Engaging and developing beginning writers through Interactive Writing and cross-curricular opportunities

by

Megan Jean Buller
Bachelor of Education, Malaspina University-College, 2007
Bachelor of Arts, Malaspina University-College, 2007

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In the Area of Curriculum Studies

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Supervisory Committee

Dr. James Nahachewsky (Department of Curriculum and Instruction)
Department Member

Dr. Tim Pelton (Department of Curriculum and Instruction)
Supervisor

Abstract

The goal of this project is to investigate and apply the components required to create a writing environment for emergent and beginning writers that is both responsive to their needs and helpful in developing their love of writing. Upon a review of the literature on beginning writing, six components have been found to be important: time, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, scaffolding as a teaching tool, student engagement, writing as a social interaction, and assessment for learning. Five cross-curricular lessons are then presented. These lessons were created using Interactive Writing as a teaching tool to support an existing writing program in a primary classroom and informed by the identified critical program components for this specific learning group. These criteria and lessons have been created in the hopes that they will provide classroom teachers with enriched practices for the support and development of emergent and beginning writers.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank those who have supported me throughout this Masters journey. First to my family and friends, thank you for accepting that my coursework and projects have consumed much of my time for the past two years. To my husband Kevin, thanks for reading and editing the expanse of papers and projects on topics beyond your frame of reference (and probably interest level) during this time. To my fellow classmates, particularly Heather, Michelle, Sarah, Laura, and Shannon – thanks for your humour and camaraderie throughout this journey. It would not have been the same without you, and I feel so lucky to have met all of you during this! Finally, to the students and coworkers who make my job what it is – thanks for your energy, interest, and a willingness to participate in the lessons and activities that I so enjoy planning.

Chapter One: The Beginning

The Only Child

As an only child, I was not starved for the attention of my parents and had great support growing up. Evening reading time taught life lessons through the adventures of Brother and Sister of the Berenstain Bears, and emotions were tested throughout my first "big girl" book *Charlotte's Web*. My mother used to tell the best stories that she created off the top of her head, and I always appreciated her sense of adventure and raw imagination. It was this inventive storytelling that inspired an interest in creating children's literature.

My own Student Experiences: Down by the Bay

I am sure most teachers think fondly back upon their own learning experiences as a child, and channel the energy of their favourite teacher into how they hope to be as a teachers themselves. Mrs. Hemmingson, my kindergarten, grade one, and grade two teacher was that teacher for me. She was an older lady, which meant older than my mom to me at the time, and had a calm kindness about her. It was with her that I learned to read, and learned to enjoy choral poetry and songs. During these years I had one of my ongoing journal entries published in the school newsletter. As a young student, this was a huge accomplishment for me, and being recognized in such a public way made me only want to write more. I still have one of the class song books, a photocopied and hand-coloured version of the song *Down by the Bay* by Raffi. This book has lasted within my collection for over twenty-five years, and serves as a reminder of the influence and effect of this teacher and the joy of learning to read and write independently.

Developing as a Beginning Teacher

After having practicum experiences in grade two, grade six, grade ten and grade eleven classrooms, it was early primary where I found my area of best fit. I first thought grade two was

as low as I would want to teach, and was terrified to have the responsibility of teaching a child how to read and write in any younger grades. Experiences working in other classrooms as a teacher on call got me interested in what a literacy program could look like, and how it could be successfully developed for grade one. In these exemplary classrooms, literacy was woven throughout all curricular areas, and took on many forms. I met some of my best mentors when on call, and have since designed my own classroom routines and practices after these individuals in hopes of creating similar success for my students.

Having my own Classroom

I have taught various grade combinations from kindergarten to grade three in my four years as a classroom teacher, and have taught up to grade ten for three years as a teacher on call. I found last year's kindergarten/grade one split the most daunting as I often struggled with how to balance the huge task of teaching the foundation for reading and writing, with the play-based learning experiences expected within the kindergarten curriculum. How could I make literacy fun and accessible to my diverse learners, while not having separate tasks for both grade levels? How could I instill in my students the love for reading and writing that my parents and teachers had instilled in me? Reading and writing ability varies so much across students, but all students need to be actively engaged simultaneously. Perhaps I could help students to find success collectively by challenging them to work on something collaboratively.

Using Class Books

In my kindergarten/grade one class I started to use class created books to encourage writing on various topics with each child responsible for contributing a page to each book. The books took various forms. Some books were collections of photos we had taken outside to explore particular concepts, some were in response to an open writing prompt like "In Fall

I_____", some were modeled after books that were read aloud, and some were informational about the students themselves. Having the class created books, or books from our songs and poems collection in the classroom library, empowered more students (particularly the kindergarten and struggling readers) to read aloud both to their peers and to me during free reading time. Children would often teach each other, or participate in choral reading with a buddy using these texts. Engagement with reading increased, as did a pride in what they had contributed to the whole-class book.

Biases

Literacy is more than teaching the different "rules" of reading and writing; the codes that students will need to understand when mastering the complicated English language. Literacy moves beyond the subject area of language arts, as reading and writing are at the foundation of every other subject area. Writing and reading skills develop together as the subjects cannot be separated from one another.

Collaboratively creating a book is an engaging process for students. Pride in published work enables students to feel good about what they can do, and creates a different level of interest than mass-published titles capture. Children like to learn about their peers, to share about themselves, and to see what their classmates can do. Having a published final product where students can view the work of their peers may inspire the underachievers to try to be a bit more careful in their work, or push the achievers to new heights. Students can learn a lot from each other, from doing some routine tasks where familiarity breeds comfort, comfort breeds success, and success breeds a willingness to try harder and stretch beyond one's own expectations to do an even better job next time.

Students need to be exposed to reading and writing in numerous ways. It seems that students who find learning to read and write challenging in the early years take longer to gain confidence. Even as early as grade one, students have vast differences in background knowledge, abilities, and skills, and may not be able to complete the same activities as their peers. We need to find a way to make an activity work for all students – it is impractical to create twenty-two different learning plans for each subject every day.

On Writing Specifically

Writing is an important part of communication for all individuals. It is important that students learn how to write, which includes both the mechanics of writing (letter formation, rules of punctuation, spacing), and the art of writing which relates more to the voice, purpose and the construction of a writing piece that makes sense and is enjoyable for others to read. Drawings are an important addition to the work of emergent and beginning writers. They add information, and often show more detail than the writing, particularly for those students who struggle with the act of getting their ideas into writing. Oral language is also an important component of writing. Students often work together and share ideas and support each other during the act of writing. Asking a student to discuss an accompanying picture may prove that they have a better understanding of the content that was supposed to be written about than they can produce in writing. Oral language, reading, and writing are linked. When you work on one, you are working on all of them. Writing skills are needed in each subject area, so each subject area also presents an opportunity to write and learn more about writing. As many primary teachers know, the need to teach every subject makes you a master of integrating subjects, skills and topics into units. In science, writing is a great way to show individual learning. Having students create a page for a class book not only provides a platform for writing practice and assessment, it provides a

collection of work for the audience in the classroom. The students will be able to read the stories that their classmates wrote, learn from the work of their peers, and use their peer and self assessment skills to support their own growth, and the growth of their peers. Writers can always improve. Students need to know that they are capable, but also that as beginning writers, there is always some way that they can work next time to make a piece of writing even better. The focus of this project is to encourage students who are at different levels of emergent or beginning writing in grade one to become better and more aware writers through engaging them in lessons which include teacher modeling through Interactive Writing, integration of other subject knowledge, and collaborative learning.

My Project Topic

This project is going to focus on using Interactive Writing as a tool for engaging all ability levels in writing, and for effective teacher modeling of good writing. In my literature search, I found that developing a student-centered writing program involves many aspects, and I am going to use techniques like Interactive Writing and Writers' Workshop to support my students as writers so that they can write their own stories and class books. The final project is a group of lessons and templates that engage writers in writing for more than one subject area and purpose. Using the research findings from Chapter Two, I designed what I hope are student-centered lessons which allow for all students to find success and enjoyment in beginning writing, no matter their level of independence with the task. I am hoping that the project will highlight the importance of taking the time to teach writing explicitly, and will also show the versatility of Interactive Writing in practice. The appendices that follow Chapter Three include templates for writing, assessment ideas, and additional writing lesson plans which have a language arts focus.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

A teacher hands out brand new journal books to her students on the first day of school. Their eagerness to start learning and sharing what they know is palpable. As they write, the teacher circulates to support the flow of ideas from these young authors. It quickly becomes obvious that the ability range within this grade one classroom is vast, and a one-size-fits-all method of writing instruction will fall short for many of these young learners. She will have to call upon her knowledge of child development, instructional strategies for writing, and give all students ample opportunity to write in order to support and provide for the growth of each individual.

In this Chapter I will explore the literature on effective components of writing instruction for students who are just beginning to write in grade one which, when included in classroom writing instruction, enables teachers to address the individual needs of their students. Before describing these components, I will discuss why explicit writing instruction can be neglected or underrepresented within daily teaching and learning, why instruction remains an important curricular inclusion, and some trends within the instruction of writing. This discussion leads finally to recommendations for what to include when teaching writing to emergent or beginning writers in the primary grades. Emergent writing for this chapter encompasses a primary student's "development progression along a continuum from scribbling to conventional spelling" (Puranik & Lonigan, 2011, p. 584).

Why Teach Writing?

The neglected R. The National Commission on Writing in American Schools and Colleges (2003) highlighted that writing was the neglected "R" and that time for writing,

assessment of writing, policy around writing, and professional development around writing were all contributing to this shortfall (McCarthey & Ro, 2011; McCarthey, Woodard & Kang, 2014). Simmerman et al (2012) echoed this concern for limited writing instruction, and reasoned that instruction for math and reading were impacting the opportunities to teach writing, along with teacher's comfort levels with their ability to teach writing effectively (p. 292-93). In their 2014 qualitative case study of twenty teachers in four different districts, McCarthey, Woodard, and Kang found that beliefs about teaching writing or the programs being used were largely influenced by what was being encouraged through professional development or the resources supplied at the district level (p. 69). This information was gathered through three classroom observations throughout one year and through interviews with the teachers. The data collected was then categorized using Ivanič's (2004) Six Discourses of Writing, discussed later in this paper, and it was further found that the beliefs a teacher has about writing do not always manifest in what/how they teach writing, and that teachers within a similar teaching location can have very different instructional practices from one another. Whether it is other curricular pressures, educational policy, or a focus on standardized testing, it must be acknowledged that external pressures can influence what teachers are able and willing to spend time teaching in their classrooms. It is also easy to neglect the direct teaching of writing because it is something that we do in every subject, but as teachers, we would be remiss if we thought that just *doing writing* replaces the need to teach the skills that go along with the process of writing.

The importance of teaching writing. Before the discussion on how to teach writing, it is important to remember why students need to learn how to write. Gibson (2008) contends that young writers do not simply improve their writing skills by mere practice alone, and they "need explicit scaffolding, constructed within expertly delivered instructional conversations that

address the language, knowledge, and strategies required for problem solving in writing" (p. 324). Writing is a way for young people to share their ideas. Simmerman et al (2012) note the importance of writing instruction in the elementary curricula as a tool for students to become adept in expressing their thinking and ideas as the world becomes more and more complex with the availability of information (p. 293). Murray (1972, 2003) explains further that writing "is the process of using language to learn about our world, to evaluate what we learn about our world, to communicate what we learn about our world" (p. 4). According to Graham, Gillespie and McKeown (2013), multi-component writing programs have a positive impact on how students read in areas of reading comprehension, reading fluency, and word reading skills (p. 3). Despite the advent of new technologies and changing tools for communication, basic reading and writing skills are required for communication. Wearmounth, Berryman, and Whittle (2011) caution us that if students fail to learn writing competence during their school years, they could be at a disadvantage their entire lives (p. 92). Writing is a form of expression that will continue to evolve as communication forms change, but it will still be present and important. Knowing how children negotiate emergent and beginning writing skills is critical for a teacher of beginning writing.

How do Children Learn to Write?

In their study on the emergent writing skills of preschool children, Puranik and Lonigan (2011) found that "there was clear and systematic evidence that writing features develop sequentially and that universal features develop earlier than language-specific features," and therefore recommended that the teaching of writing also be sequential (p. 585). Jamison Rog (2007) explains the development of beginning writers as she presents writers as fitting into four categories: *emergent, early, developing,* and *fluent* (p. 2). *Emergent* writers understand that

symbols convey a message and writing communicates ideas, but they have yet to grasp the relationship between letters and their sounds. Often they use pictures to communicate ideas, but may include scribbles, symbols or random letters to demonstrate the writing of their idea (p. 2-3). Dennis & Votteler (2013) break this stage down further into three parts: first students scribble from left to right, then they create letter-like forms, and finally they begin to string together random letters (p. 440). Mackenzie & Veresov (2013) note that in early writing development "children may not have sufficient control of print conventions to enable self-expression using text alone... drawing, as a text construction method, should remain available to children throughout the conventional written language-learning journey" (p. 22). Drawing should be treated as a part of the writing as many students enter the school system already knowing how to represent ideas through drawing (Christianakis, 2011; Mackenzie, 2014). If "children are taught to add written texts to visual texts, their self-expression skills become flexible and allow for the creation of texts, which may be more complex than those they can create with one or other mode of language" (Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013, p. 28). *Early* writers have learned to make the connection between letters and sounds (p. 5). These writers are able to put letters together to form words and are more likely to be able to read back what they have written. Students are learning more sight words at this time, and are also working on recognizing that the spaces around words are important. During writing in this stage, children should be encouraged to use invented spelling to go along with the sight word knowledge they already have. Because these writers are able to re-read, or read back what they have written, they are then able to begin to revise their writing and follow a writing process where they can plan, write, and revisit (p. 7). During the *early* stage students:

> [P]rogress from writing strings of letters to spelling many words conventionally and many more with logical phonetic spelling. They learn to separate words and use punctuation in sentences. They plan their writing by pretelling and revise by adding on. Most important, they discover the power of audience and the excitement of knowing that other readers can read what they have written (p. 8).

Developing writers can write many details on a topic using both conventional and phonetic spelling. They move from writing mostly about personal experience, to using more descriptive detail on topics where they experiment with word choice. Students demonstrate an increasing understanding of punctuation, spelling, and conventions through these longer texts; however, there is a lack of order to these ideas and the writing is often run-on sentences which are joined by the word 'and' (p. 9-10). The *fluent* writing stage is described as extending from about grade two into adulthood and consists of writing that is "clearly organized and well-crafted" (p. 10). The author's voice is connected to the purpose of the writing in this stage, complex sentences are created, and different text forms are used.

Writers in grade one will generally fall into the first three categories or stages, and will progress differently throughout the year at school. An understanding of the ability level of each writer is important for the teacher in a beginning writing classroom as lessons and expectations for each student should be realistic and at their developmental level. Jamison Rog (2007) notes that "young writers may exhibit characteristics of different stages at any given time, and may even appear to regress into a previous stage on occasion," but states further that it is our job to "assess and analyze what our students know and can do in order to extend their growth as writers" (p. 2). Suggestions for teaching writing and best practices for doing so stem from the educational climate of the day.

Trends in Writing Instruction

Writing as Penmanship, Product and Process. The teaching of writing has evolved since the beginning of the nineteenth century as pedagogy shifts within education. In their 2012 work, Hawkins and Bakar Razali examined historical trends in writing to better understand where current instructional practices in America have come from. They completed this investigation by studying primary sources including state curricular guides, teaching methods manuals, reports of writing research, and writing curriculum programs. Their findings portray the evolution of writing instruction over the past 100 years as progressing through three main Stages: Writing as Penmanship, Writing as Product, and Writing as Process. Instruction in the Writing as Penmanship era was centered upon the belief that writing "was simply the transcription of spoken thought onto the page" (p. 306). Most teaching and learning for this type of writing instruction was done through rote learning, memorization and copying models from the early 1900s through the 1930s (p. 312).Writing as Product followed, and was still closely linked to the previous ideas of writing instruction but moved beyond the mechanics of forming letters on paper, to include the importance of producing sentences with appropriate punctuation, spelling and grammar (p. 309). The amount of actual writing by students was still limited. McCarthy and Ro (2011) term the instruction within this era traditional instruction, where skills are taught to the entire class through worksheets or textbooks and emphasize grammar and conventions (p. 274). The shift to Writing as Process began in the 1980s as the emphasis was taken away from the finished product and placed upon the processes that students undertake while writing (Hawkins & Bakar Razali, p. 312). Students were given assignments and opportunities to write over longer periods of time and were encouraged to do pre and post-writing activities (p. 313). Editing with peers and conferencing with teachers to encourage writing development became

important. Hawkins and Bakar Razali ultimately acknowledge that the above three Stages of writing instruction merge together to create "a more comprehensive portrait of what it means to teach writing" (p. 315). Donald Murray (1972, 2003) encourages writing teachers to move away from teaching writing as a product, to focus instead on writing as a process. He explains the process of writing in three stages: Prewriting, Writing, and Rewriting (p. 4). Once teachers have moved away from writing as product, the focus then becomes "process of exploration of what we know and what we feel about what we know through language" (p. 4). This historical perspective provides context for the changes in writing instruction, while the Discourses of Writing developed by Roz Ivanič (2004) provide the reader with reason to reflect on their own teaching practice and how all of what is discussed in the above historical section can be woven into a more complete writing program.

Six Discourses of Writing. Ivanič (2004) discusses writing instruction and beliefs about writing as falling into Six Discourses of Writing. These discourses highlight that the teacher's motivation for writing and beliefs about writing influence what form instruction will take (p. 227). The discourses are: A Skills Discourse, A Creativity Discourse, A Process Discourse, A Genre Discourse, A Social Practices Discourse, and A Sociopolitical Discourse. In each of these discourses, there are different beliefs about learning to write and how to teach writing. Ivanič argues that a combination of these discourses would create a "holistic, comprehensive writing pedagogy" where "written text, writing processes, the writing event, and the sociopolitical context of writing would be understood to be progressively embedded within one another, and intrinsically interrelated" (p. 241). Furthermore, when teaching writing, one should consider all four elements of writing: text, process, event and context (p. 241). Her comprehensive approach does not exclude any elements, but rather emphasizes that each discourse and all of the elements

of writing should be included within the writing program even if they seem contradictory to one another. The recognition that writing is a complex process which involves specific skills, conventions, and strategies lead to the development of instructional methods or programs like Writers' Workshop and Interactive Writing where students can explore the process while also being taught the necessary skills needed in context.

I will consider both of these techniques as components of a balanced program for emergent and beginning writing instruction. Though there are other methods and programs in existence, I am choosing Writers' Workshop and Interactive Writing because they are well suited to the grade one level, they can be adapted to various subject areas, and they will enhance programs that I have already in place within my classroom practice. I will briefly outline both concepts for comparison purposes, and to demonstrate how using both of them in a primary classroom will enhance writing instruction and student development.

Two Considered Methods for Writing Instruction

Interactive Writing. Interactive writing is a teaching method where whole group mini-lessons teach a variety of writing skills based on students' needs. The teacher and students work together on a topic of choice to create one piece of writing where the students are placing pen to paper to create a single group composition. Student-specific instruction is possible through this method as the teacher selects when each student writes based on their needs, abilities, and writing goals. This form of writing also provides opportunities for engaging in reading practice as the group rereads what has been written each time something new is added (D'on Jones, Reutzel & Fargo, 2010; Roth & Dabrowski, 2014). Roth and Dabrowski (2014) note that though this method should not be the sole form of writing instruction in a classroom, the opportunities for scaffolding student knowledge during each lesson, linking what was taught back to

independent writing, and bringing together a variety of language arts skills make it an incredibly valuable part of an effective writing program (p. 35). This form of instruction is adjusted to student needs as the year progresses with the goal of teaching strategies that students can use themselves in producing a range of authentic writing pieces (Roth & Dabrowski, 2014; Roth & Guinee, 2011). Due to the short amount of time required for these lessons, this is an easily accommodated addition to a writing program within a busy timetable. The lessons taught through this method provide students with tools and ideas to employ during the independent writing completed in Writers' Workshop.

Writers' Workshop. During Writers' Workshop, students work independently creating a story or product on a topic of their choice. The focus during this form of writing is to have the students work at their own pace within their own ability-range. Children are encouraged to see themselves as authors, and begin to learn the craft of writing (Dennis & Votteler, 2013). The resulting piece of writing is not corrected for errors, but used to inform the teacher about student's strengths and weaknesses (D'on Jones, Reutzel & Fargo, 2010). Short lessons about writing usually happen before the independent writing begins, but the focus is on giving students ample time and practice to go through the stages of writing: planning, drafting, editing, and publishing, which usually has a peer-sharing component for receiving feedback on the product (Jamison Rog, 2007). The English Language Arts Curriculum Integrated Resource Package K-7 (2006) lists similar writing stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, presenting and publishing (p. 22) Writers' workshop is listed as an instructional method for teaching strategies within each of these areas (p. 23). From their observations, Pressley, Mohan, Fingeret, Reffitt & Raphael-Bogaert (2007) note that in the most effective literacy classrooms, there is some form of planning, draft, and revise instruction (p. 18). The role of the teacher during the writing time is to

make observations on student learning, and also to conference with students to provide support on writing goals (Jamison Rog). Individual and group conferences allow teachers to provide intervention where necessary (B.C. Government, 2006). Student ownership, and a willingness to take risks and use invented spellings during writing is encouraged (D'on Jones, Reutzel & Fargo, 2010).

Combining the two. Studies have shown that Interactive Writing and Writers' Workshop can be used as effective tools to improve student writing (D'on Jones, Reutzel & Fargo, 2010; Roth & Guinee, 2011). It is important to note that the research question guiding the quantitative study of D'on Jones, Reutzel & Fargo (2010) was "does it make a difference which writing instruction method is used in kindergarten, interactive writing or writing workshop, with regard to growth of kindergarten students' early reading skills in phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and word reading ability?" (p. 331). Though the researchers were looking for information on reading skills, their findings support using these writing instruction methods; by having teachers focus on setting aside time for writing each day to include either of the methods, they found that over the sixteen week timeframe, the diverse group of 151 kindergarten students who were taught writing through one of the two methods gained equivalent growth in the measured areas. This is significant for developing instructional practices for writing as it suggests that there can be flexibility within teaching practices for writing as both of these methods were equally as effective in supporting the reading skills examined and assessed (p. 337). Limitations of this study include the timeframe of only sixteen weeks and that the comparison groups did not include a control group who were taught using other methods (p. 338). The study of Roth and Guinee (2011) had similar results, though it focused specifically on

teachers who employed Interactive Writing as well as Writer's Workshop against a sample group who used Writers' Workshop as their main method for writing instruction.

Roth and Guinee's 2011 study examined 100 first graders in six different urban Northeast American classrooms, and their six female teachers who were considered "well trained and experienced" (p. 339), and had participated in a year-long professional development for teaching writing in the primary grades. All six teachers used Writers' Workshop in their practice, and three also used Interactive Writing. Data collection methods were both qualitative and quantitative and included classroom observations, teacher daily self-report logs, student writing samples, and student scores on standardized assessments. The findings of the study, which occurred beginning in the Fall of the grade one year, and continued through the Spring, determined that adding Interactive Writing, even just for ten minutes a day, increased the writing ability of the students beyond that of the comparison group which just did Writers' Workshop alone (p. 350).

The study of D'on Jones, Reutzel & Fargo (2010) and the study Roth and Guinee (2011) both concluded that each method is effective independently if correctly implemented by trained teachers, and suggested further that combining the approaches together could create an even more interactive model of writing instruction where writing is valued, students create a variety of authentic texts, and instruction is developed based on student need. These two methods of writing instruction work to support the learning in a classroom where writing is valued; an effective writing program requires further components.

General Criteria for a Successful Student-Centered Writing Program

Using the basics of both Writers' Workshop and Interactive Writing to compliment 'best practices' for writing instruction will provide for the foundation of a program for teaching grade

one students how to become confident writers who enjoy writing, and who progress throughout the year through instruction that is based on individual learning goals. The hallmarks of effective writing instruction include: time, appropriate learning opportunities within a child's Zone of Proximal Development, scaffolding, developing a love of writing through student choice, the recognition of the social component of writing, and effective assessment practices.

Time. One of the reasons that writing instruction may be neglected is the issue of time, or a perceived lack of time (Simmerman et al, 2012). Providing students with the appropriate amount of time to express themselves is critical in an effective writing program, as is the consistency of this practice in order for students to recognize the importance of the skills of writing (D'On Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo, 2010; Graham, Gillespie & McKeown, 2013; Pressley, Mohan, Fingeret, Reffitt, & Raphael-Bogaert, 2007). This includes creating a balance between actual time spent writing, and the time learning the writing process and strategies for writing (Cutler & Graham, 2008). Gentry (2005) notes that, in the effective models he has observed, kindergarten students are given the opportunity to write daily for at least forty-five minutes (p. 122). The English Language Arts Curriculum Integrated Resource Package K-7 (2006) indicates that "long blocks of uninterrupted time are most beneficial for literacy success" as "reading deeply and writing thoughtfully take time" (p. 34) and recommends further that the time allotted for writing in grades one to three should be in the range of 20-40% of the time given to English Language Arts (p. 8). Dennis and Votteler (2013) also expressed the need for daily practice, and comment further that in the case of time, teachers should focus on "quantity rather than quality" (p. 441). Writing instruction needs to be a priority of the teacher so that other curricular demands do not push it out of the timetable. Once the time for writing is established, it is important that lessons taught during it are in conjunction with where the students are developmentally.

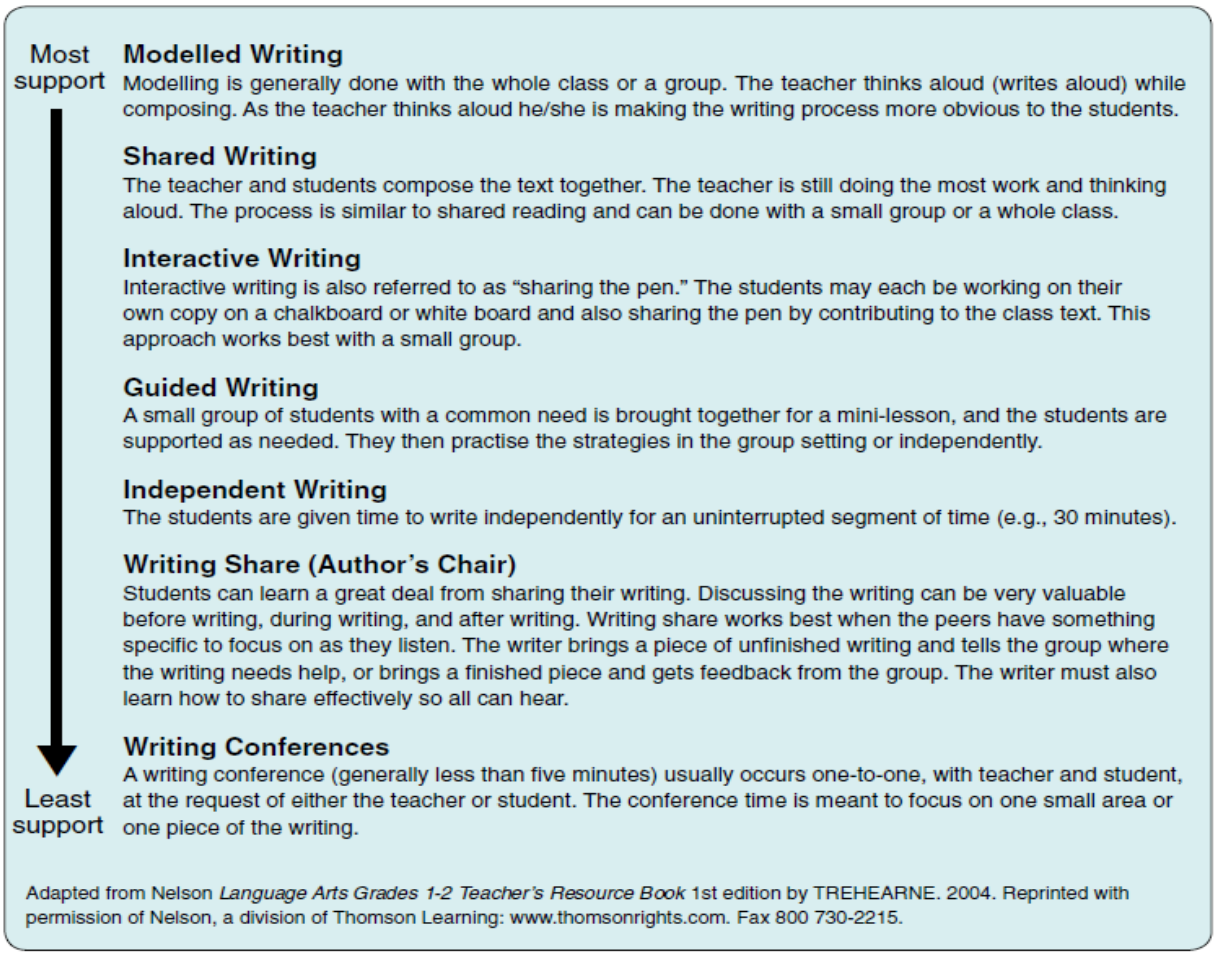
Teaching within Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development. Writing instruction should support the development and progression of each child starting from where they are at as writers, and working to move them forward. According to Pressley, Mohan, Fingeret, Reffitt & Raphael-Bogaert, (2007), "effective, engaging elementary literacy teachers provide just enough support so that students can make progress, with the purpose of encouraging students to accomplish as much as possible on their own" (p. 14). Working within Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development allows for children to develop their understanding of writing while learning from an adult expert. When teaching within this zone, the teacher should aim for instruction to be just beyond where students are ready to work independently, to where they can be successful with guided support (Berk, 2003). Tolentino (2013) explains further:

> Vygotsky's theory is rooted in the premise that development takes place through interactive experiences as learners engage in activities that they cannot do alone but are able to accomplish successfully with the help of an adult or a more competent peer. The interactions, dialogue, and learning that transpire within their zone of proximal development contribute to the attainment of their success level (p. 10).

Puranik and Lonigan (2011) examined 372 preschool students aged three to five and found that even before these students begin public school or have formal instruction, they learn a great deal about writing (p. 580). This knowledge starts as an understanding of universal writing features, and is followed by language-specific features (directionality, symbols and shapes, and spacing) (p. 568).They discovered further, that the written output or strategies for writing used by the children varied based on the complexity of the task; when the task demand is low, they use more advanced features (p. 583). Skills such as handwriting, spelling and punctuation (lower-order transcription skills), if not mastered, can take away from the amount of cognitive energy that a

child can devote to composing (p. 583). This is a consideration for assigning and assessing work for an emergent writer.

Lessons and instruction, such as teaching done through Interactive Writing, are developed based upon what the teacher is seeing as the needs and strengths of their students, and does not necessarily follow a guide book or prescribed sequence because of its responsive nature (Roth & Guinee, 2011). In Interactive Writing, the teacher scaffolds the students within Vygotsky's Zone of proximal development with instruction that promotes future independent writing, but is not too advanced that students will not be successful (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012). This gradual release of support is described in the following chart found in the Ministry Integrated Resource Package for English Language Arts (2006, p. 23):



The technique of scaffolding becomes an important component of a student-centered writing program.

Scaffolding as a teaching tool. Scaffolding for writing development takes on many forms. In general terms, when a student is being supported by scaffolding within a subject area, the role of the adult or expert is to assist a younger or less experienced learner on tasks they cannot yet complete independently (McCarthy & Ro, 2011). Teachers of writing provide scaffolds when they are modelling what good writers do. This can take the form of think-alouds, showing examples of text that the teacher has created, and encouraging deeper thinking through questioning when composing original texts as a group. Gibson (2008) explains the goal of teacher scaffolds within the context of writing:

> [O]ne of the primary goals of the teacher's instructional scaffolding during writing is to ensure a high level of student success with a few opportunities for problem solving. As teachers observe students' success with these challenges, they are then able to introduce new strategic processes that raise the difficulty level appropriately (p. 331).

This responsive teaching ensures that the needs of the students are being met, and that individual growth is possible. Under the supervision of an expert teacher in Tolentino's 2013 study, as children became more confident with their abilities as capable writers, they became mentors for each other. Performance improved when students were paired with another student of higher ability (p. 19). If the teacher demonstrates writing using language commonly used by their students, the students will see how to integrate strategies and skills taught into their own writing. Promoting growth and development in writing is much easier when students are engaged in the topics they are writing about. Allowing for writing about topics that the students choose provides

natural engagement and more student buy-in as they are writing about something that is important to them.

Student engagement. Concern for teaching grammar, punctuation, letter formation, writing structure and mechanics can distract from the importance of encouraging students to love writing. Boscolo (2008), as cited in Simmerman et al 2012, stated that "many teachers focus too much on writing skills instead of focusing on writers' beliefs and students' attitudes" which greatly affect learners (p. 294). Cutler and Graham (2008) suggest that the greater emphasis be placed on "fostering students love and enjoyment of writing" (p. 917) – particularly for emergent writers in primary grades. Tolentino (2013) encourages teachers to listen to students talk to find out their interests so that writing instruction can be meaningfully catered to them (p. 21). Motivation for writing is also linked to providing students with the opportunity to self-select their writing topics (Kissel, 2008; Dennis & Votteler, 2013). To promote success for all students, the Integrated Resource Package for English Language Arts (2006) encourages teachers to provide students with opportunities to "participate in decisions about their learning and to be engaged in a classroom community" (p. 26). Excellent teachers develop an understanding in their students that writing is worthwhile and that they can become writers by learning the strategies taught (Pressley, Mohan, Fingeret, Reffitt, & Raphael-Bogaert, 2007, p. 25). When students are engaged in their own writing, they share that enthusiasm with the children around them. This is a part of the collaborative aspect of writing which also includes the importance of sharing writing with an audience.

Writing as a social interaction.

"The spaces in which talk and literacy learning transpire have the potential to ignite and influence the pursuit of emergent writing discoveries"

(Tolentino, 2013, p. 12)

The act of writing cannot be removed from the social environment from which is takes place. I am sure we have all had those students who begin to see success writing independently when using an idea a peer shared during a brainstorm, or copying a model of someone writing at their table. As a part of a larger study, Tolentino (2013) examined fourteen students at a student-centered independent school visiting during five work-times a week for the duration of a year. During this rigorous study, the author made notes, recorded and transcribed student conversations, collected video footage, and recorded student conversations about literacy during work times. The material was then used to build a grounded theory (p. 13). The findings presented highlight the importance of talk as a way for students to negotiate the role of literacy (both reading and writing) in their lives, and also that students co-construct their learning through dialogue with their peers and learn from one another (p. 17). Students can support and encourage their peers through collaboration and dialogue during writing (Gibson, 2008; Kissel, 2008; & Tolentino, 2013). This social component can also extend to publishing, as students can give one another feedback through an Author's Sharing setting.

Author's sharing. Writers' Workshop gives students the opportunity to share completed pieces and provide feedback to their peers. In my classroom, we have three to four writers share their writing from both their journals and Writers' Workshop. After the piece is read and the illustration shown, the students in the audience then offer compliments and suggestions for future improvement. Kissel (2008) notes that through this form of peer sharing "young children begin to realize that writing serves a real purpose and the message of their written work (whether it is a printed picture or written words) holds value" (p. 56). The avenue for providing an audience for writers can take different forms such as displaying published work on bulletin boards, collective

works for individuals, or creating class books that remain in the classroom library (Gibson, 2008; Dennis & Votteler, 2013). All students should have the opportunity to have their work published to show that their writing is valued (Parr & Limbrick, 2010). Student-created books can also serve as an assessment tool for subject learning if they are written at the end of a unit of study or on specific topics of knowledge (Varelas, Pappas, Kokkino & Ortiz, 2008). As students are writing and publishing, the teacher should be assessing and conferencing with individuals to support learning goals.

Assessment for learning. The assessment of emergent writers centers on observation and anecdotal notes which are gathered through informal conversations or writing conferences with individual students. The Considerations for Program Delivery outlined in the English Language Arts Integrated Resource Package (2006) further encourage students to complete self assessment and goal setting, or assessment as learning, as an important consideration for beginning and developing writers (p. 26). The information collected by the teacher is then used to inform instruction. Wearmouth, Berryman, and Whittle (2011) examined the practice of a particularly effective New Zealand teacher of intermediate-aged students to see how her teaching pedagogy and classroom environment impacted the identities of her students as literacy learners. Though the classroom observations were only carried out for a two-day time period, I have chosen to include the findings of this study as the researchers combined these observations with an interview with the teacher, photographs of the classroom setting, and interviews with students at different writing levels. The students were asked about how they perceive themselves as writers, specifically what they see as helpful or hindering to their progress as writers. Through these findings, the authors discovered that both high and low literacy achievers were given formative feedback both during the activity of writing, and following its completion in comments on the

written work. Following the interviews, the researchers concluded that this teacher knew where each student was at, how to support their growth, and that she directed instruction to meet their needs through scaffolding (p. 97). The authors discovered further that writing in the classroom focused on completing a whole text, not on aspects of the mechanics of writing. Instruction on mechanics was catered to individual needs as they arose for each student (p. 98). Spelling instruction was similarly given. Parr and Limbrick (2010) had similar findings in their study of six teachers in New Zealand who were chosen for the study based on their high achievement results for student writing. These researchers conducted six case studies, the findings of which were supported by classroom visits on two occasions (four months apart), interviews with the chosen teachers and students, and student assessment data (p. 584). One of the important findings for this author was that students were aware of how much their teacher knew about them and this understanding was positively acknowledged by the students (p. 589). The learning aims of each lesson were understood, and the teaching within the lessons was linked to the learning aim for students (p. 587). Graham, Gillespie and McKeown (2013) encourage teachers to "set high expectations for their students, encouraging them to surpass previous efforts or accomplishments (p. 9).

Writing conferences, whether formal or informal, support students in personal growth, and give them the message that there is always some way to improve on future work (Kissel, 2008; Wearmouth et al, 2011; Dennis & Votteler, 2013). This also supports Gentry's (2005) assertion that "[w]riting instruction for emerging writers should not be the same for all members of the class but should accommodate for their various writing levels" (p. 130). When formative assessment, and regular specific feedback is given, all students can be working on writing at the same time, while still feeling like they are being successful at their individual ability level.

Students in effective writing classrooms get rewarded for improving and are given praise along with the feedback on how to improve (Pressley, Mohan, Fingeret, Reffitt, & Raphael-Bogaert, 2007, p. 20).

Putting the Pieces Together: What's Next?

Finding an ideal pre-made writing program for young and emergent writers may not be possible. It takes a caring and responsive teacher to develop lessons and opportunities for writing which will engage learners in a way that is developmentally appropriate and that promotes success in writing for all. Kissel (2008) reminds us "[t]he goal in introducing young children to writing is to create writers for life—not to create a life where children hate writing" (p. 56), and though he is talking about students before they enter the public system in his study, I think the same goal should apply as students engage in writing throughout their entire school careers. Writing is a critical skill, and students need the time to practice. Instructional methods such as Interactive Writing and Writers' Workshop support a classroom where writing happens all the time and students are not told what is important, but are given opportunities to discover what they enjoy about writing, while also learning what they need to know, when they are ready to learn it. Assessment for and as learning informs practice that is responsive and relevant to a diverse group of students.

Final Project Idea

For Chapter Three, I am hoping to enhance my existing writing program by infusing more of the ideals examined within this literature review to create a student-responsive writing program based upon the instructional techniques of Interactive Writing, Writers' Workshop, and class-created books. I hope to make adjustments to what I already do in the classroom to encourage my students to become better writers by engaging them in writing conferences and in

more peer and self assessment. To facilitate this, I will be looking to collect and develop lessons for Interactive Writing and Writers' Workshop, and assessment tools for emergent writing.

Chapter Three: Presentation of the Project

Introduction

In this Chapter, I will be using the recommendations for creating an environment which provides for engaging experiences in beginning writing as discussed and supported by the literature in Chapter Two to create a foundation for five cross-curricular lessons in which Interactive Writing is used as a tool to support writing instruction. I will discuss the steps of Interactive Writing as they are used in the classroom, and present a series of five lessons which demonstrate using this technique in different curricular areas. Each lesson is divided into the following sections: rationale/link to research, prescribed learning outcomes, materials, time needed, lesson introduction, activities, assessment, and reflection after the typical lesson. Following the project's conclusion are nine appendices which include templates to support the five described lessons, further lesson ideas on descriptive procedural writing and the supporting materials, assessment rubric examples, and two examples of how the project connects to the Ministry of British Columbia's Pedagogical Understandings of Writing.

Interactive Writing: An Introduction

The following discussion on the steps of Interactive Writing draws from Williams and Pilonieta (2012). In Interactive Writing, the teacher is working with the students within their Zone of Proximal Development to scaffold them into becoming writers who can apply the skills taught to independent writing (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012, p. 146).

The classroom steps to interactive writing. It should be made clear, that these pieces of Interactive Writing are meant to be quick and packed with teachable moments. Though only two

to four sentences may be written in a time span of fifteen minutes, the value of lessons learned is what makes this approach worthwhile and a part of balanced writing instruction program.

Step 1: Participating in a shared activity. Interactive writing begins by having the group complete a shared experience or activity. In practice, this can be an activity like hearing a story, completing a science experiment, or going on a field trip. The idea is that each student will have something to add to the piece of writing because they have shared a common experience. Williams and Pilonieta (2012) note that "discussing stories provides children with shared background knowledge that they can bring to the interactive writing lesson. Children will be more engaged and motivated to write when the topic is familiar and the activity is an authentic use of written language" (p. 146).

Step 2: Planning the text. In this step, the teacher asks open-ended questions to the group to plan the response to be written. In my practice, this can be related to subject learning beyond writing or reading. For example, I may ask students to tell me what we learned about a particular topic by giving them a title like living and non living things. We would then discuss what we should write about this topic. If responding to a shared story, the teacher may encourage discussion on what happened, the characters, or a student's favourite part.

Step 3: Modeling how writers think. This is when the teacher is writing the message, and modeling the skills good writers use. Examples of self-talk, or talking to the students during this time include: talking about capital letters, word choice, punctuation, and what letter sounds they hear in particular words. The students can hear the thinking process that the teacher is going through.

Step 4: Sharing the pen. At points in the lesson, the teacher has students actively write on the paper. During this time the teacher is scaffolding what the students are learning, and

continuing to model what good writers do, through the work of the children writing. Williams and Pilonieta (2012) highlight two of the purposes of sharing the pen:

> The primary goal of sharing the pen is to focus students' attention on a particular concept, strategy, or process that they are still coming to understand .... [s]haring the pen also provides teachers an opportunity to informally assess children's current knowledge and understandings of written language and the writing process (p. 147).

Throughout Step 3 and Step 4, the teacher is providing explicit instruction on topics/content that her students need. Each moment and word is considered as a teachable moment. Students are taught what they need to know about language and writing skills.

Step 5: Rereading for meaning. Throughout the composition, the teacher asks the students to reread for meaning. At the end of the text creation, the group rereads the writing to see if it makes sense and the message is clear. Editing and revising can then happen if needed.

Step 6: Moving to independent writing. The teacher reminds/reviews the mini lessons taught through the Interactive Writing. Students are then encouraged to use these skills in their own writing. The authors, Williams and Pilonieta recommend following the lesson with journal writing or independent composing time (p. 148).

Lesson Ideas Introduction

In the following section I present five lesson outlines that I have created for this MEd project, and have used in my own teaching. The aim of the lessons is to support students' writing development and processes through shared cross curricular experiences and multiple forms of Interactive Writing. The structure and content of these lessons incorporate a critical application of the literature as discussed in Chapter Two: how to use Interactive Writing and the qualities of an effective beginning writing program to enhance the learning of writers in grade one. Through

these lessons, students will have opportunities to engage in the practice of oral language, reading, and writing; work on adding details to their writing; and, learn about writing for the purpose of explaining how to do a specific task. The first set of lessons develops writing by encouraging students' use of descriptive details with a cross-curricular link to science. The Ministry of British Columbia's Integrated Resource Package for English Language Arts (2006) explains:

> By integrating literacy learning into all subjects, teachers prepare their students to read and write subject-specific material, help them become strategic thinkers and problem solvers, and provide them with opportunities to apply literacy skills and strategies in many different meaningful contexts (p. 18).

In linking writing with the concepts learned in science, students will be engaged in an authentic opportunity to write, expressing their learning in another subject area. The British Columbia ELA I.R.P (2006) states that "[s]tudents become confident and competent users of all six language arts through having many opportunities to speak, listen, read, write, view, and represent in a variety of contexts, and to reflect on their learning as they do so" (p. 17). Making the link between science and writing highlights that writing is a skill used for many different purposes.

The five lesson outlines are divided into sections that include the following areas: topic, rationale/link to research, Prescribed Learning Outcomes (P.L.Os), materials, time needed, activity descriptions, assessment ideas or opportunities, and a reflection after a typical lesson. I chose to structure the lesson ideas in this way so that an interested teacher could see the rationale for the lesson activities, and so that they could also use or adapt the ideas for their own classroom. The rationale and link to the research highlights how I am incorporating my learning about the needs of beginning writers into lesson planning and classroom activities. Including the P.L.O.s highlights how taking this time to develop writing does not take away from other subject

and topic areas, but rather shows how these skills can be taught in such a way that also develops the curriculum we are teaching in grade one. Materials and the time needed provide the reader with an idea of what would be needed if they wanted to teach these lessons themselves. Activity descriptions show what the students are to complete in each lesson, and the nature of instruction being provided. The activities range from group, to partner, to independent composition opportunities. Assessment ideas provide suggestions regarding where and how the teacher can find opportunities to use formative and summative assessment. The reflection section provides the extra piece of information where theory and planning meets actual real-world application. It is in this section that I have provided my own learning about how to teach the lessons, what has worked well in a typical classroom situation, and what I might change the next time that I teach the lessons. I think that as reflective practitioners, who often have a chance to adapt, change, and re-teach, it is important that we share with one another how teaching ideas such as Interactive Writing may actually play out in a classroom with twenty diverse students; where there is opportunity to celebrate the success of a lesson, and to adjust areas for improvement. It is my hope that the format will be useful and that any application of the ideas included can be translated to a variety of subject/topic ideas. During this project work, I taught two lessons a week in conjunction with my established writing routines, which include journals for personal impromptu writing, and Writers' Workshop for creative story writing. The lesson topics are: living and non-living things, a Valentine's science experiment, describing rocks from a local beach, writing about items found in the school environment, and mystery object writing.

Cross-curricular Lesson Idea 1: Interactive Writing on Living and Non-living Things

Rationale/Link to research. In starting this lesson with Interactive Writing on a topic of study in science, the students are using language to learn about, evaluate, and communicate what

they have learned (Murray, 1972, 2003). Having this pre-writing and purpose setting for the piece of writing links this Interactive Writing to the stages of Writers' Workshop described by Jamison Rog, 2007. The timing of the lesson enables a balance between actual time spent writing, and the time learning the writing process and strategies for writing (Cutler & Graham, 2008). Scaffolding opportunities within the Interactive Writing piece of the lesson will be responsive to the needs of the student who is sharing the pen. Students will experience success at their level, and will be taught new skills at the same time (Gibson, 2008). Though the students have not selected this topic for writing, they are motivated to participate and make suggestions due to the way the activity has been framed – they are responsible for deciding what is most important to teach someone about this topic. Having students pair and discuss the topic and their ideas before writing encourages the collaborative process of writing where talk leads to peer support for independent writing (Gibson, 2008; Kissel, 2008; & Tolentino, 2013). Assessment is taking place throughout the group and independent writing parts of the lesson. Students in effective writing classrooms get rewarded for improving and are given praise along with the feedback on how to improve (Pressley, Mohan, Fingeret, Reffitt, & Raphael-Bogaert, 2007, p. 20). The independent writing could be used as a summative assessment piece on the science topic, as demonstrated in the article by Varelas, Pappas, Kokkino and Ortiz (2008).

Prescribed learning outcomes.

Language Arts

A1 use speaking and listening to interact with others for the purposes of: contributing to a class goal, exchanging ideas on a topic, making connections

A4 use **strategies** when interacting with others, including: making and sharing connections, asking questions for clarification and understanding, taking turns as speaker and listener

B2 read and demonstrate comprehension of grade appropriate information texts

C2 create straightforward **informational writing** and representations, using prompts to elicit ideas and knowledge

C4 use **strategies** before writing and representing, including: setting a purpose, identifying an audience

C6 use a **strategy** after writing and representing to improve their work (e.g., sharing their written work and representations, checking for completeness, adding details)

C10 use some features and conventions of language to express meaning in their writing and representing

Science

- classify living and non-living things

- describe the basic needs of local plants and animals (e.g., food, water, light)

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2006) *English language arts kindergarten to grade 7: Integrated resource package 2006.* Retrieved from: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/pdfs/english_language_arts/2006ela_k7.pdf

Materials.

- chart paper
- markers
- independent writing template

Time needed. 20 minutes for Interactive Writing. 40 minutes for independent writing.

Lesson hook. Ask the students to help with writing a summary about what we know and have learned about living and non-living things. Explain that we are going to try and write what we know, and our audience is going to be our parents or someone who knows nothing on the topic. We have to present the important information so that someone reading could learn about this topic by what we have written. Provide the title on the chart paper *Living and Non-living Things*.

Activity 1: Brainstorm and planning discussion in pairs. Have students pair up for a two minute (approximately) discussion about what they think is important about what they have learned on this topic in science. Each group will share an idea out loud, so make sure the students are aware that they should have at least one idea to share.

Activity 2: Interactive writing. Students share ideas for what will become the written document. The teacher records some of the ideas in complete sentences, following the steps of interactive writing. In this case, the writing is summative so the shared experiences have happened in the previous weeks to the lesson. At key points, students share the pen and contribute to the writing. The writing piece is re-read throughout and once again when it is complete.

Activity 3: Independent writing. Remind students about the lessons discussed during the Interactive Writing, and encourage them to use the skills, class and composition dependent, in their own writing. Have the students draw and write about what they know about living and non-living things.

Assessment.

- Anecdotal notes during writing: Take note both of writing skills and needs and who knows what in terms of the science content during paired discussions and group sharing.
- Science writing: Assess both writing and science content of the individual piece of writing.
- Writing conferences: Could do some writing conferences with students during the independent writing activity.

Reflection after the typical lesson. After about three weeks of working with the idea of living and non-living things, and the needs of living things, we attempt as a group to write a summary about what we know about living things. I give a general introduction telling the students we are going to do some writing, and I also provide the topic and the title Living and Non-living Things. I then prompt the students to think about what they can tell their families to

show what they know about living and non-living things. The students then sit beside a buddy to discuss their science knowledge before we share the ideas orally. I find that through this type of discussion, having the students pick their own partner and discuss before being put on the spot makes them much more willing to share ideas about their science knowledge, and to have a confirmation by their peers that what they say is either correct or incorrect. They have time to change their answer, or adjust their ideas based on the knowledge of their partner, and can then come forward to the group with an idea they feel proud about sharing.

Once we start the Interactive Writing, everyone is interested in sharing their ideas and having a chance to pick up the pen and have a turn. I start the first sentence, discussing letter placement on the lines and letter size on the larger space ("this is where the capital letters and tall letters will go"). We spend about 20 minutes on this, and are able to talk about language ranging from the correct letter formation of an n, using periods at the end of words, to using words with "ee" and the sound that they make together. This is a great time to have a quick list of student names handy to note formative observations about what they share in terms of science knowledge, and also what they are able or were unable to do as writers (places of growth and for growth). I find that in practice, I notice these things quickly and easily while working with the students in the moment, and can support them in the moment, but if I do not have a record, even just a quick note, I may forget who I helped and with what because there are so many students, and so many teachable moments that take place within a piece of writing. If I take the time to write quick notes, I can reference them and use them for assessment, and to encourage a focus area for the students to review their work in their next piece.

Some things to consider for next time: Length of time spent writing to get about five sentences may be too long depending on the composition of the student group. All students want

a turn, but it is not possible. This form of writing is beneficial in this context as you can see the students who can present the science content in their own words, and which students relay it the way that it was previously taught (maybe in more mature language than they would be able to express in written format). The discussion that occurs along with Interactive Writing is beneficial here as the teacher is able to hear information from some of the students who have real struggles getting their thoughts onto paper for a variety of reasons, but are able to express themselves very well orally.

Cross-curricular Lesson Idea 2: Science Experiment with a Valentine's Twist

Rationale/Link to research. Williams and Pilonieta (2012) suggest beginning Interactive Writing with a shared experience. This science experiment is a great example of a shared experience as the students are engaged with an interactive experiment and are being encouraged to use new science vocabulary to share in writing and pictures what they are seeing unfold before them. The topic is dynamic, and the structure of the lesson is as well due to the changing results of the experiment, the opportunities to make predictions based on prior knowledge before the experiment starts, and because of the opportunity to write both as a group and independently.

Through writing and drawing about what they are seeing the students are using language to learn about, evaluate, and communicate what they have learned (Murray, 1972, 2003). Due to the level of engagement in the experiment, students can support and encourage their peers through collaboration and dialogue during writing (Gibson, 2008; Kissel, 2008; & Tolentino, 2013). Even though the students have experienced the same activity, they may have focused or been influenced by different parts of it. Their writing and drawing will highlight this and having the drawing and writing together enables the students to create multimodal texts, using two

modes of language together (Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013). This collaborative dialogue is also happening between the student and the teacher as the teacher circulates during writing and provides suggestions, support and questions to encourage more detailed writing and clarification of what is being said. Having an authentic topic allows for the students to be more interested in writing, and less focused on the mechanics of writing, encouraging them to enjoy the writing process (Simmerman et al 2012; Cutler & Graham, 2008). Responsive scaffolding for individuals is possible as all of the students are working at their level on the same piece of writing. Due to the level of engagement, off-task behaviour is minimized, so the teacher can then focus more on supporting the writing of the students.

Prescribed learning outcomes.

Language Arts

A1 use speaking and listening to interact with others for the purposes of: contributing to a class goal, exchanging ideas on a topic, making connections

A4 use **strategies** when interacting with others, including: making and sharing connections, asking questions for clarification and understanding, taking turns as speaker and listener

B2 read and demonstrate comprehension of grade appropriate information texts

C2 create straightforward **informational writing** and representations, using prompts to elicit ideas and knowledge

C4 use **strategies** before writing and representing, including: setting a purpose, identifying an audience

C6 use a **strategy** after writing and representing to improve their work (e.g., sharing their written work and representations, checking for completeness, adding details)

C10 use some features and conventions of language to express meaning in their writing and representing

Science

- communicate their observations, experiences, and thinking in a variety of ways (e.g., verbally, pictorially, graphically)

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2006) *English language arts kindergarten to grade 7: Integrated resource package 2006.* Retrieved from: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/pdfs/english_language_arts/2006ela_k7.pdf

Materials.

- candy conversation hearts (6)
- 3 cups (clear)
- vinegar
- soda water
- student observation and writing sheets (see Appendix A)
- liquid measuring cup
- markers
- chart paper
- water

Time needed. 50-60 minutes

Lesson hook. Show the students the candy hearts and the three different liquids. One of the fun things about being a scientist is that sometimes you get to do different experiments with different materials. Show and explain the materials that we will be using today.

Activity 1: Student predictions. Show the observation sheet and predict as a group whether the candy heart will sink or float in the water. Students record what they think on their sheet by colouring in either the sink or float heart. Write a sentence about the result (did it sink or float?) on the prediction sheet.

Activity 2: Interactive writing. Add candy hearts in equal amounts to the other liquids. Wait for about 20 minutes to see what happens to the hearts. During this time, complete Interactive Writing on the predictions that the students have about what will happen to the hearts in the liquids. Leave room on the chart for what actually happened.

Activity 3: Drawing observations. Students draw what happened to the hearts during their time in the liquid on their activity sheet (Appendix A).

Activity 4: Record experiment results. Add what happened in the experiment to the bottom of the writing predictions in Activity 2. Other students could have an opportunity to be a part of the Interactive Writing in this section.

Activity 5: Independent writing. Students write and draw about what they did in the experiment and the results they saw. They could use the information and vocabulary from the Interactive Writing piece as a writing tool for this writing. After completing the writing, have students pair with a partner and read their writing. Peer feedback could be given at this time.

Assessment.

- Anecdotal notes during writing of the interactive and independent pieces.
- Assessment of sentence about whether the heart floated or not (could be a formative piece).
- Assessment of independent writing and drawing to accompany the writing. Also, writing conferences could be held during this time.

Reflection after the typical lesson. To say the students get excited about this candy experiment would be an understatement. They enjoy guessing what will happen, explaining the reasons why they think that the heart will float or sink in the liquids, watching as the hearts do different things in each of the liquids, and then changing their observations. I leave the hearts in the liquids over night so that the students can come in and see further changes the next day as well.

Experiences are always unique. For example, six students may think that hearts would sink and twelve may think they will float. As the experiment continues, the students will be

engaged in observing and will come back to the table as a group as the hearts go through changes; one student may voice an observation with enthusiasm, and the others will gather to have a look for themselves. Though this is happening during independent work time, the students are able to complete their work and remain on task with limited support.

The writing in this lesson provides a good sample of what each student can do when asked to express their observations in writing. The range in emergent and beginning writing confidence will be varied. For example, some students will be able to complete their own sentences using the list of materials provided and phonetic spelling of the words they want to learn. A few will show what they can in their picture, accompanied by the list of the materials used which can be copied from the board. With these students, I take the opportunity to have them read their picture and describe what happened in the experiment in their words, and then scribe what they are saying below what they had already written. They can also be encouraged to add labels (even as simple as beginning letter sounds) to their drawings. Future writing goals could be collected from these samples and be used for the next writing lesson (things such as spacing, re-reading to ensure the writing makes sense and use of capital letters).

Cross-curricular Lesson Idea 3: Describing Rocks Found at a Local Beach

Rationale/ Link to research. The topic of using rocks from the beach will link to prior knowledge and experiences for students. They will be able to make connections to a time when they have shared in this experience, and can bring that vocabulary to the shared writing activity. Having this pre-writing and purpose setting for the piece of writing links this Interactive Writing to the stages of Writers' Workshop described by Jamison Rog (2007). Because students will complete an example of both of the activities within the safety of the group, a gradual release of support is possible as they move from guided practice, to independent practice with the same

skills (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006). The timing of the lesson enables a balance between actual time spent writing, and the time learning the writing process and strategies for writing (Cutler & Graham, 2008). Scaffolding opportunities within the Interactive Writing piece of the lesson will be responsive to the needs of the student who is sharing the idea, as the group will support the student in spelling the word while the teacher is demonstrating letter formation during recording and asking guiding questions. Students will experience success at their level, and will be taught new skills at the same time (Gibson, 2008). Though the students have not selected this topic for writing, they are able to select their working partner and the rock that interests them the most. Having students pair and discuss the topic and their ideas before writing encourages the collaborative process of writing where talk leads to peer support for independent writing (Gibson, 2008; Kissel, 2008; & Tolentino, 2013). Because they are both working with the same rock, they are able to use each other's ideas to complete independent writing. Tolentino (2013) notes that students co-construct their learning through dialogue with their peers and learn from one another (p. 17). Collaborative dialogue is also happening between the student and the teacher as the teacher circulates during writing and provides suggestions, support and questions to encourage more detailed writing and clarification of what is being said.

Assessment is taking place throughout the independent writing part of the lesson. Responsive scaffolding for individuals is possible as all of the students are working at their level on the same piece of writing. Using the piece of writing for future goal setting and instruction demonstrates a goal for future learning where, as Graham, Gillespie and McKeown (2013) suggest, teachers "set high expectations for their students, encouraging them to surpass previous efforts or accomplishments" (p. 9).

Prescribed learning outcomes.

Language Arts

A2 use speaking to explore, express, and present ideas, information, and feelings, by: generally staying on topic, using descriptive words about people, places, things, and events

A3 listen for a variety of purposes and demonstrate comprehension, by: retelling or restating, following two-step instructions

A5 use **strategies** when expressing and presenting ideas, information, and feelings, including: accessing prior knowledge, organizing thinking by following a simple framework

C2 create straightforward **informational writing** and representations, using prompts to elicit ideas and knowledge, featuring: **ideas** represented through words, sentences, and images that connect to a topic; developing **sentence fluency** by using **simple sentences**, patterns, labels, and captions, developing **word choice** by beginning to use content-specific vocabulary and some detail; an **organization** that follows a **form** modelled by the teacher, such as a list, web, chart, cluster, or other **graphic organizer**

C4 use **strategies** before writing and representing, including: setting a purpose

C10 use some features and conventions of language to express meaning in their writing and representing

Science:

Process:

- communicate their observations, experiences, and thinking in a variety of ways (e.g., verbally, pictorially, graphically)

- classify objects, events, and organisms

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2006) *English language arts kindergarten to grade 7: Integrated resource package 2006.* Retrieved from: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/pdfs/english_language_arts/2006ela_k7.pdf

Materials.

- 10-12 beach rocks
- magnifying glasses
- rock observation recording web (see Appendix B)
- rock writing paper (see Appendix B)
- chart paper
- markers

Time needed: 60 minutes * Sharing of the writing (Activity 3) may take longer, and could be completed at another time depending on how long the writing takes.

Lesson hook. Begin by telling an oral story about heading to the beach with my family (or you could also read a picture book on the topic depending on time/interest). Due to our location, all of the students have been to the beach before, so this topic will relate to them and they will have some background knowledge and their own experiences to draw from for writing. Ask the students how many of them like to go to the beach. Ask them if any of them like to find things and collect them at the beach. Make a list of some of the things students can find at the beach (this could be an opportunity for interactive writing where the students are writing the list on the chart paper).

Activity 1: Whole group example. Link back to our mystery object lesson about using descriptive language when writing. Show some of the rocks that I brought from the beach. Have the students describe what the sample rock looks like (record the descriptions on the planning page on the board). Mention that scientists often describe something to people who may never have seen nor done what they are doing before, so they have to be great writers as well as great scientists. Have the students touch the rocks as well, using their senses. After completing the planning page through Interactive Writing, use those describing words to write a descriptive paragraph about the sample rock. During this time, encourage students to do some of the writing, and talk about the planning of a paragraph with the students (opening sentence, details that are on topic).

Activity 2: Pair writing. Have students in pairs. Each pair picks a rock that they need to describe to the group. The pair will both have the same planning page and paragraph page as was completed as a whole group. This writing will be more of a whole piece, not just a list like the

clues in the first lesson. Hopefully it will have more of a beginning, middle and end. You could also do a frame for writing, where students are filling in the describing words in each section for the senses (our rock looks, our rock feels, our rock smells) being as this could be the first time they are expected to look at something with this kind of focus. Both students in the pair will complete their own writing piece. A picture will accompany the description.

Activity 3: Pair sharing. Have students (both in the pair) read their paragraphs to the group, and have the students guess which rock was theirs based on their drawing and descriptions.

After the lesson. As a way to display the writing, the teacher could make a bulletin board with a photo of each rock, or a sorting station with the actual rocks, and have the students manipulate the rocks to where they think they should go based on the paragraph about the rocks. There could be an answer key so that students could self-check their guesses.

Assessment.

- Observations on interactive writing work and group work (could be recorded after the lesson)
- Individual writing pieces (formative and summative)

Follow-up and cross curricular connections. This lesson could be used to introduce a unit on rock and soil types, or a unit on oceans. It could also be used to discuss different collections that students might have, which could lead into other idea for writing. The rock writing could be made into a class book.

Reflection after the typical lesson. At the beginning of the day, I have the rocks set on a table by our calendar wall. Students are interested in finding out why the rocks are there, and what they are going to be used for before we even start talking about the writing activity.

After sharing my story about collecting the rocks, and making the connection to things we can collect at the beach, the children describe a large rock which is passed around the carpet. I record the list of describing words from the students as they use their senses to view and feel the qualities of the rock using a projected copy of the planning page on our SMART Board. While recording, I encourage ways to look at the rock, ask clarifying questions when students share their answers, ask which describing words would be best, and how to write the words (what sounds do they hear). Because I do the writing as they are looking at the rock, it seems to go faster than our work on living and non-living things, and some of the restless behaviour is reduced.

Once we fill our page with describing words, I show the page where the students would write a paragraph about the rock. We write the example paragraph together, combining some of the describing words to make more interesting sentences. We work on letter formation, punctuation, spelling, using the sounds we know, organization, and writing with the purpose of describing. After this guided practice, students pick a partner and then pick a rock to begin the independent practice.

Each student has their own copy of the paper, and is encouraged to discuss and record observations and ideas with the support of their partner. It is interesting to see how partners are chosen, and whether individual writing improves based on the support from their partner. During this time, I circulate and support students during both the planning and writing sections. Students also illustrate what their rock looks like.

After the lesson, I use the writing piece to decide on a writing goal for each student for the next writing lesson. These goals are based on the Five Star Writing Checklist (see Appendix C). I use this assessment tool to make a class-sized poster of each of the five elements, and place

a clothes peg with an image of each student beside a goal area on the checklist. It is my hope that having this visual will encourage students to re-read their own writing and become more self-aware of how to improve as writers. After I have given the goals for a few writing activities, the students will then be responsible for choosing their own goals before writing, and filling out a checklist after reading to show their ability to self-assess. Once they understand each goal, and have worked on each, the hope is that they will be able to complete writing which meets all five of the goals.

Cross-curricular Lesson Idea 4: Writing About Your Environment

Rationale/ Link to research. Motivation for writing is linked to providing students with the opportunity to self-select their writing topics (Kissel, 2008; Dennis & Votteler, 2013). Having an authentic topic for writing allows for the students to be more focused on writing on something interesting, and less focused on the mechanics of writing, encouraging them to enjoy the writing process (Simmerman et al 2012; Cutler & Graham, 2008). I also think that having the same planning page and writing template as the previous lesson will give the students a level of comfort with what they are being asked to write which will allow for longer writing. Having one writing goal, established as student-specific based on their writing from the previous lesson also encourages the students to make realistic improvements in their writing. The Ministry of Education I.R.P (2006) for English Language Arts notes:

> Students who can monitor their learning, assess their strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for improvement become independent, lifelong learners. By thinking about how they think and learn, they gain personal control over the strategies they use when engaged in literacy activities (p. 17).

The document explains further that it is important "for classrooms to provide an atmosphere that encourages risk-taking, structures that encourage children to interact with one another, and an environment where they can make choices about their learning" (p. 19).

Prescribed learning outcomes.

A1 use speaking and listening to interact with others for the purposes of: contributing to a class goal, exchanging ideas on a topic, making connections

A3 listen for a variety of purposes and demonstrate comprehension, by: retelling or restating, following two-step instructions

A4 use **strategies** when interacting with others, including: making and sharing connections, asking questions for clarification and understanding, taking turns as speaker and listener

A5 use **strategies** when expressing and presenting ideas, information, and feelings, including: accessing prior knowledge, organizing thinking by following a simple framework

C2 create straightforward **informational writing** and representations, using prompts to elicit ideas and knowledge, featuring: **ideas** represented through words, sentences, and images that connect to a topic; developing **sentence fluency** by using **simple sentences**, patterns, labels, and captions, developing **word choice** by beginning to use content-specific vocabulary and some detail; an **organization** that follows a **form** modelled by the teacher, such as a list, web, chart, cluster, or other **graphic organizer**

C4 use **strategies** before writing and representing, including: setting a purpose, identifying an audience

C6 use a **strategy** after writing and representing to improve their work (e.g., sharing their written work and representations, checking for completeness, adding details)

C10 use some features and conventions of language to express meaning in their writing and representing

Science

- communicate their observations, experiences, and thinking in a variety of ways (e.g., verbally, pictorially, graphically)

- classify objects, events, and organisms

Social Studies

E3 demonstrate responsible behaviour in caring for their immediate and school environments

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2006) *English language arts kindergarten to grade 7: Integrated resource package 2006.* Retrieved from: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/pdfs/english_language_arts/2006ela_k7.pdf

Materials.

- plastic bag (one for each student)
- Object Planning Page (see Appendix D)
- All About My Object writing page (see Appendix D)

Time needed. 60 minutes

Lesson hook. Introduce the new Five Stars of Writing Poster (see Appendix C for rubric form). Show that each student has a goal for today's writing based on what I noticed about their writing completed about the rocks. Share the writing goals with the group (no one is in one area alone, so no one should feel singled out with this task).

Remind students about the writing based on the rocks that I found on my hunt at the beach. Tell them that today they are going to be the collectors, and we are going outside to find one item each that we will write about as scientists. It needs to be something that can fit in a small Ziploc bag, and nothing that will die if it is brought into the class (as we will return the items back to nature when we are finished, and we never take things that are living). Do an Interactive Writing brainstorm about what we think are some of the objects that we could find, that way students will have a word bank for when they need to write by themselves.

Activity 1: School ground hunt. Take students on a hunt around the school grounds. As we go, they can change their minds about an item, have the same item as another person, but they must only have one thing in their bag at the end of the hunt (pick the one they like best).

Activity 2: Planning page. Have students fill out an observation planning page based on what they can gather using their senses about their object. This page is in the same format of the rock planning page, just with "my object" at the center rather than "my rock".

Activity 3: Object writing. Have the students use their observation page to write about what they found on their hunt. It could be in the form of a framed sentence starter. Ex. "We went on a hunt around the school and I found a _____." Students then write independently about their object. After writing, have the students re-read their writing to see if they accomplished their goal.

Activity 4: Sharing and assessment. Option One: Have the students have a mini conference with the teacher about their writing after writing. During this time, the students will read their writing to the teacher. If it is short, and could use some more detail (and this is within the ability level of the student), the teacher may ask a question about the object which could lead to adding more details. Before the students read, have them remind the teacher of the goal they were working on. If they do not remember, have them head to the poster for a quick look, and then come back. After reading and working on any supported fixing, have the student share how they did on their goal today, and decide if this should be their goal again for next time. Record the goal on the paper so that other students can see/assess whether it was achieved this time (in whole or in part).

Option 2: Students read their writing and share their object with a partner. They can discuss their writing goals for the day and where they think they achieved it, and where they could work on it next time. The pairs can then offer two stars and a wish, or make a suggestion for a detail that their buddy could have written about based on what they see in the baggie.

After the lesson. This writing could be displayed, along with the small baggie and the object, so that the other students can read about their classmates' objects.

Assessment.

- Peer assessment on the writing
- Formative and summative assessment on the individual writing and planning page
- Writing conference discussion with students
- Assess how the students worked together on speaking during their sharing
- Individual assessment on how they did on their writing goal

Reflection after the typical lesson. Students are interested to see their writing goals and the new display. They also really enjoy going outside for some exploring around the school during learning time. We have usually gone out a few times before I teach this lesson for different learning activities, so they are aware they need to keep together, keep their voices down, and remain on task. Many students might collect more than one item before returning to class, and keep them in their bag so that they can choose which one will be the best for writing during the brainstorming part of the lesson.

During the brainstorming, students are able to share at their table and talk about what they have found with the people beside them. I circulate and support those students who need help getting ideas down on the planning page so that they can work on their paragraph more independently. I think having completed the same type of planning and writing only two days before with the rock writing gives the students a bit more confidence and understanding about what is expected of them for this activity. Their writing is longer and includes more details when comparing it to previous work because of this familiarity with the format of the writing activity.

This increase in length could also be tied to the fact that they are able to pick their own topic by picking their own object outside.

I am always excited to conference with each student at the end of this activity. They finish at their own pace, so I do not have a huge line at my desk waiting to read, but a manageable number. In these conferences, a few students will need to be reminded to go back and look at their writing goal on the poster, but I am pleased with how many students remember their goal and have actively worked on it while writing their ideas. During some of the conferences, some students may be able to articulate where they have achieved their goal (pointing to where), and also which sections could be worked on for next time. I am most interested to read with the students who choose to re-read for meaning as their goal. At times, while they are reading to me, students are able to catch a missing word that affected the meaning of what they were trying to get across, and are able to change it with guided support. These students are beginning to see the importance of re-reading their writing and are becoming more aware that they can edit their own work. After using these goals in this context, I look forward to using them in journal writing, and during Writers' Workshop.

Descriptive and Procedural Writing Lesson Idea 1: Mystery Object Writing

Rationale/Link to Research. The time given for the lesson enables a balance between actual time spent writing, and the time learning the writing process and strategies for writing both from the teacher and from other students (Cutler & Graham, 2008). Scaffolding opportunities within the Interactive Writing piece of the lesson will be responsive to the needs of the student who is sharing the pen. Students will experience success at their level, and will be taught new skills at the same time (Gibson, 2008). Because they are writing their clues about their own object with a group of peers, the students will also become teachers for each other.

Less confident writers can see what their peers can do, and try something new in a safe place with the support of their friends. This group work encourages the collaborative process of writing where peer conversations lead to support for the independent writing of each group member (Gibson, 2008; Kissel, 2008; & Tolentino, 2013). If the guessing group is confused about what the object was based on the descriptions, their suggestions for other ways to describe the object and their use of language provides an authentic and immediate form of feedback for the group's future improvement within this area of writing. Having students read their writing to the group encourages the reading/writing connection. Because they are writing to get a response from the audience, writing these clues shows the students that writing has a purpose (Kissel, 2008).

Prescribed learning outcomes.

Language Arts
A2 use speaking to explore, express, and present ideas, information, and feelings, by: generally staying on topic, using descriptive words about people, places, things, and events

A3 listen for a variety of purposes and demonstrate comprehension, by: retelling or restating, following two-step instructions

A5 use **strategies** when expressing and presenting ideas, information, and feelings, including: accessing prior knowledge, organizing thinking by following a simple framework

C2 create straightforward **informational writing** and representations, using prompts to elicit ideas and knowledge, featuring: **ideas** represented through words, sentences, and images that connect to a topic; developing **sentence fluency** by using **simple sentences**, patterns, labels, and captions, developing **word choice** by beginning to use content-specific vocabulary and some detail; an **organization** that follows a **form** modelled by the teacher, such as a list, web, chart, cluster, or other **graphic organizer**

C4 use **strategies** before writing and representing, including: setting a purpose

C10 use some features and conventions of language to express meaning in their writing and representing

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2006) *English language arts kindergarten to grade 7: Integrated resource package 2006.* Retrieved from: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/pdfs/english_language_arts/2006ela_k7.pdf

Materials.

- apple
- 5 brown paper lunch bags
- 5 mystery objects (I used a skipping rope, bubbles, a pencil sharpener, a bouncy ball and a ruler)
- mystery object planning page (see Appendix E)
- mystery object clue page (see Appendix E)
- SMART Board copy of the documents for writing the example (if you have access)

Time needed. 60 minutes

Lesson hook. Begin by showing the students a common object (apple). Have them name the object. Ask how do they know it is an apple? What do they know about apples? Then ask how they would describe an apple to someone that had never had one before, or to someone that cannot see. Record these ideas and describing words on the SMART Board copy of the planning page. Connect to writers adding details and describing words to their work so that those reading the work can get a picture in their minds about what they are talking about.

Activity 1: Apple clues. Create a series of clues based on the describing words that would enable someone listening to guess that it is an apple. Have students do some of the writing on the SMART Board during this part of the lesson (Interactive Writing). Try to have the clues go from the vaguest to the most specific. Tell the students that we do not want to completely give what it is away and that it is more like a riddle we're creating.

Activity 2: Mystery bag reveal. Divide the students into groups. Give each group their own mystery bag. On the planning page, students will take turns recording describing words about the object and sharing their ideas with the student who is recording. They will have to whisper so that the others groups cannot hear what their object is.

Activity 3: Group clue writing. Have students come up with clues that describe the object in the best possible way without telling their peers what it actually is. Students take turns recording one clue each for a total of four-five clues (dep. on number of students in each group). Each student can have a turn at writing; the group is helping them with what letters and words to use when spelling.

Activity 4: Sharing and guessing. After about fifteen minutes of writing (time depends on what is happening in the room), have each group take turns sharing the clues that they have come up with. Each writer then also becomes the reporter and gets a chance to read aloud. Students who are listening will take a guess after each clue. If the object is guessed early, that highlights the quality of the descriptions. If the object is not guessed by the group, have the presenting group show what their object was. Ask the listening group how they would have described the object if they had the chance (or what would have been the clue that they needed to guess it right?).

Possible extensions and cross-curricular ideas. Once the class has gone through this lesson, this could be used as a bulletin board that is interactive in the school. Students from other classes could write guesses based on the clues and leave them in a guess box. Then my students could read the answers and see how close they were to guessing the mystery objects. The clues could also be sent home as riddles that the students read to their parents, and have their parents write a guess down to send back to school for us to read as a group. A math connection could be

made with a graph of all of the guesses and then a lesson could come from that about how to read graphs.

Assessment.

- Assess who is taking the leadership roles, cooperation, what students are helping each other with (through observations); this might lead to further instruction for Writers' Workshop lessons, or individual writing goals.
- Assess the writing of each clue

Reflection after the typical lesson. Students enjoy completing this lesson in the space of Writers' Workshop on Friday. They take turns writing some of their descriptions of the apple on the SMART Board. I take this opportunity to note how some of the students are spelling certain words, their letter formation, interest in participating and the quality of describing language being used. I do not interfere much with their spelling; we record the ideas using the sounds that they know.

When writing the clues for the apple, we try to combine the ideas of a few students. This is an opportunity to create better sentences, ones that include more detail. We also work on word choice during this time and consider which words would make the clues better. For example, we might place a clue about being able to make apple chips and apple sauce last, as it would definitely give the 'apple' away.

For their mystery item, I have each group open their bags and talk a bit about the object in the hall so that they will not say what it is within hearing distance of the class, keeping the surprise intact. Each group works on creating a list of describing words and then moves on to the clues. Some groups might start their clues first, and have to be redirected to brainstorm the describing words before writing the sentences.

During the group writing, I make observations and anecdotal notes about how groups work together, who is doing most of the writing, who is offering support for spelling and sentence creation, and who needs this support.

After completing their writing, students are eager to make guesses about each object, and are excited to get the chance to read the clue they have written. Some items may not be guessed by the end of the clues. This becomes an opportunity to discuss how the clues given could have distracted or confused those guessing. For example, if a ruler was the item in the bag, and the students spent their time giving clues about the appearance of the ruler, and not what it does, their peers may struggle to make the correct guess. If this happens, the larger group may give suggestions of what clue they needed to hear in order to guess correctly.

In future, I may either do an additional lesson where the kids get to write their own clues independently, like an I Spy game, or where they can work in pairs as some students struggle to stay on task when it is not their turn to write in these larger groups.

Project Conclusion

The lessons included within this project (living and non-living things, a Valentine's science experiment, describing rocks from a local beach, writing about items found in the school environment and mystery object writing) were designed to integrate subject areas and encourage students to have varied opportunities to practice beginning writing based on their individual levels of ability. The cross curricular experiences provided the students with opportunities to authentically engage in writing for different purposes. Activities were structured for whole group, small group, partner, and individual writing practice, giving students plenty of opportunities to explore and develop their writing ability within their Zone of Proximal Development. Opportunities to learn from each other and be scaffolded by the teacher are accommodated throughout, ensuring that each student is being encouraged to move forward

beyond their current ability to become a more competent writer. As the British Columbia English Language Arts I.R.P notes "students who can monitor their learning, assess their strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for improvement become independent, lifelong learners" (p. 17) and further details the importance "for classrooms to provide an atmosphere that encourages risk-taking, structures that encourage children to interact with one another, and an environment where they can make choices about their learning" (p. 19). Interactive Writing is an excellent tool to introduce different forms of writing, to demonstrate what good writers do, and to have students take part in authentic writing instruction.

Included further in the project appendices are the templates discussed in the lessons presented above. In addition to this, there are three lessons on descriptive procedural writing that can be taught following the lessons presented above. They are designed to follow the lesson on mystery object writing. The lesson outlines are in Appendix F, with lesson materials following in Appendix G. The reader will also find a table from the British Columbia English Language Arts I.R.P which details research findings related to writing (Appendix I) and the stages of writing (Appendix H).

In the following Chapter, I will present a summary of my project, detail how my journey through this Masters program has influenced my teaching practice and beliefs, the potential influence that this experience will have on my career, and recommendations for other educators interested in engaging with the topic of beginning writing.

Chapter Four – Comprehensive Exam

Introduction

In this chapter I will present a summary of my project from Chapter Three of this document, discuss adjustments made to my personal teaching beliefs (both reaffirmations and changes) that have resulted from my experiences in this Masters program, describe how I anticipate the graduate experience will affect my career, and finally conclude with recommendations for other educators interested in learning more about beginning writing.

Project Summary

The project that I have created for Chapter Three focuses on putting into practice key elements for an effective beginning writing program for grade one students. The five lessons developed as examples were based on relevant grade one curricular content and the research base examined in Chapter Two. It was my goal through these lessons to show how to integrate the teaching of writing, including skills and processes, through Interactive Writing into other subject areas. Interactive Writing is a flexible and student responsive instruction method and adding it to my existing writing program was feasible because of the limited time it takes up in a busy curriculum. The written pieces created through Interactive Writing are based on students' suggestions, and the teaching is responsive to both the needs of the individuals who are participating in the writing, and the collective student body. Topics for writing correlate with classroom learning and skills that are within the Zone of Proximal Development of the students. The lessons in my Chapter Three demonstrate the importance of focusing on providing ample time for students to write on engaging topics that are of interest to them. The assessment ideas presented are based on realistic and student-centered expectations. Writing on topics from other curricular areas shows students how writing is used authentically and to communicate in different formats and for different reasons.

Changing and Reinforced Professional Beliefs

After each opportunity for professional development I find myself reflecting on where this new knowledge fits in with what I already know and believe in relation to teaching and curriculum. This Masters program has been no different in that regard. Student-centered instruction has always been a goal and focus for my lesson planning and methods of instruction. I strive to plan with the students in mind and allow for many open-ended tasks so that each student can demonstrate learning at their individual level. I hope to present the prescribed curriculum to my students in a way that enables them to have opportunities to explore what is being taught and gain skills or knowledge that is meaningful to them. At times, I find the amount of curriculum to be taught in each grade overwhelming, and some areas of study become content to be taught at the students, rather than explored and enjoyed in ways that are more engaging. Through courses on Environmental Education, Aboriginal Education, and Personalized Learning it has become clear that there is a certain level of flexibility within the curriculum, and also within our professional autonomy, to make choices that will best meet the needs of the students. Providing opportunities for students to show learning through different means such as storytelling, drawing, illustrations, Pecha Kucha**,** and dance are just some of the examples of ways to encourage a greater level of student engagement. My focus on the prescribed learning outcomes has been challenged and I have been encouraged to adjust teaching methods and evaluate what I consider critical instructional content and instruction methods to best meet the needs of my learners. Being introduced, or reintroduced to different ways of sharing knowledge has encouraged me to try different story telling activities and more learning outside to reach new levels of engagement for some learners.

Much of my teaching at the primary level involves integrating topics and subjects and inviting students to learn about the same content in different contexts. Social learning is a critical component of my existing program. Being a member of a group of students again through the program has reminded me of the importance of fostering relationships between students and also between teachers and students. It is these relationships that need to be strong so that when a student struggles they can look to me or their peers for the support to persevere. Having collaborative and supportive professional peers enables a learning environment for both teachers and students in which new ideas are willingly tried and exciting trends in education are evaluated for where they can fit, if they can, into daily teaching. Creating a community of collaboration and meeting new teachers with which to share teaching strategies and ideas reinforced the importance of remaining relevant and engaged with others in the profession.

As a result of developing the project for Chapter Three, I find myself looking for more teachable moments in my day-to-day teaching; whether it is a question or an idea shared by a student, or a discussion that takes an interesting tangent, allowing myself to encourage an organic interest and exploration into these moments means not being as bound by the constraints of time. This pertains to writing, but also to other subject areas as well. I have adjusted my priorities for lesson writing as I am now planning on conferencing more with students, encouraging more student to student support, and having the children set more goals about their writing, rather than having only my suggestions for growth. Peer and self assessment is becoming more of a regular occurrence in my classroom.

Professional Implications: Long and Short Term

As a professional, this program has given me further self confidence in my teaching. How I operate my classroom and my instructional methods have been positively affirmed, and I have

also gained insight into some new methods to try in the classroom. I continue to reflect on my practice and adjust what I already know to include new learning.

I think other teaching colleagues will be able to view this project and see how Interactive Writing and writing across other curricular areas can enhance the writing instruction they already have established in their classrooms. Reading or discussing what I have found through using Interactive Writing, more peer and self assessment, and different writing topics may inspire other teachers to try similar lesson ideas with their students. Sharing some of the writing ideas with students and parents may also lead to writing at home where parents and students can connect on topics that interest both parties.

Recommendations for Other Educators

1) Find a method of writing instruction that suits your teaching style and goals for your class. Adapt it to your needs and try it out in small steps at first so as to not overwhelm the students or yourself.
2) Get students actively involved in checking their writing and the writing of others based on goals that they set before writing. Initially, this may be one specific goal, and then it can become broader as the students become more confident writers. Work towards a group of students who are willing to try new ideas, to accept feedback, and to give constructive feedback to their peers. Begin with goals that you choose as working goals for the students, and maybe have a list for them to choose from. Once they have the idea, have them create the criteria themselves.
3) Do not be afraid of the time it takes to front load routines for Interactive Writing. Do not worry about how long it may take at first – it is well worth the teachable moments and specific student or small group learning opportunities which arise from using it.

Conclusion

Through this project on beginning writing, and through the entire Masters program, I have been encouraged to try new ideas, revisit some ideas that I have left behind since becoming a classroom teacher, and explore an area where I was hoping to make some improvements in my teaching. As a reflective practitioner, I am not sure where all of the knowledge and experiences that have happened within this program will end up taking me, but I am pleased that I was able to learn more about beginning writing instruction and I look forward to sharing this knowledge with my students and colleagues as I continue in my teaching career.

References

Berk, L. (2003). Chapter 6: Cognitive development: Piagetian, core knowledge, and Vygotskian perspectives. *Child development, 6,* 256-267.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2006) *English language arts kindergarten to grade 7: Integrated resource package 2006.* Retrieved from: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/pdfs/english_language_arts/2006ela_k7.pdf

Christianakis, M. (2011). Children's text development: Drawing, pictures, and writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *46*(1), 22-54. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/23050588

Cutler, L., & Graham, S. (2008). Primary grade writing instruction: A national survey. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *11*(4), 907-919. doi:10.1037/a0012656

D'On Jones, C., Reutzel, D. R., & Fargo, J. D. (2010). Comparing two methods of writing instruction: Effects on kindergarten students' reading skills. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *103*(5), 327-341. doi:10.1080/00220670903383119

Dennis, L. R., & Votteler, N. K. (2013). Preschool teachers and children's emergent writing: Supporting diverse learners. *Early Childhood Education, 41,* 439-446. doi:10.1007/s10643-012-0563-4

Gentry, J. R. (2005). Instructional techniques for emerging writers and special needs students at kindergarten and grade one. *Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, *21*(1), 113-134. doi:10.1080/10573560590915932

Gibson, S. A. (2008). An effective framework for primary-grade guided writing instruction. *The Reading Teacher, 62*(4), 324-334. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/27699696

Graham, S., Gillespie, A., & McKeown, D. (2013). Writing: Importance, development, and instruction. *Read Write*, *26,* 1-15. doi:DOI 10.1007/s11145-012-9395-2

Hawkins, L. K., & Bakar Razali, A. (2012). A tale of 3 p's—Penmanship, product, and process: 100 years of elementary writing instruction. *Language Arts*, *89*(5), 305-317.

Ivanič, R. (2004) Discourses of writing and learning to write. *Language and Education*, *18*(3), 220-245. doi:10.1080/09500780408666877

Jamison Rog, L. (2007). Writing instruction in k-3 classrooms. In *Marvelous minilessons for teaching beginning writing k-3* (pp. 1-30). Newark: International Reading Association.

Kissel, B. (2008). Promoting writing and preventing writing failure in young children. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, *52*(4), 53-56. doi:10.3200/PSFL.52.4.53-56

Mackenzie, N. M. (2014). Teaching early writers: Teachers' responses to a young child's writing sample. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, *37*(3), 182-191.

Mackenzie, N., & Veresov, N. (2013). How drawing can support writing acquisition: Text construction in early writing from a Vygotskian perspective. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, *38*(4), 22-29.

McCarthey, S. J., & Ro, Y. (2011). Approaches to writing instruction. *Pedagogies: an International Journal*, *6*(4), 273-295. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2011.604902

McCarthey, S. J., Woodard, R., & Kang, G. (2014). Elementary teachers negotiating discourses in writing instruction. *Written Communication*, *31*(1), 58-90. doi:10.1177/0741088313510888

Murray, D. (1972, 2003). Teaching writing as process not product. In V. Villanueva & K. Arola, (Eds.), *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory* (pp. 3-6). NCTE Press: Illinois.

Parr, J. M., & Limbrick, L. (2010). Contextualising practice: Hallmarks of effective teachers of writing. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *26*, 583-590. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.09.004

Pressley, M., Mohan, L., Fingeret, L., Reffitt, K., & Raphael-Bogaert, L. (2007). Writing instruction in engaging and effective elementary settings. In S. Graham, C.A. MacArthur, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Best Practices in Writing Instruction* (pp. 13-27). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Puranik, C. S., & Lonigan, C. J. (2011). From scribbles to scrabble: Preschool children's developing knowledge of written language. *Reading and Writing*, *24*(5), 567-589. doi:10.1007/s11145-009-9220-8.

Roth, K., & Dabrowski, J. (2014). Extending interactive writing into grades 2-5. *The Reading Teacher*, *68*(1), 33-44. doi:10.1002/trtr.1270

Roth, K., & Guinee, K. (2011). Ten minutes a day: The impact of interactive writing instruction on first graders' independent writing. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *11*(3), 331-361. doi:10.1177/1468798411409300

Simmerman, S., Harward, S., Pierce, L., Peterson, N., Morrison, T., Korth, B., . . . Shumway, J. (2012). Elementary teachers' perceptions of process writing. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *51*(4), 292-307. doi:10.1080/19388071.2011.557764

Tolentino, E. (2013). "Put an explanation point to make it louder": Uncovering emergent writing revelations through talk. *Language Arts*, *91*(1), 10-22.

Varelas, M., Pappas, C. C., Kokkino, S., & Ortiz, I. (2008). Students as authors. *Science & Children*, *45*(7), 58-62. Retrieved from http://cursa.ihmc.us/rid=1H0C30CZT1963SVYN1P/NSTA_Students%20as%20Authors.pdf

Wearmouth, J., Berryman, M., & Whittle, L. (2011). 'Shoot for the moon!' Students' identities as writers in the context of the classroom. *British Journal of Special Education*, *38*(2), 92-99. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8578.2011.00502.x

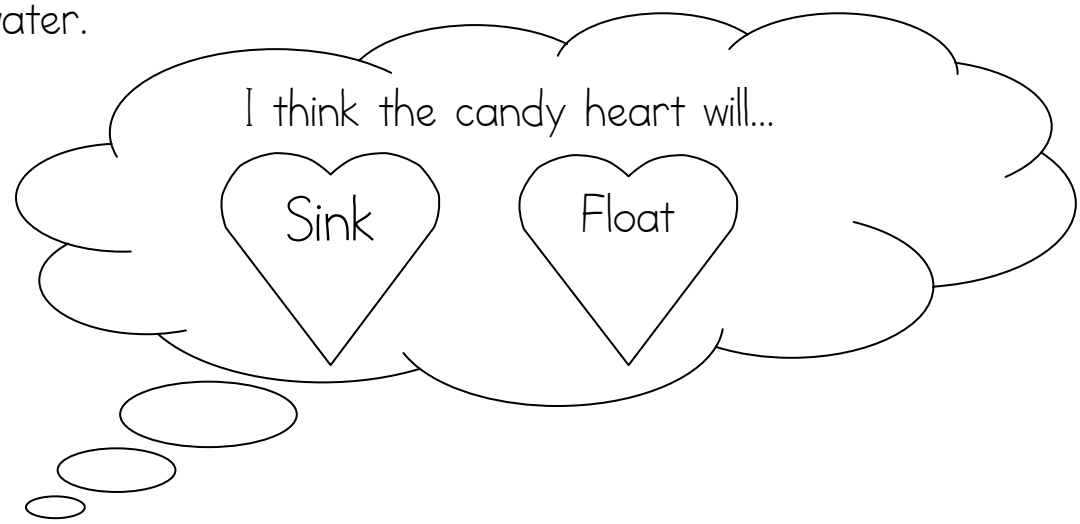
Williams, C., & Pilonieta, P. (2012). Using interactive writing instruction with kindergarten and first-grade English Language Learners. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *40*, 145-150. doi:10.1007/s10643-012-0508-y

Appendix A

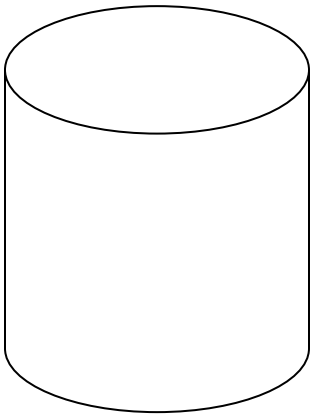
Valentine Science Experiment Observation and Writing Sheets (Adapted from Curriculum Castle at teacherspayteachers.com)

Candy Heart Experiment

Step One: Predict what will happen when the candy heart goes in the water.

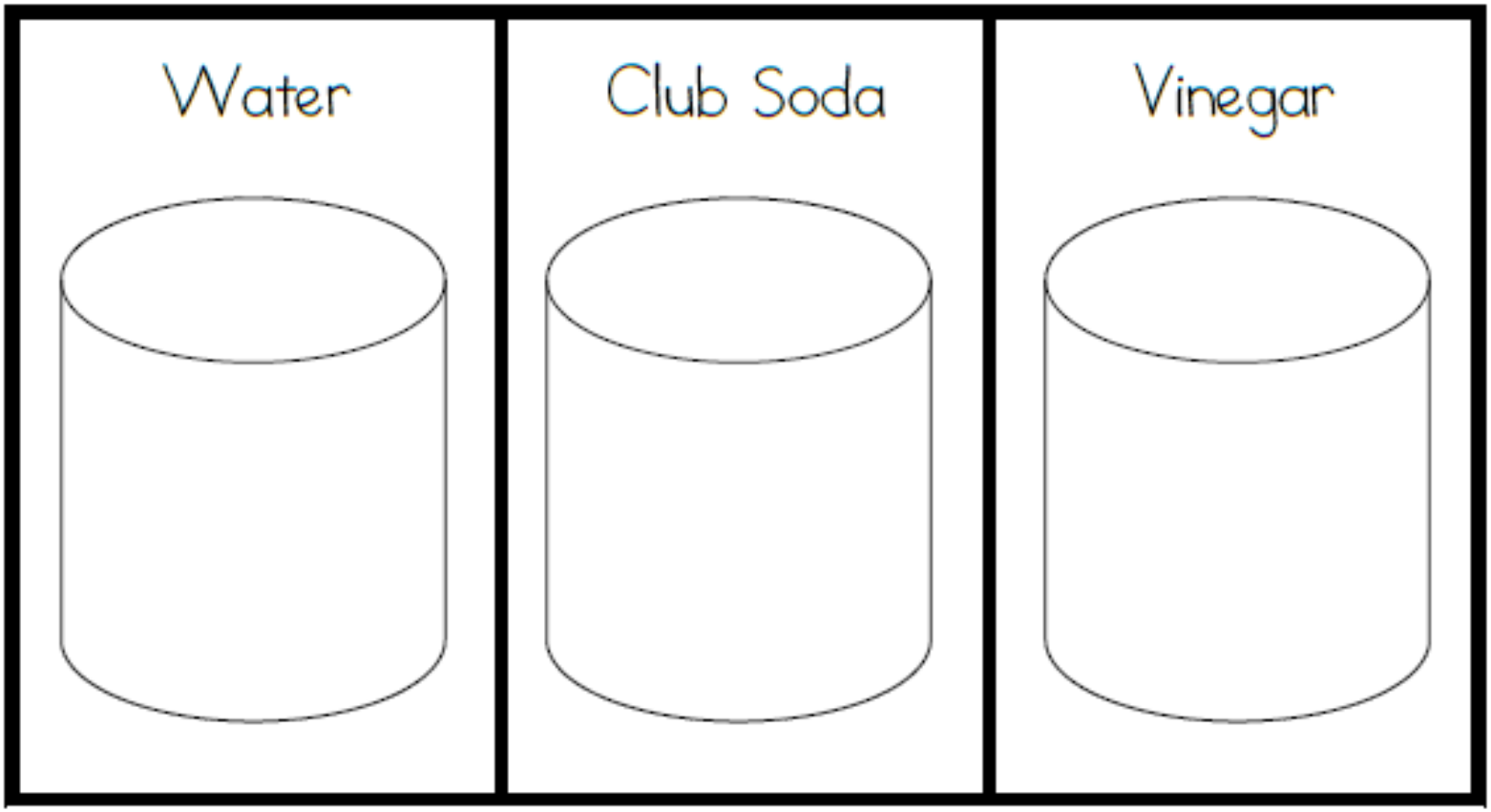


Step Two: Draw and write about what actually happened.



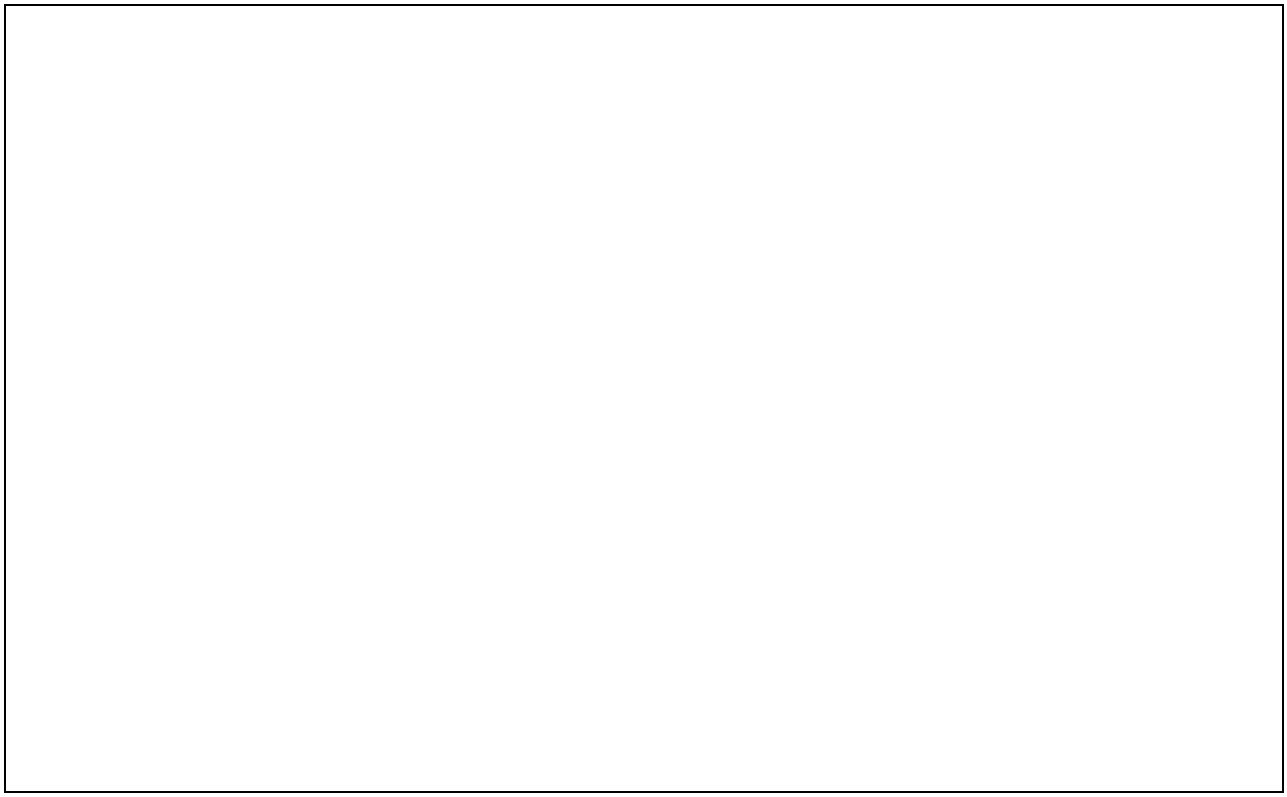
Candy Heart Experiment Continued

Step Three: Draw what happened to each heart when it was dropped into each liquid.



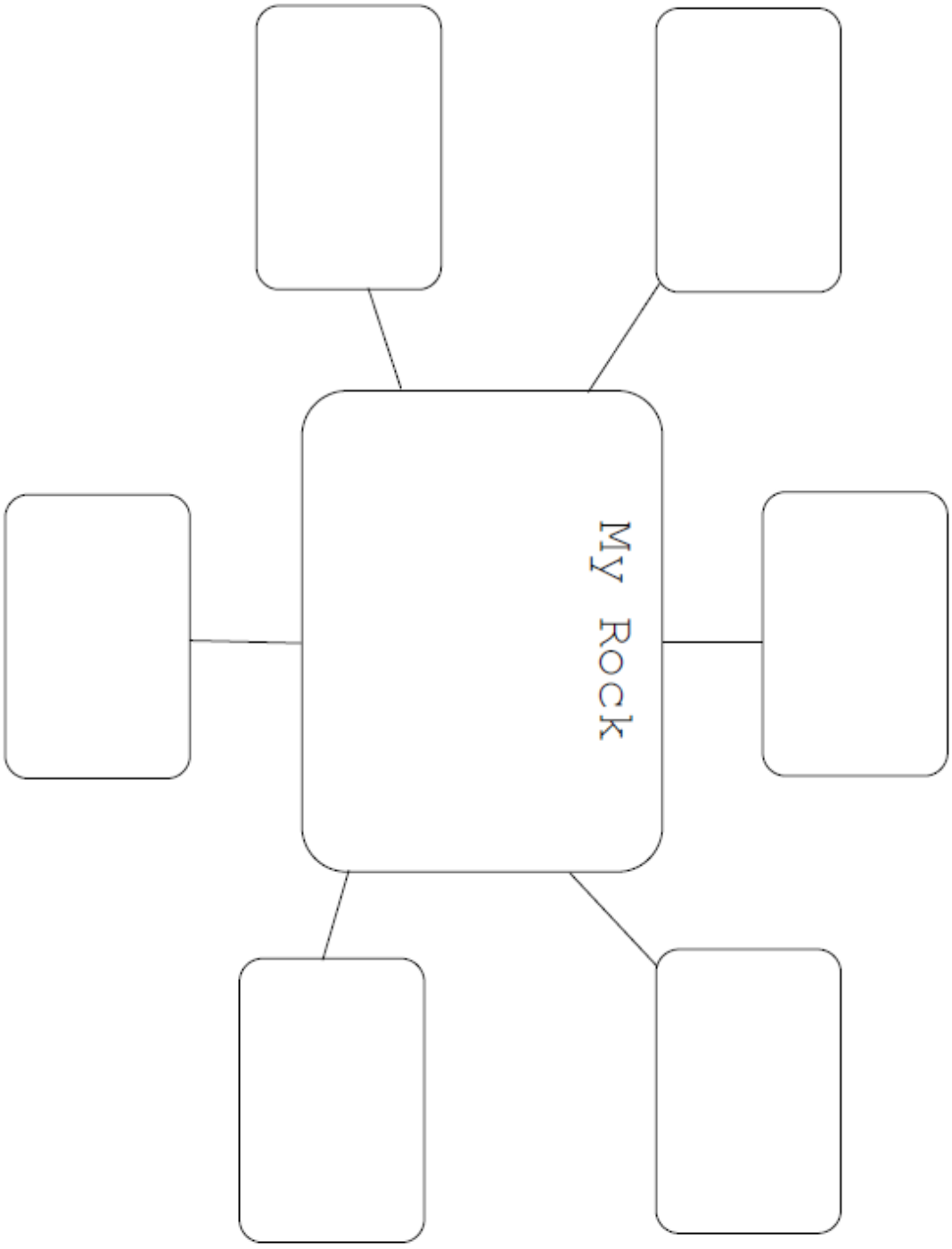
Candy Heart Experiment

Explain what happened in our experiment today. Show your thinking with pictures and words.



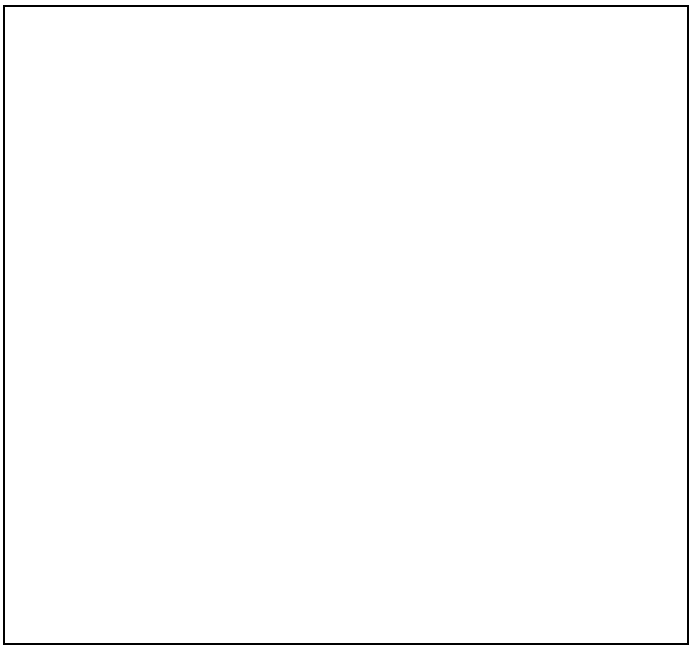
Appendix B

Lesson Idea Three Rock Observation Recording Web and Writing Page



All About My Rock

We looked at some rocks today. Here is a description of what my rock looked like:



_____

_____

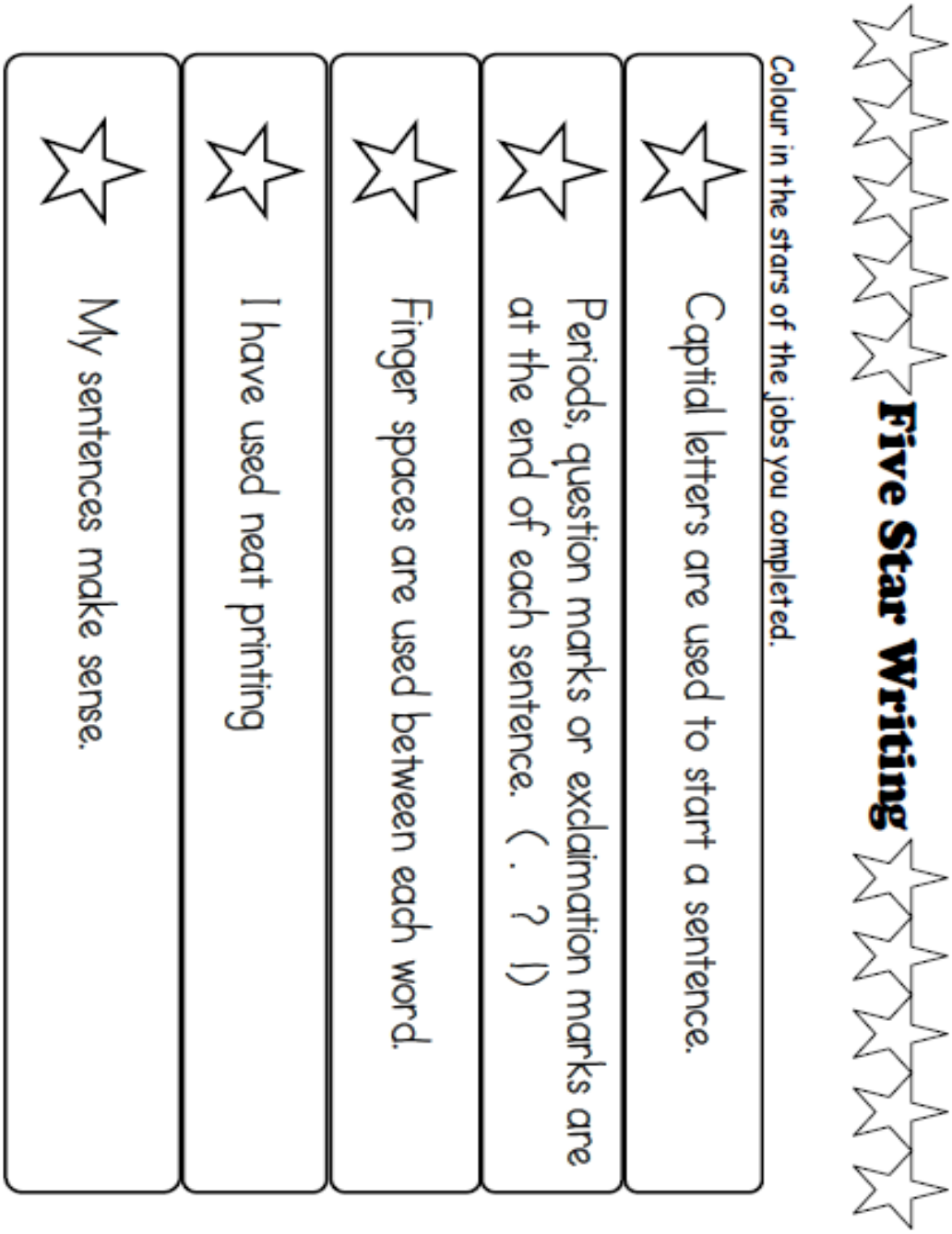
_____

_____

By:_____

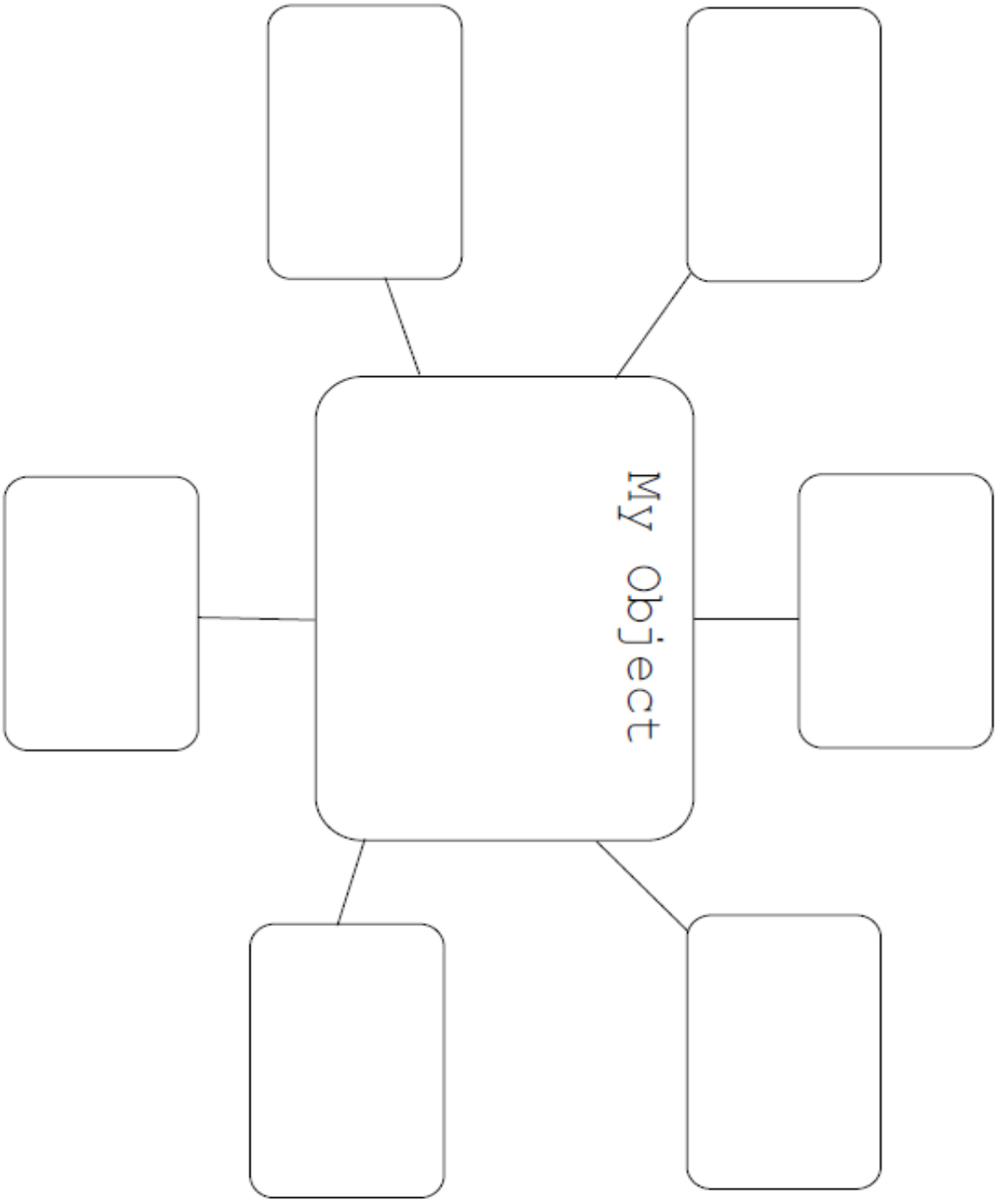
Appendix C

Five Star Writing Checklist – Adapted from Jessica Gleadall
(http://underthealphabettree.blogspot.com)



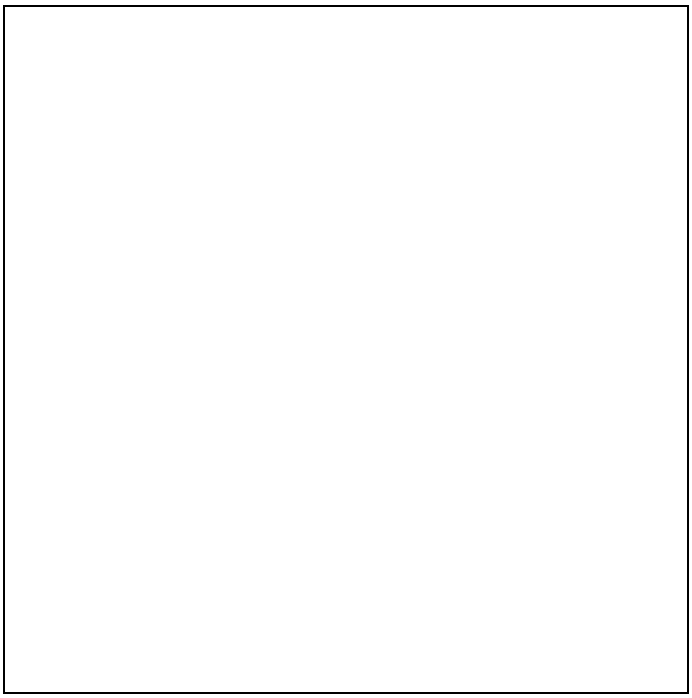
Appendix D

Object Planning Page and Writing Page



All About My Object

We went outside to find something to write about. Here is a description of what I found:



Appendix E

Mystery Clue Writing Page and Planning Page

Mystery Object

Clues:

1._____

_____

By:_____

2._____

_____

By:_____

3._____

_____

By:_____

4._____

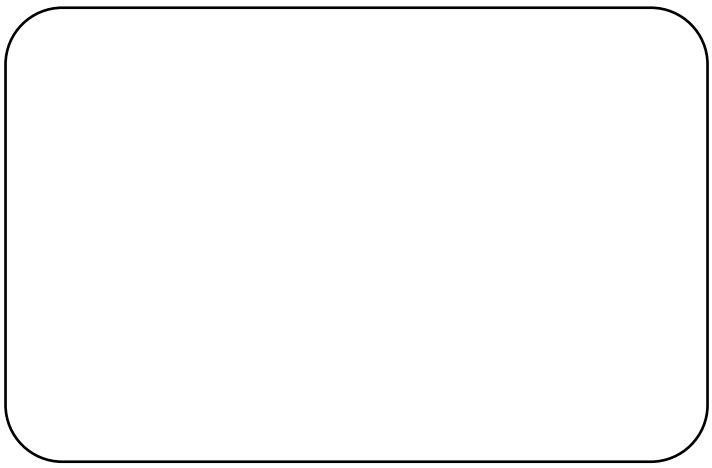
_____

By:_____

Mystery Object

Write all of the describing words you can think of about your object.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Appendix F

Descriptive and Procedural Writing Lesson Outline Two, Three and Four

Lesson Idea 2: Procedural Writing and Purposes of Writing

Materials.

- birthday card example
- letter example
- grocery list example
- recipe example
- story example
- game instructions example
- chart paper
- markers
- Cookie Monster YouTube video from:

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3w8sE72wmE
- book: *How To* by Julie Morstad

Time needed. 60 minutes

Lesson Introduction

State that writing is done for different reasons. Show some examples of writing (show a letter, a birthday card, a note for someone, a grocery list, a recipe, a story book, some instructions for a game), and see if the students can name the reason for the item (what the author was trying to do for the person/people reading it). Record the items/why they are written on a poster for future reference. Then explain to students that we are going to do some writing about "how to" do different things. They will have to pretend that they are the teacher and think of how

to explain different activities to someone who would be learning it for the first time. Read the story *How To* by Julie Morstad. This should give students a place to start thinking about their own ideas as the simple illustrations star kids, and each page shows one 'how to" statement.

Activity 1. Have students think in pairs about things they are an expert at doing. Have them report out and record their ideas on a chart for future use. If students are struggling, have them think about their interests and hobbies, or things that they do every day without thinking (like brushing their teeth or getting dressed) that they could explain to someone.

Activity 2. Show the Cookie Monster YouTube video about making an egg sandwich to illustrate the importance of giving good directions and not skipping any steps. Discuss what steps the girl missed that made the task impossible for Cookie. Record the steps they would use for making the sandwich in an Interactive Writing format on chart paper. Note that when writing instructions for doing something, you need to have a title that tells the reader what they are going to learn. You also have to use transition words or numbers for each step. All of the steps should be separate and in the correct order for completing the task. During this discussion, the students could create the criteria for what makes effective procedural writing. These criteria could be recorded on chart paper and then used to create peer, self, and teacher assessment rubrics.

Activity 3. Take the class outside to the playground. We are going to pretend that the teacher does not know how to go down a slide, and it is the job of the students to explain clearly with their words how it is done, not show with their bodies. Choose students one at a time to explain how to go down the slide. Do exactly what they say, and nothing more. The hope is that they will not describe each step, but will miss some things to illustrate how detailed and specific explaining a task really needs to be when writing. Missing some pieces of information in the description or steps means either that the task will not be done well, or could be impossible. The

teacher will keep following instructions until the students are able to describe the task successfully.

Activity 4. This could be done the following day depending on time. Do a group Interactive Writing about the steps for going down the slide on chart paper. Remind about the structure of this type of writing where necessary. Students can also illustrate the instructions and what it would look like step by step individually.

Assessment

- Assess students as they complete both Interactive Writing pieces through observations and anecdotal notes.
- Assess individual writing from the next day if you chose to have them complete that activity.

Lesson Idea 3: Procedural Writing Shared Experience – How to Blow a Bubble

Materials.

- bubble gum pieces (enough for each student)
- recording template (see Appendix G)
- criteria for quality procedural writing (from previous lesson)

Time needed. 60 minutes

Lesson Introduction

Reference the slide lesson and how we discovered how important careful and descriptive instructions are for completing tasks. Introduce the task of the day, and show the needed supplies to the students. The students will be thinking about how they would describe blowing a bubble step by step. Because gum is not allowed at most schools, being able to chew it for a class assignment will hook the students in right away.

* Options for the content of the lesson can vary. Some other procedural examples include: making lemonade, making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, or eating Oreo cookies. The idea is that the topic will be something engaging that the students can really enjoy.

Activity 1. Have students work in groups to complete the task. Remind them about using transition words like first, next, then, finally when describing the bubble blowing steps in writing.

Activity 2. Have the students write, in a group or individually, their instructions for completing the task. Not all students will have the same steps for how they go about the task.

Activity 3. Share the steps from each group or pair share if the students have written about the task individually. If sharing in pairs, they could do some peer assessment about whether or not the main ideas are included, and if they are in the correct order. Note that there may be some differences, but most likely even though the words are a bit different; they will have similar steps for blowing a bubble.

Assessment

- Individual or group writing of the task instructions
- Could use a rubric (see Appendix G for sample) to assess a peer or self-assess

Possible Extension/Home Connection

At the end of this lesson, a note explaining what we are learning about in writing could be sent home through which parents and families could be encouraged to talk with their child about the things they are good at or their hobbies. This paper could be sent back to school listing these ideas, and could even include a photo so that the students have an idea for writing in the next lesson.

Lesson Idea 4: Procedural Writing – What are you an Expert at?

Materials.

- template for individual writing (see Appendix G)
- poster of expert ideas from previous lesson
- the story *How to Clean Your Room in Ten Easy Steps* by Jennifer LaRue and Edward Koren
- rubric for assessment (see Appendix G for sample)

Time needed. 60 minutes

Lesson Introduction

Reference the previous lessons on the steps for going down a slide, and the shared experience lesson as leading into the individual writing for today. Read the book *How to Clean Your Room in Ten Easy Steps* by Jennifer LaRue and Edward Koren. Note that in this story, the girl is numbering steps and not using connecting words. Students have a choice about how they are going to set up their writing. Today, the students are going to write about something that they can teach the class or to an alien who has just landed on our planet and is trying to fit in on Earth. Show the chart from lesson four again about some of the things students are experts at. Add items if needed. If students returned the sheet from home, they can share their idea with the class to get some of their peers thinking and making connections to their own interests and abilities.

Activity 1. Students pick and share their topic of expertise with the group. Students without ideas will hopefully pick up something that they like from a peer, or a daily routine task.

Activity 2. Have students write and illustrate their expert tasks.

Activity 3 (or for another day). Have students read their instructions, and the class can "act out" what they are supposed to be doing to see how careful the instructions were for the

activity. We could also have a buddy class come in and be taught how to do some of the things that the students are experts at so the students can practice reading for an audience as well.

Assessment

- Could use the How-to Writing Rubric for peer, self and teacher assessment of the writing piece (see Appendix G)

Appendix G

Lesson Materials for Procedural Writing

On the following pages are some options for templates and a peer assessment rubric for the three lessons described in Appendix F. The variety included will enable the teacher to choose the 'best fit' template for their students, and could also provide for differentiation options. The templates are in the following order and include:

- My Expert List (Adapted from Firstgradewow.blogspot.com)
- How to blank template with four step sections – interlines no writing (Adapted from Firstgradewow.blogspot.com)
- How to template with four step sections – interlines and transition words already included. (Adapted from My First Grade Happy Place – Teacherspayteachers.com)
- How-to Writing Rubric for peer assessment. Adapted from: http://acrucialweek.blogspot.com

My Expert List

by _____

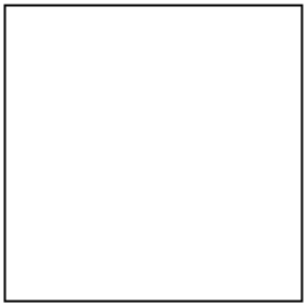
Make a list of all of the things you could explain step by step to teach another person how to do the job.

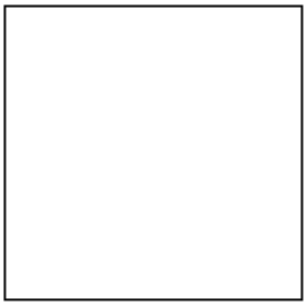
Ex) How to brush teeth

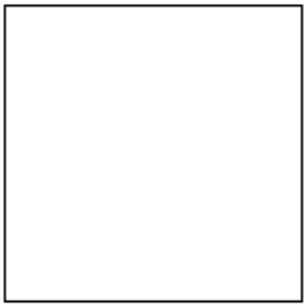
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

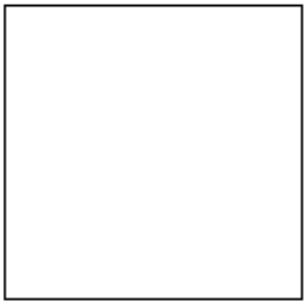
How to _____

By _____



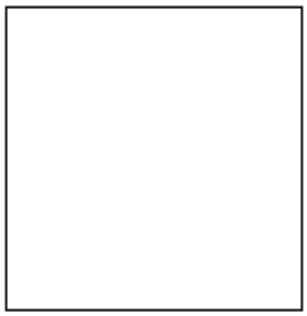




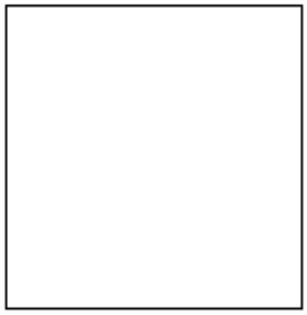


How to _____

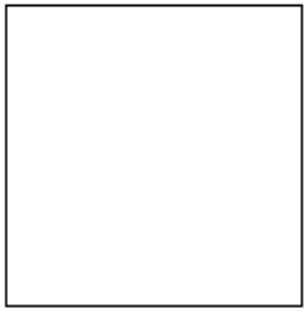
By _____



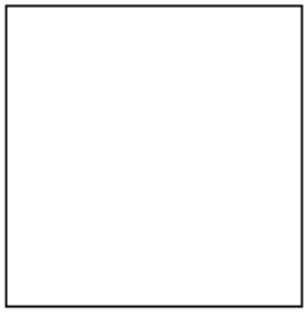
First _____



Next _____



Then _____



Finally _____

How-to Writing Rubric

Author's name: _____ My name: _____

	1	2	3	Score
Name, date and title included	One included	Two included	All three included	
Steps are numbered or start with a transition word	Few steps (1-2)	Most steps	All steps	
Steps are in the correct order	Few steps (1-2)	Most steps	All steps	
Steps are written clearly (I understand how to do the job)	I don't understand the instructions.	I understand some of the instructions.	I fully understand all of the instructions.	
Neat printing, correct capital use and spelling	4 or more errors	1-3 errors	Neat printing. Capitals used properly. Sight words are right.	

Appendix H

Pedagogical Understandings for English Language Arts: Writing and Representing (ELA I.R.P, 2006, p.143)

PEDAGOGICAL UNDERSTANDINGS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: WRITING AND REPRESENTING

Teachers model, coach, and support in learning to write in a variety of groupings (whole class, small groups, pair, individually). Using models such as the Gradual Release of Responsibility, students practise, with increasing independence, the skills and processes of writing, applying strategies during the process to increase success at writing. In the primary grades, the main emphasis is on context and meaning, rather than mechanics and conventions.

Writing in Grades 1 to 3

Prewriting

- Students prepare for writing by engaging in discussions, interacting with others, and participating in activities such as brainstorming and pair/share to gather information before writing.
- Students use various organizers to sort and manage their ideas (e.g., story frames, webs, four quadrants).
- Students consider topic, purpose, and audience in their initial plan as well as participating in developing class-generated criteria. They make decisions about how ideas will be organized.

Drafting

- Students use models, such as picture books and student writing samples to develop a draft to express ideas, feelings, emotions, and opinions.

Revising

- Students share their work, check for completeness against class-generated criteria, and revise traits to improve clarity.

Editing

- Students edit by rereading and reflecting on their own writing, and conferencing with peers and the teacher.
- Students edit for accuracy in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage, and may use a self-editing checklist.

Publishing and Presenting

- Teachers encourage students to share certain pieces of writing through displays, class books, newsletters, and electronic bulletin boards.
- Legible printing or word processing is encouraged for published written work.
- Students may present and publish their texts for real audiences (e.g., author's chair, assembly presentations).

Strategies for Writing and Representing

Students in Grade 1 use the following strategies:

- **Before** – set a purpose, identify an audience, participate in developing class-generated criteria, generate, select and organize ideas from home and/or school experiences
- **During** – look at models such as picture books and student writing samples
- **After** – share, check for completeness, and add details to improve clarity

Appendix I

Research Findings Related to Writing (ELA I.R.P, 2006, p. 145)

Pedagogical Understandings for English Language Arts: Writing and Representing, continued

Research Findings Related to Writing

"12 Writing Essentials for All Grades" from Regie Routman

Teach these essentials well in connection with any purposeful writing, and, with guidance, students will be able to use them in whatever form of writing they do:

1. **Write for a specific reader and a meaningful purpose**. Write with a particular audience in mind (this may be the author herself or himself) and define the writing task.
2. **Determine an appropriate topic**. Plan the writing, do the necessary research, narrow the focus, decide what's most important to include.
3. **Present ideas clearly, with a logical, well-organized flow**. Structure the writing in an easy-to-follow style and format using words, sentences, and paragraphs; put like information together; stay on the topic; know when and what to add or delete; incorporate transitions.
4. **Elaborate on ideas**. Include details and facts appropriate to stated main ideas; explain key concepts; support judgments; create descriptions that evoke mood, time, and place; and develop characters.
5. **Embrace language**. "Fool with words" – experiment with nouns, verbs, adjectives, literary language, sensory details, dialogue, rhythm, sentence length, paragraphs – to craft specific, lively writing for the reader.
6. **Create engaging leads**. Attract the reader's interest right from the start.
7. **Compose satisfying endings**. Develop original endings that bring a sense of closure.
8. **Craft authentic voice**. Write in a style that illuminates the writer's personality – this may include dialogue, humour, point of view, a unique form.
9. **Reread, rethink, and revise while composing**. Access, analyse, reflect, evaluate, plan, redraft, and edit as one goes – all part of the recursive, non-linear nature of writing.
10. **Apply correct conventions and form**. Produce legible letters and words; employ editing and proofreading skills; use accurate spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar; adhere to the formal rules of the genre.
11. **Read widely and deeply – and with a writer's perspective.** Read avidly; notice what authors – and illustrators, do; develop an awareness of the characteristics of various genres (fiction, poetry, persuasive pieces) and how those genres work, and apply that knowledge and craft to one's own writing.
12. **Take responsibility for producing effective writing.** Consider relevant responses and suggestions and willingly revise; sustain writing effort; monitor and evaluate one's own work and set goals; publish, when possible and appropriate, in a suitable and pleasing presentation style and format; do whatever is necessary to ensure the text is meaningful and clear to the reader as well as accurate, legible, and engaging.

These writing essentials are applicable from Kindergarten through high school and beyond.

The factors that change are:

- The amount of excellent support the student needs (demonstrations and explicit teaching).
- The complexity of texts the student composes.
- The variety of forms or genres the author attempts.
- The learner's level of independence.

Adapted from Routman, R. (2005). *Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching* (pp.13-14). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.