

**Enhancing Student Writing Skills and Passion for Writing
Using the Writer's Workshop Approach**

by

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Abstract

This curriculum project was aimed at developing and implementing a writer's workshop as the primary approach to teach writing to middle grade students. With students facing challenges in both learning how to write and being motivated to write, the curriculum was designed to be used in the 6-8 grade classroom at Good Shepherd Lutheran School in Burton, MI. Although implemented for this particular group of students, this project may help inspire teachers in other WELS grade schools to use this approach to teach their students to write skillfully and passionately. After months of research, the writer's workshop was implemented in the classroom during the second semester of the 2021-2022 school year. Students were assessed on their writing skills and passion in various ways. Writing skills were assessed using both quantitative (test scores and grading rubrics) and qualitative (surveys and conference sheets) data. The student's passion for writing was shown through qualitative data, mainly through survey responses. This paper lays out the research, development, implementation, and results of the writer's workshop approach to writing.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Purpose of the Study

Writing is a valuable tool used to communicate one's thoughts and feelings to others. It is one of four basic language skills and is a fundamental skill for all individuals (Graham, 2019). It was evident in the last several years of teaching writing to my middle grade students that writing had become a chore rather than a positive experience. My students wrote simply because they were asked to during the school day. I observed a growing lack of passion for writing and the interest level dropped below that of even some of their other dreaded subjects like science and grammar.

My students encountered what Marina Gair (2015) call "the writing monsters." Many of my students were reluctant writers who struggled with these writing monsters. Some students were unhappy with their writing and negatively criticized their work. They compared their writing to classmates who were gifted with the ability to write. A few of the students approached writing projects grudgingly as it was just another homework assignment. Then there were the students who claimed they simply had nothing to write about or didn't enjoy writing.

As their writing teacher, I had to make sure my students were meeting the national and state writing standards as laid out by the Michigan Department of Education and the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2018). However, as the years passed, I felt as if there was more to teaching my students to write beyond just meeting one standard and moving on to the next. I want my students to learn the writing process while at the same time keeping a positive attitude. I truly believe that students want to write and want to write passionately. This is possible when the teacher provides their students with

the opportunities to write as well as teaching them to write using the writing process properly. Steve Graham (2019) emphasizes that if students are to be successful in school and work, they must learn to write. In order for this to be accomplished, adequate practice and instruction in writing is required (Graham, 2019). Since writing is an important component of a student's education, it is essential teachers find the most effective method of teaching writing to their students.

Importance of the Study

Teaching writing has changed over the last several decades (Graves, 2003). One of these changes include a shift from product to process (Smith, 2000). The literature review will flesh out more on this shift and other notable changes in writing instruction over the last several decades. Teachers have adapted to these changes and implemented different approaches to meet the writing needs of their students.

As an educator, I have grown to understand that with the changing landscape of education there are new methods of teaching writing which have presented themselves in the educational setting. This is where I began to dig deeper into the different methods of teaching writing and how I can teach writing more effectively and with more meaning. There is much to learn about teaching students to write, but when it comes to moving them to write effectively and passionately, I feel the writer's workshop is the best approach and may have the biggest impact on a students' writing in and out of the classroom.

Educators across the country have developed, implemented, and improved upon several methods and approaches to teaching writing. As an essential component of the classroom, it is important that writing plays an integral part of the academic landscape

(Atta, 2013). In recent years, according to Bulut (2017), many students are underperforming in the area of writing. A study done by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2020) report that only 27% of students in grades 4-12 are proficient in their writing. This includes students attending both public and private schools across the country. The same study found students have developed a negative attitude towards writing that has given way to an inability of mastering basic writing skills and communicators through written language. Teachers must be willing to devote necessary time and effort when teaching writing (Graham, 2019).

As mentioned above, a teacher's approach to teaching writing must be one that gives students a solid understanding of the writing process and encourages students to write about topics they are enthusiastic about. The teacher must be a strong guide and facilitator working alongside students during the writing process.

Project Goals

The purpose of this project is to enhance student writing skills and overall passion for writing by using the writer's workshop approach. The goal of implementing and using the writer's workshop approach is threefold:

1. Enhance writing skills by guiding students through the writing process, tracking their growth, and providing them with resources such as a writer's notebook to allow students to understand and engage in the writing process,
2. Encourage students to be confident and capable writers through the use of writing traits and formative-style assessments,

3. Foster a positive attitude and passion towards writing by giving students a chance to see their progress through surveys, peer-and-self-assessments, and teacher feedback

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The foundation of this curriculum project is to teach students how to write using the writer's workshop. Although the writer's workshop is not the only method to teach writing, its unique structure gives students the confidence and skills they need to be life-long writers (Atta, 2013). This literature review explores and synthesizes the individuals who developed the writer's workshop approach to teaching writing, emphasizes the effectiveness of the writer's workshop in the classroom, and examines the main components of the writer's workshop.

Researchers have concluded that writing is a very complex skill and learning how to write takes time and solid instruction (Graham, 2019). In a study published by Johns Hopkins University in 2019, a team of researchers reviewed and analyzed various approaches to teaching writing to students in grades 2-12. When studying the many approaches for teaching students to write, researchers found a few common ideas shared by teachers when it comes to effective and meaningful writing instruction. These include establishing writing routines, implementing a process approach to writing, frequent writing opportunities for students, collaborative work among students, and establishing goals for students to achieve while working through the writing process (Slavin, 2019). After studying the writer's workshop through the eyes of Ralph Fletcher (1996, 2001), Ruth Culham (2006), and Lucy Calkins (2020), I discovered that all five of these common ideas from the Slavin's research (2019) are evident in their work. In the next section I explain the important contributions to the writer's workshop world by these researchers.

Lucy Calkins

Lucy Calkins, the Founding Director of the Teachers College Reading, and Writing Project at Columbia University, led the project in its dual functions as a think tank, developing state-of-the-art teaching methods for writing and other language arts components, and a provider of professional development. Calkins has been supporting hundreds of teachers, principals, superintendents, and policymakers across the country and around the world in an effort to better their teaching methods and ways of teaching kids to write and be passionate about their writing (Calkins, 2021). Lucy Calkins is one of the original architects of the writer's workshop and its influence on the educational world today. Educators such as Donald Graves, another driving force behind the writer's workshop, give Lucy Calkins much credit for influencing his outlook on teaching writing in his own classroom. Calkins's practical way of fleshing out skills through short demonstrations, known as minilessons, raised the quality of children's writing immeasurably (Graves, 2004). Since the development of the writer's workshop, hundreds of educators have expanded and refined this format of teaching writing.

One of the reasons Lucy Calkins is an advocate for the writer's workshop is its ability to reach students at all different learning levels. A "one-size-fits-all" approach is not an effective way to teach writing. For teachers, the routines and structures of the writer's workshop are kept simple and predictable, so they are able to focus their attention on guiding their students through the complex writing process while reaching students at their learning level (Calkins, 2021). There is evidence in Calkins's work, as other researchers have noted (Culham, 2006; Fletcher, 2001) that collaboration, small and large group work, and engagement are highlighted in the writer's workshop. Her work on

the writer's workshop also corresponds with the national Common Core State Standards in the area of writing. One unique aspect of Calkins's research of the writer's workshop is her Reading and Writing Bill of Rights (Calkins, 2021). These 10 statements are as follows:

1. Above all, good teachers matter. Learners need teachers who demonstrate what it means to live richly literate lives, wearing a love of reading and writing on their sleeves.
2. Students need a balanced approach to English/language arts, one that includes a responsive approach to teaching of both reading and writing. researchers have studied examples of exemplary literacy instruction. In every case, when they found a classroom with high literacy engagement, they found balanced teaching in place.
3. Reading and writing need to be taught like other basic skills, with direct, explicit instruction—including spelling, conventions, and the skills and strategies for proficient reading and writing.
4. Readers need long stretches of time to read, and writers need extended opportunities to write.
5. Writers need to learn to use the writing process: rehearsing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing their writing. readers need opportunities to consolidate skills so they can use skills and strategies with automaticity within fluid, engaged reading.

6. Writers deserve to write for real, to write the kinds of texts that they see in the world, and to write to put meaning onto the page. Readers need opportunities to read high-interest, accessible books of their own choosing.
7. Readers and writers need teachers to read aloud to them.
8. Students need opportunities to talk and sometimes write and respond to texts.
9. Readers need to read increasingly complex texts appropriate for their grade level and they need support reading nonfiction and building knowledge base and academic vocabulary through information reading.
10. Learners need clear goals and frequent feedback tailored specially to them. They need to hear ways their reading and writing is getting better and to know what their next steps might be.

These ten statements are what Calkins sees as a *must* in every reader and writer. These statements can be tied to her thoughts and ideas published in her recent book, *Teaching Writing* (2020). The important essentials of a successful writer's workshop include time for students to write, opportunities to learn from others via collaboration and conferencing, experiencing the writing process through hands-on writing, and the need for students to share their writing with peers and other audiences.

According to Calkins, the main components of a writer's workshop include minilessons, writing time, writing conferences, and publishing. The first component is the minilesson. These short, 10–15-minute lessons are meant to inspire and instruct students as writers (Calkins, 2020; Culham, 2018; Fletcher, 2001; Victoria, 2021). These minilessons are chosen and driven by the teacher.

The second component is writing time. The aforementioned researchers all agree that independent writing time must be the largest portion of the writer's workshop approach, anywhere from 30-45 minutes. During this time students are writing in their writer's notebooks, developing stories, and working through the writing process, or conferring with their peers.

Writing conferences is the third component Calkins lists. Writing conferences can involve student-to-student and teacher-to-student collaboration. Conferencing during the writer's workshop allows students to work with others on their writing and gain feedback, which is another piece to a successful writer's workshop (Calkins, 2021).

The fourth and final component is sharing time and publication. As mentioned before, students must be given a considerable amount of feedback and chances to share their writing with others. These components are important to include in a writer's workshop despite the modifications that may be added to fit the needs of a classroom of writers.

The work Lucy Calkins has developed and shared with the educational world is detailed and has helped inspire teachers, like Donald Graves, to implement the writer's workshop into their own classrooms. According to a brief autobiography published by Heinemann (2021), Calkin's work on the writer's workshop became an integral part of thousands of classrooms around the world. However, other educators have contributed to the writer's workshop. One of these individuals is Ralph Fletcher. Ralph Fletcher has been a mentor to not only young students learning to write but also educators who teach students to write. The next section will discuss these contributions by Fletcher and his importance to this study.

Ralph Fletcher

Over the years, Fletcher has led teachers to understand the importance of their particular role in teaching students to write. He believes in trusting students to write and learn to write well. Like ski instructors help their students find their stride down the snowy slopes, teachers have the opportunity to guide their students to find their stride as writers (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). His work on the writer's workshop and its effectiveness motivates teachers to implement it into their own classrooms and give their students the tools, resources, and motivation to become life-long writers who are passionate about their work. (Fletcher, 2017).

Teaching students to write is not an easy task because it is not so much one particular skill rather a bundle of skills that include all language arts areas such as reading, grammar, and spelling (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). In Fletcher's perspective, implementing a writer's workshop into a classroom creates an environment where students can acquire the skills mentioned above in addition to growth in their overall fluency, confidence, and passion for writing. While Calkins lists five components in her writer's workshop structure, Fletcher has four main components: essentials of time and space, focus on establishing routines, the writing process, and the effectiveness of a writer's notebook.

The first component is the importance of time and space. Fletcher believes that time and space are essential to the success of a writer's workshop. In his hour-long writer's workshop model, he breaks down the three major components inside the writer's workshop time: minilessons are given 5-10 minutes, writing time is given 35-45 minutes, and share time takes anywhere from 10-20 minutes. Notice the components of his

writer's workshop time are similar to those of Calkins with the largest block of time set aside for students to write. It is important for teachers to block out as much time as possible for students to write. Fletcher encourages roughly three or more hours per week for students to engage in the writer's workshop. This means students are writing a minimum of two hours per week. (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Time is crucial for a teacher in a classroom, especially when they are responsible for more than just teaching writing. However, in order for students to be successful writers, teachers must strive to carve out the time for students to write.

The other essential part is space. The way a teacher designs his/her classroom can play a large role in their students' learning. Research has shown that classroom design creates a community of learners, helps students work at their optimal level of challenge, and encourages students to learn holistically (Rands & Gansemer-Topf, 2017). Since space is so critical, a teacher must set the classroom up in a way that students can benefit from it. When applied to the writer's workshop, students need to have a space to write, engage with their peers, conference with their teacher, and to access writing tools and materials. The writer's workshop is fueled by the energy students bring to the classroom. Time and space are essential to bring active student engagement during the writer's workshop.

The second component to Fletcher's writer's workshop framework is the establishment of routines. In order for the writer's workshop to run smoothly, students must be given guidelines and expectations to follow. The management system a teacher sets up has to work for their students, but also the teacher themselves (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). Although the concept of the writer's workshop is for students to work as

independently as possible, there must still be a management system in place so teachers, and their students, do not get overwhelmed. Donald Graves (2003) provides a list of fundamentals that have been, and will continue to be, just as important to any approach to teaching students to write. The work of Donald Graves (2003) and Ralph Fletcher (2001) agree that these fundamentals help teachers plan for and organize writing instruction in the classroom. Fletcher (2001) reflects these similar ideas when he discusses the importance of creating a safe learning environment for students to write.

- Children need to choose most of their own topics, but only after a teacher has given the students guidance as to how and where to gather their ideas.
- Children need regular responses to their writing from both their teacher and their peers.
- Children need to write at least three days of the week. However, five days of writing is the ideal situation.
- Children must be able to publish their work.
- Teachers must model proper writing techniques so their students can watch as the teacher processes and thinks through their writing.

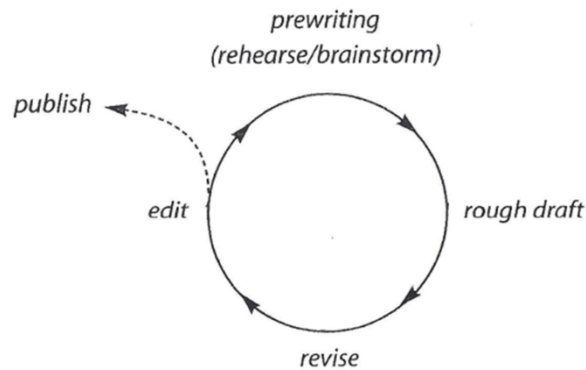
A third routine that must be established is the daily writer's workshop structure. Fletcher (2001) sets his workshop up so students are taken through three main parts during writing time. These include the minilesson, the writing time, and share sessions. The minilesson should be 5-10 minutes in length and include topics that help students write. The teacher may decide what these minilessons will include. Writing time is the longest portion of the writer's workshop, anywhere from 30-45 minutes. Fletcher (2001) suggests using this time for students to write, peer conference, or conference with the

teacher. Students may write in their writer's notebook ideas or thoughts they might have, draw pictures, or discuss their work with another student. This time is valuable and must stay consistent. The share sessions allow students to share their work with each other and/or the teacher. Fletcher (2001) suggests using the last 10-15 minutes of the writer's workshop to complete this activity. Students should be encouraged to share their work out loud with their peers or to the whole class. Whether the work is incomplete or final, it encourages students to stay with their writing and continue pushing through the writing process (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). These three portions of writing time can positively impact students while they continue writing on all sorts of topics that might come into their mind. It is evident that the writer's workshop gives students ample independent time to plan, develop, and take their own writing through the writing process. However, the teacher still plays a major role as they must set up their students for success. Establishing routines and setting expectations not only keeps the teacher organized, but it also provides students with everything they need to be successful writers.

The fourth component is the writing cycle. Fletcher (2001), Calkins (2021) and Culham (2010) provide a map of what the writing process looks like in their work. The writing cycle in the figure below shows the five steps Fletcher (2003) encourages writers to take when working through the writing process. The five parts of the writing process are 1) prewriting, 2) drafting, 3) revising, 4) proofreading, and 5) publishing. Each part of the cycle emphasizes a different learning objective when it comes to learning to write. The purpose of the writing process inside the writer's workshop is not to teach kids *the* process, but rather to give students the opportunity to take their work through a process which will encourage them to reread, revise, and edit over and over again until they come

to a point where they can publish their piece. Again, the research of Donald Graves and Lucy Calkins show similar ideas in that even young writers can work through a process and produce work that is well done (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 2004; & Calkins, 2020).

Figure 1
The Writing Cycle



Note: The writing cycle as presented by Ralph Fletcher. Reprinted from *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide* (p. 62), by Fletcher, R. J., & Portalupi, J. A. copyright 2001 by Heinemann.

The final component is the idea of the writer’s notebook. In one of his well-known books *A Writer’s Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You*, Fletcher described the writer’s notebook as “the most important tool I use” (Fletcher, 1996). He sees the writer’s notebook as one of the best ways for students to explore and collect their thoughts, emotions, feelings, and anything that pops into their mind. As mentioned before, teachers must give students a direction where to find their ideas for their writing. Writing teachers will encourage their students to find ideas to write about in their notebooks by making lists, drawing from past memories, and pulling lines from other published works (Fletcher, 1996). Fletcher also suggests another unique way for students to add ideas to their notebooks, writing seeds. Writing seeds are simply pictures or small

artifacts to remind students of their hobbies, memories, etc. These seeds are small enough to fit inside an envelope inside their notebooks. Students may pull a writing seed from their envelope and write about whatever comes into their head from that seed. Students are encouraged to use their writer's notebook throughout the writing process. Fletcher (1996) also suggests giving students time to simply free-write. Students shouldn't have to worry about their spelling, grammar, or the like when they write down their ideas. These will be ironed out and corrected during the writing process. "A writer's notebook gives you a place to live like a writer, not just in school during writing time, but wherever you are, at any time of day" (Fletcher, 1996). Equipping students with a tool such as a writer's notebook can be just the key to unlocking a student's passion for writing.

There are notable similarities among the works of Lucy Calkins and Ralph Fletcher. The underlying purpose of the writer's workshop is seen in both individuals' research. As mentioned previously, many individuals have continued to modify and innovate ways to make the writer's workshop stronger. A third educator who has contributed many ideas to the writer's workshop, especially in the area of assessing student writing, is Ruth Culham.

Ruth Culham

Ruth Culham made groundbreaking discoveries when it came to teaching students in primary through high school how to write well. Culham's passion, research, and practice has given way too many publications throughout the years. She provides teachers with the resources and tools to teach writing confidently in their classrooms. One of Culham's most well-known works is her publications about the 6+1 writing traits. These seven traits represent a language that empowers students and teachers alike to

communicate about qualities of writing and the ability to assess them with her rubrics (Culham, 2006). The traits in Culham’s work and a brief description, taken from her book *Teach Writing Well* (2018), of each are listed below:

1. Ideas are the meaning and development of the message being portrayed by the student.
2. Organization refers to the internal structure of the students’ writing piece.
3. Voice is how the student brings to life a particular piece of writing.
4. Word choice is the specific language and vocabulary used by the student.
5. Sentence fluency is the way the words flow throughout the text.
6. Conventions are the proper and correct use of grammar and sentence mechanics.
7. The presentation (known as the “+1” trait) is the overall appearance of the work when it is published.

When researching Culham’s 6+1 traits above, it is evident that it belongs in the discussion about implementing a writer’s workshop. The following reasons show just how important the six traits are when used in connection with the writer’s workshop.

First, these traits can serve as a model for teachers to use in the writer’s workshop. Culham (2006) makes it clear that the six traits are not a part of the workshop, but rather the “language of writer’s workshop”. In a writer’s workshop, students will apply their skills in the context of real writing. It is evident from the Fletcher research that the writer’s workshop can be a challenge for some teachers. To overcome these challenges, Culham offers these traits as a guide for ensuring their students learn how to write, discuss, and assess their writing effectively. For example, the first five traits (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency) are critical during the revision

portion of the writing cycle whereas the final two (conventions and presentation) are most important during the editing phase and preparing the final draft (Culham, 2018).

Next, the writing traits can be used as an effective tool when teachers conference with their students about their work. Culham's (2006) assessment tool for student work is known as the 6+1 scoring guide. This tool allows teachers to assess a student's piece of writing in order to facilitate a productive and meaningful conference. There are five scoring levels, each with its own descriptions. The teacher will use this tool to analyze the piece through the lens of each trait. Students have the opportunity to respond and discuss modifications and corrections to the piece as necessary. Reading and assessing each child's work one trait at a time may be time consuming. However, the more familiar a teacher and students get with the scoring guides, the less time it will take to score. (Culham, 2018).

Finally, the seven traits of Ruth Culham can assist teachers as they guide and assess their students to become better writers and develop an overall passion for writing. Although Culham's traits are not a curriculum with a scope and sequence, they can be used as a guide for what writing instruction can look like and ways to assess the writing. To be effective, teachers may use the minilesson portion of the writer's workshop to target core objectives in their current language arts curriculum and link them directly to a state/national standards (Culham, 2006).

Based on decades of research by Fletcher, Calkins, and Culham it is clear the writer's workshop approach fits the necessary requirements of what teaching writing must look like to be successful (Slavin, 2019). Not only do the writing skills improve during this instructional strategy, but a child's passion to write is also enhanced. In his

research on different writing strategies, Slavin (2019) and Fletcher (2001) concluded that motivation was a key to successful writing. If the child's peers love to write, and the teacher also shares an enthusiasm in the writing process, then the students will write with energy, passion, and enjoyment (Sheets, 2019). Implementing the writer's workshop as the main curriculum to teaching writing in the classroom has potential to develop a child's writing skills and overall passion for writing within a literacy community (Calkins, 2020; Culham 2018; Fletcher, 2001; Sheets, 2019).

Passion and Attitude Towards Writing

We all need to know how to write. The writing must be clear and articulate so that readers do not misunderstand what we intend to say (McDonagh, 2020). This can be a challenging task for anyone, especially for students who do not enjoy writing. So, how can teachers get their students to write with a positive attitude? Educators like Culham, Calkins, and Fletcher have worked to develop a method of teaching students to write while encouraging a positive attitude towards writing. A student's passion and positive attitude towards their writing should be present as they learn to write clear and articulate. This section will briefly discuss student attitude in relationship to their writing and ways teachers may enhance student attitude in writing.

It is important to understand how a student's attitude can affect their ability to learn in an educational setting. Research suggests that there is a clear relationship between students' attitudes and their academic achievement (Díez-Palomar, 2020). Students who do not see school as a desirable place will choose to reject the teaching that goes on within the walls of the classroom. This same concept can be used when talking about specific subject areas. In this case, a student who does not see the purpose of

writing may view writing in a negative way. This research also suggests a student's negative attitude towards learning comes from the teachers lack understanding of where their students are at in their learning (Díez-Palomar, 2020). In each case, a child's attitude relates to their performance in the classroom or specific subject area.

Both the teacher and student have a role to play when it comes to fostering a positive attitude toward writing. There are expectations for the teacher and student in a writer's workshop which are listed later in this chapter. In addition to those expectations, teachers must contribute to the writing experience on a broader scale. One way is for teachers to help students recognize they are indeed writers. McDonagh (2020) focuses his work on the idea that we already know how to write, but we haven't discovered it yet. Teachers must help students encounter their "inner writer" and utilize it during writing class. Another way for teachers to motivate at their students to write passionately is to model the behavior in their own writing. In order for students to care about writing, the teacher will need to demonstrate an interest in writing. A teacher must convey an attitude of openness, patience, and enthusiasm (McDonagh, 2020). Ralph Fletcher (2017) also makes this point in his book "Joy Write" and suggests teachers show just as much passion in their writing as they want their students to show. Finally, a teacher must give students the opportunity in their writing to experience, play, and be authentic. McDonagh (2020) uses a piece by Shannon Falkner (2011) to express the need for teachers to get their students to think critically of their surroundings and draw upon their experiences to write. When students write about topics they are interested in, they tend to become more passionate about their piece. Allowing students to play with their experience and write

them down may be a great way for students to write with more conviction and confidence.

Writing is an important part of our academic, social, and cultural life as shown already in this chapter. Students need to learn to write. Yet, it goes beyond just learning to write well. Teachers will want their students to write with meaning and passion. Research, as shown in this section, shows there is a direct relationship between a student's attitude and their learning. It will be vital for teachers to understand how to teach their students to write and the ways to motive them to write passionately.

Approaches to Teaching Writing

Before diving into the structure of the writer's workshop, it is necessary to discuss the different approaches to teaching students how to write. This section will examine four well-known methodologies to teaching students to write which include teacher-centered, learner-centered, content-focused, and the interactive/participative method. It is necessary to recognize the various ways students learn to write and to compare it to the writer's workshop found in this research project.

The first method is the teacher-centered approach to learning to write. Here, the teacher is viewed as the master of the content. The learner is the recipient of the knowledge being given by the teacher only. In this writing environment, the teacher lectures to students on how to write by following specific rules, routines, and use extrinsic motivation to influence student behaviors (Garrett, 2008). Although having some benefits, this conventional style of teaching students how to write does prohibit students from working collaboratively with their peers and gives students less

opportunities to develop communication skills and sharing their writing with others (Lathan, 2022).

The second method contrasts the first and is known as the student-centered approach. In a student-centered classroom, the teacher is concerned primarily in helping students research and write about problems and issues, try out possible solutions or explanations, and finally lead students to construct his or her own meaning (Garrett, 2008). The teacher is still in the authoritative position but become more of a facilitator as students take more control over their learning. This approach also allows students to collaborate on their writing with one another and come to conclusions through meaningful discussions. (Lathan, 2022). Drawbacks include a noisier learning space, concern over students missing out on key objectives with less lecture time, and students not being able to focus without more structure. Benefits seen from this approach consist of strong collaboration and communication skills, more opportunities to share writing products, and students learning to work independently (Lathan, 2022).

The third method focuses on content-based instruction. Content-based instruction is a teaching method that emphasizes what is being taught (A.S., 2017). The teacher and the students must fit into the content together without being over-critical of the content being presented. Here, the content drives the learning. Through lecture or student-led discussion, the writing content is presented and retained at face value. Studies have shown that content-based learning can be an effective way for students to learn how to write (A.S., 2017).

The final approach is known as the interactive/participative method. According to published piece found on the Baylor University website (Interactive Methods, 2021),

interactive learning encompasses all methods of purposeful student engagement with material aided by students interacting with others and themselves. This method can also be described as a form of active learning. Interactive writing is a writing process used to teach students how to write a paragraph. The process involves the sharing of writing between the teacher and students. It can be in a group of students (Wirhayati, 2020).

Writing activities involved in this method motivate students to write, since the students are asked to write immediately in response to the lecture request. This method of writing can be implemented into different subject areas like social studies or science with the teacher stepping in and applying a learning moment involving writing skills.

Reviewing these other approaches to writing instruction mentioned above gives the teacher instructional ideas and allows the teacher to make informed decisions for his/her own classroom. These methods listed range from a traditional structure to more of a modern-day approach. During this project, the writer's workshop replaced the more traditional style of teacher-centered writing instruction. With this in mind, the next section fleshes out the writer's workshop structure and give an overview of this more modern method of teaching students to write effectively and passionately.

The Writer's Workshop Structure

To understand how the writer's workshop is an effective approach to writing instruction, it is necessary to outline the structure as well as the key elements within this approach. After studying the literature more closely on how teachers can use the writer's workshop, a clear outline emerged. The following sections of this literature review outline the basic components of the writer's workshop based on the foundational ideas of Calkins, Culham, and Fletcher.

Components

There are 5 major components to the writer's workshop: minilessons, writing time, conferencing, share time, and publishing. All teachers must develop and implement these components to fit the needs of their students and their classroom environment.

Minilessons. Minilessons are a teacher-guided instructional time to explicitly instruct students on narrow topics such as exploring types of writing issues, modeling writing techniques, or reinforcing a particular writing process skill. The minilesson should be kept brief (no more than fifteen minutes) and include time for making connections, teaching, and student engagement. Minilessons can be used for students to discuss their writing in small group settings. Teachers may use the time within a minilesson to target key writing standards while giving students plenty of time to become better writers.

Writing. This portion of the writer's workshop is given the most amount of time. During this block, students are busy working on their own writing. Every student may be on a different stage in the writing process. Some may be writing their first drafts, others editing, and some in the final stages of the revision process. This time may also be used for writing conferences between the teacher and individual students. During writing conferences, the teacher will ask students about their writing and what they are learning through their writing. Depending on the amount of time devoted to teaching writing, this block of time may take anywhere from twenty to forty-five minutes.

Sharing. This component of the writer's workshop process is often skipped due to a shortage of time. Research shows that teachers who devote the time to make writing meaningful report having the most effective writing results (Graham, 2019). With this in mind, it is important that teacher devote at least ten minutes to sharing to make this final

portion of the writer's workshop successful. Sharing may include presenting final published writings to the class, small groups sharing and discussing where they are at in the writing process, or even having students trade papers to review and comment on each other's work. Another added benefit of sharing within a group is the sharpening of speaking, listening, and communication skills. These skills are easier to be acquired through face-to-face interactions rather than simply writing words on a page (Atta, 2013).

Writing Conferences. A writing conference is a one-to-one interaction between a teacher and their student or an interaction between a student and a peer. During this time, teachers will assess what level of writing the student is currently at, then provide feedback in an area that could use some improvement (Ball, 2018). Teachers will want to conduct writing conferences one-to-one with a few students during the writer's workshop block. Conferences do not need to take place every day, but on a regular basis. The purpose of these conferences is to allow teachers to check in on a deeper level with the students and give students ownership in their writing process as they can talk about what they are writing about. Another benefit to this component is it allows teachers to encourage their students to self-reflect and give rich meaning to the students and their writing pieces. The teacher will use a conference document or chart to conduct and record what was discussed during the conference. Lucy Calkins states, "To teach well, we do not need more techniques and strategies as much as we need a vision of what is essential. It is not the number of good ideas that turns our work into art, but the selection, balance, and design of those ideas" (Calkins, 1994). A one-to-one conversation with a student can allow time for the student to target improvement areas and bring their writing to new heights.

Publishing. Students should be given an opportunity to showcase their writing in some form. This is one of the reasons researchers like Fletcher (2004) and Calkins (2020) have added publishing work as part of the writer's workshop structure. Even Culham (2003) encourages students to publish their work as it follows the writing process. For Culham, her publishing of work falls into the assessment of student work using her six writing traits (Culham, 2003). Students can publish their work throughout the year, more specifically after a writing unit or cycle is completed (Calkins, 2011). Publishing will look different depending on the classroom setting. Some suggestions by Fletcher (2004) and Calkins (2020) include collecting final pieces into folders, binding them together in a notebook, or laminating the work. Another option for teachers is to find a company that publishes student work and have the stories made into a book. Some teachers will publish student writing pieces within the classroom, online, or in the wider community. Giving students the chance to share their work makes the writing more meaningful (Calkins, 2001).

Assessment Tools

Throughout the components above, a number of tools can be used to engage students in their writing. One of these tools is a writer's notebook, made popular by Ralph Fletcher (1996). A writer's notebook can be used by students to help organize a student's thoughts, story ideas, etc. This notebook acts like a scrapbook for students to collect important relics from their life and other writings that may inspire future pieces (Fletcher, 1996). Young writers can use methods such as lifting lines from other texts, drawing, writing seeds, or making lists to help them begin writing. Whether it is a free write or an idea for a future publication, the writer's notebook is a great place to store

thoughts and ideas. Like Fletcher, Calkins's philosophy (1994) agreed that young writers value their writing on a deeper level and plant "seeds" for future writing pieces when collecting and drawing upon their own thoughts and ideas. A writer's notebook is an asset to a student during the writer's workshop and gives them the confidence they need to become better writers (Fletcher, 1996). The writer's notebook can be a useful formative assessment tool for teachers because it acts as a roadmap to where students are in their writing. Teacher's may see student's taking risks in their writing or using strategies discussed during writing conferences (Kirkwood, 2009). A teacher can look through the writer's notebook and track where students have been and where they are headed. It can guide teachers to make inform decisions on what areas a student can continue to work on. Finally, you can tell a lot about the student's passion or motivation for their writing based on their interaction with their notebook. A teacher can observe and record how many times a student is using their notebook or where they are writing. An example of this could be when a student is asking to take their notebook home or on a trip to continue writing. If a student is not a writer and are asking to write, then there is evidence that the student is building their passion for wanting to write (Kirkwood, 2009).

Another tool for assessment and student feedback is the set of writing rubrics by Ruth Culham as mentioned earlier. Managing the writer's workshop can be a challenge on its own. Using the rubrics to formally assess each piece of writing would add a lot of work. However, Culham's 6+1 writing traits and rubrics are helpful because they provide a built-in model for ensuring that students learn to write well (Culham, 2013). A study published by the Northwest Regional Educational Library (2004) showed that 80-90 percent of teachers who assessed their students' writing based on Culham's 6+1 writing

traits reported a positive experience. It helped their writing instruction and found the students to have a greater understanding of the writing process and other good qualities of good writing (Bellamy & Kozlow, 2004). The teachers in the study also found that using the 6+1 writing traits helped them improve their ability to give meaningful feedback to their students about their writing. Studies such as the one above shows similar results. It is evident using these scoring rubrics can help increase student achievement in their writing.

Culham provides scoring guides across all grade levels with explanations on how to use them. Teachers can use these scoring guides, modified to fit each classroom, to teach minilessons, conduct conferences, and develop grades for final writing products (Culham, 2018). Since these traits offer a common language for assessing and talking about writing, it becomes the core of assessing student writing in the writer's workshop. Whether it's a formative assessment such as a writer's notebook or writing conference forms or a summative assessment like using Culham's 6+1 writing traits scoring guide the assessment is useless unless the teacher does something with it. Calkins (2020) presents four important things necessary to make assessing student writing meaningful: 1) show writers evidence of their growth, 2) help writers take the next steps based on their level of learning, 3) look for evidence that the teaching is working, and 4) look for evidence that the teaching is now working. Teachers will want to develop and implement a form of record keeping that works best for their classroom.

Record keeping while conducting the writer's workshop is necessary to the effectiveness of the approach itself and progress of young writers in the classroom. Teachers who keep records of items such as student surveys, student-achieved skills and

goals, conferences forms, and other data showing student progress in writing will have a strong understanding of their students' performance level (Shubitz, 2018). Not only will record keeping allow teachers to see evidence of student growth of writing skills, but also in their attitudes towards their writing.

The Writer's Workshop Routine

Teachers will need to find a variety of ways to build the writer's workshop into their classrooms. The versatility of the writer's workshop structure allows teachers to choose a number of schedule options, a block of time for writing, and even how to implement both reading and writer's workshops together for teachers who teach both subjects. As mentioned before, teachers who devote a greater amount of time to writing in class may see the greatest results. When determining the scope and sequence of the writer's workshop units, teachers will need to determine a block of time that works best for their students and their classroom schedule. Most writer's workshop resources give options of 45, 60, or 90 minutes for writing. These time blocks follow the original writer's workshop structures as laid out by Calkins (1983) and Culham (2018). A writer's workshop can also be implemented at various times during the week as well. Some scope and sequences give options anywhere from two to five days a week (Carroll & Feng, 2010). Depending on the teacher's classroom schedule a writer's workshop can easily be implemented even though there might be less days to teach writing.

Units should include a variety of writing genres. Depending on the grade level, teachers will need to incorporate narratives, persuasive writing, informative/explanatory writing, and research-based writing projects. This will ensure teachers are meeting the learning objectives that students need to become critical thinkers and learners while

engaged in the writing process (Bulut, 2017). It is important for teachers implementing the Writer's Workshop to be sure to meet the English Language Arts (ELA) writing standards, either on a national or state level. When implemented thoughtfully and with purpose, the writer's workshop may meet most, if not all, ELA standards students should master as they progress through the writing process.

Expectations

As referenced previously, the fundamentals for teaching writing (Graves, 2003; Fletcher, 2001) remain consistent regardless of the teaching method employed. These fundamentals include pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Teachers can use these to help them guide their decisions in setting effective expectations for their students during the writer's workshop.

Students. Students need to keep a collection of their work so they can reflect on the pieces they accomplish and be able to self-evaluate their work as writers (Graves, 2003). This practice is just as important to teaching children to write today as it was decades ago. Regardless of the approach, writing must have unchanged expectations on the part of both the student and the teacher. The expectations given to the teacher and the student in a writer's workshop can lead to a successful and efficient writer's workshop. It is important for teachers to set foundational expectations for the students so they may be successful in their writing. There are a few expectations students must follow for the writer's workshop to be productive. The first expectation is following the writer's workshop routine. Students are given the routines for their writing within the first day or two of the writer's workshop. It is important that students follow these routines to be

successful. The following list of basic routines, created by Werner (2017), are based on the work of Culham, Fletcher, and Calkins.

- Meeting area routines (materials, seating, behavior)
- Work time routines (when, where, and how to work)
- Conference routines (who is included in conferencing, when and what to discuss)
- Sharing routines (how and when can the work be shared with others)

Second, each student must be organized. This expectation is not solely found in writing, but in their everyday routine. Students who are organized have a much greater chance of success and are motivated to do well in school (Cejovic, 2011). Organization in the writing process is critical. Students must keep their writing materials, writing pieces, and writer's notebook organized to set them up for success in their writing. Third, students must write following the writing process as laid out by the teacher through the writer's workshop approach. The writing process is standard in many writing curriculums.

Students are given the opportunity to work through the writing process at their own pace, but they must understand the process and stay on task (Slavin, 2019).

Teacher. The most important expectation of a teacher while implementing the writer's workshop is to follow the workshop model. Since students are expected to follow routines, the teacher must stick to their chosen curriculum plan. Teachers who adhered to the writer's workshop model were overall successful in giving their students effective writing instruction (Troia, Lin, Cohen, & Monroe, 2011). Another expectation of teachers while using the writer's workshop is to model appropriate and correct writing behavior (Fletcher, 2021). Showing students that writing can be fun and enjoyable can be obtained when the teacher is modeling the same behavior. Through modeling, the students will not

only gain the knowledge of using the correct writing skills but also gain an understanding that writing can be enjoyable and their passion for writing may be enhanced. To help each teacher become more comfortable in implementing and using the writing workshop approach, teachers must be given the necessary resources and training (Atta, 2013). Proper training and focus on student learning can be an effective tool used to best enhance student writing skills and their overall passion for writing.

Conclusion

Writing is important. If it weren't, the writing experts referenced in this review would not have put as much time and effort into designing an effective approach to teaching students to write. Although there are several approaches to teaching writing, the writer's workshop stands out above the rest. Based on the research done in this literature review, it is evident that the writer's workshop is an effective approach to teaching students to write. The works of Fletcher, Calkins, and Culham set a strong foundation for teachers to study and implement the writer's workshop into their own classrooms. Their research-based approach to teaching writing stays true to the basic necessities of what young writers need to be successful as shown by Donald Graves (2004). It is because of this research that I base my curriculum project on implementing the writer's workshop into my own classroom. It is my firm belief that the writer's workshop will create an environment where my students can acquire the skills and tools necessary to be confident and fluent writers with a passion to want to write.

Chapter III: Implementation

Introduction

The objective of this project was to enhance student writing skills and overall passion for writing by using the writer's workshop. The goal of implementing and using the writer's workshop was to enhance the students' writing skills and knowledge of the writing process, encourage students to become confident and passionate writers, and to foster a positive attitude towards writing among students in a middle school classroom. By implementing a writer's workshop in place of a more traditional approach to teaching writing the goal will be to rid the kids of their "writing monsters" (Gair, 2015) and rekindle a spark in the students to write and to write effectively.

This project took the form of action research where a current educational practice is changed, or improved, to better a particular practice (Mertler, 2011). In this project, the teacher replaced the current way of teaching writing with the writer's workshop for his middle grade students. They will be introduced to a more student-centered approach over the conventional teacher-centered approach. Since action research is a recurring process of planning, acting, developing, and reflecting (Mertler, 2011), the teacher developed the writer's workshop to fit this research model.

This chapter will describe the procedure in which the writer's workshop was designed, developed, and implemented into an upper grade classroom for a period of twelve weeks. This chapter will describe the procedure in which the writer's workshop was designed, developed, and implemented into an upper grade classroom for a period of twelve weeks. This chapter also lists the artifacts collected during implementation and

reports the results from the writing completed by students during the course of the project.

Procedure

Since the writer's workshop was a new approach to writing for both the teacher and students involved in this project, the teacher took the class through an introductory unit on the writer's workshop. Although not part of this curriculum project, the introduction helped the students understand what was expected of them during writer's workshop. The foundational skills of this twenty-lesson unit included teaching the main components of the writer's workshop, setting up and maintaining a writer's notebook, building a list of ways to help them begin the writing process, and reviewing students' background knowledge of the writing process.

At the beginning of the project, students completed a writing attitude survey (Appendix A) and a writing profile survey (Appendix B). The writing attitude survey comes from the *International Reading Association* and was designed with the intent to help educators learn how to help their students write and enjoy their writing more (Kear, 2000). The writing profile was created by the researcher using past experience of teaching writing. These surveys helped identify each students' past writing experiences and attitudes. The same writing attitude survey was given at the end of the project to evaluate any change in attitude towards writing using the writer's workshop approach.

The teacher began the writer's workshop by implementing two writer's workshop units spanning a course of twelve weeks. Each unit lasted six weeks that included five weeks of minilessons and a week of writing, sharing, and conferencing. The first unit of the writer's workshop (Appendix C) was a study of Ruth Culham's 6+1 writing traits.

The teacher used the information in Culham's book, *Teach Writing Well* (2018) to teach each of the traits and how they benefit the writer in his/her writing process. The minilessons highlighted important information about each of the traits on Culham's 6+1 grading rubrics. Students studied Culham's middle school writing rubrics (Appendix D) as they would be used to assess future writing pieces. The second unit (Appendix E) of this writer's workshop project was a unit on persuasive writing. Here, the minilessons included the process of how and when to write persuasively. Included in Culham's work is a scoring guide for persuasive writing (Appendix F) using the writing traits. The persuasive writing pieces were assessed using the traits scoring guide (Appendix D) to keep the data results consistent.

Students were engaged in their writing Monday through Friday and each session lasted 45-60 minutes. The schedule was consistent with the writer's workshop structure as described in the literature review and included the components typically seen. Teacher-student writing conferences (Appendix G) were held two days of the week unless a student requested extra conferences. Peer conferencing took place almost every day of the week as needed by the students. Each student kept track of their place in the writing process during each of the units. Students could publish their final pieces at any point during the unit, but students were given a target date to complete their final writing pieces.

At the conclusion of the second unit, students were given the writing attitude survey (Appendix A) to complete for a second time. Each student was also given an exit survey (Appendix H) which gave them an opportunity to rate their experience with the

writer's workshop and share their personal thoughts on how they felt it affected their writing.

Artifacts

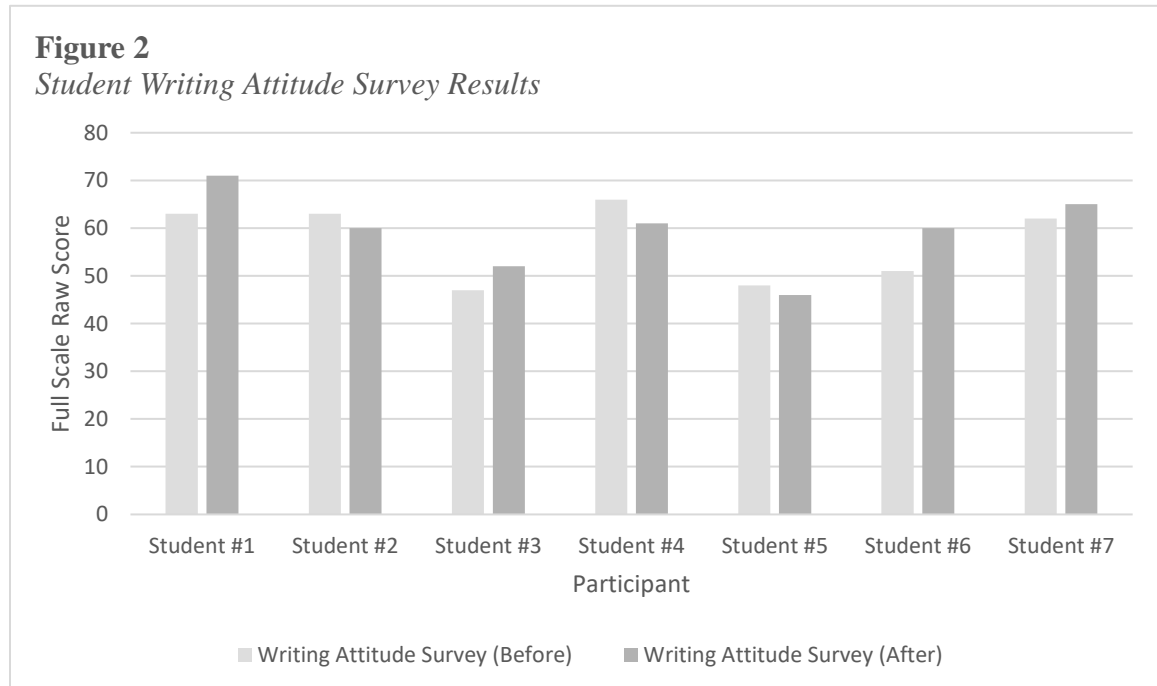
During the project, there were three surveys given to collect meaningful data on each students' writing knowledge and attitude/passion for writing. In addition, daily work completed by the students during writer's workshop included writing conferences, writing in the writer's notebook, participation during minilessons, share time, and final writing pieces. The work and effort put in each day of writer's workshop gave a good indication of whether the students was growing in their understanding of the writing process and their overall understanding of how to be an effective writer. Although a small portion of the data collected was unable to be evaluated with quantitative figures, the teacher was able to make strong connections for strong conclusive evidence to the project. This data includes the writing conference recording sheets (Appendix G) and the student response portion of the exit survey (Appendix H).

To compare and solidify the data results from the other evaluations during this project, results from the language mechanics portion of the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) were collected. NWEA evaluates each assessment and reports a RIT score, an overall score for a subject based on a Rasch unit scale that indicates how the student performed in a subject. Each student's RIT score gave a good indication of whether the student had gained more understanding of the writing process through the writer's workshop over the traditional way of learning to write.

Finally, each student completed two writing pieces: one for each unit. Students were assessed based on the 6+1 writing traits as mentioned above. These assessments became the researcher's main tool in determining whether the writer's workshop was a success as a whole class. The results from each writing piece were assessed based on the 6+1 writing traits rubrics and then compared to evaluate whether there was growth over the twelve-week project.

Results

Overall, the students in the class had a more positive attitude for writing after the writer's workshop was implemented. The writing attitude survey (Appendix A) has a total full-scale raw score of 112. The data shown in Figure 2 compares the student's full scale raw score before and after the writer's workshop was implemented. In the first survey, the class had an average raw score of 57.1 out of a possible score of 112. The



results of the second survey show a class average of 59.2. The data reveals 60% of the students in the class had a positive gain score of 6 points while the other 40% of students

had a negative gain score of roughly 3 points. The results from the two surveys show a minimal increase in the groups attitude towards writing after the new writing approach was implemented. Although minimal, it can be noted the class gained a more positive attitude during the twelve weeks of using writer's workshop.

The first section of the exit survey (Appendix H) consisted of a 1 (extremely low) to 5 (extremely high) rating scale. Table 1 shows the ratings from each student and the class average for each question. Out of 35 total points, one student scored between a 16-20, four students scored between a 21-25, and two students scored between 26-30. Most of the question ratings fell between a score of 3 (average) and 4 (high) for most of the class. The average class scores for all questions were rated at a 3 with the exception of questions 1 and 2 which report a 2.71 and 2.57. When looking at the class as a whole it appears the writer's workshop had an average effect on their effectiveness and passion for writing. The word "average" would imply that the new approach to writing neither improved nor weakened the class in their writing abilities. It is notable, however, that those students who had a low enthusiasm to write rated the writer's workshop at a 4-5 overall. The students within the class that were average or above average writers tended to rate the approach at a 2-3. The data in Table 1 does agree with the student writing survey results stating the class had a minimal, yet positive, increase in attitude and motivation to write with an increase knowledge of the writing process using the new writing approach.

Table 1

Exit Survey Rating Scale Results

	S 1	S 2	S 3	S4	S 5	S 6	S 7	Average
Question 1	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2.71
Question 2	3	3	2	4	1	2	3	2.57
Question 3	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3.71
Question 4	4	4	4	5	3	4	3	3.86
Question 5	3	4	3	5	3	4	3	3.71
Question 6	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3.42
Question 7	4	5	3	5	1	3	4	3.57
Total Score	25	27	21	29	16	22	24	23.55
Total Points	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35

The second section consisted of five short answer responses from the students' personal experiences with the new writing approach. Student responses (Appendix I) gave a more detailed look at what the rating scale was suggesting. Some of the common ideas from the group are listed below.

- A majority of the students, with the exception of one, stated that they were most happy that they had the ability and freedom to choose their own topics to write about.
- Some of the negatives shared by the students included the amount of writing time the writer's workshop involves, a dislike of the persuasive writing genre, and a challenge to still find ways to overcome writer's block.
- Most students felt that if they continue using the writer's workshop, they will see more positive results and become even better writers.
- A majority of the students, with the exception of one, felt their knowledge about the writing process and their writing skills overall were improved while using the writer's workshop.

- A majority of the students, with the exception of one, felt their passion for writing had increased slightly in some way.

When comparing the written responses with the more quantitative data, the results seem to be similar. For example, the students appeared to have a small increase in their passion to write from the surveys. In their written responses the students use phrases like “increase a little bit” or “has gotten a little better” when describing their overall passion and attitude for their writing. This parallel shows the students gained a moderately improved their writing attitude. Another note that is worth highlighting is the one exception to the overall responses. There was one particular student who had nothing positive to say about using the writer’s workshop. The student was confident the writer’s workshop didn’t do anything and that it was, in a nutshell, a waste of his time. His written responses show he took little from the new writing approach. However, the quantitative data suggests he still learned something despite his personal assessment.

The writing conference sheets (Appendix G) collected during the project also give some insights to the ways in which the students improved their understanding of the writing process and sharpened their writing skills. The meaningful questions coming from the students during those conferences showed valuable investment into their writing. The focus on the 6+1 writing traits as the primary base for being better writers was a key in determining the success of the new writing approach. The writing conference sheets through the two units of study included:

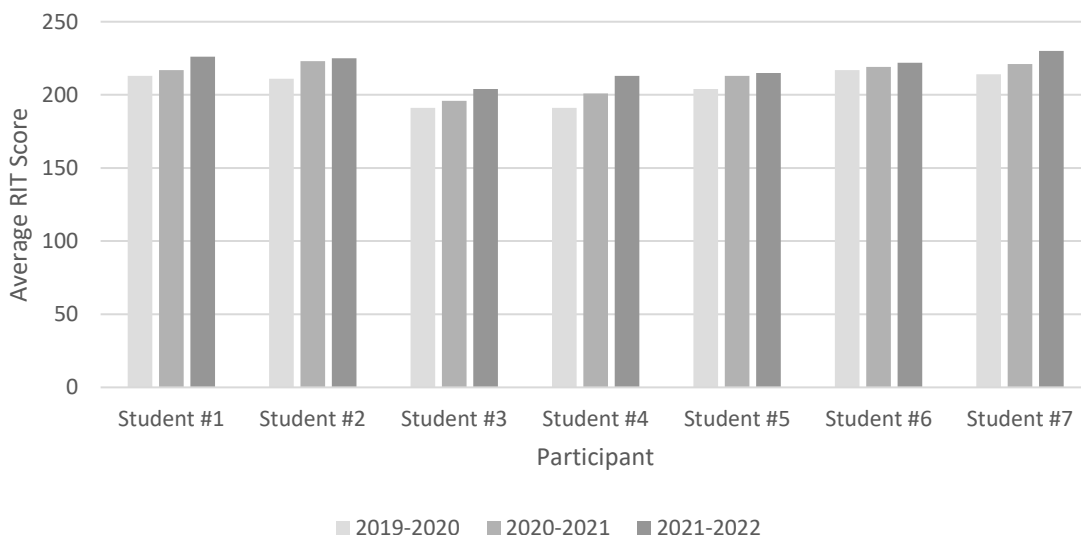
- as a whole group, an overall strong emphasis on organization, sentence fluency, and word choice writing traits

- improvements on transitions between main points within a paragraph and between body paragraphs within the writing
- how to properly develop and implement dialogue within a writing piece
- careful attention given to adding too much or too little detail to a writing piece
- narrowing down topic choices through freewriting and brainstorming resources

Students were able to think about their personal writing and where they wanted to improve. From student-led conferences, the students were able to think through the writing process and the area's most impactful to them. When one trait was focused on, the other areas also began to improve. It is apparent the students achieved a better understanding of the writing process and grew in their passion for writing.

The NWEA MAP test assesses students on a RIT score, as mentioned above. The results in Figure 3 represents the average RIT score for each individual student of the class in the area of language usage over the past two years. Writing has a heavy emphasis on the language usage test which is why it was used to identify growth, or progress, of the

Figure 3
Language Usage RIT Scores from NWEA MAP Assessment



students while using the writer's workshop. There are three bars representing the average total RIT score for each student from the past three school years, specifically in the area of language mechanics. It is important to report both an average growth in writing skills from the class and to identify growth on an individual basis. This gives a better overall perspective on the success of the writer's workshop. The blue and red bars represent school years where a more traditional approach to teaching writing was used. The green bar represents the current school year in which the writer's workshop was implemented.

The average RIT score for the class in 2019-2020 was 205. In the 2020-2021 school year the class average was 212 which was an average class growth of 7 RIT points from the previous year. In 2021-2022 the average class RIT score for language usage was 219. This is an average class growth of 7 RIT points. From the data collected, the writing skills of the collective group grew at the same rate regardless of the writing approach applied. When looking at the student data individually, a couple of observations were made. First, 4 of the 7 students in the class raised their average RIT score by at least 2 points. Of those 4 students, two increased their RIT scores by at least 4. The other three students in the class increased their RIT score by 1 point or less. This means the three students achieved more growth between the two years not using the writer's workshop opposed to switching writing approaches.

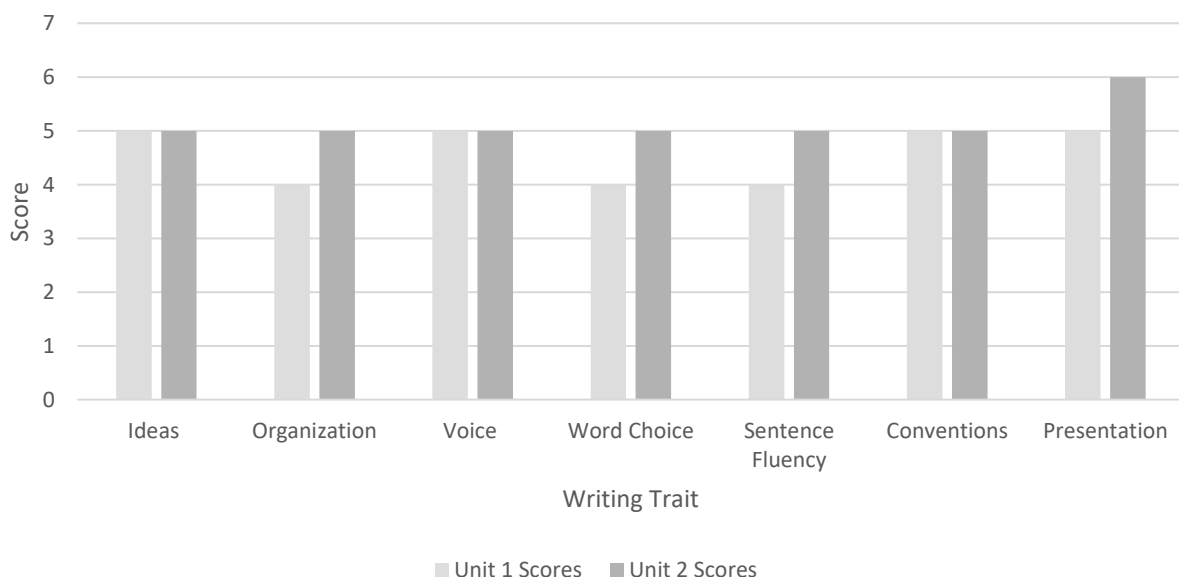
When looking at the data from an average class RIT scores and the individual achievement, it appears the growth from a standardized testing perspective was mild. Each student did have some growth in their knowledge of writing from the 2020-2021 school year and the 2021-2022 school year when using the writer's workshop. However, given the present data, a conclusion can be made that the writer's workshop only had a

moderate, positive effect on the student's knowledge and understanding of the writing process compared to the traditional style of learning to write.

The final, and probably most important piece of data collected that shows the overall success of the writer's workshop was the assessment of each students' writing piece from the two units. As previously mentioned, Ruth Culham's 6+1 rubrics were used to assess the students on both writing pieces. The researcher took rubrics for each trait and combined them into a single document (Appendix J). The document created did not alter the information of the original rubrics, but rather allowed for a more efficient way to assess and report the results. The summary of the results for each individual students writing pieces from both units can be found in Appendix K. In addition, the class averages for using the 6+1 writing traits to assess the writing is shown in Figure 4.

The first item to note from the data provided is the individual improvements made by the students from unit to unit. Three students from the class made improvements on at least 1-3 traits overall. The remaining 4-6 traits remained the same, with small

Figure 4
Average Class Score from 6+1 Trait Scoring Rubrics



improvements within the grading rubric for that particular section. Four of the students in the group made improvements on at least 4-5 of the traits from their first writing piece. Individually, all students either maintained their writing skills in some areas or make moderate (+1) to significant (+2 or +3) improvements on specific skills. No matter the level of understanding, each student made some positive improvements to their writing. It is notable to mention that the traits most improved as a class where the focus in the student-teacher writing conferences: organization, word choice, and sentence fluency.

The second item to highlight from the data is the overall class improvement while working with writing through the 6+1 traits. Figure 4 breaks down the trait and average class score on that trait from unit 1 to unit 2. Ideas, voice, and conventions stayed at a score of 5 (strong) while organization, word choice, sentence fluency, and presentation jumped up one point respectively. These areas improved from being a 4 (refining) to a 5 (strong) or a 5 (strong) to a 6 (exceptional). Again, the areas of organization, word choice, and sentence fluency were emphasized through conferencing and the improvements came within those traits plus one more.

It appears the class was able to adapt and improve their writing with a much different approach to the writing process. This data solidifies once again that the writer's workshop does have a positive impact on a student's ability to write and gives them confidence to be more passionate about their writing.

Chapter IV: Reflective Essay

Introduction

The main goal of this project was to replace a more traditional writing curriculum with a more modern approach known as the writer's workshop. The intent was to give students a more effective method of learning the writing process and promote a stronger, positive attitude in their writing. The writer's workshop can be applied into various grades and classrooms. Because of its versatility, the writer's workshop was modified to fit a multi-grade classroom at Good Shepherd Lutheran School. Students in the class had never used a writer's workshop and were given all the tools and resources to make it a successful experience for them. The teacher set up a special writing area in the classroom where these resources were made readily available whenever needed. Overall, the implementation of the writer's workshop into this setting fit well and the students engaged in the curriculum over the course of the project. This chapter will include an overall conclusion of this curriculum project and some recommendations based off those conclusions and the observations of the participants in the study.

Conclusions

This curriculum study took the form of action research, a process by which a current teaching practice is changed, or modified, to improve the overall quality of the student learning. In this study, a traditional style of teaching 6-8 grade students to write was replaced by a more modern approach known as the writer's workshop. The purpose of this change was to enhance the students' writing skills and their overall passion for writing by using the writer's workshop.

Limitations

There were a few limitations for this project. First, the writer's workshop was implemented in a small, multigrade classroom with a total of seven students. A small sample size with this type of research has its strengths and weaknesses. The limitation is found in the interpretation of the data collected. With only seven students involved in the study, the data collected may not have given a true effect of the writer's workshop and its impact on the class as a whole. Although there were signs of improvement in both areas of the project goals, a larger sample size could have given a more accurate result of improvement.

The second limitation I would note was the data collected from the NWEA MAP test. The data collected from this standardized test did include the test results from a test that assesses the student's ability to write. However, the data included two years with a traditional method of teaching as opposed to only one school year involving the implementation of the writer's workshop. The growth reported from year to year is an accurate look at the student's ability to write, but with two years of growth not using the new writer's workshop. This could have been the reason for the smaller, positive increase in growth.

The third and final limitation in this curriculum project study was the unfamiliarity of the writer's workshop to the students involved. None of the students in the class had experience with the writer's workshop until this project. Since all students involved had been exposed to learning to write from a heavy teacher-guided style for years, the switch to a more student-guided approach was a drastic change. Every student has a different way of learning, but a few of the students in the class had a hard time adjusting to the new student-guided approach in such a short amount of time. Despite the

introduction to writer's workshop that took place prior to implementation, it may not have been enough background and experience for each student to feel comfortable with this new approach to learning how to write. Because of this, I feel the study itself would have done better given more instruction as to what to expect in a writer's workshop writing class.

Takeaways

I enjoyed taking the time to research, develop, and implement the writer's workshop into my classroom over the last several months. Learning a new method to teaching my students to write was an opportunity for me to step outside my comfort zone. I was able to adapt my writing classes to better meet the needs of my students while also giving them a chance to find a stronger motivation and passion in their writing. I had a great time watching my students grow in their knowledge of the writing process at their pace while also focusing on their individual needs.

One advantage of the writer's workshop is its versatility to be used at any grade level or classroom structure. The research done for this study shows that the writer's workshop can be successfully implemented into a kindergarten classroom or an 7-8 grade classroom. Overall, the writer's workshop fit well into the multigrade classroom setting. An hour portion was taken from the morning routine and converted to the writer's workshop curriculum without disrupting the other subjects needing to be taught. Its versatility also helped meet the needs of each student among the three grade levels present in the classroom without the need to teach to each individual grade. The class was taught together, and the teacher worked with the students one-to-one as needed. This one-to-one time strengthened the students' ability to work on an area of writing needed. The

writing conferences played an important role in this aspect of student-based learning. Another advantage to the writer's workshop was the ability for me to let go as the teacher and give students the opportunity to write on topics of their choosing. Most of the students in the class had an easier time writing on topics they enjoyed rather than being forced into a topic of disinterest. As the data states, the positive progress in knowledge and passion for the writing was moderate, yet the writer's workshop was positively received by the whole class.

The amount of work that went into the development and planning of each unit was made easier by learning and borrowing of different ideas from other educators who also have experience in teaching the writer's workshop. The number of resources out there allowed me to put together each unit from a different educator, but then modify it to fit the needs of my particular class. Planning for minilessons was a bit challenging. All of the minilessons had to be designed with effectiveness while keeping them brief. Student writing, conferencing, and sharing made up the larger portion of a writer's workshop model. With that in mind, it was challenging at first to keep those minilessons within the 5–8-minute range. Once a routine had been established, this was easier to accomplish. Overall, the writer's workshop took about the same amount of time to prepare for as the traditional writing approach yet had a much more meaningful impact on the student's ability to write.

Finally, the data shows a moderate increase in each student's understanding of the writing process, how to write, and their passion for writing. The slight increase was also seen on a whole-group level. As I reflect back on the main purpose and goals of this project, I can see the benefits of the writer's workshop method and its ability to positively

impact a student's writing skills. Although the positive impacts were not large, the students achieved the goals laid out for this study. A majority of the class overcame many of the "writing monsters" they were dealing with prior to this study. They also came to realize how a student-driven approach can have some value to their learning to write. These conclusions can be made simply from the written responses to their experience with using the writer's workshop (Appendix I).

Recommendations

My positive experience with this curriculum project can indeed be shared with other writing teachers who take the time to implement this writing approach in their classrooms. Some teachers may find it hard to switch over to the new method after spending years teaching writing as they have come to learn so well. There is no doubt a lot of initial work will need to go into learning, developing, and implementing this new writing approach, but in the end, it will be worth the time and energy to watch your students grow in their love for writing. When faced with both challenges and successes during my personal experience, it was great to see my students continue to learn to the best of their God-given abilities. I would recommend other teachers strongly consider implementing the writer's workshop into their own classrooms. I have been encouraged through my own research and experience with using the writer's workshop to share my new-found knowledge of this writing approach with other teachers I serve alongside in the future.

As a school principal and teacher, I have a unique opportunity to use the writer's workshop personally in my future classrooms and work with other teachers on the faculty who are interested in implementing a writer's workshop in their classrooms. My intention

is to take my experience and knowledge from this study and use it to better student writing in the future. There are, however, some items that would need to be considered before moving forward in the future. The following are some of the areas I would like to research, modify, and possibly change in regard to the writer's workshop:

- Research the different writer's workshop time blocks (45-minute, 60-minute, 90-minute) and identify the one that has the least and greatest impact on student writing.
- Research the different resources available for a full-year writer's workshop curriculum and modify them to fit the current classroom structure.
- Expand the writer's workshop into a writing and reading workshop curriculum that combines the two subject areas into one whole unit of study.
- Enhance the writer's workshop introductory unit to give the students a stronger foundation to build their writing skills on in other units.
- Track the student's experience with the writer's workshop multiple times during the school year to allow for more real-time modifications as the students give feedback.
- Encourage students to push themselves to write outside of their comfort zone.
- Provide more writing resources for students to utilize including grading rubrics, examples of different writing genres, and hardcopy dictionaries and thesauruses.
- Provide more share time during class as opposed to sharing with the group their final pieces when the unit is over.

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Appendix A: Writing Attitude Survey

Writing Attitude Survey





Name _____ School _____ Grade _____

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1. How would you feel writing a letter to the author of a book you read?





2. How would you feel if you wrote about something you have heard or seen?


























3. How would you feel writing a letter to a store asking about something you might buy there?










































4. How would you feel telling in writing why something happened?

<small>GARFIELD © PAWS. All rights reserved.</small>	<p>10. How would you feel if you had a job as a writer for a newspaper or magazine?</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div>
	<p>11. How would you feel about becoming an even better writer than you already are?</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div>
	<p>12. How would you feel about writing a story instead of doing homework?</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div>
	<p>13. How would you feel about writing a story instead of watching TV?</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div>
	<p>14. How would you feel writing about something you did in science?</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div>

GARFIELD © PAW'S. All rights reserved.	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?			

<small>GARFIELD © PAWS. All rights reserved.</small>	<p>20. How would you feel if your teacher asked you to go back and change some of your writing?</p>
	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div>
	<p>21. How would you feel if your classmates talked to you about making your writing better ?</p>
	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div>
	<p>22. How would you feel writing an advertisement for something people can buy?</p>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div>	
<p>23. How would you feel keeping a journal for class?</p>	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div>	
<p>24. How would you feel writing about things that have happened in your life?</p>	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div>	

GARFIELD: © PAWS. All rights reserved.	25. How would you feel writing about something from another person's point of view?			
				
GARFIELD: © PAWS. All rights reserved.	26. How would you feel about checking your writing to make sure the words you have written are spelled correctly?			
				
GARFIELD: © PAWS. All rights reserved.	27. How would you feel if your classmates read something you wrote?			
				
GARFIELD: © PAWS. All rights reserved.	28. How would you feel if you didn't write as much in school?			
				

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**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: _____

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)

Midyear percentile ranks by grade and scale (continued)

[illegible]

Appendix B: Student Writing Profile

Name: _____

Date: _____

Grade: _____

Teacher: _____

Write a paragraph (3-4 sentences) about each of the following prompts.

1. What I like about my writing...
2. Three writing goals that you will work on during writer's workshop this semester...
3. My plans for reaching my three goals and improving my writing this semester...
4. My favorite place to write is...
5. What writing piece am I most proud of...
6. This makes my writing unique and different from my classmates...
7. My favorite type of writing is...
8. My least favorite type of writing is...
9. Writing is important to me because...
10. Two other things I would like to share about me as a writer...

Appendix C: Writer's Workshop Unit 1 Block Plan

Unit One: Culham's 6+1 Writing Traits				
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Day 1 Culham's Traits: Overview	Day 1 Culham's Traits: Trait #2	Day 1 Culham's Traits: Trait #3	Day 1 Culham's Traits: Trait #5	Day 1 *Students pick a trait to be scored*
Day 2 Culham's Traits: Overview	Day 2 Culham's Traits: Trait #2	Day 2 Culham's Traits: Trait #4	Day 2 Culham's Traits: Trait #5	Day 2 Writing Day
Day 3 Culham's Traits: Trait #1 *Writing Conferences	Day 3 Culham's Traits: Trait #2 *Writing Conferences	Day 3 Culham's Traits: Trait #4 *Writing Conferences	Day 3 Culham's Traits: Trait #6 *Writing Conferences	Day 3 Writing Day
Day 4 Culham's Traits: Trait #1	Day 4 Culham's Traits: Trait #3	Day 4 Culham's Traits: Trait #4	Day 4 Culham's Traits: Trait #6	Day 4 Writing Day
Day 5 Culham's Traits: Trait #1 *Writing Conferences	Day 5 Culham's Traits: Trait #3 *Writing Conferences	Day 5 Culham's Traits: Trait #5 *Writing Conferences	Day 5 Culham's Traits: Trait #6 *Writing Conferences	Day 5 Final Writing Day of the Unit *Writing Conferences

Appendix D: Ruth Culham's 6+1 Writing Trait Scoring Guides

Student-Friendly Scoring Guide: Ideas

The piece's content—its central message and details that support that message.

<div>6</div> <div>HIGH</div>	EXPERT	<p>My topic is well developed and focused. My piece contains specific, interesting, and accurate details, and new thinking about this topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a clear, central theme or a simple, original storyline. • I've narrowed my theme or story line to create a focused piece that is a pleasure to read. • I've included original information to support my main idea. • I've included specific, interesting, and accurate details that will create pictures in the reader's mind.
<div>5</div>	WELL-DONE	
<div>4</div> <div>MIDDLE</div>	ALMOST THERE	<p>My piece includes many general observations about the topic, but lacks focus and clear, accurate details. I need to elaborate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've stayed on the topic, but my theme or story line is too broad. • I haven't dug into the topic in a logical, focused way. • My unique perspective on this topic is not coming through as clearly as it could. • The reader may have questions after reading this piece because my details leave some questions unanswered.
<div>3</div>	MAKING STRIDES	
<div>2</div> <div>LOW</div>	ON MY WAY	<p>I'm still thinking about the theme or story line for this piece. So far, I've only explored possibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've jotted down some ideas for topics, but it's a hodgepodge. • Nothing in particular stands out as important in my piece. • I have not written much. I may have only restated the assignment. • My details are thin and need to be checked for accuracy.
<div>1</div>	GETTING STARTED	

Student-Friendly Scoring Guide: Organization

The internal structure of the piece—the thread of logic, the pattern of meaning.

<p>6</p> <p>↑</p> <p>HIGH</p>	<p>EXPERT</p> <p>My details unfold in a logical order. The structure makes reading my piece a breeze.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My beginning grabs the reader's attention. • I've used sequence and transition words to guide the reader. • All of my details fit together logically and move along smoothly. • My ending gives the reader a sense of closure and something to think about.
<p>5</p>	<p>WELL-DONE</p>
<p>4</p> <p>↑</p> <p>MIDDLE</p>	<p>ALMOST THERE</p> <p>My piece's organization is pretty basic and predictable. I have the three essential ingredients, a beginning, middle, and end, but that's about it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My beginning is clear, but unoriginal. I've used a technique that writers use all too often. • I've used simple sequence and transition words that stand out too much. • Details need to be added or moved around to create a more logical flow of ideas. • My ending needs work; it's pretty canned.
<p>3</p>	<p>MAKING STRIDES</p>
<p>2</p> <p>↑</p> <p>LOW</p>	<p>ON MY WAY</p> <p>My piece doesn't make much sense because I haven't figured out a way to organize it. The details are jumbled together at this point.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My beginning doesn't indicate where I'm going or why I'm going there. • I have not grouped ideas or connected them using sequence and transition words. • With no sense of order, it will be a challenge for the reader to sort out how the details relate. • I haven't figured out how to end this piece.
<p>1</p>	<p>GETTING STARTED</p>

Student-Friendly Scoring Guide: Voice

The tone and tenor of the piece—the personal stamp of the writer, which is achieved through a strong understanding of purpose and audience.

<div>6</div> <div>↑</div> <div>HIGH</div>	<div>EXPERT</div> <p>I've come up with my own "take" on the topic. I had my audience and purpose clearly in mind as I wrote and presented my ideas in an original way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My piece is expressive, which shows how much I care about my topic. • The purpose for this piece is clear, and I've used a tone and tenor that are appropriate for that purpose. • There is no doubt in my mind that the reader will understand how I think and feel about my topic. • I've expressed myself in some new, original ways.
<div>5</div> <div>↑</div> <div>MIDDLE</div>	<div>WELL-DONE</div>
<div>4</div> <div>↑</div> <div>MIDDLE</div>	<div>ALMOST THERE</div> <p>My feelings about the topic come across as uninspired and predictable. The piece is not all that expressive, nor does it reveal a commitment to the topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a few places, my authentic voice comes through, but only in a few. • My purpose for writing this piece is unclear to me, so the tone and tenor feel "off." • I've made little effort to connect with the reader; I'm playing it safe. • This piece sounds like lots of others on this topic. It's not very original.
<div>3</div> <div>↑</div> <div>LOW</div>	<div>MAKING STRIDES</div>
<div>2</div> <div>↑</div> <div>LOW</div>	<div>ON MY WAY</div> <p>I haven't thought at all about my purpose or audience for the piece, and therefore, my voice falls flat. I'm pretty indifferent to the topic and it shows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've put no energy into this piece. • My purpose for writing this piece is a mystery to me, so I'm casting about aimlessly. • Since my topic isn't interesting to me, chances are, my piece won't be interesting to the reader. I haven't thought about my audience. • I have taken no risks. There is no evidence that I find this topic interesting or care about it at all.
<div>1</div>	<div>GETTING STARTED</div>

Student-Friendly Scoring Guide: Word Choice

The specific vocabulary the writer uses to convey meaning and enlighten the reader.

<div>6</div> <div>HIGH</div>	<div>EXPERT</div> <p>The words and phrases I've selected are accurate, specific, and natural sounding. My piece conveys precisely what I want to say because of my powerful vocabulary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My piece contains strong verbs that bring it alive. • I stretched by using the perfect words and phrases to convey my ideas. • I've used content words and phrases with accuracy and precision. • I've picked the best words and phrases, not just the first ones that came to mind.
<div>5</div> <div>MIDDLE</div>	<div>WELL-DONE</div>
<div>4</div> <div>MIDDLE</div>	<div>ALMOST THERE</div> <p>My words and phrases make sense but aren't very accurate, specific, or natural sounding. The reader won't have trouble understanding them. However, he or she may find them uninspiring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've used passive voice. I should rethink passages that contain passive voice and add "action words." • I haven't come up with extraordinary ways to say ordinary things. • My content words and phrases are accurate, but general. I might have overused jargon. I need to choose more precise words. • I need to revise this piece by replacing its weak words and phrases with strong ones.
<div>3</div>	<div>MAKING STRIDES</div>
<div>2</div> <div>LOW</div>	<div>ON MY WAY</div> <p>My words and phrases are so unclear the reader may wind up more confused than entertained, informed, or persuaded. I need to expand my vocabulary to improve this piece.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My verbs are not strong. Passive voice permeates this piece. • I've used bland words and phrases throughout—or the same words and phrases over and over. • My content words are neither specific nor accurate enough to make the meaning clear. • My words and phrases are not working; they distract the reader rather than guide him or her.
<div>1</div>	<div>GETTING STARTED</div>

Student-Friendly Scoring Guide: Sentence Fluency

The way words and phrases flow through the piece. It is the auditory trait because it's "read" with the ear as much as the eye.

<div>6</div> <div>↑</div> <div>HIGH</div>	<div>EXPERT</div> <p>My piece is strong because I've written a variety of well-built sentences. I've woven those sentences together to create a smooth-sounding piece.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've constructed and connected my sentences for maximum impact. • I've varied my sentence lengths and types—short and long, simple and complex. • When I read my piece aloud, it is pleasing to my ear. • I've broken grammar rules intentionally at points to create impact and interest.
<div>5</div>	<div>WELL-DONE</div>
<div>4</div> <div>↑</div> <div>MIDDLE</div>	<div>ALMOST THERE</div> <p>Although my sentences lack variety or creativity, most of them are grammatically correct. Some of them are smooth, while others are choppy and awkward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've written solid shorter sentences. Now I need to try some longer ones. • I've created different kinds of sentences, but the result is uneven. • When I read my piece aloud, I stumble in a few places. • Any sentences that break grammar rules are accidental and don't work well.
<div>3</div>	<div>MAKING STRIDES</div>
<div>2</div> <div>↑</div> <div>LOW</div>	<div>ON MY WAY</div> <p>My sentences are choppy, incomplete, or rambling. I need to revise my piece extensively to make it more readable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many of my sentences don't work because they're poorly constructed. • I've used the same sentence lengths and types over and over again. • When I read my piece aloud, I stumble in many places. • If I've broken grammar rules, it's not for stylistic reasons. It's because I may not understand those rules.
<div>1</div>	<div>GETTING STARTED</div>

Student-Friendly Scoring Guide: Conventions

The mechanical correctness of the piece. Correct use of conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and grammar and usage) guides the reader through text easily.

6	↑	HIGH	EXPERT	<p>My piece proves I can use a range of conventions with skill and creativity. It is ready for its intended audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My spelling is strong. I've spelled all or nearly all the words accurately. • I've used punctuation creatively and correctly and begun new paragraphs in the right places. • I've used capital letters correctly throughout my piece, even in tricky places. • I've taken care to apply standard English grammar and usage.
			WELL-DONE	
5	↑	MIDDLE	ALMOST THERE	<p>My writing still needs editing to correct problems in one or more conventions. I've stuck to the basics and haven't tried challenging conventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've misspelled words that I use all the time, as well as complex words that I don't use as often. • My punctuation is basically strong. I should review it one more time. I indented some of the paragraphs, but not all of them. • I've correctly used capital letters in obvious places (such as the word I), but not in others. • Even though my grammar and usage are not 100 percent correct, my audience should be able read my piece.
4	↑		MAKING STRIDES	
3	↑	LOW	ON MY WAY	<p>The problems I'm having in conventions make this piece challenging to read, even for me! I've got lots of work to do before it's ready for its intended audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive spelling errors make my piece difficult to read and understand. • I haven't punctuated or paragraphed the piece well, which are necessary to guide the reader. • My use of capital letters is so inconsistent it's distracting. • I need to clean up the piece considerably in terms of grammar and usage.
2	↑		GETTING STARTED	
1				

Student-Friendly Scoring Guide: Presentation

The physical appearance of the piece. A visually appealing text provides a welcome mat. It invites the reader in.

<div>6</div> <div>HIGH</div>	<div>EXPERT</div> <p>My piece's appearance makes it easy to read and enjoy. I've taken care to ensure that it is pleasing to my reader's eye.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've written clearly and legibly. My letters, words, and the spaces between them are uniform. • My choice of font style, size, and/or color makes my piece a breeze to read. • My margins frame the text nicely. There are no tears, smudges, or cross-outs. • Text features such as bulleted lists, charts, pictures, and headers are working well.
<div>5</div>	<div>WELL-DONE</div>
<div>4</div> <div>MIDDLE</div>	<div>ALMOST THERE</div> <p>My piece still looks like a draft. Many visual elements should be cleaned up and handled with more care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My handwriting is readable, but my letters, words, and the spaces between them should be treated more consistently. • My choice of font style, size, and/or color seems "off"—inappropriate for my intended audience. • My margins are uneven. There are some tears, smudges, or cross-outs. • I've handled simple text features well but am struggling with the more complex ones.
<div>3</div>	<div>MAKING STRIDES</div>
<div>2</div> <div>LOW</div>	<div>ON MY WAY</div> <p>My piece is almost unreadable because of its appearance. It's not ready for anyone but me to read.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My handwriting is so hard to read it creates a visual barrier. • The font styles, sizes, and/or colors I've chosen are dizzying. They're not working. • My margins are uneven or nonexistent, making the piece difficult to read. • I haven't used text features well, even simple ones.
<div>1</div>	<div>GETTING STARTED</div>

Appendix E: Writer's Workshop Unit 2 Block Plan

Unit Two: Persuasive Writing				
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Day 1 Intro Day	Day 1 Minilesson 4	Day 1 Minilesson 9	Day 1 Minilesson 14	Day 1 Writing Day
Day 2 Intro Day	Day 2 Minilesson 5	Day 2 Minilesson 10	Day 2 Minilesson 15	Day 2 Writing Day
Day 3 Minilesson 1 *Writing Conferences	Day 3 Minilesson 6 *Writing Conferences	Day 3 Minilesson 11 *Writing Conferences	Day 3 Writing Day *Writing Conferences	Day 3 Writing Day *Writing Conferences
Day 4 Minilesson 2	Day 4 Minilesson 7	Day 4 Minilesson 12	Day 4 Writing Day	Day 4 Writing Day
Day 5 Minilesson 3 *Writing Conferences	Day 5 Minilesson 8 *Writing Conferences	Day 5 Minilesson 13 *Writing Conferences	Day 5 Writing Day *Writing Conferences	Day 5 Final Writing Day *Writing Conferences

Appendix F: Ruth Culham's Persuasive Writing Rubric

Scoring Guide: Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing contains a strong argument based on solid information that convinces the reader to embrace the writer's point of view. Sometimes persuasive writing is a call to action, such as a donation solicitation from a charitable organization. Other times, it's an attempt to change attitudes, such as an op-ed piece in your local newspaper. Regardless of the format, the writing needs to be clear, compelling, and well supported. The writer should not waver in his or her position.

6	↑	HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influences the reader's thinking through sound reasoning and a compelling argument. Contains opinions that are well supported by facts and personal experiences. Differences between opinion, facts, and personal experiences are clear. Takes a position that is defensible and logical. Exposes weaknesses of other positions. Avoids generalities and exaggerations. Includes many moments of sound reasoning and judgment. Reveals only the best evidence to make the strongest statement possible. Connects to a larger "truth."
			STRONG	
4	↑	MIDDLE	REFINING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raises questions for the reader, but may fail to persuade him or her because the thinking is superficial and only hints at something deep. Mixes opinions, facts, and personal experiences. The piece relies on emotion more than truth. Data may be present, but not used to full effect. Contains an argument that starts out strong, but fades. Offers few new insights into the topic. Attempts to expose holes in other opinions, with mixed results. Features generalities or exaggerations, but also concrete information and clear examples. Includes a few moments of sound reasoning and judgment. Contains some evidence that hits the mark and some that veers off course. Waffles. Many statements are plausible while others are far-fetched, leaving the reader unconvinced.
3			DEVELOPING	
2	↑	LOW	EMERGING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not influence the reader. The writer's thinking and reasoning is vulnerable to attack. Abounds with opinions that are not supported by facts or personal experiences. Takes a position that is not clear or not credible. The argument is illogical or implausible. Ignores the opposing side of the argument. Offers only generalities and exaggerations—no hard facts that could sway the reader. Includes no moments of sound reasoning and judgment. Lacks the evidence necessary for the reader to take a stand. Does not question or does not probe. The piece misses the target.
1			RUDIMENTARY	

Appendix G: Writing Conference Recording Sheet

Date of Conference	Student Focus for Conference	Teaching Point	Student Goals

Appendix H: Writer's Workshop Exit Survey

	1 (Extremely Low)	2 (Low)	3 (Average)	4 (High)	5 (Extremely High)
Rate your enthusiasm as a writer after using the writer's workshop approach.					
Rate your passion towards writing after using the writer's workshop approach.					
Rate your knowledge about the writing process since beginning writer's workshop.					
Rate your overall experience with learning to write using the writer's workshop.					
Rate your ability to write informally using the writer's workshop approach.					
Rate your ability to write formally using the writer's workshop approach.					
Rate your satisfaction with your writing using writer's workshop.					

Answer the following questions using complete sentences.

1. What do you like about writer's workshop? Explain.
2. What didn't you enjoy about Writer's Workshop? Explain.
3. Do you feel using the writer's workshop moving forward would help you become a better writer in the future? Explain.

4. After using the writer's workshop, do you feel your writing skills have been improved upon better than your past experience with learning to write? Explain.
5. After using the writer's workshop, do you feel your passion for writing is greater than before? Explain.

Appendix I: Writer's Workshop Exit Survey Student Responses***What do you like about writer's workshop? Explain.***

- "I like writer's workshop because I have the freedom to choose what I write about. I like this because in my other classroom, my teachers would choose what I write about."
- "I really like how I am free to write my own writing pieces. I can choose my topic and make it my own."
- "I like that we get to write about topics we choose."
- "I like that I get to pick what I want to write about. I also like that there is no length requirement."
- "I like nothing about it. I like it because we didn't have to do grammar."
- "I like how you get to write about anything you want. I like the minilessons because I learn something new about writing in a short amount of time."
- "I like that I get to do my best in my own writing. I liked getting to meet with my peers to see where I can improve."

What didn't you enjoy about Writer's Workshop? Explain.

- "I mainly didn't like the fact of how much I had to write because I got writer's block very often and didn't know what to write."
- "I don't like how much time it takes in a class period. What happens when I have writer's block and I need to take a break or if I get tired for writing so long and then my writing becomes worse?"
- "I didn't like the persuasive speech in writer's workshop. I feel I am still unable to persuade someone on a certain topic."

- “I didn’t like how you have to draft multiple times. I wish I could have just drafted once and finished the piece.”
- “I don’t like writing itself. I don’t like writing about different genres. I don’t like writing for a long time. I don’t like freewriting, revising, or editing.”
- “I didn’t like persuasive writing, even with writer’s workshop.”
- “Most of the minilessons were long and I didn’t understand some of the material. It left me little time to brainstorm and think more about my writing like I wanted too.”

Do you feel using the writer’s workshop moving forward would help you become a better writer in the future? Explain.

- “I do, because if I didn’t have writer’s workshop I wouldn’t know how to write.”
- “Yes. The more you write the more your practice will make you a better writer. With the lessons it also offers tricks to implement into my writing and will become a muscle memory.”
- “I will use what I learned in high school. I probably won’t write by myself at home because I get bored writing still.”
- “Yes. I think writer’s workshop is a much better way of teaching writing. You get to write about what you are passionate about and not just your teacher telling you what to write about.”
- “No. I feel I would say the same thing as the above question.”
- “I think that if I use writer’s workshop moving forward it will make me a better writer.”

- “Writer’s workshop may help me because I know more now about the writing process than before. It helped me make improvements to my writing.”

After using the writer’s workshop, do you feel your writing skills have been improved upon better than your past experience with learning to write? Explain.

- “I do, because before I had no idea how to correctly write but the writer’s workshop has taught me how to write.”
- “Yes. The more I look through my writing the more it flows and the less mistakes I see.” My old writing never looked like this, so I know I improved.”
- “Yes. My writing skills have improved a lot while using writer’s workshop. When I was 8 or 9, I didn’t like to write which is why I didn’t do good. Now I know I can write better.”
- Yes. I am able to have fun with my writing and not just be another subject to complete work in.”
- No. I feel I haven’t changed my writing skills.”
- I think I have improved my writing skills because the minilessons taught me a lot about writing and grammar in writing.”
- “I believe I have gotten better at writing after using the writer’s workshop.”

After using the writer’s workshop, do you feel your passion for writing is greater than before? Explain.

- “Yes, because I know how to write now, so writing is more fun that it was before.”
- “Yes. I know that I will make it sound good, flow better, and have good stories to write. I have more of a passion to write instead of dreading it every day.”

- “My passion is better because I didn’t like writing when I was younger but now, I like writing a little bit more.”
- “I am definitely more passionate about my writing than before. I like it way better than just writing a regular essay paper.”
- “No. It made me not like writing even more.”
- I think my passion for writing is just a little better than before we started writer’s workshop.”
- “I wasn’t so sure my writing skills were very good before I learned about writer’s workshop, so I believe my passion for writing better has grown a bit more since I practiced the new writing approach.”

Appendix J: Culham's 6+1 Scoring Rubric – Modified

6+1 Writing Traits Grading Rubric						
	Exceptional – 6	Strong – 5	Refining – 4	Developing – 3	Emerging – 2	Rudimentary – 1
Ideas	A. Finding a Topic B. Focusing the Topic C. Developing the Topic D. Using Details		A. Finding a Topic B. Focusing the Topic C. Developing the Topic D. Using Details		A. Finding a Topic B. Focusing the Topic C. Developing the Topic D. Using Details	
Organization	A. Creating the Lead B. Using Sequence and Transition Words C. Structuring the Body D. Ending with a Sense of Resolution		A. Creating the Lead B. Using Sequence and Transition Words C. Structuring the Body D. Ending with a Sense of Resolution		A. Creating the Lead B. Using Sequence and Transition Words C. Structuring the Body D. Ending with a Sense of Resolution	
Voice	A. Establishing a Tone B. Conveying the Purpose C. Creating a Connection to the Audience D. Taking risks to Create Voice		A. Establishing a Tone B. Conveying the Purpose C. Creating a Connection to the Audience D. Taking risks to Create Voice		A. Establishing a Tone B. Conveying the Purpose C. Creating a Connection to the Audience D. Taking risks to Create Voice	
Word Choice	A. Applying Strong Verbs B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases C. Using specific and Accurate Words D. Choosing Words that Deepen Meaning		A. Applying Strong Verbs B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases C. Using specific and Accurate Words D. Choosing Words that Deepen Meaning		A. Applying Strong Verbs B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases C. Using specific and Accurate Words D. Choosing Words that Deepen Meaning	
Sentence Fluency	A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences B. Varying Sentence Types C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow D. Break the “rules” to Create Fluency		A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences B. Varying Sentence Types C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow D. Break the “rules” to Create Fluency		A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences B. Varying Sentence Types C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow D. Break the “rules” to Create Fluency	
Conventions	A. Checking Spelling B. Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately C. Capitalizing Correctly D. Applying Grammar and Usage		A. Checking Spelling B. Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately C. Capitalizing Correctly D. Applying Grammar and Usage		A. Checking Spelling B. Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately C. Capitalizing Correctly D. Applying Grammar and Usage	
Presentation	A. Applying Handwriting Skills B. Using Word Processing Correctly C. Making Good Use of White Space D. Refining Text Features		A. Applying Handwriting Skills B. Using Word Processing Correctly C. Making Good Use of White Space D. Refining Text Features		A. Applying Handwriting Skills B. Using Word Processing Correctly C. Making Good Use of White Space D. Refining Text Features	

Appendix K: Scoring Results for Individual Student Writing Pieces

Student #1		
Topic 1: Shark Attacks		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	5	Strong
Organization	5	Strong
Voice	5	Strong
Word Choice	5	Strong
Sentence Fluency	5	Strong
Conventions	5	Strong
Presentation	5	Strong

Student #2		
Topic 1: The History - Gaming Consoles		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	5	Strong
Organization	4	Refining
Voice	5	Strong
Word Choice	4	Refining
Sentence Fluency	4	Refining
Conventions	5	Strong
Presentation	5	Strong

Student #3		
Topic 1: Dogs		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	5	Strong
Organization	3	Developing
Voice	4	Refining
Word Choice	3	Developing
Sentence Fluency	2	Emerging
Conventions	4	Refining
Presentation	4	Refining

Student #4		
Topic 1: Commander Fives		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	5	Strong
Organization	4	Refining
Voice	4	Refining
Word Choice	4	Refining
Sentence Fluency	2	Emerging
Conventions	4	Refining
Presentation	5	Strong

Student #5		
Topic 1: Michigan All-Stars and Head Coach		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	5	Strong
Organization	4	Refining
Voice	5	Strong
Word Choice	5	Strong
Sentence Fluency	5	Strong
Conventions	5	Strong
Presentation	5	Strong

Student #6		
Topic 1: The Ultimate Team		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	5	Strong
Organization	5	Strong
Voice	5	Strong
Word Choice	4	Refining
Sentence Fluency	5	Strong
Conventions	4	Refining
Presentation	5	Strong

Student #7		
Topic 1: The Truth About Peter Pan and Captain Hook		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	5	Strong
Organization	5	Strong
Voice	5	Strong
Word Choice	5	Strong
Sentence Fluency	5	Strong
Conventions	5	Strong
Presentation	5	Strong

Student #1		
Topic 2: Dogs Are Amazing Pets		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	5	Strong ↔ 0
Organization	5	Strong ↔ 0
Voice	5	Strong ↔ 0
Word Choice	5	Strong ↔ 0
Sentence Fluency	5	Strong ↔ 0
Conventions	5	Strong ↔ 0
Presentation	6	Exceptional ↑ 1

Student #2		
Topic 2: Slap Chop		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	6	Exceptional ↑ 1
Organization	5	Strong ↑ 1
Voice	6	Exceptional ↑ 1
Word Choice	5	Strong ↑ 1
Sentence Fluency	6	Exceptional ↑ 2
Conventions	5	Strong ↔ 0
Presentation	5	Strong ↔ 0

Student #3		
Topic 2: iPhones Are Better Than Samsung		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	5	Strong ↔ 0
Organization	5	Strong ↑ 2
Voice	5	Strong ↑ 1
Word Choice	4	Refining ↑ 1
Sentence Fluency	4	Refining ↑ 2
Conventions	4	Refining ↔ 0
Presentation	6	Exceptional ↑ 2

Student #4		
Topic 2: Green Anoles Are Better Than Brown Anoles		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	5	Strong ↔ 0
Organization	4	Refining ↔ 0
Voice	6	Exceptional ↑ 2
Word Choice	5	Strong ↑ 1
Sentence Fluency	5	Strong ↑ 3
Conventions	5	Strong ↑ 1
Presentation	5	Strong ↔ 0

Student #5		
Topic 2: Kids Should Play An Instrument		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	5	Strong ↔ 0
Organization	5	Strong ↑ 1
Voice	5	Strong ↔ 0
Word Choice	5	Strong ↔ 0
Sentence Fluency	5	Strong ↔ 0
Conventions	5	Strong ↔ 0
Presentation	6	Exceptional ↑ 1

Student #6		
Topic 2: Dogs Are The Best Pets		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	6	Exceptional ↑ 1
Organization	5	Strong ↔ 0
Voice	5	Strong ↔ 0
Word Choice	5	Strong ↑ 1
Sentence Fluency	5	Strong ↔ 0
Conventions	5	Strong ↑ 1
Presentation	5	Strong ↔ 0

Student #7		
Topic 2: Why San Francisco Stinks		
Writing Traits	Rubric Score	Rubric Explanation
Ideas	6	Exceptional ↑ 1
Organization	6	Exceptional ↑ 1
Voice	5	Strong ↔ 0
Word Choice	5	Strong ↔ 0
Sentence Fluency	6	Exceptional ↑ 1
Conventions	6	Exceptional ↑ 1
Presentation	6	Exceptional ↑ 1