of absolute levels, is the goal.
- Language processes are integrated. Children speak, listen, write, or as they need to.
- Authenticity is essential. Children choose to learn through language because it is useful, or interesting, or fun for them. They need to own the processes they use.
- Developing language across the curriculum is easier to achieve in elementary, self-contained classrooms.
- Content area teachers are urged to consider how language is used in their fields and then think of their curriculum as a dual curriculum with the double agenda it implies.
- Whole language teachers organize the whole of or a large part of the curriculum around topics or themes.
- A teaching unit provides a focal point for inquiry, for use of language, for cognitive development. It involves students in planning, and gives them choices of authentic, relevant activities within productive studies.
- In a whole language classroom, there are books, magazines, newspapers, directories, signs, packages, labels, posters, and every other kind of appropriate print all around.
- When learning centers are present in whole language classrooms they are integrated and keyed to the ongoing whole language program.
- The materials found in a whole language classroom should include a classroom library, books borrowed from the school library and the public library, student-authored books produced in the class publishing center. Materials that are inappropriate are basal readers, sequenced skill programs, or the usual types of instructional materials. The classroom should include anything the children need or want to read.

A Theory of Learning:

- Language learning is easy when it is whole, real, and relevant.
- Language is both personal and social.
- Language is learned as students learn through language and about language, all simultaneously in the context of authentic speech and literacy events.
- Language development is empowering: the learner "owns" the process, makes the decisions about when to use it, what for and with what results.
- Language learning is learning how to mean: how to make sense of the world in context of how our parents, families, and cultures make sense of it.
- Language development is a holistic personal-social achievement.

Goodman, 1986
Appendix B
Suggested Mini-Lessons

**Procedures**
- writing the title, author's name, and date on writing
- establishing workshop rules
- defining the structure and sequence of the workshop (mini-lesson, writing with conferring, large-group sharing)
- using only one side of the paper to facilitate revision
- managing time in the writing workshop
- identifying ways to respond to writers
- using a writing folder
- suggesting procedures for editing one's writing
- establishing procedures for illustrating a published book

**Qualities of Good Writing**
- writing to get "pictures in your head"
- adding information for clarity
- describing a situation through "show not tell"
- deleting information for clarity and conciseness
- focusing writing - too many stories in a piece
- writing effective leads
- writing effective endings
- considering connections between leads and endings
- omitting extra "thens"
- omitting extra "ands"
- eliminating sentences connected with "and" and "then"

**Strategies Writers Use**
- choosing topics
- using books as inspiration for topics
- saving all writing and using it as a resource for future topics or revision
- considering genre and strategies for writing: poetry, biography, autobiography, nonfiction, how-to books, fiction
- reading a journal (kept on a trip) and listing possible topics
- reading old piece for possible revision or new topics
- choosing topics by hearing other writers' pieces (e.g., sleepovers, birthdays)
- rereading for clarity and completeness
- sequencing information by cutting and pasting
- lining out to make changes rather than erasing

**Skills**
- managing space: words too big (only two or three to a page), words too little (run into each other)
- using left-to-right, top-to-bottom progression
- inserting spaces between words
- using capital letters to start sentences
- using capital letters for proper names
- alphabetizing a list (in a glossary, for example)
- using picture dictionaries
- using exclamation marks
- using question marks
- inserting quotation marks
- changing "me and my friend" to "my friend and I" (compound subjects)
- using antonyms

Adapted from *And with a Light Touch* by Carol Avery (1993)
### Appendix C
Writing Rubric - Second Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Exceptional Writer</td>
<td>• Exceptional development and organization of a detailed topic with few, if any, grammatical errors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5     | Experienced Writer  | • Provides a clear paragraph with sensory details.  
• Clear beginning, middle, and end.  
• Very few mechanical errors. |
| 4     | Developing Writer   | • Describes the topic with adequate details.  
• Uses complete thoughts.  
• Organization evident.  
• Adequate use of punctuation and capitalization. |
| 3     | Practicing Writer   | • Writes a brief description with some details using simple sentence structure.  
• May not be written in a logical way. |
| 2     | Emerging Writer     | • Writes a simple description using inventive spelling and some sentence structure. |
| 1     | Beginning Writer     | • An attempt to convey meaning using pictures, letters, or words.  
• May be off topic. |
References

Atwell, N. (1987). *In the Middle. Writing, Reading and Learning with Adolescents.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann


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Graves, Don & Hansen, J. (1983). The Author’s Chair, *Language Arts, 60*. 176-183


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