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SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR EXPOSITORY WRITING

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

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Education:  
Reading/Language Arts

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by  
Bonnie Dee Reed  
December 2005

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR EXPOSITORY WRITING

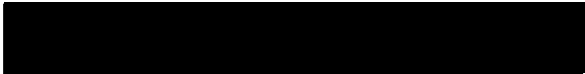
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San Bernardino


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by  
Bonnie Dee Reed  
December 2005

Approved by:

  
Diane K. Brantley, First Reader

11-29-05  
Date

  
Alayne Sullivan, Second Reader

## ABSTRACT

Teaching in a district where educators are limited to using one writing program prompted the researcher to initiate this study. The focus of this study was on expository writing strategies that would improve fifth and sixth grade students' abilities to develop well constructed expository essays. Through researching Step Up to Writing, the Six-Traits, interactive writing, play/realia, paired/shared writing, and writers' workshop the Integrated Expository Writing (IEW) model was developed.

The IEW model began with the teaching of the writing process and continued with the teaching of the strategies and qualities needed to become proficient writers. Instruction was provided to the students over a 10 week time period. Mini-lessons on organization, ideas, voice, sentence structure, word choice, and conventions were included within the writer's workshop framework.

Once the implementation of the IEW model was in place the students were able to improve the organization of their essays within the first two weeks of instruction. Additionally the students were able to improve the organization and content of their expository essays.

Overall, all of the students in the study showed improvement in their writing.

While these findings are promising, the students may have achieved even greater success if the study was implemented for a longer period of time.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade class from the 2005 - 2006 school year. My students were more than willing to participate and learn something new. They worked hard to improve their writing during the implementation and I know they will continue the hard work.

I would also like to thank my friends, who without knowing encouraged me to finish this project even though at times I wanted to quit. Thank you, my friend, Carmen Madrigal for reading and giving me feedback on my thesis and always being there to tell me not to worry, that I would get it done, it meant so much. Thanks to Rebecca Hoy and Jake Beigle who always made sure I had plenty of time to work on my thesis by assisting me with other activities when needed.

My current administrator, Elizabeth Moore, deserves great thanks. She loaned me several resources and allowed me the time to implement my project during the first trimester. Thank you, Mrs. Moore, for all of your encouraging words and support.

I would now like to thank the three most important people in my life, for without them this would not have been possible. Thank you to my daughter Crystal for cooking

dinner and helping around the house, I know you gave up your free time and I greatly appreciate and love you for that. To my husband Theron, thank you for giving up our time together, now we have all the time in the world. And to my son Cristopher (1987 - 1997), thoughts of you always helped me through, thank you for encouraging me by what you did and who you were the short time you were with us, this was for you!

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction to the Study

Writing is an important component of the curriculum for every grade level. With the "No Child Left Behind Act" (NCLB) in place today, teachers are being held to higher standards and levels of accountability without always being given the support and materials needed to get the job done. The NCLB Act is in place to ensure that all students receive a quality education regardless of their background. It gives parents and students more choices, states and school districts a greater flexibility, and requires research-based teaching methods. Teachers must be willing to do whatever it takes to reach every student that comes through their classroom. "A hopeful America is one in which not one child is left behind" (President George W. Bush, 2005). Due to the NCLB Act, districts are implementing several assessments that are administered throughout the year to ensure the teachers are teaching and the students are learning.

One of these assessments, at the elementary level, is a writing assessment for fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.

The district writing assessments are administered at the end of every trimester so the need for a writing program that teachers can use to assist in increasing the student's ability to write expository essays is tremendous. The Step Up to Writing program currently being used in my district is just not enough. According to a first grade teacher at Jones Elementary School, "Step Up to Writing is a great program if all you are trying to do is get the students organized". A sixth grade teacher added, "Yea, I am still trying to get them to use the appropriate voice in their essays and they are still having a difficult time selecting the right words to use, but they are very organized". All of this and we are still falling behind the national average in writing.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the scale scores for writing in the state of California are still falling below the national average. On a scale of zero to 300, students in the fourth grade in California scored 146 in 2002 while students across the nation had an average score of 156. Using the same scoring scale, eighth grade students in California scored 141 in 1998 and 144 in 2002, while the national average for fourth grade students was 148 in 1998 and 152

in 2002 on their writing assessment. This translates into the fact that only 22% of our fourth grade students in the state of California are proficient and/or advanced in writing and only 23% of our eighth grade students are in that same category (NCES, 2005). Most of our students fall in the basic and below basic achievement levels. Because of this, it is time for every school district in the state of California to find the strategies and programs that will help increase our students' writing scores.

My school district needs to be open to other strategies and/or programs that can be combined with the Step Up to Writing program to increase our students' writing abilities, otherwise the writing scores in California will continue to increase in the manner in which they have, slowly.

### Background to the Study

There are several writing programs containing strategies to assist students in writing better expository essays. Although these writing programs exist, they do not always work for the students we have in our classrooms each year. Some teachers have a choice in the writing program(s) they use in their classroom. Other teachers are instructed



by their districts what writing program(s) they must use to teach their students. Teachers should be given the opportunity to select the writing programs or strategies from those programs that will make their students successful writers.

I have been teaching sixth grade for four years in the Cristopher Unified School District (pseudonym). During my first two years we did not have a specific writing program to follow. Teachers taught writing through many different programs depending on their own knowledge of what works and what does not work. What worked for me, as a new teacher, was the *Jumbo Book of Writing Lessons: Intermediate* (Teacher Created Materials, 1999). This book contained 37 writing lessons that took the students through the writing process. The lessons ranged from conventions to the publishing stage of writing. With this book I was able to help my students become better writers.

We were then advised, at the beginning of my third year, the district had adopted the Step Up to Writing Program (Auman, 2003) and all teachers were directed to use this new program. I was excited to finally have some direction on how to teach writing to my students. After going through the training I was even more excited with

what I saw in the program. It was at this time I realized that the writing lesson book I was using, while it was improving the students writing, was not enough.

I began using Step Up to Writing with my students and noticed an almost immediate positive difference in the organization of their expository writing. The content of their writing, on the other hand, was still very basic and dry. There had to be other strategies or programs I could integrate with this program that would help my students to improve the content of their expository essays.

When given the opportunity to develop a new writing curriculum, I looked at successful strategies students could use to further develop their expository writing. Expository writing is a style of writing used to explain, describe, give information, or inform. In expository writing the author should use details and descriptions to clearly explain the topic. The author must not assume the reader has prior knowledge about the topic. Expository writing needs to be very clear, therefore organization is also important.

I chose to focus on expository writing for this study because this is an area of writing where most fifth and sixth grade students experience difficulty. Most student

difficulties lie within their ideas, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. We are surrounded by expository writing and speeches in our everyday lives and the ability to write in this manner is important. It allows us to communicate with the people we work with and come in contact with on a daily basis.

### Statement of the Problem

Teachers are concerned that their students are not producing quality writing. Being restricted to using one writing program can limit how well students learn to write. One teacher at Adams Elementary commented that, "I wish we could use other strategies and find other programs to use with or without the Step Up to Writing because this program alone is just not working for my students". One of the fifth grade teachers then added, "Every year we get a different group of students and we have to find what works for them, because what worked last year might not work this year with this group of students". I work in the Cristopher Unified School District where the teachers must use the Step Up to Writing Program. This program was adopted by the district in 2003 and was initially implemented in grades three through twelve. Later that year the curriculum

department at the district office took Step Up to Writing and developed a program for kindergarten through second grade.

Although by teaching and using the Step Up to Writing Program students are getting their essays well organized, the essays being produced are lacking in content. Our teachers and students are still in need of a program that will teach them the strategies they need to tap into their ideas and background schema, use the correct voice, make better word choices, understand and use better sentence fluency, and make fewer conventional errors. This background information then leads into the purpose of the present study.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project was to provide teachers with a set of writing strategies that will allow their students the opportunity to learn how to write a well organized and in-depth expository essay. Bringing together successful strategies used in the Step Up to Writing and Six-Trait programs as well as integrating other successful strategies such as interactive writing, play and realia, Paired/Shared writing, daily sustained writing, and

conferencing created a program of strategies specific to expository writing. Combining the strategies from these two programs and implementing them into the classroom using writers' workshop will give teachers a more complete program for high quality expository writing. This integrated program was based on the learning principles embedded within socio-psycholinguistic theory.

#### Theoretical Basis for the Study

The student's ability to learn how to write is a difficult process for both the student and the teacher. "The challenge of helping children write well—and live Well—is bigger than any of us and bigger than any of our theories. It's a challenge big enough to live for" (Calkins, 1991, p. 8). The teacher must fully understand the students and the students must be willing to open up and let what they know flow out onto the paper without reservations. The researcher attempted to combine writing programs and strategies that would help students realize their potential as writers and to help the teacher realize the many successful strategies for teaching writing. Socio-psycholinguistic Theory (SPL) provided the foundation for the study of the writing programs and strategies that were

combined to create a well rounded program; a program in which the teacher explicitly teaches so that the students can actively learn.

### Socio-psycholinguistic Theory

There are three major principles to the socio-psycholinguistic theory: 1) meaning is more important than identification, 2) language is naturally integrated, and 3) students must be active participants in the learning process.

The first principle states that the meanings behind the words are more important than identifying the words. The exact identification of all the words is not absolutely necessary for understanding the meaning of what is being read. According to Smith (1985), "As we become fluent readers we learn to rely more on what we already know, on what is behind the eyeballs, and less on the print on the page in front of us" (p. 9). This is also true for writing. Allowing students to select topics to write on gives them the opportunity to tap into their background knowledge (what is behind their eyeballs) and create a successful expository essay.

Next is the premise that language is naturally integrative. Semantics, syntax, and phonics are the three

small systems that make up the larger system of whole language. To be learned naturally these systems of language must not be taken apart. Although the SPL theory emphasizes semantics, it "assumes not only that the systems of language are shared, but that they are interdependent and interactive aspects of a single process" (Harste & Burke, 1979, p. 5). While teaching reading and writing the SPL theorist ensures that the students are being taught all of the systems as a whole; the letter sound correspondence, the meaning, and the grammar. Through mini lessons taught each day during the present study the teacher ensured that the students understood the whole language and not just a part of the language.

The final principle of the SPL theory states that the students must be active in the process of reading. The reader must be specifically looking for the meaning behind what is being read. Smith writes (1985),

...meaning is not something that a reader or listener gets from language, but something that is brought to language. The difference is important, for it demonstrates that reading is not a passive activity but involves complex intellectual processes that must always be actively initiated by the reader. (p.10)

Writing is a part of a well rounded reading program and must be considered as such. Therefore, although students must be taught how to write, the students must be active in the writing classroom to learn how to write. It is also important for the students to see and understand the reasons behind what they are doing in the classroom and being an active learner will allow the students that understanding.

Whole language or socio-psycholinguistic theory is a theoretical premise that literacy instruction is based on the concept that learners must experience language as an integrated whole. The meaning behind what they are reading and writing is emphasized in this theory. The students must also understand why they are reading and writing to become more active in the process. According to Weaver (1988) those who advocate a whole language approach emphasize the importance of approaching reading and writing by building upon the language and experiences of the child (p. 44). Within a newly developed program the students are encouraged to write about what they already know, to use their background knowledge when they are writing. With this in mind the researcher came to the following question.



## Question

The writer investigated the following question through her research of several strategies and different writing programs and through the implementation of a new expository writing program.

Can students successfully write expository pieces that are both well organized and content-rich after being taught several strategies from different writing programs?

## Hypothesis

My students will begin to write better expository essays with an integrated writing program containing Step-up to Writing, the Six-Traits, and other successful strategies all taught through a Writers' Workshop format. It is important for students to learn how to write well organized and content-rich expository essays. This will allow the students to express their knowledge through their writing and the reader to understand the topic.

## Importance of the Study

The need for one writing program that contains strategies for all students to be successful writers was of great importance. The program used in my school district

was not enough. Our students' organization was improving, but their content was still lacking. The research and development of a new writing curriculum for expository writing will give students strategies to assist them as they develop as writers and it will give teachers a new program to better their writing curriculum. In doing this study we will learn what strategies to use to assist us in teaching our students how to write a better quality expository essay.

#### Definition of Terms

Expository writing - Writing that explains, clarifies, or provides the reader with information and is clear, centrally focused through examples and details.

Writing process - A process in which writers move through several stages (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to reveal a final writing piece.

Prewriting - The planning and collecting of information on a topic.

Drafting - Developing the ideas and thoughts into meaningful words, sentences, and paragraphs.

Revising – The students examine and react to the meaning of what they have written.

Editing – Writers identify and correct any spelling, mechanical, and grammatical errors.

Publishing – Sharing the final draft with others.

Six-Traits – A way of looking at writing that takes teachers and students right inside the process, a vision (Spandel, 2005, p. 1).

Ideas – Ideas are the heart of it all, the writer's main message and details, evidence, or anecdotes that support or expand the message (Spandel, 2005, p. 2).

Voice – Verbal fingerprints. A mix of individuality, confidence, engagement with the topic, and reader rapport—that “something” that keeps readers reading (Spandel, 2005, p. 2).

Word choice – A knack for selecting the *just right* word or phrase to make meaning clear and to bring images or thoughts to life through writing (Spandel, 2005, p. 2).

Sentence fluency – rhythm and flow, the music and poetry of language, and the way text plays to the ear (Spandel, 2005, p. 2).

Conventions - Writers' skill in using an editor's tools (punctuation, spelling, grammar, capitalization, and layout) to clarify and enhance meaning (Spandel, 2005, p. 2).

Organization - Internal structure of a piece of writing that gives support and direction to the ideas (Spandel, 2005, p. 2).

Step Up to Writing - A program containing a collection of practical strategies for tackling all kinds of writing that provides in-depth instruction.

Writers' workshop - A process in which children choose their own topics, writing, revising, editing, and publishing. Begins with a minilesson in which the teacher writes, children write as teacher helps, and concludes with an Author's chair.

Interactive Writing - A teaching method in which children and teacher negotiate what they are going to write and then share the pen to construct the message.

Play (hands-on)/Realia (visuals) - Concrete materials, direct experiences, and hands-on activities. It is the use of illustrations, captions, comics, graphs, labels, photos, wordless picture books, timelines, and

use of color to generate ideas (Scully and Roberts, 2002, p. 97).

Paired/Shared Writing - Two or more students working together to author a piece of writing.

Daily sustained writing - A set of time for students to write every day.

Conferencing - Discussions between the teacher and the student about the progress of their writing.

#### Limitations

The limitations of this study were minimal. The class grade level was the first limitation. I taught a combination class (fifth/sixth grade) during the implementation of this program. Although the fifth grade curriculum also includes writing expository essays, it was my intention to only study sixth grade students. The combination class lowered my ability to have a larger sample size of one grade level.

The second limitation was the size of my class for the 2005 - 2006 school year. This determined the number of participants in my study. Enrollment at Beigle Elementary School (pseudonym) was down and I had 32 students during some of the implementation of the writing program. Within

the first month my total enrollment went down to 28. Some of the students who left my classroom were the students being studied. This required me to select other students. In addition, studying a small sample of students (one class) limited the study.

Another limitation was the length of my study. I implemented the new curriculum starting July 2005 and continued through September 2005. A study over only three months gave me the opportunity to verify my findings, but a longer study would make the findings more substantial.

Finally, there was the limitation of being the teacher and the researcher. Since I did the research and taught the new writing curriculum, I put full effort into ensuring my students' success. If another teacher would have implemented the new writing curriculum, it might not have been as successful. The other teacher might not have held as high an interest in the program or the results.

#### Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The remaining chapters are organized in the following manner. Chapter two contains the research I conducted to find the successful strategies for expository writing. I researched the writing process, Step Up to Writing, the

Six-Traits, several writing strategies, and writer's workshop. In chapter three I developed a new expository writing curriculum that combines the researched areas. Chapter four provides information on the results and my findings after implementing the new expository writing curriculum. Chapter five is a summary of chapters one through four. It also includes the conclusions found from the results of my study and recommendations for further research based on my findings.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Writing is a complex process through which students can learn to express elaborate ideas and concepts. As writers we do not sit down and write a story or an essay from start to finish and end up with a final product. Emig (1971) suggests that, "writing is not linear but recursive, thus shifting focus of writing from product to process, from ends to means" (Danielson, 2000, p. 1). Harp and Brewer (1996) agree with Emig's research and also describe writing as a recursive process in which a writer will move forward and backward through until they are satisfied with the results of their writing.

The process of writing is a task in which weak or "experimental" writing will exist before the strong writing exposes itself (Kleiman, 1997, p. 1). Students must understand this process and know how to work through it before their writing can change from a poor expository writing piece to one they can be proud to author.

For students to comprehend how to write, and write well, we as teachers are responsible for teaching each stage in the process. The writing process consists of five



stages; prewriting, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing. Emig (1971) noted that writers will go through the first four steps of this writing process several times before a final publication emerges. It is through this process of writing and revising that writing quality improves. To better understand the recursive nature of writing, the following research details each step in the writing process.

### The Writing Process

We (teachers) need to help children spin through the stages of writing (Calkins, 1991). The stages of the writing process start with prewriting, a stage in which brainstorming and generating ideas are the focus. During this stage of writing, writers need to decide on a topic and collect and organize their ideas. Students' ideas usually come from their background knowledge as they tend to write about what they already know. Students will succeed if we allow them to write from their own experiences. We should teach our students to dig deep into their own interests and experiences for topics they care about (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1993). Prewriting comes in the form of several strategies, such as drawing a picture,

using one of many graphic organizers, and outlines using stars, bullets or numbers. (See Appendix B) for an example of graphic organizers. Graphic Organizers allow the students to get their ideas down on paper in an organized manner. The students are able to write down their very basic ideas in a graphic organizer. They will then expand on those ideas before they write their rough draft.

This first stage is usually the most time consuming. According to Donald Murry (1982), 70% or more of writing time should be spent in prewriting. By spending a great deal of time in this stage of the writing process, students are more likely to produce a quality piece of writing.

The next stage in the writing process is drafting. Writing a rough draft gives the students an opportunity to get their ideas and words down on paper. Students put their ideas and words into meaningful sentences and paragraphs. The focus is not on organization at this time, it is simply creating something that the student and teacher can work on without concern for the conventions (Poindexter and Oliver, 1999, p. 421). Through interactive writing the teacher can help her students understand this stage. Interactive writing is a strategy where the teacher and the students share the pen to learn. Using a piece of large chart paper

to write on, the teacher and the students verbally negotiate what will be written and then take turns writing the information down on the chart paper. The responsibility is gradually released to the students as they begin to comprehend what is being taught (Fisher and Frey, 2003).

The third stage of the writing process is the revision of the first draft. This process is a reorganizing of the ideas. During the revision process the students first read and reread their writing to themselves. Next the student's writing is read by other students and the teacher to provide them with feedback on the content. It is at this time that students change and reorganize their words to clarify what they are trying to say within the paper.

Modeling can be an effective way of teaching students how to revise their writing. Here a teacher would copy an expository paper and give each student a copy. Next, using the overhead, the teacher would go through the process of revising with the students. The teacher places the overhead of a piece of expository writing onto the overhead projector. As a class, they will read the paper through once together. At this time the teacher will then reread the essay sentence by sentence eliciting responses from the students about the sentence fluency, word choice and the

conventions. Once all of the errors have been corrected, the students should rewrite the essay. This process should be modeled several times to ensure the students understand the writing process. Students must understand how to revise to be successful writers. It is through this stage that the author addresses the text's organization, content, and voice to improve the depth and clarity of their work. Once the students complete the revision of the paper and feel that they have expressed their ideas, they begin looking at the conventions.

Editing the revised writing for conventional and organizational errors is the next stage in the writing process. It is at this stage, students are taught to peer edit. Students sit next to one another and read the writing together looking for spelling, mechanical, and grammatical errors. It is not the job of the peer helping to edit a paper to fix the errors, it is their job to help the writer discover and correct those errors on their own.

Lastly students will publish a final product by publicly sharing the final copy. The sharing can be through an oral presentation, posting on a bulletin board, or making a class book. The purpose for students to publish their final draft is to "instill pride of authorship"

(Scott and Vitale, 2003). According to Collins and Parkhurst (1996), "It is the act of sharing writing that provides the incentive to write again" (p. 279). Students will feel more successful when they see their writing in the final stage of publication. It will allow them to also feel that they have accomplished something and encourage and motivate them to write again. Much of the research on the writing process is the same. Other researchers might refer to the stages in the process by different names, but all come to the conclusion that the writing process is the backbone of expository writing.

Another way of looking at this process is through Englert's POWER strategy (1992), to Plan, Organize, Write, Edit, and Rewrite/Revise. In Wong's article (2000) she states that, "Engbert's writing strategies revolve around mobilizing students to generate ideas; teaching them to group/cluster ideas logically; to write; and to revise according to clear criteria such as inclusiveness of important ideas, clarity, one's intuitiveness of ideas well-liked or the reverse, and to act on feedback from one's intuitions or others in revising one's composition" (p. 30). In other words, teachers need to take the students

through the writing process in a logical order that will generate a successful expository essay.

Students need to understand writing is a process that takes time to work through to have a successfully completed essay. Too often students think writing can be completed in a short amount of time, but for them to work through the five stages in the process they need to realize time is of no importance; the quality of their writing is much more important. Students also need to understand that writing is a skill they will use throughout their lives. "Not long ago the writing process was deskwork. Today, writing extends far beyond the desk. Writing is lifework, not deskwork" (Calkins, 1991, p. 6-7). Writing is taking place beyond the classroom and the students need to be given more opportunities to write. The need for a writing program that includes the writing process's five stages, as the backbone to the program, strategies to create successful writers out of our students, and opportunities to write on topics they have knowledge of, is the reason for the following research of existing writing programs as well as successful strategies.

## Step Up to Writing

Step Up to Writing is a program developed with the knowledge of writing being a process. Each stage in the writing process needs to be taught directly and used repeatedly for students to become better writers (Simon, p. 1, 2003). According to Auman (2003), "Everyone can learn to write clear, concise, organized paragraphs if they are provided with: direct instruction, step-by-step guidelines, examples, opportunities to practice, and specific feedback" (section 1, p. 1). Step Up to Writing is a collection of "practical strategies" for approaching all types of writing (Auman, 2003, section 1 p. 1). The focus of my research is on expository writing as it is the most difficult type of writing for fifth and sixth grade students.

It is first important for students to understand the purpose of their writing (Auman, 2003, section 2, p. 2). Understanding the difference between expository (information) and narrative (telling a story) writing will help students organize their information. Step Up to Writing uses the strategies of modeling and use of examples to teach the difference between expository and narrative pieces. Narrative writing has a beginning, middle, and end as opposed to expository writing which has an introduction,

body, and conclusion. Reading aloud both narrative and expository texts is also a strategy used to teach the difference between these two types of writing. Once students understand these differences, teaching them how to write an expository piece will be more successful.

After teaching students what expository texts are and are not, Step Up to Writing introduces an organizer that uses color-coding. The colors of a traffic signal: green, yellow, and red, are used to guide students in understanding how a piece of writing is organized (Appendix B). Color-coding enables students to visualize their organization and put their ideas in an order which makes sense. The color-coding is applied through the use of folded paper, specifically the accordion fold (Appendix C) or by using color strips of paper for expository writing. It does not matter what the plan is that a student has to organize their ideas, just as long as they organize their ideas. As long as the students have a plan the content of their expository writing will improve. Auman (2003) stated, "Creating a plan saves time, improves writing and increases test scores" (section 2, p. 9).

One way students can plan their expository writing is through the use of the accordion paragraph. "The Accordion



Paragraph can be used for all types of paragraphs that present facts, give directions, list information, describe a process, or promote a product" (Auman, 2003, section 2, p. 1). This is a folded piece of paper in which one sentence is written in each folded section. This allows students to see their ideas sentence by sentence and therefore allowing them to plan and write a more quality paper. Using abbreviations and informal outlines are other methods for organizing information in Step Up to Writing.

Now that students are comfortable with the organization of an expository piece using the accordion paragraph, it is time to teach them how to write their own topic sentences. Up until now the teacher has provided students with the topic sentence. The Step Up program contains thirteen methods for writing a topic sentence "all of which contain the same two elements; the occasion and position" (Auman, 2003, Section 2 p. 20). The occasion is the subject or reason for writing and the position is what you plan to prove or explain. Providing examples and teaching students directly how to write a topic sentence is the approach in the Step Up program. Giving students' topics and having them write the topic sentences will provide them with the practice they need in developing

topic sentences. Students will then be able to write a better quality expository essay containing a precise topic sentence that tells the reader what they are about to read. For example a precise topic sentence would be; "If I won a million dollars it would change my life in two ways".

Once students have mastered writing a topic sentence and have been able to at least write an expository paragraph it is time to introduce them to what Auman calls the "Blues" (2003, Section 2 p. 35). These are sentences added to the beginning of an expository piece that give the reader slightly more interesting information. These sentences get the readers attention and are sometimes called attention grabbers. An example of an attention grabber would be; "Winning the lottery is the best event ever to happen to me. I can't believe I won a million dollars".

Finally, Step Up provides ideas for writing conclusions. A conclusion is simply restating the topic sentence to remind the reader of the topic. Students should use synonyms to restate the topic sentence. Suggested words and phrases are listed to help students write the concluding sentence of a paragraph and the concluding

paragraph in an expository essay. An example of words and phrases for conclusions are listed in the following table.

Table 1. Words and Phrases for Conclusions.

all in all	due to	overall	altogether
for these reasons	surely	thus	clearly
in conclusion	in fact	truly	in effect
as a result of	certainly	indeed	to sum up
definitely	obviously	ultimately	consequently

Step Up to Writing provides students with examples and “lists of lively verbs, adjectives, and precise nouns” (Simon, 2003, p. 2). Lists help students focus on the content of their writing by providing assistance in word choice.

The Step Up to Writing approach to teaching writing begins with the teacher. The teacher provides examples through “modeling, guided practice, and extended interactive practice” (Simon, 2003, p. 3). The teacher must also provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the students writing to ensure student success. Having a rubric will provide precise feedback in a timely manner. Providing students with explicit instruction and a student

friendly rubric will help them understand what is expected of them, thus improving their expository writing.

Although the research on the effectiveness of this program is limited, results from Emerson Middle school in the Los Angeles Unified School District showed great improvement. The pre and post scores are reported in Normal Curve Equivalency (NCE) with the average range being from 30 - 70. After implementing the Step Up to Writing program from October 2001 to May 2002 with 216 students the results were as follows; special education students were able to increase their writing scores from 32 to 49, English Language Learners (levels 2, 3, and 4) increased their scores from 28 - 42, and general education students increased their scores from 46 - 57 (Auman, 2005). This program can work to improve students writing scores whether they are unskilled writers or average to gifted writers. There is always room for improvement at all levels of writing.

Step Up to Writing is a program that considers "organization" the key to good writing. It is believed if the students can get their ideas organized they will develop into better writers. My question then becomes: what if the students have difficulty generating the ideas? My

students have been able to get themselves organized using this program, but they are still not generating ideas and the information needed to deliver their message in their writing. The Step Up to Writing curriculum is not enough by itself to help students develop as expository writers. It is for this reason I decided to research and incorporate the Six-Traits into this writing curriculum.

### The Six-Traits

The Six-Trait writing model encompasses several qualities that are needed in expository writing. The qualities will allow students to get the message of their topic across to the reader. These qualities are all necessary in teaching writing and in learning how to be a better expository writer.

"Six-Traits writing is not a curriculum. It is not a program. It is a *vision*—a way of looking at writing that takes teachers and students (all writers) right inside the process to where the action is" (Spandel, 2005, p. 1).

The Six-Trait writing model was developed by a group of teachers in Beaverton, Oregon. They wanted a way to successfully assess student writing and teach students to

write. To accomplish this they needed to collaborate and decide what qualities they were looking for in the students writing. After finding research done by Paul B. Diederich (*Measuring Growth in English*, 1974) and completing their own research, the Beaverton teachers agreed with him and with one another on the qualities that make writing work (*Great Source*, 2004, p.3). These qualities are ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions.

Ideas are the writer's main message through the use of details, examples, and explanations, all of which should support the main message. The ideas are the content of every essay that is written. A writer needs to provide enough details to allow the reader to visualize the main topic without being left with unanswered questions. Spandel states, "It isn't the amount of detail that counts, but how vivid it is" (2005, p. 66). Once the writer has their ideas and supporting details they must organize those ideas.

Organizing ones ideas is important to allow the reader to read the essay smoothly. A well organized essay tells the reader that the writer knew where they were headed and that they have a sense of direction. The essay should not bounce from one idea to another and back to the first one

again. Ideas and organization are the foundational traits of writing. Once you have ideas and organization, flavor needs to be added into writing to help broaden the writers ideas.

Voice, word choice, and sentence fluency are the flavor in ones writing. It is the voice that gives life to piece of writing. The words that are chosen by the writer and the manner in which they put them together create the expressiveness and interesting rhythms that jump off the page for the reader (Spandel, 2005, p. 91).

Being able to write with voice requires the writers to select a topic that is important to them and that they have some knowledge about. The writer also needs to consider what the reader might already know and want to know about the selected topic. With all of that in mind the writer must then be able to bring the topic to life through the use of detail, language, and energy.

Selecting the appropriate words to use in a piece of writing is important to help the reader visualize and thoroughly understand the message. This must be done without the use of jargon, inflated language, and modifier overload (Spandel, 2005). Writers must keep the writing real and original using everyday language to get the

message across to the reader. When the writers have their voice and word choice figured out they must then put their sentences together to have a variety and rhythm within their essay.

The writers must vary their sentence length and sentence beginnings. If there are too many short and choppy sentences, the writer must reorganize by combining some of the sentences to help the essay flow for the reader. When the reader uses the same beginning for several sentences the essay begins to sound repetitive. The writer must read their essay out loud to, "see how it plays to the ear" (Spandel, 2005, p. 100). This will allow the writer to hear whether their essay flows or whether their essay might need restructuring of some of the sentences.

Finally, the conventions within a piece of writing need to be visited to ensure the essay is error free. The conventional errors within a piece of writing make for a difficult read. If words are spelled incorrectly, sentences are punctuated wrong, the words were just wrong for the topic, and paragraphing was incorrect the essay would be too difficult to read and understand. Once all of the traits have been taught to the students the teacher must have a way to assess the students writing.



Within the Six-Trait writing model scoring assessments (rubrics) were developed to assist the teachers in "tracking and analyzing the quality of student writing" (Arter, Spandel, Culham, & Pollard, 1994, p. 3). A student friendly copy of the rubric was also developed and given to each student thus allowing them the opportunity to see what is expected in their writing. Students can not revise and edit unless they can hear the problems within their written text, thus, "unless teachers show students how to read their own writing, their work will not improve (Spandel, 2005, p. 5).

Within the Six-Trait model students are taught writing through the use of strategies such as examples, modeling, read aloud books, personal experiences, and choice. There are other successful writing strategies I decided to research and include in this project.

### Writing Strategies

Writing is not an easy task for most students and not every strategy will work for every student. Having a variety of successful strategies within a writing program will give every student a better opportunity to improve their writing skills. The strategies selected and included

in this curriculum reform are interactive writing, play (hands-on) and realia (visuals), paired/shared writing, and writer's workshop that includes daily-sustained writing mini-lessons, and conferencing.

### Interactive Writing

Interactive writing is "a cooperative event in which teacher and children jointly compose and write text" (Swartz, Klein, and Shook, 2001, p. 1). Through negotiation and collaboration the teacher and the students decide on what will be written. Once the decision is made both the teacher and the students will share the pen and write the text. During interactive writing the teacher is able to model writing and engage the students in creating text. Students who find it difficult to get their words down on paper are more engaged and willing to participate in interactive writing (Bradley and Lock, 2001, p. 1). These students are generating the ideas while another person is writing. When they become more comfortable they will begin joining in the sharing of the pen. This strategy allows the teacher to appropriately scaffold the process of writing for the students.

### Play (hands-on) and Realia (visuals)

Another strategy that can be used to improve students writing is the use of play or hands on experiences and realia, also known as visuals. Students use their background knowledge when they write about self-selected topics. The use of play and realia can provide the students with the background knowledge and understanding that they are lacking to successfully write an expository essay.

"When expository writing is linked to a concrete object or experience in a playful manner, children become engaged in learning to write in a different way. A real object or first-hand experience captures children attention, inspires their vocabulary, and encourages their language skills to grow" (Scully and Roberts, 2002, p. 97).

For example, bring in the ingredients to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and make that sandwich in front of the class while students take notes. Then give the students the opportunity to make the sandwich in their groups and write down the steps on their own. This real-life experience will give the students the knowledge they need to write an expository essay on how to make a peanut butter sandwich. "Generating a recipe or a topic

sentence is much easier for children after they have a real experience to write about" (Scully, et al, 2002, p. 97). Give the students as many opportunities to use play and realia as possible to allow them a great writing experience.

Bring in different real-world items to have the students write about such as flowers, pictures or paintings, figurines, etc. If the students can actually visualize the "illustrations, captions, comics, graphs, photos, labels, wordless picture books, timelines, and use of color" that you are asking them to write about, they will be more successful in the writing task (Routman, 2005, p. 171). When a student needs help with generating ideas and improving their knowledge, using play and realia is a valuable strategy.

#### Paired/Shared Writing

Pairing students to write together is a strategy that will help students become better writers. Pair students with one partner or place them in small groups of no more than three or four students. Paired writing will help struggling writers understand the process that goes into writing expository essays. Pair a weaker writer up with a more experienced writer and allow them to create an

expository essay together. Through paired writing students can experience creating an essay with another writer. This will allow each writer to bring to the essay their own strengths to create familiar text (Routman, 2005). The experience of paired writing will also give confidence to both writers and increase their writing abilities. Paired writing gives the stronger writer the experience of teaching the weaker writer and learning about understanding others. "Teaching someone else about something you understand is not only vital, but key to further developing intellectual empathy" (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998, p. 96). Another strategy that encourages such peer collaboration is writer's workshop.

### Writer's Workshop

Writer's workshop is a scheduled time in the day when the students and the teacher compose meaningful pieces of writing. Usually at the beginning of the writing session the teacher will conduct a mini-lesson then the students will have the remainder of the time to write. There is no one way to manage a writer's workshop. Every teacher has their own management style within their classroom, just do what works. The writer's workshop provides time to write

daily, teach mini-lessons, and conference with the students.

It is important to have a daily-sustained writing time in your daily schedule. Students must have time to write every day if they are expected to improve. According to Routman (2005) "Those who write every day in a regular planned writing session produce about twice the volume and twice the number of ideas as writers who write when they feel like it" (p. 175). Giving the students the opportunity to write every day will keep the flow of the writing process and ideas moving. Without the every day writing time, the students are likely to forget their ideas and the flow of their essays diminishes. Cunningham and Allington (2003) believe that "the opportunity to write daily is especially critical for children who come from homes where they have few opportunities to see adults write or to actually write themselves" (pp. 97-98). It is our responsibility, as teachers, for making this writing time available to our students in our already busy days.

Teachers can use writer's workshop to teach mini-lessons. The mini-lessons can be brief lessons on writing strategies, skills, and procedures or a time to focus on the content and organization of a particular writing genre.

Select the lessons according to the students needs during a writing piece. For example, if the students are having difficulty with organizing their writing then prepare a mini-lesson to review ways to better organize their ideas. The mini-lessons should be at any time during the writer's workshop and should not be longer than five to ten minutes. Sometimes students need reminding of the strategies, skills, and procedures that they have learned. Through mini-lessons, students will get the guidance needed.

Conferencing with the students is a "critical part of teaching writing" (Routman, 2005, p. 181). Students need time to talk about their writing throughout the writing process. Conferencing with the teacher, a peer, in a group, a teacher's aid, or parents will give the students the ability to receive "affirmation, encouragement, guidance, and explicit teaching" (Routman, 2005, p. 172). Routman also states that students need to have opportunities to talk about their writing whether they are one-on-one or whole class. Implementing writer's workshop into the classroom will allow for the conferencing time that is needed to help students succeed.

Based upon the research presented in this chapter, I have developed an integrated writing program using both the

Step Up to Writing Program and the Six-Trait Model. I have combined strategies from each that I believe will assist in the teaching of fifth and sixth grade students in becoming better expository writers. I have also included other research-based strategies that have been proven to be successful at improving the quality of a piece of expository writing. These have been embedded within the new writing program through a writer's workshop format. The new integrated writing program is detailed in chapter three.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

I wish we could change the world by creating powerful writers for forever instead of just indifferent writers for school (Mem Fox, 1993, p. 22).

The purpose of this study was to determine if students would benefit from an expository writing program that combined two programs and other writing strategies. The researcher combined Step Up to Writing (Auman, 2003), the Six-Traits (Spandel, 2005), and other writing strategies that were implemented through a writer's workshop. For the purpose of this study the researcher is calling the new program the Integrated Expository Writing (IEW) model. This was a qualitative study that determined the improvement in the content of the student's expository writing. The following project details the implementation of the researchers writing model.

#### Project

Within the IEW model the writing process was where it all began. Students started by developing an understanding

that writing is a process that takes time to master. They developed this understanding by learning each stage in the writing process and by being given many opportunities to write. Each stage in the writing process had to be explicitly taught to students before teaching them how to begin developing their ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence structure, and conventions. For this reason the integrated program began with the writing process.

Prior to the implementation of the IEW model it was important to understand the students' knowledge of the processes involved in writing and their ability to express their ideas on paper. Assessing the student's background knowledge and their ability to write was done through informal observations, surveys, and formal assessments. These assessments were completed before and after teaching writing as well as throughout the teaching process in order to be the most effective for students. The following section details how this was done within the regular classroom.

#### Pre-Writing Survey

On the first day of school, the students were given a writing survey (See Appendix A). The survey was reviewed

with the students and the teacher informed them that by completing this survey they would allow her to understand how they felt about writing and what they know about writing. Some example questions on the survey are, "Do you like to write? If yes, what do you like to write? If not, explain why? and Where do your ideas come from?". It was also explained to the students that knowing this information would allow the teacher to teach them more effectively. Students must understand the purpose of each task they are asked to complete or they tend not to take the task seriously. Students were given time to complete the survey, about 30-40 minutes was plenty of time. For those students who have difficulty with reading and writing, the survey was administered as an oral interview. Once all students completed the survey the teacher collected and reviewed them to gain a better understanding of how much knowledge the students had about writing. The information was placed into the following categories:

- Students who like to write.
- Students who do not like to write.
- Students who know the writing process.
- Students who do not know the writing process.

- Students who write at home.
- Students who do not write at home.

These categories were used to guide the teacher when she prepared mini lessons with writing groups and whole class instruction. Following this the teacher obtained a writing sample from each student by having them write an expository essay as a pre-assessment.

#### Pre-Assessment

Pre-assessment best occurs in the following two ways:  
1) informal observations across several weeks and, 2) a formal written assessment.

Informal observations occurred when the students were writing. The teacher observed and wrote down what the students did as they were writing. Were they just sitting there, did they organize and plan first, and were they talking with another classmate, are just a few characteristics the teacher noticed as the students wrote. These observations helped to determine the areas in which the teacher could assist the students during writing.

The formal written assessment was administered before any teaching took place. This gave the teacher the opportunity to see where the students are in the writing

process and allowed the teacher to plan mini lessons in the areas the students were having difficulty.

The teacher began by having the students select a topic to write on, such as favorite sport, holidays, friends, etc. She took a moment to brainstorm some writing topics with the students, wrote the list on the board, and allowed the students to select their own topic. Allowing students to select their topic gave them the opportunity to produce a much better expository paper by selecting a topic they are familiar with (Spandel, 2005). The students were able to use any form of organization to plan the information on their topic. It was explained to the students that they must have a multi-paragraph paper. The directions given were very specific in order to standardize the process. For example, look at the directions in the table below.

Table 2. Example Expository Writing Pre-Assessment.

Directions:

In this test you will write an expository essay. You must use the notebook paper to plan and write your expository essay. Write only on one side of the paper. You may use as many sheets of paper as you need.

Scoring based on:

Have a clear topic, a well organized essay, use of details and facts to support topic, and use of correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Writing Topic:

Select a topic you are familiar with, such as favorite sport, friends, holidays, etc. Write your topic at the top of your paper. You may use any form of organization to put your information together. Write your multi paragraphed paper when you have your ideas organized. Once you have completed your teacher will collect it.

Once the directions were given the students began writing. The teacher observed and took anecdotal records as to what the students were doing as they wrote. About 3-5 minutes were spent observing each student. This took some time to collect the information on each student. The students wrote for two 60 minute blocks of time to complete their writing assessment. This gave the teacher plenty of time to collect anecdotal records on each student.

Once the teacher finished taking the anecdotal records, she allowed the students to finish their writing. The writing was collected and dated as the formal pre-assessment. The formal expository piece of writing from each student helped guide the teaching after having

reviewed it using a scoring rubric. For this study the writing rubric in Appendix F was used to score each student's paper. It is a five point rubric, with a five being a perfect paper and a one being a failing paper. The rubric was used to score each paper in the areas of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Each area was given a different score. For example an essay could have received a five for ideas, a three for organization, a three for voice, a two for word choice, a two for sentence fluency, and a three for conventions. This essay would have an overall score of three when the scores were averaged.

After scoring each paper, a file was created for each student's pre-assessments, expository essays, and post-assessments. Maintaining a file for each student allowed for determining growth in writing skills, attitudes and overall knowledge base. The expository essays that were placed in the file were selected by both the student and the teacher. It was essential to make the students a part of the assessment process as much as possible so that they would develop ownership in the learning process. By increasing their level of ownership in their writing, students were more successful and motivated to write.

When all of the pre-assessments were complete and a file for each student was created, the teacher began to instruct the students in the processes involved in expository writing. Expository writing is writing that explains, clarifies, or provides the reader with information. The writing needs to be clearly written and centrally focused through the use of details and examples.

The teaching of the writing process was done first. Each student had to understand writing is a process that takes time and that quality writing does not just happen over night. Once this was internalized, the students began to use the process for each essay that they wrote. To further clarify how to implement the writing process into the curriculum, the next section details the steps involved along with a daily and weekly teaching schedule.

#### Teaching the Writing Process

Most students in the fifth and sixth grades are somewhat familiar with the writing process and once they were reminded they began to understand quickly. Therefore, with her class, the teacher taught the steps of the writing process within one week. She began by teaching prewriting and continued through the whole process ending with the publishing stage. Remember, each class and group of



students can be different and therefore the pacing may vary.

Materials and Classroom Set-Up. The following materials were used to teach the writing process:

\*Chart paper - Used to create posters, for the classroom, of the writing process.

\*Markers - Used to write on the chart paper. Suggested colors are black, brown, blue, or other dark colors.

\*Writing journals - The students used the journal to take notes and keep samples of the writing process in.

\*Pencils - The students wrote in their journals using pencil.

\*Colored pencils - The students used colored pencils during the organization stage of the writing process.

\*Table groups - The students collaborated in their table groups about ideas and assisted one another in understanding the writing process.

Weekly and Daily Schedule. Week 1/Day 1: (30 - 45 minutes) Prewriting

The teacher began by having students predict what prewriting is and then they interactively wrote their responses on a piece of chart paper. She discussed with the students the importance of spending time in this stage each

time they write. She made sure the students had the exact definition of prewriting during this discussion.

A piece of chart paper was placed on the white board with magnets and the class began interactively writing a map of ideas. While there are several types of pre-writing maps, an example of the one used can be found in Appendix D. The students were instructed to take notes and copy the information on the chart paper into their writing journals.

Using a marker, the teacher wrote the topic "sports" (any familiar topic to students can be used) in the center of the chart paper and circled it. The students brainstormed different sports at their table groups and made a list in their writing journals (about 2 - 3 minutes was allowed). A discussion of the different sports took place, then using interactive writing, some students came up, one at a time, and wrote one sport their group talked about in the circles connected to the main circle.

Once there were about three or four different sports, the students began thinking about what they knew about these sports and wrote them down in their writing journals. About five minutes was given and then a discussion of the students' knowledge of sports was conducted. At that time some students were selected to come up and write their

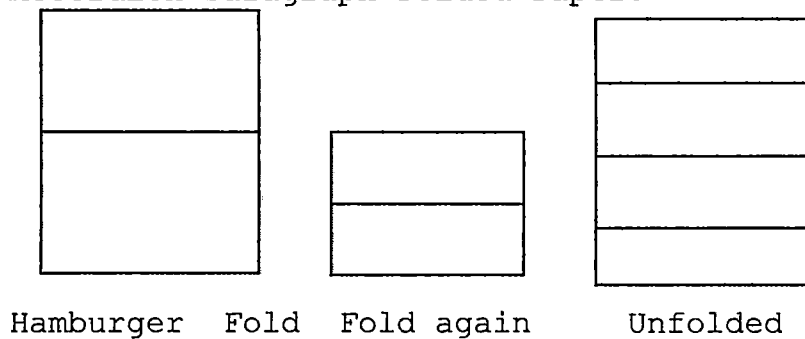
knowledge next to the sport it went with. The teacher reminded all students that they were to be copying this into their writing journals. Once this part of the prewriting was completed, homework was assigned to the students as practice. The students were to brainstorm on a familiar topic in the same manner in which they did in class. Each student was allowed to select their own topic.

Now that the teacher and the students have finished mapping their knowledge of sports they will use another piece of chart paper in tomorrows' lesson to teach the students how to organize their brainstorming information.

Day 2: (45 minutes - 1 hour) Prewriting/Drafting

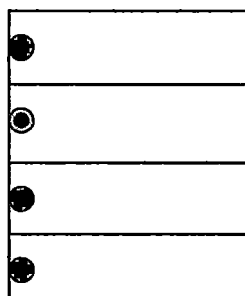
Today the teacher taught the students how to use the accordion paragraph to further organize their ideas. The accordion paragraph is a graphic organizer and it finalizes the prewriting stage and begins the drafting stage of the writing process. This organizer consisted of folded paper and the use of colors for the students to become active in this process.

Table 3. Accordion Paragraph Folded Paper.




Each student was given a piece of lined paper to fold as the teacher modeled how to fold the chart paper into an accordion fold (See Appendix C). The chart paper was folded in half like a "hamburger"; the students were folding their paper in the same manner. Then it was folded once more in the same direction. Students were then instructed to unfold their paper and they should have four sections like the chart paper (Demonstrated in table 3). The chart paper was placed on the board next to the brainstorming map that was completed yesterday.

Table 4. Color-Coded Accordion Paragraph.



In first section of the accordion folded paper a green circle was drawn on the left side (see table 4). This represented the topic sentence. In this section, the class decided on a topic sentence (one sentence) for the paragraph. Each group of students developed a topic sentence and then as a class they decided on one to place on the chart. Once the teacher and the students had agreed on their topic sentence, they began discussing their key ideas.


Table 5. Sample Topic Sentence.

	There are many types of sports, but I enjoy soccer and baseball the most.
--	---

In section two, a yellow circle was placed on the left side below the green circle. Yellow indicates key ideas and in this section the class developed one sentence about one of the key ideas on the map. Remember, this was also only one sentence. Now that the first idea was completed, the teacher and the students looked at the examples, evidence, and explanations of their idea in order to collaborate and



come up with two sentences (one for each section) to support their key idea.

Table 6. Sample Key Idea.

	Some people have probably heard of soccer, have never had the opportunity to play.
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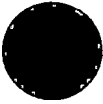
On the left side of the accordion folded paper, in the next two sections (Sections 3 - 4), they place a red circle. Red indicated the examples, evidence, and explanations of their key idea. Have students work in their groups to develop one sentence for each red section. Discuss as a class and place one sentence in each section, giving you two examples of your first idea.

Table 7. Sample of Example, Evidence, and Explanations.

	In soccer there are many different positions, example forward, goalie, and left defense.
	More people should play soccer because it is to kick the ball around the field.

They then turned their papers over and continued with another yellow section and two red sections. Another key idea was selected and a sentence was developed for it and the sentence was placed on the chart. Two examples were then selected and developed into two separate sentences, one sentence for each example. These example sentences were then finished and placed on the chart, one in each red section (Refer to tables 5 - 7).

Table 8. Sample Conclusion Sentence.

	Although I like soccer and baseball, there are other types of sports to be enjoyed.
--	---

Finally, there was one section left. A green circle was placed on the left side under the previous colored circles. This green represents the conclusion (See table 8). As a class they discussed how to end their paragraph. Once the class decided on a concluding sentence, it was placed on the chart and the accordion paragraph was completed (See Appendix E).

This was considered the first draft of their paragraph. Revision of the accordion paragraph will take place on day three.

Using the brainstorming homework from the night before, the students were to complete an accordion paragraph of their own for homework to practice the strategy.

As the students were writing, the teacher walked around the classroom taking anecdotal notes on their progress using the accordion paragraph graphic organizer. These notes were placed in the students' writing files.

Day 3: (30 minutes) Revision/Editing

Students took out the accordion paragraph that was completed yesterday. As a class they took each sentence, one at a time, and read it aloud looking and listening for any spelling, punctuation, word choice, or capitalization errors. It was much easier to revise and edit a paragraph when they were looking at it sentence by sentence.

Once all corrections were complete it was time to put all of the sentences together in paragraph form. Students were given another piece of paper to write the next draft of the paragraph. Together as a class they wrote their sentences into a paragraph, indenting the first line only.



By transferring the information from the graphic organizer into paragraph form the students began to understand the importance of the writing process.

For homework, students used their own accordion paragraph from day two's homework. They revised and edited each sentence and put the sentences together as a paragraph to practice this strategy.

Day 4: (30 minutes) Editing/Publishing

Students took out the class paragraph and paired up with a partner and edited one another's papers. Although they wrote this as a class, each student could have made errors while copying their paragraph. Once they completed this peer-editing process they wrote their final copy (publish) of the class-created paragraph.

Next, the students' pair edited their homework paragraph so that they were able to write a final draft of it for homework. Homework was assigned and the students turned in all of the assignments from the teaching of the writing process (mapping, accordion paragraph, and all drafts and published copies).

Day 5: (20 minutes) Review

On day five of teaching the writing process, the students' homework was collected. They looked at the

writing done in class, (the charts) and quickly reviewed this process by having an open question and answer session. At this time it was determined that the students understood the writing process. If most students were still having difficulty, the teacher would have spent another day or two on the stage(s) of the writing process. If only a few students were still having a difficult time with this process, she would have pulled together small groups to re-teach the stages where the students were still having difficulty.

Once the teacher was comfortable knowing her students learned that writing is a process and how that process works, she began teaching them how to better the content of their writing.

#### Integrated Expository Writing Model

By using the Step Up to Writing color-coded accordion paragraph students were able to be successful in organizing their ideas into an expository paragraph. The students then learned how to develop the paragraph into an essay. Since the accordion paragraph was taught with the writing process, the teacher then taught the students how to develop the content of their paragraphs. The ideas, voice, word choice, sentence structure, and conventions were

explicitly taught one at a time and then brought back together as one package. The teacher modeled good writing through the use of read aloud books and other writing samples. She was sure to use books and other writing samples that emphasize the use of ideas, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency. Ideas are the foundation of writing. The teacher started by teaching ideas and moved through each trait until she had taught each one. The traits were taught in approximately two weeks. The teaching time may vary from group to group.

The following materials were needed to teach writing:

- \*Chart paper-used to create charts
- \*Markers-used to write on the chart paper
- \*Writing Journals-students used to take notes
- \*Pencils-used to write in journals and to write essays
- \*Colored Pencils-used for the accordion paragraph
- \*Lined paper-used for notes and essays
- \*Thesauruses-used for selecting better words
- \*Dictionaries-used for spelling
- \*Tape and/or Magnets-used to hold the charts on the white board while creating them

Week 2/Day 1: (45 minutes - 1 hour) Assessment Tool  
(Rubric)/Writers Language

The first activity the teacher did with her students was to create a classroom for writers. The language writers' use was interactively written onto posters and posted in the classroom as seen below.

Illustration 1. Classroom for Writers.

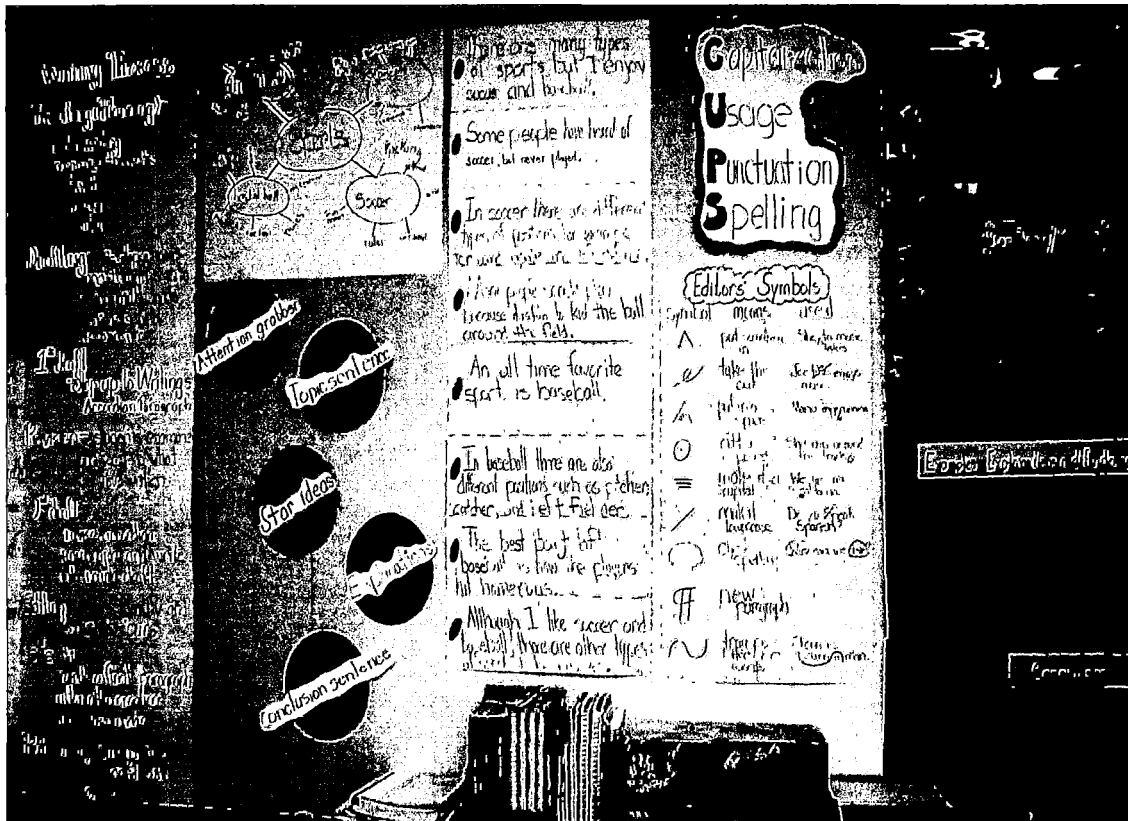
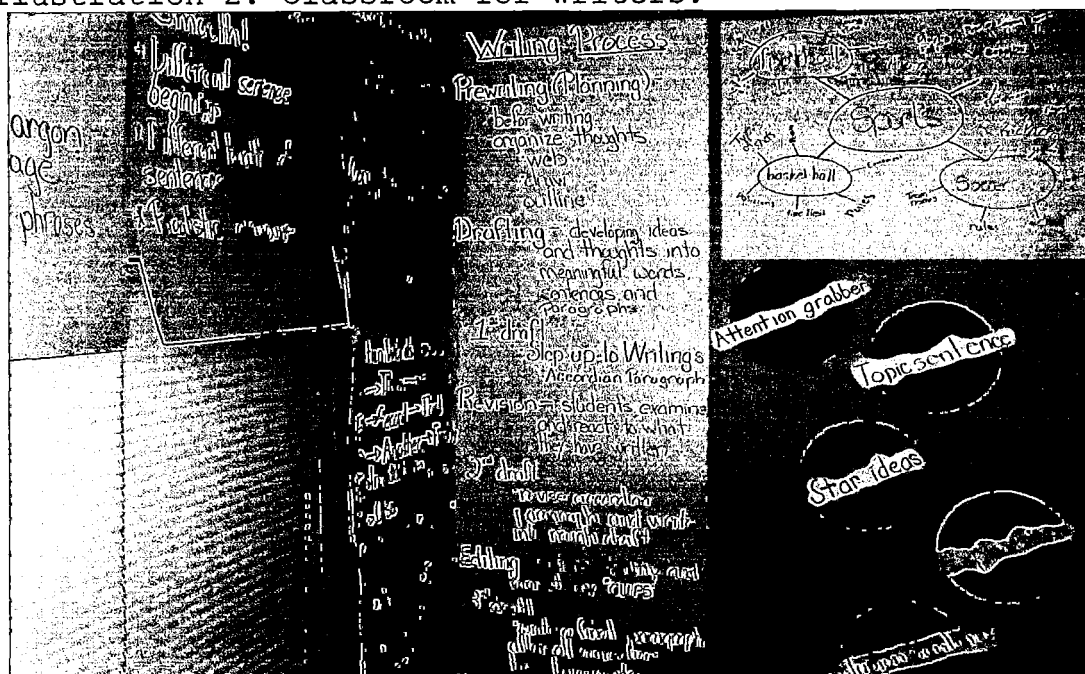


Illustration 2. Classroom for writers.



All students were given a copy of a student friendly assessment tool (rubric) (See Appendix F). The rubric was read through by the teacher and her students to clarify each trait and what were the expectations of them in their writing. As the teacher went through each trait on the rubric, she made charts with her students for each trait and posted them in the classroom. She also spent time each day reviewing excerpts of writing that modeled each trait for them. For example, when she was teaching word choice she read Roald Dahl's book (1998), *George's Marvelous Medicine*. This showed the richness of the language selected

by the author to describe, in detail, the making of the medicine and what happened to grandma when George gave it to her.

Six pieces of chart paper were needed to create the posters of each trait. With the students the teacher created six posters that were placed on the wall for reference. The posters (See Appendix G) include sound ideas, good organization, individual voice, powerful words, smooth fluency, and correct conventions. One at a time, a piece of chart paper was placed on the front board and the titles were written accordingly. The charts were created as they worked through the rubric. When the teacher and students were finished, they placed the posters on the wall and she directed the students to refer to the posters for reference as they were writing.

Day 2: (30 - 45 minutes) Student Assessors

A copy of an anonymous paper that was clearly strong and/or problematic was copied, as this was the easiest way to begin teaching students how to assess writing. A copy of this paper was presented each student. Using an overhead, the teacher worked through this paper with the students to model how to assess a piece of writing using the rubric provided.

Before the student groups began, the piece of writing was read aloud to the class by the teacher as they followed along. This allowed the students to hear it through completely one time. After the writing was read through once, it was read again having the students reading along with her (Shared reading), then they scored the paragraph together for the use of ideas. Each group was instructed to read the paper at least five more times (once for each trait they were scoring for). This gave them the opportunity to focus on one trait at a time. If this process took more than one day the class would continue on day three.

Before the teacher began teaching the six-traits to her students she looked for literature that could be read aloud to her students. She made copies of the list to share with her students. By using small passages that were examples of the traits helped her teach them to her students. Below you will find a table containing examples of books that the teacher found that conformed to each of the six-traits.

Table 9. Book List for Teaching Ideas.

Ideas: (non-fiction books)

Diane Ackerman, A Natural History of the Senses, (1995)

Jennifer Armstrong, A Shipwreck at the Bottom of the  
World, (1998)

Julius Lester, To be a Slave, (1998)

Twig C. George, Jellies: the Life Jellyfish (2000)

Rolad Dahl, Boy: Tales of Childhood (1984)

Table 10. Book List for Teaching Voice.

Voice: Roald Dahl, Matilda, (1988, p.7)

\*Gary Paulsen, Clabbered Dirt, Sweet Grass, (1992, p. 3)

\*Sandra Cisneros, The House on Mango Street, (1989, p.11)

\*Jon Katz, A Dog Year (2003)

\*Compare a newspaper article on any topic and the encyclopedia on  
the same topic. For example, a baseball article and baseball in the  
encyclopedia.



Table 11. Author List for Teaching Word Choice.

Word Choice: (Any books by the following authors)	
Mem Fox	William Steig
Roald Dahl	Gary Paulson
Margaret Atwood	Alias Grace
Miss Alaineus: A Vocabulary Disaster (2000), a book by Debra Frasier	

Table 12. Book List for Teaching Sentence Fluency.

Sentence Fluency:
*Kathi Appelt, Poems from Homeroom A Writers Place to Start, (2002)
*Paul Fleischman, Seedfolks, (1997)
*Sandra Cisneros, The House on Mango Street, (1989)
*Betsy Franco, You Hear Me? Poems and Writing by Teenage Boys, (2000)
*Thomas Locker, Water Dance (1997)
*Nikki Grimes, My Man Blue (2002)

Table 13. Book List for Teaching Conventions.

Conventions: (Resources for the classroom)

\*Patricia T. O'Conner, *Woe Is I*. New York: Grosset/Putnam. (1996)

\*Lynne Truss. *Eats, Shoots, & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. London: Gotham Books, (2004)

Spandel, V. (2005). *Creating writers: Through 6-Trait writing assessment and instruction* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). United States of America: Pearson Education, Inc.

### Day 3: (1 hour) Ideas

Every student in the classroom has information and knowledge on a topic regardless of where they came from. This knowledge was where they need to get their ideas from. Encouraging students to tap into this knowledge and write about their ideas will help make writers out of them. Teachers need to encourage students to start choosing their own topics at times. Allowing students the opportunity to select their own topics was important; as this allowed them to write on something they had enough background knowledge (the stuff behind the eyeballs) about to ensure a successful writing experience.

The first activity completed for teaching ideas with the students was an interactive writing of "writing topics". A piece of chart paper was placed on the board with magnets (tape can be used). The chart was titled

"Writing Topics" and a topic was placed on the list by the teacher. The students were told that they were compiling a list of topics for them to choose from when writing.

Students came up and add topics to the list. Once the list was generated, the students were informed that they would be able to add to the list if they remember another topic later.

A topic was selected off of the chart and the students began brainstorming a list of ideas (at least 20). The teacher had five good details and the rest were general details. In their table groups, the students selected the good ideas out of the list. A class discussion was held on which details the groups thought were the good details. Did the groups agree on the good details? If not, why?

Students were given back their expository paragraphs from the previous week. The teacher asked for volunteers to share their paragraphs with the class. As students shared their paragraphs, the class talked about the ideas. The teacher asked questions such as; Did the writer explain their topic well enough for the reader to completely understand the ideas? Does this paragraph need more details to explain the ideas? With the students, the teacher

brainstormed ways to make the paragraph(s) better when necessary.

For homework the students had to take their paragraph from the previous week and revise their ideas.

Day 4: (30 minutes) Continue Ideas

A book was selected that contained plenty of detail to get the message across to the students. The book was read aloud to the students substituting general details. The students were then asked if they understood the story completely or if it seemed as if there was something missing. Then the teacher read the story aloud again in its original form and watched her students begin to realize how detail makes the story. As they discussed the story and the many details that were within its pages the students determined that they preferred the second version of the reading because the details made it more interesting.

Day 5: (30 - 45 minutes) Voice

A topic most students were either familiar with or enjoyed was selected. An article from the newspaper on a baseball game was selected and read to the students. Then a passage out of an encyclopedia on baseball was selected and read to the students. The students were then asked which one, the article or the encyclopedia was written using more

voice and which one was drier. The students agreed that the encyclopedia was the drier piece of writing because it was lacking details. Together, the class took the drier piece of writing and rewrote it so that the students' voices shined through.

For homework students had to find a passage from a favorite book, news paper, magazine, etc. They read this passage aloud in class the next day and the class decided how well voice was used in each passage. A thorough discussion was held about how important it is to read with expression in the voice to learn how to write with that same expression. The students were asked questions that targeted who the author was and they had to support their beliefs with a piece of the text. It was explained how to enhance voice in a piece of expository text.

Week 3/Day 6: (1 hour) Word Choice

Read aloud books to the students that have incorporated excellent word choice. Authors to consider are William Steig, Gary Paulsen, Ronald Dahl, and Mem Fox (Spandel, 2005, p.189). After reading aloud to your students begin making charts of tired words and excellent words. This was used as a resource for the students to

remember that there was sometimes a better word to be used as they were writing.

Using chart paper, the class brainstormed a list of tired words. That is a list of words that are overused, and simple. Then they used another piece of chart paper to create a list of words to use in place of those tired words. Students used a thesaurus to help with the development of the excellent word list. The teacher took a few minutes (15) to familiarize the students with a thesaurus.

A passage was taken out of a nonfiction text and some of the words were changed. Copies were made and given to all of the students and an overhead was made for the teacher. As a class they went through the passage highlighting all descriptive words. Then, as a class they decided which words need changing, if any. It was explained to the students that by using a thesaurus they could use other words besides the everyday ordinary words (overused or dead words). By using a variety of words, a piece of writing can become more interesting to the reader.

Homework: Students were given a different passage that was altered and they have to make changes to the overused

words. Using a highlighter, they highlighted and changed these words.

#### Day 7: (30 - 45 minutes) Sentence Fluency

It is essential to teach students to create sentences that flow nicely. To do this the teacher took an expository essay and used the first paragraph to teach about run-on sentences and fragments. She re-wrote each paragraph with errors of this kind, creating run-on sentences and fragments from the existing text. Each student was given a copy and she made an overhead. As a class they worked through the entire text to make corrections. The students were asked which text helped them to better understand the author's meaning.

The second paragraph of the essay was used to teach the students about variety when it comes to the beginning of sentences. All the sentences were changed so that the beginnings sounded the same. A copy was given to all of the students and the teacher made an overhead for herself. As a class, they made the necessary corrections to have a variety of sentence beginnings.

The third paragraph was used to eliminate the use of endless connectives. The paragraph was typed combining the sentences using connective words like and, so, and then.

Once again all students were given a copy and an overhead was used by the teacher to help make the necessary corrections that eliminated the overuse of connective words.

Some students came up to the overhead to make the corrections and others just told the teacher what corrections to make. Remember students learn from doing.

For homework the rest of the essay was typed with these sentence fluency errors mixed together. Students made the corrections as needed.

Day 8: (30 - 45 minutes) Conventions

A poster of the editors' symbols (See Appendix H) was interactively written and a demonstration of how to use these symbols was given to the students.

Students were given an unedited copy of an anonymous paper that the teacher typed and double spaced for enough room to edit. The students were also given a colored pen or colored pencil to edit with. A copy was prepared for the overhead to make the editing process easier for the students to understand how to use the editing symbols. Students volunteered to come up and make a correction on the unedited overhead copy. One sentence was edited at a



time. Once the entire paper was edited the students placed that sample in their writing folders to use as a reference.

For homework the students were given another passage that was unedited for them to practice their editing skills using the editors' symbols.

Finally, when the writing process, Step Up to Writing color-coded accordion paragraph, and the Six-Traits were all taught to the students they needed continual practice in their use. Mini lessons were taught at the beginning of each writing time when necessary. Writers' workshop was the perfect environment in which to teach and continue writing for students.

After teaching, it was important to give the students plenty of opportunities to write and improve their expository essay writing. Remember, mini lessons were continually taught as necessary. At the end of the trimester a post-assessment was given. This showed any improvement or growth the students had during this time. It also showed the areas of writing where students are still having difficulty. The mini lessons taught should be designed around the areas of writing in which the students still have difficulty. The post-assessments determined these difficult areas.

### Post-Writing Survey

Once the teacher taught the students how to write expository essays and they had plenty of opportunities to write and improve their skills and knowledge (at least three months/each trimester), the students were given the writing survey (See Appendix A) again. This was to determine what the students now know about the writing process and whether or not they changed their opinion about writing, how they write, and what they write. The teacher made sure the students understood the purpose of completing this survey again then she had them write a final expository essay as a post-assessment.

### Post-Assessment

At the end of the trimester each student wrote an expository essay. This allowed for determining the mini lessons needed to continue teaching the students how to write expository essays. It was made sure that each student had specific instructions and a choice of topic. The directions given for the pre-assessment were used as the post-assessment directions.

### Student Sample

The researcher used her classroom students as the basis of this study. Although she taught this new writing program to the entire class, she selected three fifth graders and three sixth graders to monitor for the purposes of this study.

From each grade level she selected a low, average, and high writer. The low, average, and high students were determined after she administered the pre-assessment. Once this was determined she selected the six students to be monitored. The students that were selected from the fifth grade consist of two 10 year old females and one 10 year old male, all of which are Hispanic. The students that were selected from the sixth grade consist of two 11 year old male students and one 11 year old female student of which two are Hispanic and the other is Hispanic/Caucasian mixed.

### Time for Implementation

The researcher began implementing the writing program on July 18, 2005 and continued through September 23, 2005. It was the researcher's intention to implement the program for an entire trimester, but due to several beginning of

the school year assemblies and activities she did not start until the third week of the school year.

### Data Collection

The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of several combined writing programs and writing strategies could help our students improve their expository essays. The researcher was using one of the programs, Step Up to Writing, and found that her students were not as successful as she would have liked. They seemed to be able to organize their writing, but their essays were still lacking in the ideas, word choice, sentence fluency, and convention areas.

The sample population of this study was given a blue folder to keep all of their writing in for this study. They were given white lined notebook paper and brown lined paper. All of the prewriting and rough drafts were written on the brown lined paper and only the final draft was on the white notebook paper. The notes that the students took while being taught was also on white notebook paper and kept in the folder. The students were instructed to keep all of their writing in this folder and that it would be collected at the end of the trimester. The essays that were turned in to the teacher were graded and given back to the

students to keep in their folder. One of the essays was revisited to improve the ideas within the essay.

### Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to determine if the students writing would improve during and after the teaching of a new writing program (IEW) that combined writing programs and writing strategies.

The researcher gave a pre and post writing survey as well as a pre and post writing assessment. The information from the surveys was compiled and placed in a table. The pre and post writing assessments scores, as well as all of the sample population's essays, were placed in a graph to show their progress through the use of the Integrated Expository Writing program.

The essays were graded by the researcher and one other sixth grade teacher. The scores were averaged if they were not the same. This data can be found in the graph of the student's progress. In chapter four you will find the results and discussion of the pre and post survey, the implementation of the Integrated Expository Writing model, and the pre and post assessment.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of the current study was to determine if combining Step Up to Writing, the Six-Traits, and other successful writing strategies would increase the students' ability to write a well organized and content-rich expository essay.

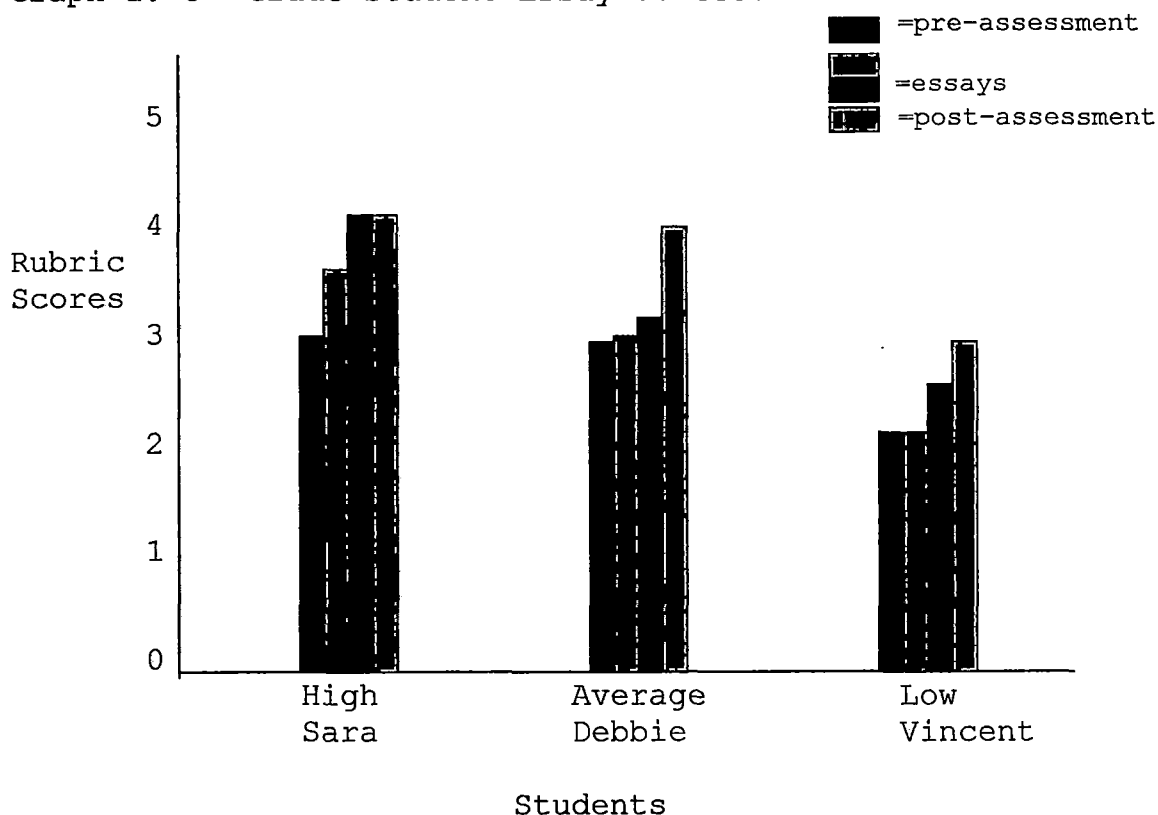
The students who participated in the current study were three sixth grade students and three fifth grade students. In each grade level there was a high, an average, and a low writing student. They wrote expository essays before (pre-assessment), during, and after (post-assessment) the teaching of the Integrated Expository Writing (IEW) model. These students were also observed throughout the current study while they wrote.

The behaviors that were observed during their writing were talking, looking around the room, writing, engaged in the writing, rubbing elbows on the desk, writing fast, and very focused on writing task. At the start of the current study the two high students, Sara and Crystal, were on task and writing most of the time. They were observed looking

around the room at times. Debbie was often observed looking around the room and talking with her neighbor. Albert, on the other hand was writing, talking, and often writing extremely fast to get finished. Vincent was engaged in his writing task and sometimes appeared to be just sitting there staring off into space. Finally there was Juan. Juan was looking around, rubbing his elbows on the desk, and writing. Once the teacher started teaching the IEW model, some of the students were more engaged in the writing task. Sara and Crystal were never off task while writing. They remained focused and completed their expository essays. Debbie and Albert also began to focus more on their writing. They were still observed looking around the room but they were not talking. Finally, Vincent and Juan would be writing, but their speed of completing the task still needed to be addressed.

The results of this study suggest that the students were able to improve their expository writing after having been taught using the IEW model. They were also able to change their behaviors while they were writing as they all became more focused. The following bar graphs show the scores of the individual participant essays throughout the teaching of the IEW model.

Graph 1. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Essay Scores.



In graph one the scores of the fifth grade students who participated in the IEW model of writing are shown. The high (Sara) and average (Debbie) students were females and the low writer of the fifth grade group was a male (Vincent) student.

#### Sara

Sara scored a three, according to the scoring rubric (See Appendix F), on her pre-assessment. Her score in ideas, voice, word choice, and conventions was a solid



three. Sara was able to meet the requirements to earn a three in these areas, some of which are; the reader was able to determine the main idea, some of her information was left out, some of her words are right for her topic, she sometimes used her voice to help the reader understand, and her essay contained some errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. She was lacking in organization and her score ranged from a one to a three. Sara did not have a conclusion or an introduction, which made her organization confusing. She did, however, stick to her chosen topic. The final area scored was sentence fluency where she was able to score a five. Sara used a variety of sentence beginnings and lengths. Her paper flowed nicely and most of her sentences were strong and clear. Overall these scores averaged to a three.

After spending a week and a half teaching the IEW, Sara was able to score a three plus on her first essay. She earned a three in every section of the rubric, but in organization she improved greatly to a score of five. She had an introduction that hooked the reader, the essay was easy to follow, her ideas were clearly connected and she stayed on topic, and her conclusion was detailed and linked to the topic.

Once the teacher began teaching mini lessons on ideas, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions, Sara was able to increase the score of her essay and post-assessment to fours. The score for ideas, voice, word choice, and conventions were each four. Sara's topic was very clear and she was able to use plenty of details to help the reader understand her topic without the need to ask further questions. Her sentence fluency was still a three and organization was still a five.

Although Sara was the highest writer of the fifth grade students in this class, she improved from an overall score of three to an overall score of four on the writing rubric developed by the teacher.

#### Debbie

Debbie, the average writer, scored a three on her pre-assessment. In the areas of ideas, voice, word choice, and conventions Debbie scored threes. The main idea was clear, but she left out some information that could have helped the reader understand the topic better. The voice in Debbie's essay was right for her topic and her word choice made her paper clear. Debbie made a few errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization which, at times, interfered with the readers understanding of the essay. Her

organization was between a one and a two because she did not have an introduction or a conclusion. The sentence fluency in her essay helped her essay flow and made it easy to read. The sentences were strong and clear, but she only used few sentence beginnings giving her a score between a three and a four. Debbie was given an overall score of a three.

Through participating in the new writing model (IEW) Debbie was able to improve in several areas as was seen on her second and third essays. The ideas, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions were all solid threes. Debbie maintained the same score for all of these except the sentence fluency, where she dropped to just a three. Some of her sentences were clear and had different lengths, but she was still using the same beginnings in her sentences and in some parts of the essay the reader got stuck and had to reread. This could be due to the choice of her topic. Her organization was a five giving her a score slightly higher than a three. Her information was arranged in an interesting manner, her ideas were clear and on topic, and her introduction hooked the reader and the conclusion was detailed.

On her post assessment, Debbie improved greatly in some areas of her writing. The ideas and word choice scores were now fours. The topic of Debbie's essay was very clear. She used enough details so that the reader was able to understand without having to ask any questions. Her choice of words was more precise and also made her topic very clear. The voice, sentence fluency, and conventions were between a three and a four which was achieved by using the appropriate voice for her topic, using a variety of sentence beginnings, having strong and clear sentences, and having few errors in the conventions that did not interfere with the understanding of the topic. The organization was still a five. This gave Debbie an overall score on her post-assessment of a four.

#### Vincent

Finally there was the low achieving writer, Vincent, who scored a two on his pre-assessment. His ideas and organization were both ones on the rubric. Vincent's essay was only a list of his thoughts with limited information, which left the reader questioning the topic. The essay did not contain an introduction or a conclusion and it jumped from one idea to another. His sentence fluency and conventions were twos because of the lack of clarity in his

sentences and the errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. Voice and word choice were both scored a three. Although all of the other areas that were scored were still in need of great improvement, Vincent was able to have a voice in his essay that was appropriate to the topic and his choice of words were also correct for his topic. Vincent earned an overall score of two.

He maintained his score of two on his first essay after participating in the new model (IEW) of writing for approximately two weeks. This essay received the same score although Vincent did improve in one area and decreased in another. His ideas, word choice, sentence fluency and word choice were the same score as the pre-assessment, but his organization went up to a three and his voice went down to a one. Vincent's organization increased to a three because he was able to include an introduction and a conclusion as well as have the essay become slightly more organized; also, his ideas were more connected to the topic. The drop in Vincent's voice could be due to the lack of knowledge on the topic he selected.

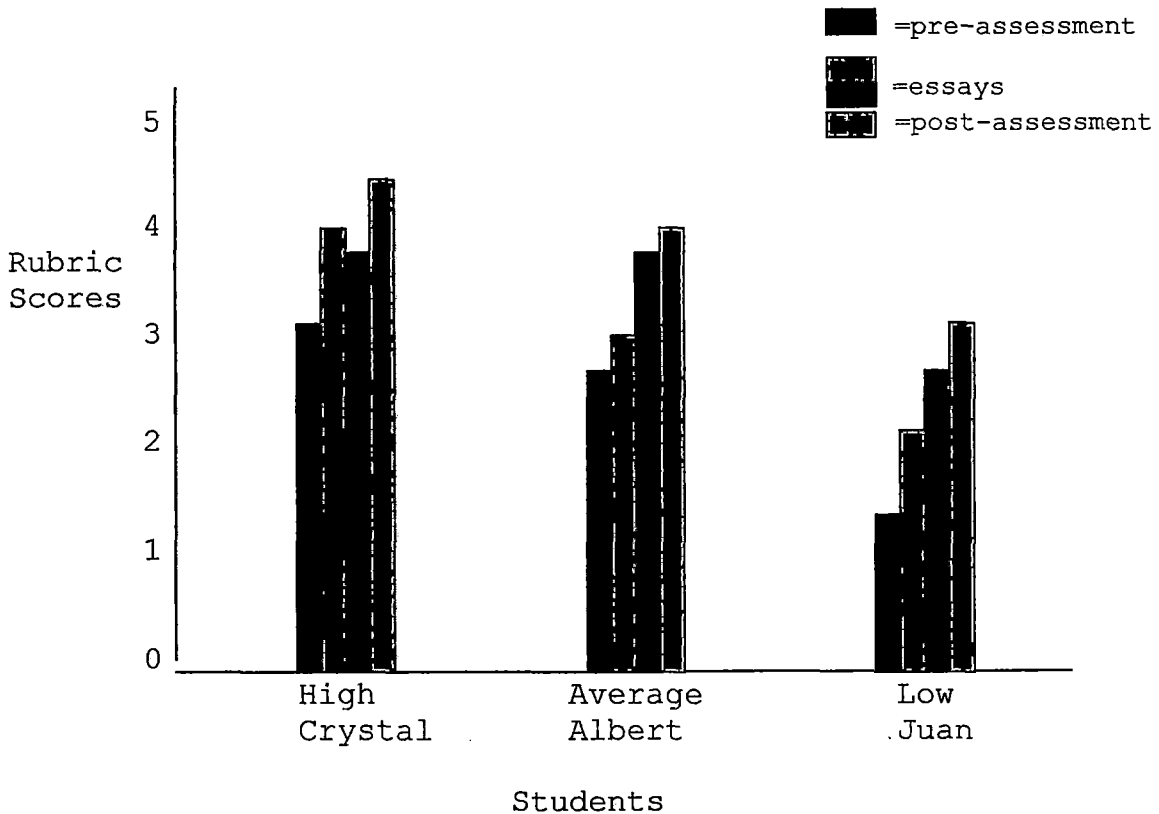
Once the teacher began instructing Vincent about the Six-Traits of Writing through mini lessons, he was able to make a slight jump to a score of three minus on the last

essay before the post assessment. Vincent's ideas, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions were all threes, but his organization was between a two and a three due to the fact that the essay didn't have a conclusion.

After his continued work, Vincent was able to score a solid three on his post-assessment scoring a three in all areas. His topic was clear; he had an introduction and a conclusion; his voice helped the reader to understand the topic; he used more precise words rather than general words; most of his sentences were strong and clear; and the errors within his conventions were minimal.

According to the scores of Sara, Debbie, and Vincent, improvement can be made using the IEW model for teaching expository writing to fifth grade students. Although there were not huge improvements in their scores, these students made improvements in a relatively short period of time. The next section details the results of the sixth grade students involved in the study.

Graph 2. 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Essay Scores.



Graph two shows the scores of the sixth grade students who participated in the Integrated Expository Writing (IEW) model. The high achieving student (Crystal) was a female and the average (Albert) and low achieving (Juan) students were males. Through participating in this study these students were able to improve the content and structure of their expository essays, as seen in the graph.

## Crystal

Crystal came into the sixth grade as one of the higher achieving writers. She was able to write an expository essay with a score of three for her pre-assessment. In all assessed areas; ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions, she earned a three. Although her topic was clear she left out some details which could have further enhanced its clarity. She could have organized her information in a less confusing manner that would have allowed the reader a better understanding of the information given. Her voice was appropriate to the topic, but her word choice was too general and needed to be more specific. The sentences within her essay were strong and clear and some were of different lengths, but the errors within her spelling, and grammar sometimes interfered with the understanding of part of the essay.

Crystal's second essay showed improvement and she earned an overall score of four. Her ideas and conventions were scored between a three and a five. Crystal was able to keep her topic clear and answer all of the questions a reader might have on the topic of shoes. The organization, word choice, and sentence fluency were scored as fives. Her essay was very well organized with an introduction and



conclusion. She used more precise words that made her writing very clear for the reader. Crystal varied the beginnings of her sentences, had varying lengths of sentences, and the essay flowed nicely. Her voice was still a three. Crystal's voice sometimes helped the reader understand the topic, but it was not always appropriate for the topic she selected.

Crystal's next essay only earned her a three plus/four minus. Her ideas, word choice, and voice were a three, her organization was still a five, and her sentence fluency and conventions were between a three and a five. Her ideas and voice dropped from a five to a three for this essay. This was due to her leaving out some information that could have helped the reader better understand the topic. She also used general words instead of specific words related to the topic that could have made it clearer. Crystal only used a few different sentence beginnings making her paper somewhat routine. The reader was confused by the writing at one point, but was able to understand the overall message.

Crystal was able to show great improvement on her post-assessment as she scored a four plus. Her ideas, organization, word choice, and conventions were all fives. She was able to have a very clear topic that included an

introduction to hook the reader and a conclusion that was detailed and linked to the topic. The words she selected to use within her essay were perfect for the topic and her writing was clear and concise. She was able to use a variety of sentence types to express her thoughts. The errors in grammar were minimal and did not interfere with the understanding of the essay. The sentence fluency and voice were still threes in this final essay. Although most of her sentences were strong and clear, she only used few varied beginnings on her sentences. Finally the voice in her paper was somewhat appropriate for this topic, but at times the reader was unable to understand what was being said by the writer. As the graph shows, there was steady improvement on her overall writing.

#### Albert

The average student, Albert, scored just below a solid three on his pre-assessment, with a score of three minus. His ideas, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency all earned threes. Albert left out information that could have made his ideas more clear while his voice helped the reader understand the topic. Some of the words he selected to use in this essay were specific to the topic, and the sentences were strong and clear to the reader. The organization and

conventions in Albert's essay were scored between a one and a three due to the lack of a conclusion and the errors within his grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization were serious and interfered with the flow of the essay.

Once Albert started the IEW model he began showing slight improvement. He earned a solid three with his second expository essay. His voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions were all threes. With the use of specific words his voice came through and made the essay a little clearer. Albert's sentences varied in length and most of them were strong and coherent. The essay contained some errors in punctuation and spelling which at times interfered with the understanding of the essay, but overall the errors were minimal. The ideas in Albert's essay were between a three and a five. His topic was very clear, but with the addition of more information the reader would have understood more about the topic. Albert was able to increase his organization to a score of five. The information was arranged so that it would be interesting and easy to follow. There was an introduction that hooked the reader and a detailed conclusion in this essay that Albert completed.

Albert was able to improve slightly in a few areas on his next essay. His organization and voice were fives. The organization remained the same, but Albert's voice rang through in this essay. He knew who his audience was and it showed through his voice. The reader was also able to understand the topic better because of his strong voice. The ideas, sentence fluency, and conventions were between a three and a five. The topic was very clear and Albert was able to indicate, through the information given, his knowledge of the topic. He used a variety of sentence beginnings and the essay flowed and was easy to read. Although the essay still contained conventional errors, they did not interfere with the understanding of the topic. Albert's word choice was still a three giving him an overall score of a four minus.

Albert was able to earn a solid four on his post-assessment by improving in every area except one, word choice. His score for word choice was between a one and a three. He was using very general and basic words and parts of the essay were unclear due to the word choice. All of the other areas were between a three and a five. The topic of his essay was evident and he included enough details to show his understanding of the topic. The essay was

organized and arranged to make it comprehensible and flow nicely. Albert was able to write clear and strong sentences with few spelling and grammar errors. More importantly, these errors did not interfere with the understanding of the essay.

### Juan

The final sixth grade student who participated in IEW model of teaching writing was Juan. Juan was a low achieving writer when he entered into the sixth grade, but has been successful in gaining some skills and strategies to help him become a better writer.

The score he earned on his pre-assessment was a one plus. Juan's ideas, organization, voice, and word choice were all ones. Juan's essay consisted only of a list of his thoughts. These thoughts were limited and repetitive and left the reader with questions which caused her to lose interest. The introduction and conclusion were missing and his paper was not organized. The word choice was wrong for his topic which is why there was no voice within his essay. Juan's sentence fluency and conventions were scored as threes. Some of his sentences were strong and clear, but he used only a few repetitive sentence beginnings. The grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

contained errors that were interfering with the flow of the essay and the reader's understanding of the topic.

Juan's second essay earned him a two plus. He improved his ideas, organization and voice to a score of three. Juan was able to include more details about his topic for this second essay thus making his topic very clear to the reader. His introduction hooked the reader right away. He was able to have a conclusion that was detailed and linked to the topic even though the essay was otherwise unorganized. Juan knew who his audience was and his voice helped the reader understand the topic. Juan's word choice was still a one due to him only using general words and some of the essay was unclear. His sentence fluency, and conventions dropped to a score between a one and a three because did not vary the sentence beginnings. The sentences were basic, and there were many errors within the spelling and grammar. Overall the essay was better than the pre-assessment.

Juan's third essay also showed improvement. His ideas, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency were scored threes. Juan's topic was made clear through the use of specific words and a voice that helped the reader understand the topic. Some of his sentences were strong and

clear, although the reader got stuck and had to reread some of them. The organization in this essay was a five. Juan arranged the information so that it was interesting and easy to follow. His introduction grabbed the reader and the conclusion was detailed and on topic. The conventions were still between a one and a three. This is an area where Juan has yet to make any improvement. He is still writing basic sentences and making many errors in grammar and spelling. Juan earned a three minus on this expository essay. This could be due to Juan being an English Language Learner (ELL) who has been recently Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (R-FEP).

The post-assessment score for Juan was slightly better than a three. His organization was still a five while his ideas were scored between a three and a five. Juan's ideas are improving. His topic was very clear and if he knew more on the topic he chose it would have been even stronger. Juan's voice, word choice, and sentence fluency were all threes. He was able to use some specific words and write sentences that helped the essay flow and allowed his voice to be heard. Juan is still struggling with the conventions, which is an area where he scored between a one and a three.

Juan made great improvements according to his scores on these four expository essays.

These students, Crystal, Albert, and Juan, were all sixth graders who were able to make improvements in their expository essays by participating in the IEW model for teaching writing. Although all of the improvements were not the same for each student, they all made great strides and are well on their way to becoming better writers.

#### Discussion of the Findings

When reviewing the findings of the study, some interesting trends emerged across all of the students. Even so, some areas of scoring on the rubric either increased, stayed the same, or decreased for some of the participants in the study. However, the overall scores of all the students increased between their pre-assessments and post-assessments.

The fifth grade students were able to increase their overall writing score by one full level. Sara went from a writing score of three on her pre-assessment to a score of four on her post-assessment. Debbie was able to go from a writing score of three on her pre-assessment to a score of four on her post-assessment as well. Vincent started off



with a writing score of two on his pre-assessment and was able to achieve a score of three on his post-assessment. While these results are promising, they may have achieved even greater success had the study been implemented for a longer period of time.

The sixth grade students had great success in improving their writing scores just as the fifth grade students had done. Crystal started with a writing score of three on her pre-assessment and earned a four on her post-assessment. Albert only made a slight improvement from a three minus on the pre-assessment to a four on his post-assessment. The lowest achieving sixth grade student, Juan, made the most significant improvement, having earned a score of a one plus on his pre-assessment and a three plus on his post-assessment. Given more time to work on expository writing with these students would have shown greater success.

In both fifth and sixth grade, the high and average students were able to significantly increase their score in organization to a five from the pre-assessment to the first essay, which was a time period of only two weeks. Although the low students in both grade levels also increased their organization score, it was only a small improvement from

the pre-assessment to the first essay. The organization scores of Sara, Debbie, Crystal, Albert, and Juan remained a five throughout the study while Vincent's score was between a two and a three.

There were also improvements within the other traits that were taught to the students in this study. Sara, Debbie, and Albert were able to increase their ideas score one full level while Vincent, Crystal, and Juan were able to increase theirs by two levels. Crystal and Vincent maintained their score for voice, Sara and Albert increased theirs by one, Juan increased his voice score by two, and Debbie actually decreased her score for voice by one. For word choice Crystal and Juan increased their score by two levels, Sara and Debbie were able to increase their score by one level, Albert decreased by one level, and Vincent stayed the same. Crystal, Juan, and Debbie all maintained their sentence fluency, while Albert and Vincent increased theirs by one and Sara went down by two levels. Finally there are the conventions. Crystal and Albert increased their score by two levels, Sara and Vincent increased theirs by one level, and Juan and Debbie went down by one level.

The trends found within this study indicate that overall the IEW model worked for the students within this study. Although the students increased, maintained, and decreased scores on the rubric, their overall scores improved which is quite promising. With continued implementation of the IEW more improvement could be achieved by the participating students.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The concern among teachers was that their students were not producing quality writing. All students come from different backgrounds and therefore will learn and understand concepts differently. As teachers, having to use the same writing program for all of the students without being able to deviate from that program made it difficult to reach every student.

The purpose of this study was to provide teachers with a set of writing strategies that allowed their students the opportunity to learn how to write a well organized and in-depth expository essay. By combining the writing process, Step Up to Writing, Six-Traits, interactive writing, play and realia, paired/shared writing, daily sustained writing, and writer's workshop, the researcher was able to create a program that would elicit a high quality expository essay.

The research revealed that teaching the writing process is important to the teaching of writing. Until the students realize that writing is a process that takes time, their writing will not improve. The process of writing is a

task in which weak or "experimental" writing will exist before the strong writing exposes itself (Kleiman, 1997, p.1). Emig (1971) and Harp and Brewer (1996) agree that writing is a recursive process where the writer will move forward and backward through the process until they are satisfied with the results of their writing.

To help with the organization of an expository piece of text, the Step Up to Writing program was implemented within the IEW. This program, developed by Auman (2003), was a collection of practical strategies for all types of writing. Although the research was limited on this program, evidence was found to indicate that it increased the writing scores of those who used it. The results from a middle school in the Los Angeles Unified School District showed a significant improvement for all of the students who used Step Up to Writing (2002).

Research showed that the Six-Trait writing model was a set of writing qualities that make writing work. Without these qualities writing is often plain and boring. These essential qualities of solid writing are ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Spandel (2005) stated that the Six-Traits are not a curriculum nor is it a program, rather it is a vision

or a way of looking at writing. This vision will take the teachers and the writers, directly into the process of writing. In addition to the Six-Traits, there are also several outstanding strategies for teaching writing.

One of the strategies researched was interactive writing. Interactive writing is "a cooperative event in which teacher and children jointly compose and write text" (Swartz, Klein, and Shook, 2001, p.1). Interactive writing allows students who have difficulty getting their words down on paper a place to get started. Once they become comfortable they will generally begin writing on their own. Another way to help students become more comfortable is to monitor and work one-on-one with each student at some point. This can be done through writer's workshop.

Implementing the IEW model through a writer's workshop allowed for mini lessons of the strategies the students were still having difficulty with. The teacher held conferences with the students as they worked through the stages in the writing process. Research has proven that conferencing with the students is a critical part of teaching writing (Routman, 2005). The opportunity to write every day gave the students the chance to improve their writing. Research stated that people who write every day on

a regular basis will produce about twice the volume and twice the amount of ideas as writers who write when they feel like it (Routman, 2005). The teacher gave the students opportunities to write every day and even encouraged them to write at home. Together, each of these elements contributed to the development of the IEW model.

With the completion of the research the researcher developed the Integrated Expository Writing (IEW) model. It was during the implementation of the IEW that the teacher and the students began to understand the importance of writing being taught with the writing process at the beginning. Once the writing process was taught to the students the teacher began teaching the students how to improve their ideas, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Through mini lessons and conferences the teacher slowly taught these qualities to the students and slowly they began to improve.

The students who participated in the IEW were able to improve their overall writing quality. The researcher found that with the use of the IEW model the students could increase the quality of their expository essays by at least one to two levels on the scoring rubric. It is, therefore, the researcher's contention that students can successfully

write expository essays that are both well organized and content rich after being taught several strategies from different writing programs.

### Conclusions

Through researching and combining the writing process, Step Up to Writing, Six-Traits, and several writing strategies, the researcher designed a new expository writing program. The new expository writing program, Integrated Expository Writing (IEW) model, was developed with the hopes of helping fifth and sixth grade students to produce a better quality expository essay.

The IEW model was taught over a period of 10 weeks. Within the 10 weeks, the researcher taught the writing process and each trait. Once the program was initially taught the researcher, through writer's workshop, taught a 15 - 20 minute mini lesson at the beginning of each writing session. The topics of the mini lessons were determined by how many students were still having difficulty in those areas. After the mini lessons the students would continue working on their essays and have conferences with the teacher to discuss their accordion paragraph, rough draft and final drafts. After the conferences with each student,



the student would write their final draft of their essay and turn it in to the teacher.

The researcher was able to discover how much fun writing can be. She did not like teaching writing because it was a difficult task. Where to begin with writing, how to teach writing, and was I teaching it right were questions that were constantly on her mind. Year after year the researcher would see minimal if any progress in her students writing, until now. Now she has answers to these questions. Start with the writing process and use the IEW model and the students will learn how to write expository essays. The experience of writing a thesis and creating a successful expository writing program has allowed the teacher the opportunity to view writing in a different way, challenging and yet enjoyable.

The new IEW model allowed the researcher a better understanding of how to teach writing, one step at a time. The students first needed to be taught why we write and that writing is a process. This made the task of teaching fun and exciting for the researcher. Once she realized she needed to break apart the teaching of writing into several different steps, the students finally began to understand why we write and that it is a process that takes time. The

students were beginning to take their time with each essay instead of trying to finish it quickly.

The findings of the data revealed that the hypothesis was proven in that the IEW model of writing was successful in helping the fifth and sixth grade students write a better quality expository essay. Each student in the study was able to improve their writing of their expository essays. All of the students however, did not improve at the same rate. Some improved greatly from the pre-assessment to the post-assessment while others only made slight improvements. With the following recommendations the researcher and the students could have a more significant improvement in expository writing.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Due to the time and sample size limitations of this study, further research is needed on the long-term effectiveness of the IEW model. The following recommendations could help determine the extent of the improvement in the quality of the students' expository writing that this program could have on fifth and sixth grade students.

One recommendation would be to implement this program into a classroom for at least six months. This would allow for the collection of more data. It would also allow the teacher and researcher to slow down the program if necessary to accommodate all of the students' learning abilities. If some students are struggling with a strategy, the teacher can choose to spend more time on that strategy.

Another recommendation would be to have more than one teacher implementing the IEW model at the same time and collectively scoring the papers. Each teacher could use their entire class or use the same size sample of their class. The sample population would need to be determined before the implementation of the IEW model. It is suggested to use the entire class; this will make it easier if a student moves. If you only use a small sample size and one of your students in the sample moves your data will be affected. If you use the whole class and a student moves you could simply leave out all of that students data without having a great affect on your overall data.

The final recommendation for the IEW model would be to include the play/realia strategy and pair/shared strategy into the IEW model. Although these two strategies were researched, the time of the implementation came to an end

before they could be taught and then utilized by the students.

These recommendations are given in hopes that further research and implementation of the IEW model will take place.

APPENDIX A  
WRITING SURVEY

## WRITING SURVEY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

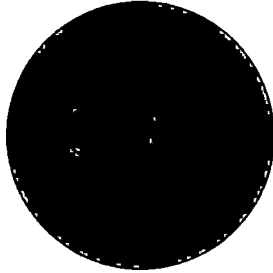
1. What do you think of when you hear the word "writing"?
2. Do you like to write? If yes, what do you like to write? If not, why?
3. What does someone have to do or know to be a good writer?
4. Name and describe the steps in the writing process?
5. How do you decide what to write about?
6. Where do your ideas come from?
7. What do you use to plan your writing once you know what you are going to write about?
8. Do you write at home? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, where is your favorite place to write and how often do you write?

9. List the strategies you think you use when you write.
10. List the strategies you think you need to improve on in your writing.
11. What is the most difficult part about writing?
12. Do you keep a daily diary or journal at home? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, when did you start doing this?
13. What is the best advice/response you have ever received from someone about your writing?
14. Which do you prefer to do:  
\_\_ To write    \_\_ To read    (check one) Why?
15. In general, how do you feel about writing?

APPENDIX B

STEP UP TO WRITING: TRAFFIC SIGNAL

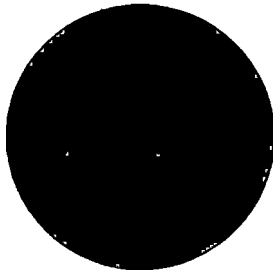




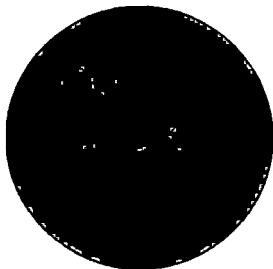
Write a  
topic  
sentence



Give a  
reason,  
detail, or  
fact. Use a  
transition.



Explain.  
Give an  
example.



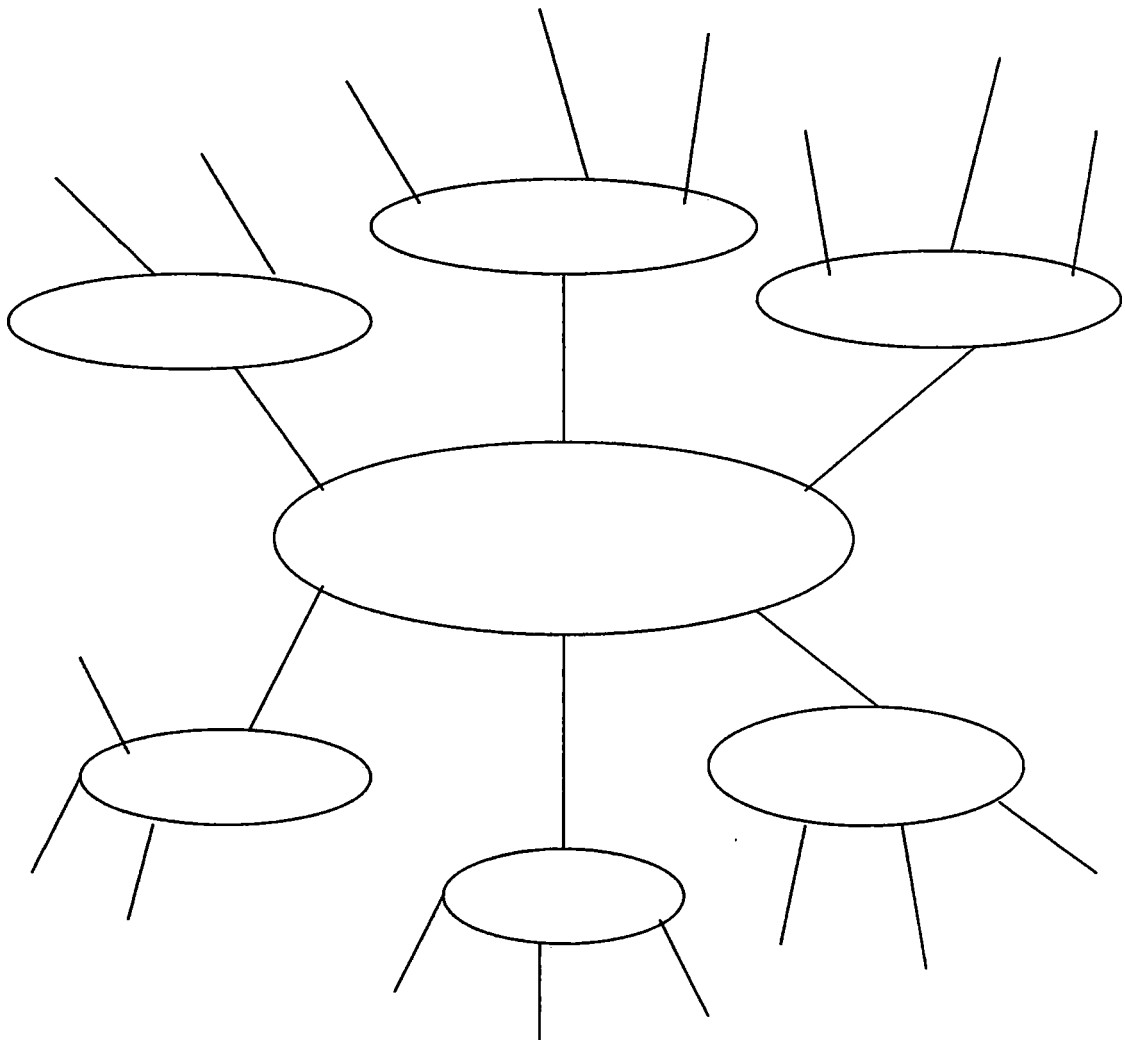
Remind the  
reader of  
your topic.

APPENDIX C  
ACCORDION FOLD



APPENDIX D  
MAPPING IDEAS

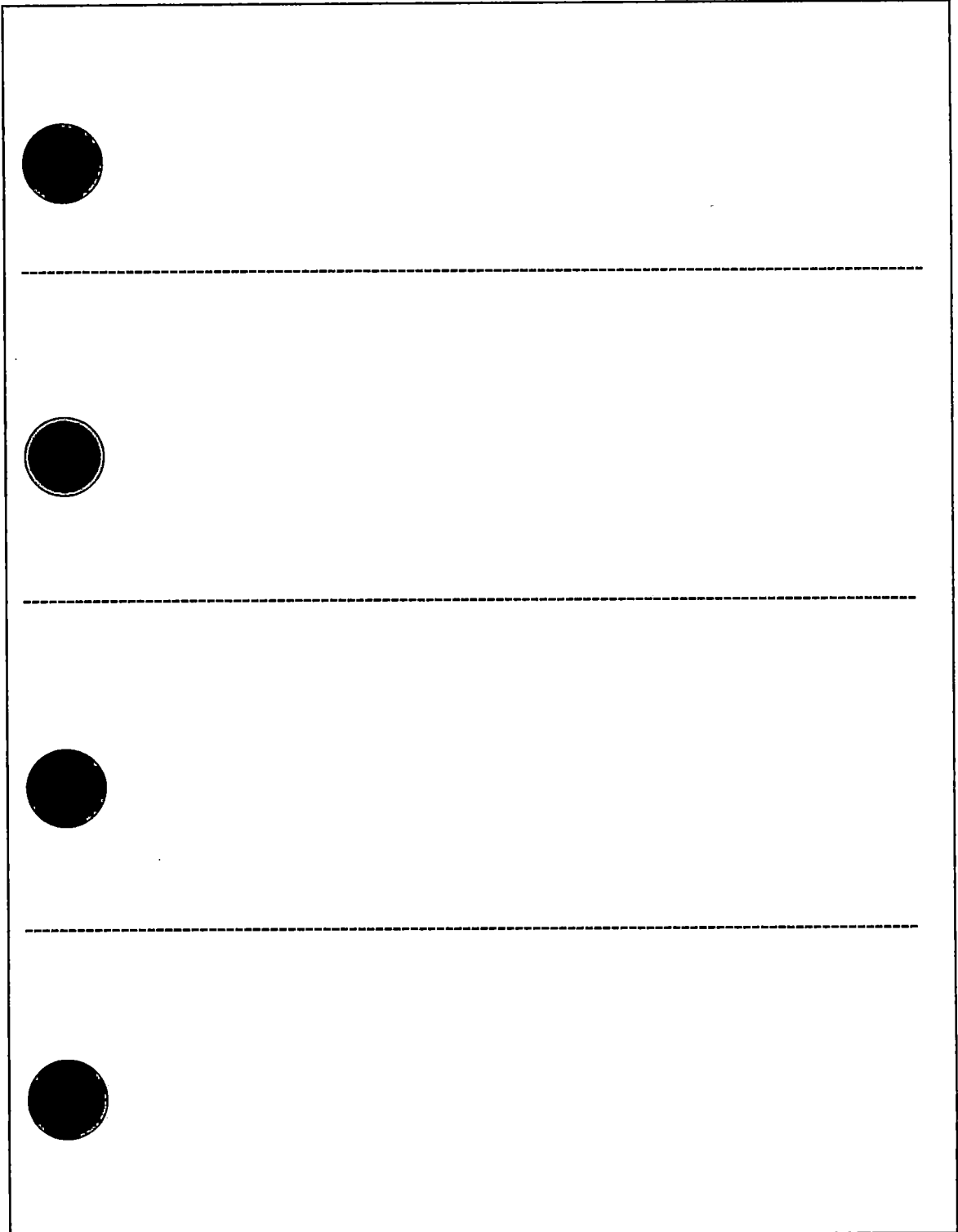
WEB



APPENDIX E

COLOR-CODED ACCORDION PARAGRAPH

FRONT



[illegible]



## APPENDIX F

### 5<sup>TH</sup> AND 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE ASSESSMENT TOOL (RUBRIC)

## Teacher/Student Five-Point Expository Writing Guide

\*Adapted From Vicki Spandel's *Creating Writers: Through 6-Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition).

### IDEAS

5

- \_\_\_ My topic is very clear.
- \_\_\_ I used many different resources. (experience, reading, research, or interviews)
- \_\_\_ I thought about what my readers would want to know and answered their questions.
- \_\_\_ I used enough examples, details, and facts to show my knowledge of this topic.

3

- \_\_\_ My reader can determine my main thesis or research question.
- \_\_\_ I use some resources. (guess, reading, experience, research, or knowledge)
- \_\_\_ I might have left some information out which could have helped my reader.
- \_\_\_ My paper could have been stronger if I knew more on my topic. My reader will have to figure things out for themselves.

1

- \_\_\_ I only have a list of my thoughts.
- \_\_\_ The information I have in my paper is limited, repetitive, and made up.
- \_\_\_ I still have questions, so my reader will too.
- \_\_\_ If you are unfamiliar with my topic you will lose interest.

### ORGANIZATION

5

- \_\_\_ My introduction hooks my reader.
- \_\_\_ I arranged my information so it would be interesting and easy to follow.
- \_\_\_ My ideas are clearly connected. They stick to my topic.
- \_\_\_ My conclusion is detailed and linked to the topic.

3

- \_\_\_ My introduction is basic and not directly to the point.
- \_\_\_ My organization is sometimes confusing and repetitive.
- \_\_\_ My ideas are not always connected, my reader will get lost.
- \_\_\_ Although I have a conclusion it does not bring my paper to a close.

1

- \_\_\_ I do not have an introduction.
- \_\_\_ My paper is not organized.
- \_\_\_ No one will understand my writing.
- \_\_\_ I do not have a conclusion.

## VOICE

5

- \_\_\_ I know who my audience is and it shows in my paper.
- \_\_\_ I use my voice to help my reader understand what I am saying.
- \_\_\_ My reader enjoys this topic although they might not like the topic.
- \_\_\_ I used the voice appropriate for my topic.

3

- \_\_\_ I have an OK voice for my topic and audience.
- \_\_\_ I sometimes used my voice to help the reader understand what I am saying.
- \_\_\_ My reader is OK with the topic although they might not like the topic.
- \_\_\_ I tried to use the voice appropriate for my topic.

1

- \_\_\_ I do not have a voice for my topic and audience.
- \_\_\_ The voice I used did not help my reader understand my message.
- \_\_\_ My reader does not like my topic and did not finish reading it.
- \_\_\_ I did not use the appropriate voice.

## WORD CHOICE

5

- \_\_\_ My word choice makes my paper clear.
- \_\_\_ My words are right for my topic and audience.
- \_\_\_ I used precise words rather than general words.
- \_\_\_ My writing is clear and concise.

3

- \_\_\_ My word choice makes my paper somewhat clear.
- \_\_\_ Some of my words are right for my topic and audience.
- \_\_\_ I used some precise words and some general words.
- \_\_\_ My writing could be clearer.

1

- \_\_\_ My word choice makes my paper unclear to my reader.
- \_\_\_ My word choice was all wrong for my topic.
- \_\_\_ I only used general words in my paper.
- \_\_\_ My writing is unclear

## SENTENCE FLUENCY

5

- \_\_\_ All of my sentences are strong and clear.
- \_\_\_ I used a variety of sentence beginnings.
- \_\_\_ My sentences are different lengths appropriate to my topic.
- \_\_\_ My paper flows and is easy to read.

3

- \_\_\_ Most of my sentences are strong and clear.
- \_\_\_ I only used a few sentence beginnings.
- \_\_\_ Some sentences are different lengths, but most are too long or too short.
- \_\_\_ My reader might get stuck and have to reread some of my sentences.

1

- \_\_\_ My sentences are unclear.
- \_\_\_ I did not vary my sentence beginnings.
- \_\_\_ I find it hard to follow my sentences.
- \_\_\_ The message in my paper is missed due to poor fluency in my sentences.

## CONVENTIONS

5

- \_\_\_ I have a variety of sentence types to express my thoughts.
- \_\_\_ I do not have any errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.
- \_\_\_ I cited outside sources correctly.
- \_\_\_ My paper is perfect.

3

- \_\_\_ I only included few sentence types to express my thoughts.
- \_\_\_ Contains some errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.
- \_\_\_ I only cited some sources.
- \_\_\_ My errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of my writing.

1

- \_\_\_ My sentences are basic.
- \_\_\_ Contains serious errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.
- \_\_\_ I did not cite any sources.
- \_\_\_ My errors will interfere with the understanding of the message.

APPENDIX G  
SIX-TRAIT POSTERS

## Individual Voice

- \* Sounds like the writer
- \* Exciting, spectacular, enthusiastic
- \* Personal, individual
- \* Puts you in the writer's head
- \* Makes you feel what the writer feels.
- \* Read it again out loud!

## Powerful Words

- \* Just right. The best way to say it!
- \* Make a mind map
- \* Powerful words
- \* No wordiness, jargon, or boring language
- \* Use words and phrases you love.

## Great Ideas

- \* Clear message
- \* Complete, satisfying information
- \* Details not everyone would think of
- \* Clear purpose
- \* You can't stop reading!

## Excellent Organization

- \* A great opening to hook you.
- \* Easy to follow
- \* Do not wander off
- \* Transitions that connect my ideas.
- \* An exciting and powerful ending!

## Fluency that Flows

- \* Easy to read aloud
- \* Smooth!
- \* Different sentence beginnings
- \* Different lengths of sentences.
- \* Realistic dialogue.

## Correct Conventions

- \* As close to error free as I could make it.
- \* Indention for each paragraph.
- \* Correct spelling, grammar punctuation, capitalization.
- \* Highly readable.
- \* Editor loves me!

APPENDIX H  
EDITORS' SYMBOLS



<u>Symbol</u>	<u>It Means</u>	<u>Use it like this</u>
^	Put something in.	<sup>listens</sup> She ^ to music.
e	Take this out.	Jose <del>likes</del> enjoys music.
^ #	Put in a space.	Maria enjoys <sup>^</sup> running. #
o	Add a period.	She ran around the track o
≡	Make this letter a capital.	We live in <u>california</u> . ≡
/	Make this letter lower case.	Do you / Speak Spanish?
o	Check the spelling.	Win o can we leve? o
¶	Start a new paragraph	"What?" questioned Sylvia. ¶ Rene replied, "You heard me!"
5	Transpose letters or words.	Tom is young a man.

APPENDIX I

RESPONSES TO THE PRE AND POST WRITING SURVEYS

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Responses to the  
Pre and Post Writing Survey

Questions	High Student	Average student	Low Student
1.What do you think of when you hear the word "writing"?	I think of me writing on a paper.	I think of if the subject is going to be hard.	I think of words.
	I think of a essay with a pencil next to it.	I think what will be my subject or what new strategies I am going to learn.	I think about what I'm going to write about.
2.Do you like to write? If yes, what do you like to write? If not, why?	Yes, I like writing. I like it because it expresses my feelings.	I like to write. I sometimes write poetry and stories.	Yes I like to write predictions.
	I like to write stories that are not true the most, but writing true things are still fun.	I like to write because it puts my mind into it and what I am going to write about.	Yes, I like to write stories.
3.What does someone have to do or know to be a good writer?	He or she has to know how to write stories.	To spell and to know what people like to read about in books. To do everything you learned in school.	How to write good story.
	They have to know about their topic and they can't go off topic.	How to plan and how to organize their data and also what people are interested in.	They have to know how to spell and read.

4.Name and describe the steps in the writing process.	I don't know what the process is.	I don't know.	Predicting, questioning, and clarifying.
	You make the web, Step Up to Writing, rough draft, and final draft.	Prewriting (planning) before you organized need to have thoughts.	Prewriting, you organize your thoughts. Draft you do accordion Graph. Draft revise.
5.How do you decides what to write about?	I usually just think if it is going to be a good story.	Compare two ideas and pick the best one.	I look around.
	I look around the room till I get an idea or in school I look in the chart.	I just think of something I know about.	I look at what I know more about.
6.Where do your ideas come from?	It usually comes from pictures. Whenever I don't know I look around the room.	From my past.	From movies.
	Sometimes from stories or movies but sometimes I just make them up from what I see.	They come out of the things that I am listing.	From my brain and pictures.
7.What do you use to plan your writing once you know what you are going to write about?	I sometimes do it on steps and sometimes just start with the final draft.	I don't know.	I brainstorm.
	I use a web to list my facts.	I use a web and an accordion paragraph.	A web.

8. Do you write at home? If so where is your favorite place to write and how often do you write?	Yes, I write about every day. I like writing on the table.	I do write at home. I like to write outside by the pool or on my sisters bed.	Yes, my room.
	Yes, I write in the kitchen, I usually write persuasive letters, but I don't know how often.	Yes, I do write at home and my favorite place to write is outside because it is quiet.	Yes, at the table. I write a hour a day.
9. List the strategies you think you use while you write.	First I think of a title, then I think...	Content, predict, clarify, summarize.	I think I clarify and predict.
	Web, Step Up to writing, rough draft, check your writing, and final draft.	Planning, drafting, and editing.	Word choice, Spelling, and brainstorming.
10. List the strategies you think you need to improve on in your writing.	Writing a bit neater.	Questioning and connections.	Questioning and summarizing.
	I think I need to improve in checking my work.	I think I need to improve in editing.	Spelling and word choice are hard to do.
11. What is the most difficult part about writing?	Thinking of a interesting story.	Knowing how to spell a word.	Thinking of Ideas.
	Finding what to write on.	Getting the examples and ideas.	I have trouble editing.
12. Do you keep a daily diary or journal at home? If so, when did you start doing this.	No.	I started to write in my diary when I was seven years old.	No.
	No.	Yes, I do keep a diary and I have used diaries since second grade.	No.

13.What is the best advice/response you have ever received from someone about your writing?	"You're a good writer"	"That was really good Sophie"	Advice
	I have nice ideas.	The advice my sister gave me and it was to always reread and edit the paper at least two times.	To add more details.
14.Which do you prefer to do: To write or To read? Why?	To read because it is easier than writing.	To read because I could get ideas Also, because it is more fun.	To read because I don't get tired.
	To read because you can relax and enjoy someone else's writing.	To read because I learn more about things so I can write about them.	To read because I like a good adventure.
15.In general, how do you feel about writing?	I like it sometimes.	I think it is a bit boring. Sometimes fun.	Good.
	I feel like it is fun.	In general, it feels a bit depressing in some ways.	A little good because I like to express Myself.

The first response is from the pre-survey  
The second response is from the post-survey

6<sup>th</sup> Grade Responses to the  
Pre and Post Writing Survey

Questions	High Student	Average student	Low Student
1.What do you think of when you hear the word "writing"?	A pencil.	Ow, my hand hurts so bad.	We are going to Write a lot.
	Time to take out my blue folder.	I think this is boring.	Yes, I get to do something I like to do.
2.Do you like to write? If yes, what do you like to write? If not, why?	No, because if you write for a long time it hurts your hand. If it is for a short time it is better.	No, it gets boring and hurts my hand.	Yes, because we Can learn new things.
	Yes, because it gets me thinking about the topic and what I do/don't know about it.	Yes, because I am able to go slow and step by step.	Yes, I like to write about everything one thing is.
3.What does someone have to do or know to be a good writer?	How to spell and be descriptive.	Type.	They have to write a lot.
	The writing process.	In writing you need to know the steps of writing.	They have to know the writing process and how to do it.

4. Name and describe the steps in the writing process.	I don't know. ----- The web to get your main ideas, star ideas, and examples. Accordion paragraph to get all your info. in the right spot. The rough draft so you could get ready to do your final draft.	I don't know. ----- Your topic sentence in your own words, star ideas with what that topic is, explanations say what it is, and conclusion which is closing.	I don't know. ----- Prewriting (planning), you can do a web, draw and outline...
5. How do you decide what to write about?	It depends on what I think is exciting or what I'm thinking about. ----- I look up at the chart we made and which ever I think I have a good idea about I write about it.	I think about what happened in my day. ----- I decide by finding a topic and sticking with it because it's good.	I think alot and when I got it I write it. ----- I look at different things and when I have something in my head I make a web.
6. Where do your ideas come from?	From books, television, and my life. ----- My ideas come from what other people tell me and myself.	Whatever happened in my day. ----- When I try to get an idea I think of something I would know a lot about.	I look around. ----- Movies, cartoons, outside, and everywhere around and what I do help me write.
7. What do you use to plan your writing once you know what you are going to write about?	I don't know. ----- I use the writing process the way Mrs. Reed taught it to us.	I don't know. ----- When I plan I always use a web.	I try to find ideas. ----- I make different plans, I make webs, I correct my writing.



8. Do you write at home? If so where is your favorite place to write and how often do you write?	Yes. My bedroom everyday.	No.	No.
	No.	No.	No.
9. List the strategies you think you use while you write.	Summarizing.	I do it out of order.	My ideas, looking around.
	I use the CUPS and Step Up to Writing.	Web, Accordion paragraph, rough draft.	Before writing I organize my thoughts and make a web and make my rough draft.
10. List the strategies you think you need to improve on in your writing.	I don't know.	In order.	did not answer
	I think I need to improve on word usage.	The web.	I need to use more powerful words and greater ideas.
11. What is the most difficult part about writing?	The writing and thinking part.	The pain in my hand is frustrating.	The writing part.
	I think the web is most difficult because you have to think about ideas.	The most difficult part about writing is coming up with a topic.	The most difficult part of writing is the writing part.
12. Do you keep a daily diary or journal at home? If so, when did you start doing this.	No.	No.	No.
	No.	No.	Yes. When I was in PASA and when I started 6th grade.

13.What is the best advice/response you have ever received from someone about your writing?	I don't know.	"Sloppy Writing"	They don't say anything.
	When I had good describing words.	did not answer	When the teacher said I had good ideas.
14.Which do you prefer to do: To write or To read? Why?	To read because you could read faster than you could write.	To read, it calms me down.	To read because you don't have to have a pencil.
	To read. I like to read because it's quicker than writing.	To read. I would rather read because it's easier.	To read. I like reading more than writing. Writing is fun but I like reading more.
15.In general, how do you feel about writing?	I kind of like it.	Bored	I don't like it.
	Sometimes I kind of like it.	The way I feel about writing is "What's the point".	It is really fun, but it takes a long time to finish the writing and also a little hard.

The first response came from the pre-survey  
The second response came from the post-survey

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