The Effect of Using an Authentic Writing Task on

Students' Attitudes toward Writing

by

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Field Project

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Science Degree in Education

Graduate Studies

Martin Luther College

New Ulm, MN

March 2012

Signature Page

Date: March 2012

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Abstract

Students write authentically when they write for a specific, relevant purpose and audience. Students' attitudes toward writing may improve when they see the value of their writing beyond the classroom. In this study, the students completed the Writing Attitude Survey before and after completing an authentic writing unit, writing informational books to share with kindergartners. They also answered interview questions about their feelings toward the project and writing in general. The students' attitudes did not significantly change as measured by the Writing Attitude Survey; however, their interview responses showed that they enjoyed the writing and liked sharing their writing with their audience. Many students stated that they liked writing more after this project. Teachers can use authentic writing units to encourage students in their writing.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Carla Melendy, for her time and excellent advice as I wrote this paper. She taught my favorite class in the Masters' Program. I also appreciate the work of my committee members, Dr. Gene Pfeifer and Dr. Cynthia Whaley. Professor Paul Tess was a great help with the statistics and tables. I have thoroughly enjoyed the graduate classes I've taken through Martin Luther College and am grateful for the opportunities I have had to learn and grow.

I need to thank my family as well. My husband, Brian, gave me the time to complete my work in all my classes and on this project, very often putting children to bed so I could study. He was also my technology advisor. My children, Bethany, Joel, April, and Martin, also supported me and gave me homework time. Bethany and Joel, I will read Harry Potter to you tonight!

I am so blessed by many people and a wonderful God!

AUTHENTIC WRITING AND ATTITUDE

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Chapter I: Introduction

Problem Statement

As children get older, some students' desire to write may lessen (Sanacore, 1997). Guiding students to see the value of writing beyond the classroom may help them develop a more positive attitude and a willingness to tackle the complex task of writing. As students write for a real purpose and audience, they may see the value and relevance of writing. Using authentic writing tasks is one way to help students understand the relevance of writing. How does using an authentic writing task affect students' attitudes toward writing?

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study was to see how using an authentic writing task affected students' attitudes toward writing. I also hoped to find what specifically changed students' attitudes toward writing. Teaching and learning can be more effective and enjoyable when students have a positive attitude. This research may give teachers another perspective into student attitude and a strategy to use for teaching writing.

Research Questions

How does using an authentic writing task affect students' attitudes toward writing? What specifically do students like and dislike about the authentic writing project done in the study?

Definition of Terms

Authentic writing task. Authentic writing tasks are tasks that have an authentic purpose (the reason for writing matches what the students have encountered or may encounter in real life) and an authentic audience (the students are writing for a specific

audience beyond the teacher). In other words, the students write for real reasons and for real people.

Affective domain. The affective domain is the part of learning that emphasizes the students' feelings, emotions, and attitudes toward what is being taught.

Intrinsic motivation. Sweet and Guthrie (1996) define intrinsic motivation as goals that are internal to the learner, such as involvement, curiosity, social interaction, and challenge.

Extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation includes goals that originate from a parent, teacher, or other person instead of from the learner. Compliance, recognition, and getting good grades are examples of these goals (Sweet & Guthrie, 1996).

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

Attitude can be difficult to measure. Surveys and interviews can shed some light on the students' attitudes, but they will not give the entire picture. While the Writing Attitude Survey was tested extensively and found to be reliable, it provides only one score for attitude; therefore, the survey does not provide information about the causes for poor attitudes or identify strategies to improve attitude (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000). The fourth and fifth grade class I worked with had only fifteen students (nine boys, six girls). This may not give as clear a picture as working with more students. Finally, the duration of the study was not long. The students completed one authentic writing task, with the Writing Attitude Survey given both before and after the task. Students were also interviewed after completing the task. Having a longer time of working with such tasks may give more information about student attitudes.

Overview

The review of literature shows the importance of the affective domain, motivation, and attitude on student learning. It also shows that researchers and teachers have found that writing for a real purpose and audience tends to improve student motivation and attitude. This mixed-method study used Kear's Writing Attitude Survey (2000) as a pretest and post-test to compare the students' attitudes toward writing and interviews to clarify how students felt about the authentic writing task and writing in general.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

Skilled writing is a complex problem-solving process. What keeps children involved in creating a well-written piece? Not only do students need to consider their topic but their audience and purpose as well. They need to plan, communicate clearly, solve problems, and follow writing conventions. Bruning and Horn (2000) asserted that as writers struggle through this complex process, they need to develop strong beliefs in the relevance and importance of writing. They proposed four factors that help develop the motivation to write. Teachers can nurture functional beliefs about writing, foster student engagement through authentic writing goals and contexts, provide a supportive context for writing, and create a positive emotional environment. This research focused on nurturing functional beliefs about writing and using authentic goals in writing in order to improve students' attitudes toward writing.

The Importance of the Affective Domain, Motivation, and Attitude

The affective domain is important to attitude, motivation, and achievement. Pajares and Valiante (2001) studied how students' self-perception affected their writing. They discovered that when students believed they were good writers, their writing was indeed better. They concluded that affective components do influence the writing process. Bolin, Khramstsova, and Saarnio (2005) argued the importance of maintaining a balance between the cognitive and affective domains. They found that using authentic assignments (specifically journal writing) positively motivated college students as shown by their course evaluations. Student attitude and motivation are important factors when teaching writing.

Students can be motivated by a variety of factors. Some factors are intrinsic in nature while others are extrinsic. Sweet and Guthrie (1996) defined intrinsic motivation as goals that are internal to the learner. Such goals include involvement, curiosity, social interaction, and challenge. Extrinsic motivation comes from a source other than the student, such as a teacher or parent. Students participate in the activity to receive a reward or avoid punishment. While both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation may be appropriate in the school setting, intrinsic motivation typically is longer lasting and more effective. Sanacore (1997) asserted that intrinsic motivation has a strong link to lifetime literacy. Lepper (1988) listed a number of benefits of intrinsic motivation, including longer time on task, creative problem solving, comprehension monitoring, investment of mental effort, and the use of deeper study strategies. These qualities are important in the task of writing. While not all students will be intrinsically motivated all the time, helping students become intrinsically motivated can aid in the often complex writing process and improve attitudes toward writing.

One way of looking at motivation is through achievement goals. Meece (2003) defined two different types of goals students might have. These goals affect how students choose, perform, and persist at various learning activities. Students who have a mastery or learning goal orientation have a desire to improve ability, master a skill, or understand the material. Mastery goals are similar to intrinsic motivation in that the student is interested in the task itself. Students who focus more on performance goals are concerned with demonstrating ability or avoiding negative judgments. Meece (2003) stressed that students demonstrate more positive learning behaviors when they are focused on mastery goals. "With a mastery focus, students prefer challenging activities, persist at difficult

tasks, report high levels of interest and task involvement, and use learning strategies that enhance conceptual understanding and recall of information" (Meece, 2003, p. 110). Smiley and Dweck (1994) studied how young children were affected by having a mastery-oriented pattern as opposed to a learning goal orientation. They found that performance goal children displayed more cautious behavior in setting goals. These children focused on performance and outcome, while the mastery goal children focused more on the challenge and process. The children who tended to have mastery goals had higher standards, focused on strategy, thought positively, and persisted after failure. While everyone will be motivated by each kind of goal, it certainly seems that guiding children toward having mastery goals will benefit the students' learning and writing process.

Authentic Writing Improves Student Motivation and Attitude

Teachers who see the importance of motivation and attitude on learning will want to find ways to boost students' intrinsic motivation and mastery goal orientation. Bruning and Horn (2000) proposed that nurturing functional beliefs about the nature of writing and fostering student engagement through authentic goals and contexts can help students become more intrinsically motivated. Newmann and Wehlage (1993) also valued the use of authentic instruction. They stated that conventional schooling tends to be inauthentic and that "the work has no intrinsic meaning or value to students beyond achieving success in school" (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993, p. 8). They proposed five standards of authentic instruction, including higher-order thinking, depth of knowledge, substantive conversation, social support for student learning, and connectedness to the world beyond the classroom. This research focused on connecting learning to the world beyond the

classroom. Newmann and Wehlage stated that authentic instruction is connected to the world when students address real-world issues or use personal experiences to apply knowledge. Scheurman and Newmann (1998) also listed criteria for authentic tasks. These included construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school. Tasks that have value beyond school have some useful or personal value beyond getting a grade. Showing students the relevance of their learning to their own lives should improve attitude and motivation.

Students are motivated in different ways, and teachers will want to find ways to motivate each student. McCarthy (1997) listed four types of learners based on how students perceive the world (by mainly feeling or thinking) and how they process experiences (by reflection or action). Since students have these different learning styles, teachers will want to use a variety of ways to encourage students in their learning. One way to do this is by showing students why they need to learn the information and how this information applies to their lives. McCarthy (1990) found that when teachers looked at their own learning styles they "also feel a deeper sense of responsibility for motivating students: they report a new urgency to create curiosity and interest in their students" (McCarthy, 1990, p. 34). Using authentic writing tasks can be one way of reaching students with different learning styles.

Authentic writing tasks involve writing for an authentic purpose and an authentic audience. When students write for reasons that have to do with real life, they have an authentic purpose. Oldfather (2002) conducted a case study with fifth and sixth graders who were initially not intrinsically motivated. He found that some students became motivated by choosing a positive attitude and searching for the worthwhileness of the

task. Sanacore (2008) found that reluctant learners became more intrinsically motivated

when they saw the relevance to their lives. Brophy (1999) stated that a key feature of a

motivational learning situation is having content and activities that are perceived as

relevant to the learner. Lepper (1988) contended that motivation is a problem in school

because often school learning is abstract and students don't understand the real-world

functions of the knowledge they are learning. He advocated creating educational

activities that are clearly relevant to the students' current lives. Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall,

and Tower (2006) stressed the importance of authentic literacy activities. They found that

teachers "reported that students came alive when they realized they were writing to real

people for real reasons" (Duke et al., 2006, p. 354). Research has shown that engaging

students through projects can help students go beyond the minimum effort in their work.

Students also retain learning and apply it to real-world settings (Curtis, 2002). Bergin

(1999) wrote of the importance of utility-goal relevance. When students see how learning

can achieve a goal they have, they become more interested and intrinsically motivated.

Bergin stated that goal relevance is problematic because students often don't see the

relevance of their learning to their current concerns. Students have a better chance of

being motivated when they have an authentic purpose for writing.

      Students also need to understand that their writing will have a real audience.

Writing and reading are closely connected. "Communicative partnerships and awareness

of the role of the reader enhance writing" (Cameron, Hunt, & Linton, 1996, p. 145).

Cameron et al. also stated that taking readership into account is important for even young

writers. Duke et al. (2007) stated that authentic literacy can involve writing to provide

information for someone who wants or needs it. When students write for a real purpose and audience, they will more likely have a positive attitude.

Summary

Motivation is important to learning. One way to motivate students is by helping them see the relevance of their writing and giving them a real audience for whom to write. Teachers can help students see the value of their learning beyond the classroom by giving them authentic writing tasks. By using such writing tasks students positively increase their attitudes toward writing.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

Student attitude and motivation are important components to learning. Many have wondered why one student seems so motivated while another does not. As children get older, some students' desire to write may lessen (Sanacore, 1997). Guiding students to see the value of writing beyond the classroom may help them develop a more positive attitude and a willingness to tackle the complex task of writing. As students write for a real purpose and audience, they may see the value and relevance of writing. Teachers may use authentic writing tasks as one way to reach unmotivated students and help them understand the relevance of writing.

This mixed-method study compared students' attitudes toward writing before and after completing an authentic writing task. Kear's (2000) Writing Attitude Survey was used as a pretest and post-test to compare student attitudes. The researcher also interviewed students to find more specific information about students' attitudes toward the writing project.

Research Questions

How does using an authentic writing task affect students' attitudes toward writing? What specifically do students like and dislike about the authentic writing project done in the study?

Research Design and Procedures

This was a mixed-method study. The researcher used the Writing Attitude Survey (see Appendix A) developed by Dennis J. Kear (2000) as a pretest and post-test. The

researcher also interviewed students after teaching the authentic writing unit (see Appendix B).

The researcher obtained permission from the parents of the fourth and fifth grade class through a permission slip (see Appendix C). The researcher then administered the Writing Attitude Survey (see Appendix A), using the directions included. The researcher taught an authentic writing unit in which the students wrote books for the kindergarten children on animal needs (see Appendix D). This unit took approximately three weeks to complete. After the project, the researcher administered the Writing Attitude Survey again. The researcher interviewed the students about their attitudes toward the writing project (see Appendix B). The interviews took place on school grounds in a resource room near the classroom. The researcher asked the questions and videotaped student responses.

Population and Sample

This research took place at Mount Olive Lutheran School in Las Vegas, Nevada. The students in the fourth and fifth grade classroom participated in the study. There were six fourth graders (three girls, three boys) and nine fifth graders (three girls, six boys). The students had a wide range of abilities, from students who struggled with reading and writing to academically gifted students. There were several different ethnicities (Asian, Hawaiian, Hispanic), but the majority (70%) were Caucasian students. Student ages ranged from nine to eleven.

Instrumentation

The researcher used the Writing Attitude Survey (see appendix A) developed by Dennis J. Kear (2000). The survey includes twenty-eight items dealing with how the

students feel about different aspects of writing. The students rated each question using a four-point Likert scale pictured by the Garfield character. The survey has a high degree of reliability and validity after being tested by a national sample (Kear et al., 2000). Kear provided a reproducible copy of the survey along with the scoring sheet for use among educators and researchers. The researcher also interviewed the students after teaching the authentic writing unit. The open-ended questions were written by the researcher (see appendix B), and their purpose was to see what specifically the students liked about the unit and what might motivate the students in the future. The researcher interviewed students in the resource room near the students' classroom. The interviews were video-recorded.

Data Analysis Procedures

The Writing Attitude Survey was scored by assigning point values to each Garfield figure (very happy Garfield is 4, somewhat happy Garfield is 3, indifferent Garfield is 2, upset Garfield is 1). The researcher added up the raw score for each student and figured his/her percentile ranks by comparing each score to the midyear percentile ranks by grade and scale table (Kear et al., 2000, p. 12-13, see Appendix E). After the unit was taught, the students took the Writing Attitude Survey again. The researcher scored the survey in the same way, comparing student scores to the pretest by using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The researcher interviewed each student about the writing activity (see Appendix B).

Limitations

Attitude can be difficult to measure. Surveys and interviews can shed some light on the students' attitude, but they do not give the entire picture. While the Writing

Attitude Survey was tested extensively and found to be reliable, it provided only one score for attitude; therefore, the survey did not provide information about the causes for poor attitudes or identify strategies to improve attitude (Kear et al., 2000). The fourth and fifth grade class had only 15 students (nine boys, six girls). This may not have given as clear a picture as working with more students. Finally, the duration of the study was not long. The students completed an authentic writing task, with surveys given both before and after the task and interviews after the task. Having a longer time of working with such tasks may have given more information about student motivation.

Summary

How does using an authentic writing task affect students' attitudes toward writing? This study attempted to answer that question by using Kear's (2000) Writing Attitude Survey before and after students completed an authentic writing task and comparing those scores. The researcher also interviewed students to gain a richer knowledge of students' feelings and attitudes toward authentic writing.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to see how using an authentic writing unit affected students' attitudes toward writing. The students completed the Writing Attitude Survey developed by Dennis J. Kear (2000) both before and after finishing the authentic writing unit, writing informational books about animals for kindergartners. The students also answered seven interview questions about the project and writing in general.

Data Analysis

The students completed the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear, 2000) as a pretest before beginning the authentic writing unit, writing informational books for kindergartners. After the students wrote and illustrated their books and shared them with the kindergartners, the students again filled out the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear, 2000). The researcher ran a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test to see if there were differences in student attitude as measured by the Writing Attitude Survey after completing the authentic writing unit. For fourth and fifth grade students, pretest and post-test Writing Attitude Survey percentile ranks were not significantly different as a result of participation in an authentic writing program, $T = 45.5$, $z = -.440$, $p = .660$.

As shown in Table 1, some students' percentile ranks increased following the authentic writing unit. The first six students were fourth graders. Five of the six fourth graders' percentile ranks rose or stayed the same. Students seven through fifteen were fifth graders. A number of their percentile rankings decreased after the writing unit. Raw scores are reported in Appendix F.

Table 1

Writing Attitude Survey, Percentile Rank_____

Student	Pretest	Post-test
1	38	56
2	35	4
3	56	59
4	44	78
5	92	96
6	99	99
7	69	75
8	87	72
9	94	96
10	41	27
11	41	19
12	3	1
13	63	60
14	48	21
15	77	79

There was a wide range in percentile rankings, as shown by Figure 1 and Table 1. Some students reported high motivation throughout, while some reported low motivation. The median pretest percentile rank was 56, while the median post-test percentile rank was 60.

Figure 1

Pre and Post-Test Dispersion, Percentile Rank
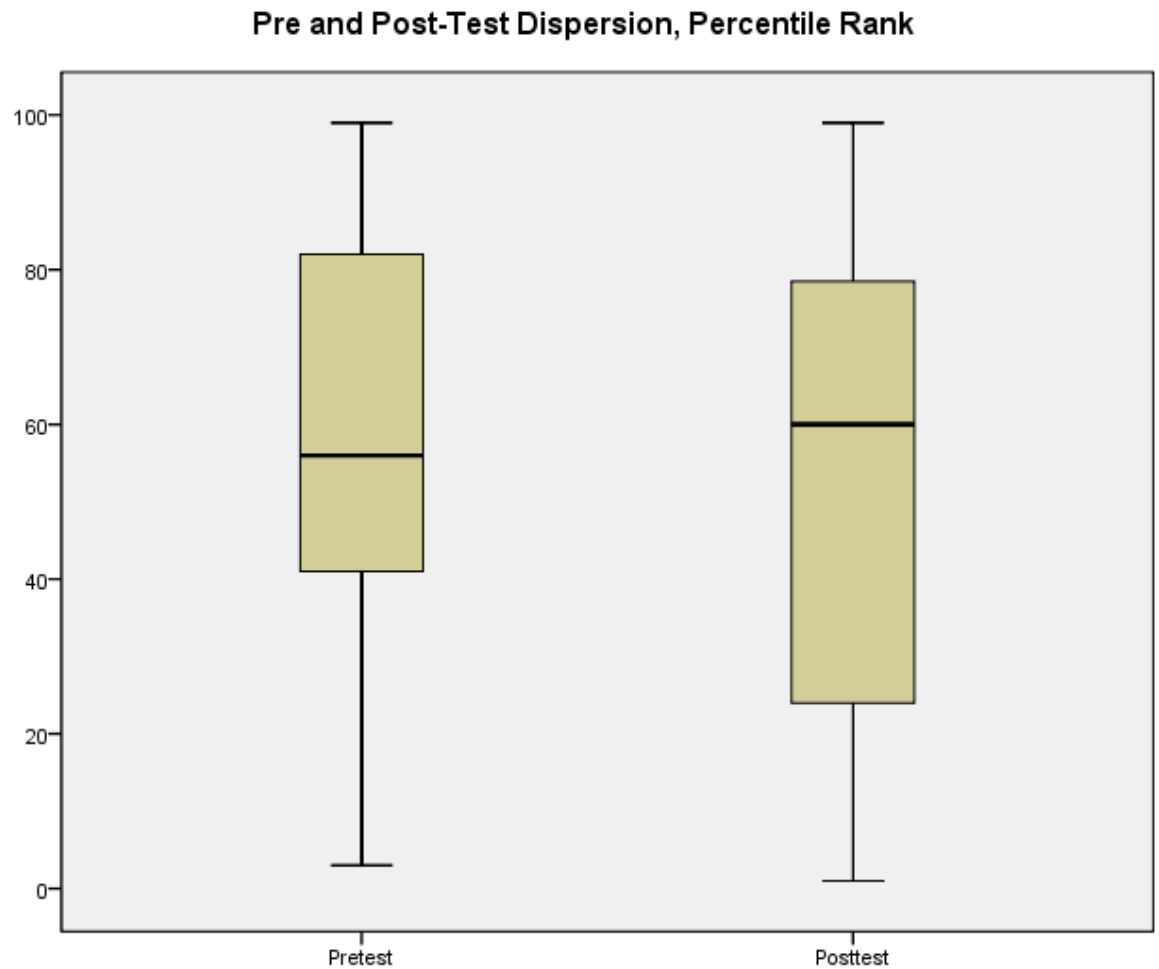
Note. Output of box plot from SPSS (v. 16).

The students also answered interview questions about the writing unit and writing in general. The first question was "What did you like about writing the book for the kindergartners? As Figure 2 shows, most students enjoyed making illustrations, actually writing the book, and teaching the kindergartners. Other students mentioned that they liked reading to the kindergartners and learning about the topic. Several students listed more than one thing they liked; therefore there were more than fifteen responses.

Figure 2: Percentages of students' favorite parts of the writing unit.

What did you like about writing the book for kindergartners?

- Learning about the topic 9%
- Reading to the kindergartners 14%
- Drawing the pictures 29%
- Writing the book 24%
- Teaching the kindergartners 24%
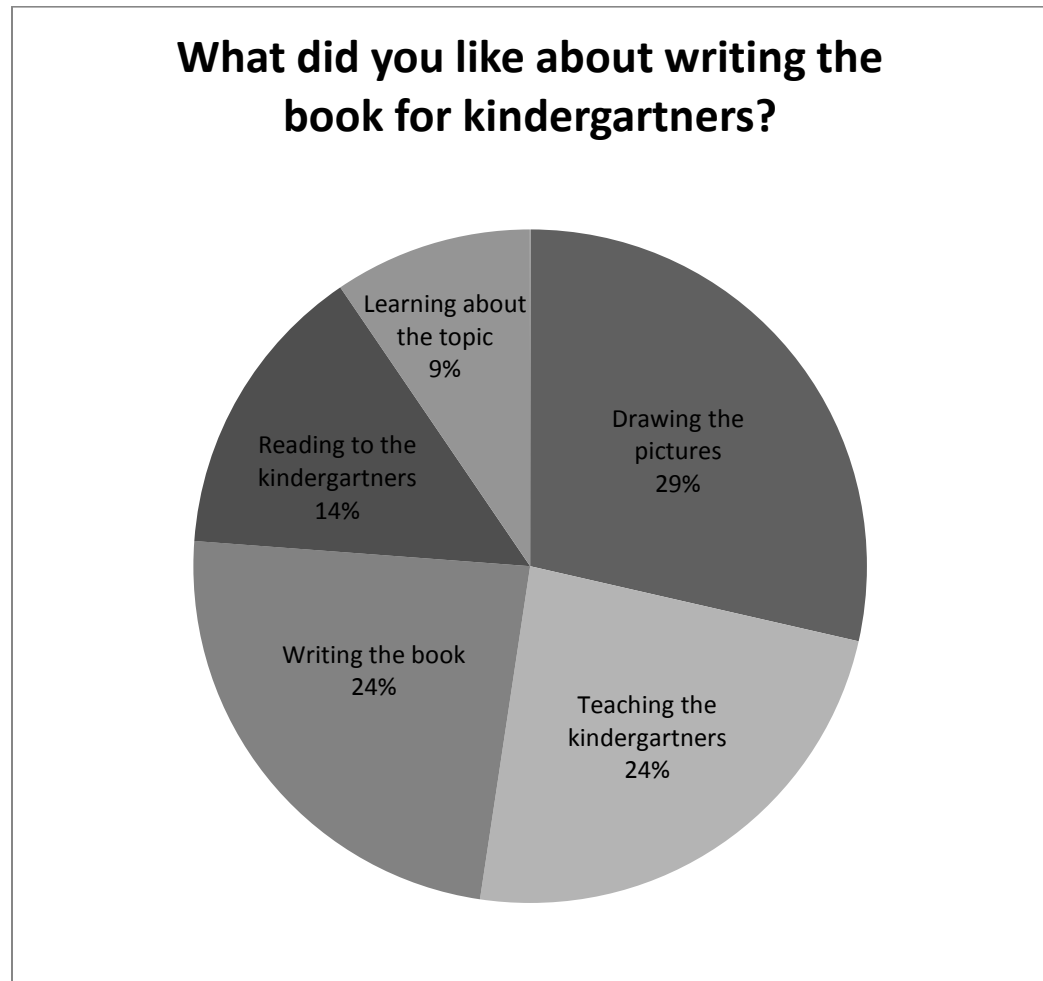
       The second question was "What didn't you like about writing the book for the kindergartners?" Seven students answered that there was nothing that they did not like about the unit. Four of the students did not like that the kindergartners lost some focus during the reading time. Other responses included that the writing took a lot of time, it was hard to decide what to write and draw, the research was not fun, and that a student messed up his title page.

       The third question was "What did you learn about writing through making the book for the kindergartners?" When teaching the unit, the researcher spent quite a bit of time focusing on the purpose and audience for writing (keeping the writing authentic). As

Figure 3 shows, more than half of the students referred to audience when answering this

question. Three students mentioned that they learned that writing is fun.

Figure 3: Percentages of what students learned through the writing unit

What did you learn about writing through making the book for the kindergartners?

- Purpose: I wrote to teach kindergartners 7%
- Writing takes effort 7%
- Audience: my topic appeals to kindergartners 13%
- Audience: how to write for kindergartners 53%
- Writing is fun 20%
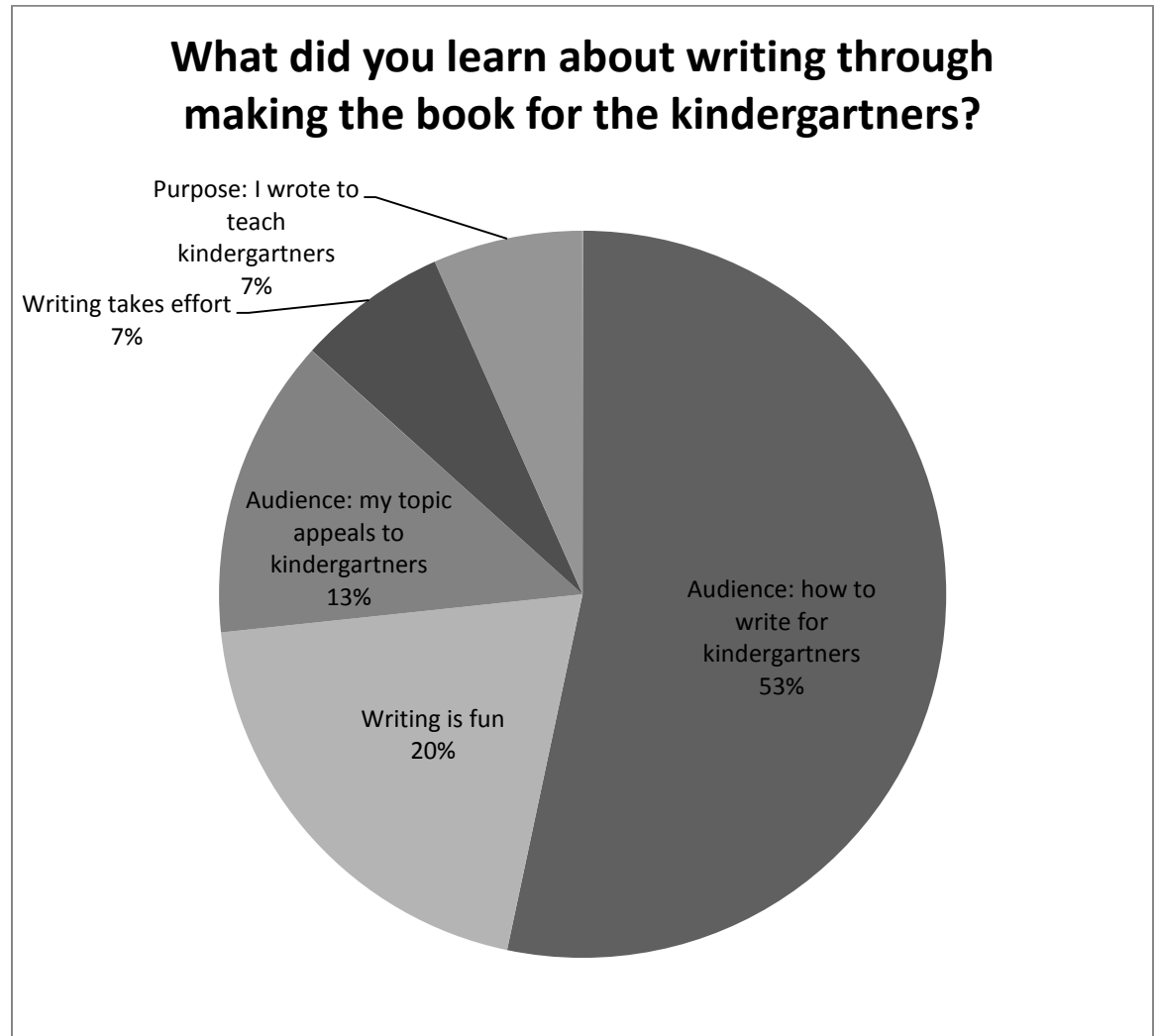
The students struggled a bit with the fourth question, "How did this project

change the way you think about writing?" Forty percent of the students stated that they

liked writing more after the authentic writing unit. Two students mentioned that they felt

better about their writing. Another two students enjoyed having the opportunity to write.

Other responses included learning that students can write to give information and can

write books for young children. One student wanted to write more books, and another felt

happy about writing. One student did say that she felt there was no change in her thinking.

The fifth question was "What gets you excited about writing?" There was great variety in the answers, just as there was great variety in the students. Four students enjoyed illustrating their text. Three students liked the sense of accomplishment they got from writing. Another three students liked sharing their writing with others. Other responses included learning interesting facts, writing about what he/she likes, and using imagination. One student expounded on the fact that there are no limits to what you can do with writing.

The students also shared what they would like to write next. Responses included writing about another animal, writing an action/adventure story, writing about a video game, writing a mystery, writing and illustrating a comic book, writing a fantasy story, and writing about Jesus. Several students were not sure what they would write next.

The final question asked the students to give advice to a writing teacher. Again, the responses were quite varied. Four students emphasized the need for the teacher to be simple and clear in his/her teaching. Three students wanted the teacher to keep writing fun. Several students mentioned helping the students learn about audience, teaching revising and editing, and giving the students choice in what they write. The students also wanted teachers to make sure everyone pays attention, help students find information, give students time to write, and use demonstrations. Some students gave more than one response to this question.

Summary

The Writing Attitude Survey did not show a significant change in students' attitudes toward writing after the authentic writing unit. A number of the students' percentile ranks did increase after the unit, even though they were not significantly higher. The interviews gave more information about what the students felt about writing. The students did enjoy the authentic writing experience. They liked writing for and sharing their work with the kindergartners. They learned that writing with a purpose and audience in mind is important. Many of the students stated that they liked writing more, felt better about their writing, and were happy to share their writing. Overall, the students were positive during the writing and sharing of their books. This positive attitude was evident in the interview responses.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Students in a fourth and fifth grade classroom were given Dennis Kear's (2000) Writing Attitude Survey before and after completing an authentic writing unit, writing an informational book for kindergartners. The students also answered interview questions about how they felt about the authentic writing unit and writing in general. How did using an authentic writing task affect students' attitudes toward writing? What specifically did students like and dislike about the authentic writing project done in the study?

Summary of the Results

The students did not show a significant change in attitude, as measured by the Writing Attitude Survey pretest and post-test results; however, some students expressed a change in attitude in their interview responses, and some percentile ranks did increase. The students enjoyed writing and drawing their books. They mentioned their pleasure in sharing their books with their audience, the kindergartners. Many of the students could not state a part of the project they did not like. The biggest frustration was in the actual sharing of their books (keeping the young children's attention), instead of in the writing process. The students were able to express what they learned about purpose and audience. More than half of them stated that they liked writing more, were happier with their writing, and wanted to write more books after completing the authentic writing unit.

Conclusions

Skilled writing is a complex problem-solving process. How can students keep motivated to engage in this difficult work? Bruning and Horn (2000) asserted that as writers struggle through this complex process, they need to develop strong beliefs in the

relevance and importance of writing. Using authentic writing units may help students understand the relevance and importance of writing. Teachers can create writing units that have a clear, relevant purpose and a specific audience. In this study, the researcher taught an authentic writing unit and then surveyed and interviewed the students to see how an authentic writing task would affect students' attitudes toward writing and what the students liked or did not like about the authentic writing unit.

Researchers have found that helping students see the relevance and worthwhileness of their writing can improve motivation. Oldfather (2002) found this to be true when he conducted a case study with fifth and sixth graders who were initially not intrinsically motivated. He found that some students became motivated by choosing a positive attitude and searching for the worthwhileness of the task. Sanacore (2008) worked with reluctant learners and found they became more intrinsically motivated when they saw the relevance to their lives. Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, and Tower (2006) stressed the importance of authentic literacy activities. They found that teachers "reported that students came alive when they realized they were writing to real people for real reasons" (Duke et al., 2006, p. 354).

The results from the Writing Attitude Survey did not replicate these researchers' results. There was no significant change in the students' attitudes as measured by the survey. There may have been several reasons for this. The students were engaged in only one short three-week authentic writing unit. Perhaps with more time and exposure to authentic writing units, the students may have had a more measureable change. Also, while the students enjoyed filling out the survey the first time, they were not as enthusiastic when filling out the survey after the writing unit. Several students had silly

behavior while filling out the survey, even as they were encouraged to be honest in their responses. This may have affected the survey results. Several students whose percentile ranks decreased talked about how they liked writing more after the authentic writing unit in their interviews.

While the Writing Attitude Surveys did not show a significant change in attitude, the students did express in their interviews that they were excited by the authentic writing unit, learned from it, and would like to continue to do more authentic writing. One student who struggles with writing stated, "It made me feel better about my writing because I felt like they [the kindergartners] liked it." He went on to say, "I just like that you can do anything with writing. There are no limits." Having a specific purpose (teaching the kindergartners about animals) and audience helped this student realize his potential as a writer. Another student said that "it [writing] really pays off in the end." Both students had positive attitudes about themselves as writers and wrote informative, entertaining books for kindergartners. Just as Pajares and Valiante (2001) found, these students' self-perception positively affected their writing.

One aspect of this project that the students enjoyed and learned from was writing for a specific audience. More than half of the students mentioned that their favorite part of the project was teaching and reading to the kindergartners. They felt a connection and an important purpose in what they were doing. Cameron et al. (1996) stressed the importance of audience for all writers, and this was shown in the responses the students gave in their interviews. Having students from different classrooms work together can be a motivating experience.

Scheurman and Newmann (1998) listed value beyond school as one criterion for authentic tasks. Tasks that have value beyond school have some useful or personal value beyond getting a grade. The fourth and fifth grade students displayed through their hard work that writing for an authentic reason had value for them. The students did not receive a grade for their writing; instead, they used their writing to teach others. One student stated, "It [the writing project] makes me feel like I want to write books for people more." This student, along with many of the others, saw the value of writing, perhaps feeling that intrinsic motivation which is so valuable to learning.

Recommendations

While the Writing Attitude Survey did not show a significant change in student motivation for writing, the students' responses to the interviews did show that the students enjoyed and learned from the authentic writing experience. Authentic writing activities can be motivational and wonderful learning opportunities. Teachers can help the students see the purpose and audience for their writing and give students opportunities to write for relevant reasons. The students seemed particularly motivated by sharing their work with children from a different classroom. Teachers can find ways for students to share their work with people, whether it is students from a different classroom or another audience within or beyond the school setting.

This research was of fairly short duration and contained only one authentic writing unit. Future research could include having the students complete writing attitude surveys after participating in more authentic writing units over a longer period of time. Working with older students, who often are unmotivated toward writing, could also yield interesting results.

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Appendix A: Writing Attitude Survey

5. How would you feel writing to someone to change their opinion?

6. How would you feel keeping a diary?

7. How would you feel writing poetry for fun?

8. How would you feel writing a letter stating your opinion about a topic?

9. How would you feel if you were an author who writes books?

10. How would you feel if you had a job as a writer for a newspaper or magazine?

11. How would you feel about becoming an even better writer than you already are?

12. How would you feel about writing a story instead of doing homework?

13. How would you feel about writing a story instead of watching TV?

14. How would you feel writing about something you did in science?

15. How would you feel writing about something you did in social studies?

16. How would you feel if you could write more in school?

17. How would you feel about writing down the important things your teacher says about a new topic?

18. How would you feel writing a long story or report at school?

19. How would you feel writing answers to questions in science or social studies?

20. How would you feel if your teacher asked you to go back and change some of your writing?

21. How would you feel if your classmates talked to you about making your writing better ?

22. How would you feel writing an advertisment for something people can buy?

23. How would you feel keeping a journal for class?

24. How would you feel writing about things that have happened in your life?

25. How would you feel writing about something from another person's point of view?

26. How would you feel about checking your writing to make sure the words you have written are spelled correctly?

27. How would you feel if your classmates read something you wrote?

28. How would you feel if you didn't write as much in school?

Writing Attitude Survey
Scoring sheet

Student's name _____

Teacher _____

Grade _____

Administration date _____

Scoring guide

4 points Very happy Garfield

3 points Somewhat happy Garfield

2 points Somewhat upset Garfield

1 point   Very upset Garfield

Item scores:

1._____   15._____

2._____   16._____

3._____   17._____

4._____   18._____

5._____   19._____

6._____   20._____

7._____   21._____

8._____   22._____

9._____   23._____

10._____   24._____

11._____   25._____

12._____   26._____

13._____   27._____

14._____   28._____

Full scale raw score: _____

Percentile rank: _____

Writing Attitude Survey
Directions for use

The Writing Attitude Survey provides a quick indication of student attitudes toward writing. It consists of 28 items and can be administered to an entire classroom in about 20 minutes. Each item presents a brief, simply worded statement about writing, followed by four pictures of Garfield. Each pose is designed to depict a different emotional state, ranging from very positive to very negative.

Administration
Begin by telling students that you wish to find out how they feel about writing. Emphasize that this is not a test and that there are no right answers. Encourage sincerity.

Distribute the survey forms and, if you wish to monitor the attitudes of specific students, ask them to write their names in the space at the top. Hold up a copy of the survey so that the students can see the first page. Point to the picture of Garfield at the far left of the first item. Ask the students to look at this same picture on their own survey form. Discuss with them the mood Garfield seems to be in (very happy). Then move to the next picture and again discuss Garfield's mood (this time, somewhat happy). In the same way, move to the third and fourth pictures and talk about Garfield's moods—somewhat upset and very upset.

Explain that the survey contains some statements about writing and that the students should think about how they feel about each statement. They should then circle the picture of Garfield that is closest to their own feelings. (Emphasize that the students should respond according to their own feelings, not as Garfield might respond!) In the first and second grades read each item aloud slowly and distinctly, then read it a second time while students are thinking. Be sure to read the item number and to remind students of page numbers when new pages are reached.

In Grades 3 and above, monitor students while they are completing this survey. It is not necessary for the teacher to read the items aloud to students, unless the teacher feels it is necessary for newer or struggling readers.

Teachers should review the items prior to the administration of the survey to identify any words students may need defined to eliminate misunderstanding during completion of the instrument.

Scoring
To score the survey, count four points for each leftmost (very happy) Garfield circled, three points for the next Garfield to the right (somewhat happy), two points for the next Garfield to the right (somewhat upset), and one point for the rightmost Garfield (very upset). The individual scores for each question should be totaled to reach a raw score.

Interpretation
The scores should first be recorded on the scoring sheet. The scores can be interpreted in two ways. An informal approach would be to look at where the raw score falls related to the total possible points of 112. If the raw score is approximately 70, the score would fall midway between the somewhat happy and somewhat upset Garfields, indicating the student has an indifferent attitude toward writing. The formal approach involves converting the raw score to a percentile rank by using Table 1. The raw score should be found on the left-hand side of the table and matched to the percentile rank in the appropriate grade-level column.

Note. From "Measuring attitude toward writing: A new tool for teachers." by D.J. Kear,

G.A. Coffman, M.C. McKenna, & A. L. Ambrosio, 2000, p. 17-24 by D.J. Kear.

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Appendix B: Interview Questions

Name:

1. What did you like about writing the book for the kindergartners?

2. What didn't you like about writing the book for the kindergartners?

3. What did you learn about writing through making the book for the kindergartners?

4. How did this project change the way you think about writing?

5. What gets you excited about writing?

6. What would you like to write next?

7. What advice would you give to someone teaching writing?

Appendix C: Permission Letter

January 30, 2012
Dear Parents and Guardians,

My name is Sue Heinitz. My daughter, Bethany, is in fourth grade at Mount Olive. I have nine years experience teaching fourth and fifth grades and enjoy working with students. I am currently working toward my Master's degree in education and have been planning to research students' attitudes toward writing for my master's thesis.

I have received permission from Mr. Krieger and the school board to include the students in Miss Warner's classroom in my research study. My research involves a short survey for the students to complete about their attitudes toward writing. I will then teach a writing unit to the class. I'll work with the students to write and illustrate a book about animals and their needs to share with the kindergarteners. I will spend three weeks this winter working with the students on this writing unit. After the students complete the writing project, I will interview the students to see what they liked or disliked about it. The individual interviews will be recorded. I will work with Miss Warner to ensure the students miss very little class time during the interviews.

I now ask for your permission to include your child in my research study. Any information I gather will be kept completely confidential, and I will not use your child's name in the research paper. If you wish to withdraw your student from the research study at any time, please let me or Miss Warner know. If you choose to withdraw your child from the study, I will destroy any information gathered about him/her.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact me at

489-3471 (home) or 416-6075 (cell) or contact Miss Warner.

Thank you,

Mrs. Susan Heinitz

Please fill out the form below and return it to Miss Warner by Friday, February 3.

Yes, _____ has permission to participate
                  (Write your child's name here.)
in the writing research study this winter (2012).

No, _____ does not have permission to
                  (Write your child's name here.)
participate in the writing research study this winter (2012).

Parent or Guardian signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Authentic Writing Unit Procedures

Kindergarten Informational Book

Scenario:
The kindergartners are studying animals and their needs in science. Mrs. Panning would like books written especially for kindergartners about different animals and their needs. We get to help by creating books for the kindergartners.

Task:
Write a picture book about an animal and its needs for the kindergarten class.

Procedures:
1. In class, we will look at different informational picture books and make a list of what makes a good informational book for a kindergartner.
2. Choose an animal for your book and tell Mrs. Heinitz your choice.
3. Research your animal. Make a web showing the needs of the animal. Think about basic needs such as food, habitat, protection, communication, and anything else your animal might need.
4. Write a simple text describing the needs of your animal. Keep in mind the list about what makes a good informational book for a kindergartner.
5. With a partner, revise your writing. Make sure your writing makes sense, is interesting for a kindergartner, and is easy to understand. Check your spelling and grammar also. Use the revising and editing checklist.
6. Plan what will be on each page of your book. Most likely, you will only put one or two sentences on each page of your book.
7. Carefully write (or use a computer) the text on each page. Add an illustration to each page.
8. Decide on a title and make a cover for your book. Make sure to include the title and author.
9. Hand in your finished book. You will have an opportunity to read your book with the kindergartners.

Expectations:
1. Participate in group discussions.
2. Research your animal carefully and complete the information web.
3. Include correct information telling about your animal's needs in your book.
4. Consider what a kindergartner would like to know and can understand as you write your book.
5. Include pictures and simple text in your book describing the needs of your animal. Be sure to include what food, environment, shelter, and protection it needs.
6. Your book will have a cover, including the title and authors.
7. Your book should be neat, with correct grammar and spelling.

AUTHENTIC WRITING AND ATTITUDE

Appendix E: Midyear Percentile Ranks by Grade and Scale Table

Table 1
Midyear percentile ranks by grade and scale

Raw score	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
112	98	98	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
111	98	98	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
110	98	98	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
109	98	97	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
108	97	97	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
107	97	96	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
106	96	96	99	98	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
105	95	95	99	98	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
104	95	94	99	98	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	98
103	94	93	99	97	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	98
102	93	93	98	97	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	98
101	92	91	98	96	98	99	99	99	98	99	99	97
100	91	90	97	95	98	99	99	99	98	99	99	97
99	90	89	97	95	97	99	98	99	98	99	99	97
98	89	88	96	94	97	99	98	99	97	99	99	96
97	87	87	96	93	96	99	97	99	97	99	98	96
96	86	85	95	92	96	99	97	99	96	99	98	94
95	84	83	94	90	95	99	96	99	96	98	98	93
94	83	82	93	89	94	98	96	98	95	98	97	92
93	81	80	93	87	93	98	95	98	94	97	97	91
92	79	78	91	86	92	97	94	98	94	97	96	89
91	77	76	90	84	90	97	93	97	93	96	95	88
90	75	74	89	82	89	96	92	97	92	95	95	86
89	73	72	87	80	87	95	90	96	90	94	94	85
88	70	70	86	78	86	95	89	95	89	93	93	83
87	68	67	84	75	84	94	87	95	88	92	91	81
86	65	64	82	73	82	93	86	94	87	90	90	79
85	63	62	80	71	79	91	84	93	85	90	88	76
84	60	59	78	68	77	90	82	91	83	88	87	74
83	58	57	76	65	75	89	79	90	82	86	85	72
82	55	54	74	62	72	87	77	88	80	84	83	69
81	52	52	71	59	69	85	75	87	78	82	81	66
80	49	49	69	56	66	83	72	85	75	80	79	63
79	46	46	66	53	63	81	69	83	73	78	76	61
78	44	44	63	50	60	79	66	81	71	75	74	58
77	41	41	61	47	57	77	63	79	68	73	71	55
76	39	38	58	44	54	74	60	76	66	70	68	52
75	36	36	55	41	51	72	57	74	63	67	66	49
74	33	33	52	38	48	69	54	71	61	64	63	46
73	31	31	49	35	44	66	51	68	58	61	59	43
72	29	28	46	32	41	63	48	66	55	57	56	40
71	26	26	43	30	38	60	44	63	52	54	53	37
70	24	24	41	27	35	57	41	60	50	51	50	34
69	22	22	38	25	32	54	38	57	46	47	46	31
68	20	20	35	22	29	51	35	54	44	44	43	29
67	18	18	32	20	27	48	32	50	41	41	40	26
66	17	17	30	18	24	44	29	47	39	37	37	24
65	15	15	27	16	21	41	27	44	36	34	34	21
64	13	14	24	14	19	38	24	41	33	32	31	19
63	12	12	23	13	17	35	22	38	31	29	28	17
62	11	11	20	11	15	32	19	35	28	26	26	16
61	10	10	10	10	13	29	17	32	26	23	23	14
60	08	08	17	08	12	27	15	29	24	21	21	12
59	07	08	15	07	10	24	14	26	22	18	19	11

(continued)

Table 1
Midyear percentile ranks by grade and scale (continued)

Raw score	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
58	07	07	13	06	09	22	12	24	20	16	17	09
57	06	06	12	05	08	19	10	21	18	14	15	08
56	05	05	10	05	07	17	09	19	16	13	13	07
55	04	04	09	04	06	15	08	17	14	11	11	06
54	04	04	08	03	05	14	07	15	13	10	10	05
53	03	03	07	03	04	12	06	13	12	08	09	05
52	03	03	06	02	03	10	05	12	10	07	07	04
51	02	02	05	02	03	09	04	10	09	06	06	03
50	02	02	04	02	02	08	03	09	08	05	05	03
49	02	02	04	01	02	07	03	08	07	04	05	02
48	01	02	03	01	02	06	02	07	06	04	04	02
47	01	01	03	01	01	05	02	06	05	03	03	02
46	01	01	02	01	01	04	02	05	05	02	03	01
45	01	01	02	01	01	03	01	04	04	02	02	01
44	01	01	02	0	01	03	01	03	03	02	02	01
43	01	01	01	0	01	02	01	03	03	01	02	01
42	0	01	01	0	0	02	01	02	03	01	01	01
41	0	0	01	0	0	02	01	02	02	01	01	0
40	0	0	01	0	0	01	0	02	02	01	01	0
39	0	0	01	0	0	01	0	01	02	01	01	0
38	0	0	0	0	0	01	0	01	01	0	01	0
37	0	0	0	0	0	01	0	01	01	0	0	0
36	0	0	0	0	0	01	0	01	01	0	0	0
35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	01	01	0	0	0
34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	01	0	0	0
33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note. From "Measuring attitude toward writing: A new tool for teachers." by D.J. Kear,

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Appendix F: Writing Attitude Survey, Raw Scores

*Writing Attitude Survey, Raw Scores*_____

Student	Pretest	Post-test
1	74	80
2	73	55
3	80	81
4	76	86
5	96	101
6	112	112
7	81	83
8	89	82
9	94	96
10	72	67
11	72	64
12	51	47
13	79	78
14	74	65
15	84	85