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WRITING WORKSHOPS:

THE AUTHENTIC

WRITING

EXPERIENCE

by

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April 20, 2023

## ABSTRACT

### WRITING WORKSHOPS:

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#### EXPERIENCE

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The University of Texas at Arlington, 2023

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Many of the artistic aspects of writing are lost in the common lecture-style teaching of grammar and essays. A writing workshop is used to resolve this, acting as a coaching approach to teaching writing in which students move at their own pace. To study the effectiveness of a writing workshop, a third-grade student from an urban setting was worked with three times a week. These sessions began with 10 minutes on an aspect of learning, followed by 30 minutes of writing, and 10 minutes of conferencing. After working with the student, it was found that the student's writing greatly benefited from the writing workshop. The writing improved in detail, voice, proper grammar, punctuation usage, etc. The student also commented that writing was much more creative than

previously thought. Therefore, it is concluded that a writing workshop is useful in today's classroom environment.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Prospective teachers rely not only upon their course work, but also upon their field experiences to learn how to become an effective classroom teacher. Learning how to teach writing is a major priority for prospective teachers who want to teach in an elementary classroom. The state education agencies such as the Texas Education Agency require teacher preparation programs to address standards and competencies which include composition and writing conventions. Similarly, these state agencies require elementary teachers and school districts to adhere to state curriculum requirements that include written composition and writing conventions. Leaders in the field of English language arts recommend using a writing workshop approach based upon theory, research, and practice. However, information about how to provide a writing workshop has not been a part of every classroom teacher's professional development. Moreover, many elementary teachers do not teach writing on a daily basis. Therefore, even when a prospective teacher learns about how to provide effective writing instruction in their university coursework, they often are unable to witness a writing workshop approach in their field experiences.

The predominate type of writing instruction taking place is problematic for the development of prospective teachers and their future students. Most often, writing is taught by providing students with topics to write on and is primarily used for students to practice

writing conventions. If taught at all, writing often contains no joy for a student or their teacher. If a prospective teacher is not able to actively engage in implementing a writing workshop during their education to become a teacher, one is not likely to try a writing workshop when teaching even if the teacher has learned about the writing workshop approach in university courses and believes it is more effective than traditional writing instruction. The writing workshop is based upon underlying principles that are quite different from traditional writing instruction, such as the five principles and these underlying principles call for instruction vastly different from what prospective teachers have experienced. When juggling the multiple demands of classroom teaching and management, even experienced teachers do not have the time to try out major changes in an instructional approach unless they have ample time and support as they do. The shortcomings of the field experiences prospective teachers experience yield a shortcoming in their development. In turn, the prospective teachers' students are not likely to receive the type of effective writing instruction recommended by the experts in the field.

### 1.2 Purpose of the Study

An overall purpose of this study is to understand what takes place when a prospective teacher does have the opportunity to implement a writing workshop working with a child during a semester. Recommendations from leaders in the field of English language arts indicate that prospective teachers and students both benefit from experiences with the writing workshop approach. What remains less clear are the dynamics of how working with a child could support the development of the child and the prospective teacher.

More specifically, the study has two major research questions. Research Question 1 focuses upon the impact of a writing workshop on a child: When providing a writing workshop to a child, what types of responses does a child have and what factors play a role?

Research Question 2 focuses upon the impact of implementing a writing workshop on the development of the prospective teacher: When a prospective teacher implements a writing workshop, what types of learning take place and what factors play a role?

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has developed position statements where a committee of experts in the field synthesize the research literature to make recommendations for the field. One NCTE position statement, *Understanding and Teaching Writing: Guiding Principles* (2018), presents four essential principles for teaching writing deemed essential. In introducing the principles, the statement points out that an educators' goal for their learners is to develop their writing ability each time a learner is writing. This is done through a conscious effort of designing a classroom experience that facilitates learning. Additionally, the position statement explains that the metaphor of "grow" is used to describe the main focus of each writing experience. Each time a learner is writing the focus of instruction is on whether the learner is gaining an author's voice to be used in their future writing, conventional writing skills, or an increased view of the importance of writing to convey their thoughts.

#### 2.1 First NCTE Principle

The first principle discussed by the NCTE is that writers will grow within a culture of feedback. This principle describes how the teacher lowers themselves to the level of the child. Once the teacher and child are peers, the teacher can facilitate peer feedback on the child's writing, fueling the ongoing revision process of the child's writing. In doing so, the teacher should also prompt the child's metacognitive thinking; why do they make the

choice in the writing they do? This culture of feedback will ultimately assist the child in seeing the new possibilities for their writing in the future.

### 2.2 Second NCTE Principle

The second principle states that writers grow when they broaden their repertoire and when they refine their judgement in making choices with their repertoire. This describes how writers must broaden their use of writing strategies beyond their natural methods to ensure that their writing connects to others. Refining their judgement in making choices with their repertoire refers to the need of writers to practice connecting their writing with others and thinking about how the choices they make in their writing confirms these connections.

### 2.3 Third NCTE Principle

The third principle refers to the idea that assessment should be transparent and contextual, and it should provide risks for the writer to grow. The risks a writer experiences allow for growth in the student writer's ability to envision the rest of their piece of writing. When allowed multiple situations to write within, rather than just high-stakes assessments, writers are more open to new methods in their writing, which is why assessments should be on-going. Assessments should also take into account the context of the scenario, so that student writers may respond differently to these contexts in the future.

### 2.4 Fourth NCTE Principle

The fourth and final principle discussed by the NCTE is that writers grow when they have a range of writing experiences and in-depth writing experiences. When providing writers with a context for their writing, it must be varied. To gain an understanding of

various writing contexts, student writers must be allowed to write in various contexts. Writing with only a regurgitation of context knowledge in mind will not grow their ability to reflect on their knowledge. The process of writing multiple drafts allows writers to reflect on their growth as a writer, and the process of writing under many different contexts allows student writers to develop all potential scenarios of writing.

### 2.5 Writing Workshops

As presented in the professor-authored course materials (Tice, 2022), Donald Graves and Lucy Calkins have been icons in the field of children's writing, providing principles and descriptions of an effective writing workshop. A writing workshop provides three parts of daily instruction: 1) a mini-lesson, 2) writing and conferences with the teacher, and 3) author's chair or whole-class sharing. writing workshop begins with the teacher presenting a mini-lesson. This mini-lesson is about ten minutes in length. The mini-lesson focuses upon what the students need to know, primarily strategies and techniques writers' use. Teachers also write during the writing workshop, and they use their own writing to model strategies and techniques during the mini-lesson, such as topic selection, adding dialogue, making revisions. After the mini-lesson, the students write, and the teacher circulates among students to have writing conferences with students. These rough-draft conferences are brief, lasting one-three minutes. During a conference, the students read aloud the piece that the student is working on, and the teacher "receives" the work by telling the students what the teacher liked or learned, and then asks genuine questions. During each week of the writing workshop, a teacher meets with each student at least once. Teachers also can use small-group instruction to meet with students to address needs. The writing workshop concludes each day with the author's

chair, or whole class sharing of writing. Following the same structure of the rough-draft conferences, the student reads aloud the piece, and the students tell the writer what they liked or learned and then they ask genuine questions.

After writing for two or three weeks, students select a piece from their writing folders to publish. Then they meet with a teacher in small groups to have a publishing conference, and in his conference the focus is on writing conventions. Students learn to use a proofreading list to check for spelling, punctuation, and usage.

Providing authentic writing experiences is part of the conceptual framework that undergirds the writing workshop. A writing workshop must allow students to select their own topic or focus of their writing. Students write what they care about and know, just as authors do. Students are not required to start a piece and finish the piece at the same time. Students vary when they are finished with a draft, but all students write daily during the writing workshop. Students also are taught to first establish their content and that multiple drafts or revisions are part of the writing process. Attention is provided to learning writing conventions, and learning conventions is meaningful because they are linked to a real purpose: developing a piece of writing that readers can easily read.

In spite of decades of research and recommendations from leaders in the field, classroom teachers and school administrators primarily see writing instruction as a way for preparing for state testing. When writing instruction is provided, a traditional approach is used where topics are assigned, and written products are then graded. In many elementary classrooms writing is not taught if writing is not on the state exam for the grade level.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### 3.1 Study Design

This study represents action research. As described by Clark, Porath, Thiele, and Jobe (2023), action research is an approach often used by teachers, whereby they systematically examine their teaching. Action research provides a way for teachers to address questions through planning, data collection, and data analysis. The process of addressing questions includes ongoing evaluating and reflecting throughout the duration of the study.

The action research took place as the prospective teacher studied teaching writing to a child as a service-learning project with the H.O.P.E Tutoring. H.O.P.E Tutoring is a well-established non-profit agency that strives to help students improve their grades, attitudes, and behavior. Kathy Mitchell, the director of H.O.P.E Tutoring, arranged for the prospective teacher to work with a child at an elementary school.

#### 3.2 Participants

The participants in this study are the prospective teacher and the student, Handy. Handy is a third-grade student at an elementary school in an urban-setting. He was chosen as his teacher believed Handy to possess great potential but needed one-on-one support to reach it. He is a very engaged student with the topic of learning and very eager to learn. In his teacher's eyes, these qualities would help Handy with learning in a writing workshop setting.

At the time of the study, the prospective classroom teacher was beginning the final year in her teacher preparation program. Throughout schooling, the prospective teacher enjoyed instruction in the English language arts. Although experiences with literature were consistently rewarding, the experiences in writing were limited to grammar exercises. During her teacher program she learned about the writing workshop approach in a course and gained some experience in implementing a writing workshop. However, the semester the prospective teacher took this course was during COVID-19 pandemic, and while the course normally has an after-school activity where the prospective teachers would practice implementing a writing workshop with a student, this was not possible. From this, the prospective teacher became very interested in implementing a writing workshop as she experienced planning a writing workshop and practicing launching a writing workshop via video with peers. The prospective teacher read extensively about how to implement a writing workshop and the rationale for a writing workshop, which provided the confidence to then use it for the honors capstone project. Those experiences became a springboard for wanting to implement a writing workshop with one child for this study to be able to learn more about the approach and its potential in helping students.

### 3.3 Instructional Approach

Traditionally, writing instruction has entailed assigning a topic and students submit a written product that is graded. However, students often do not receive the support they need during the process to help them reach their potential as writers. Conversely, the writing workshop approach provides authentic writing experiences drawing upon what writers actually do. The writing workshop approach acknowledges that both the process of writing and the written product are important. Therefore, students receive support as they

write rough drafts and also as they are editing a final draft that they want to publish. One type of support provided during the writing process is through mini-lessons that take place at the beginning of the writing workshop. Through mini-lessons the teacher models the writing, so students learn strategies and techniques that writers use. The mini-lessons are based upon specific needs of the student and the type of writing the student is learning. Another type of support during the writing process takes place through regular writing conferences, and through these the teacher will tell the student what they liked or learned through the words of the writer and ask a genuine question about anything that is not clear. A final way students receive support in a writing workshop is through author's chair where at the conclusion of each writing workshop a student volunteers to read aloud a current rough draft and students provide a class-wide writing conference. The writing workshop is also authentic in providing daily, regular times for writing. Students are not required to all finish on a given date. Students can vary when they begin one piece and begin another, but all students write each day. At a designated point, the teacher will ask students to look into their writing folder and select a piece that they would like to work further on and have an editing conference where they use a proofreading sheet and learn more about writing conventions.

In working with Handy, the prospective teacher was not working with an entire classroom but was able to implement the major elements of a writing workshop approach. The writing workshop was conducted in three one-hour sessions each Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday for eleven successive weeks. Each session, the prospective teacher would pull Handy out of class during third grade's hour of the day designated to independent work time and would begin each writing workshop with a ten-minute mini-lesson. Each mini

lesson was based upon the writing needs shown in Handy's writing from the previous session. After the mini lesson, the prospective teacher would allow Handy to write a personal narrative for thirty minutes with short breaks in which the prospective teacher would check for comprehension in Handy's writing. Each session ended with a ten-minute post conference in which Handy would read aloud his personal narrative that he had wrote. The prospective teacher would then say something that was liked in the story, a question that the prospective teacher had about the story and would ask Handy if there were any immediate revisions, he saw in the story that he could do. If there was any extra time left at the end of a session, the prospective teacher would play a writing game with Handy. The prospective teacher created these games to improve Handy's use of writing conventions. One game worked with spaces between words, another with adding details into a story, and the last was identifying all the details possible in a poem.

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### 3.4 Procedures

The prospective teacher met with a student named Handy over a period of eleven weeks each Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday during the enrichment period for third grade. What follows is a detailed account, where the prospective teacher narrates what happens each week and her reflections upon what is taking place. This narrative account provides the data for the subsequent analysis to address the research questions. The account is divided into segments according to the eleven weeks of the instructional period.

#### *3.4.1 Week 1 – Narrative Account*

On the first day of providing the writing workshop, Dr. Tice and I met at the elementary school so that I could meet the teacher and start working with Handy. I then went back with the teacher to her classroom and as we walked, I asked if there was anything specific about why Handy was chosen to work with me on a writing workshop. I learned that he was chosen to work with me so that he could gain extra tutoring in writing. The teacher added that Handy was a student with potential, but he was very behind grade level. I also asked the classroom teacher how often they write during the week, and the teacher replied that they practice writing for about 30 minutes per week.

After I met Handy, the teacher told me an area where we would be working on the writing workshop. As I was walking to the area with Handy, I asked if he enjoyed writing,

to which he told me that he was not a “fan of writing” and instead preferred to draw. Handy stated that writing was “boring” and asked me if we could just practice drawing instead. Then Handy and I arrived at the area where we would work. It had tables and was an area where we could work quietly by ourselves. I began the workshop by letting Handy choose which table we sat at as I wanted Handy to feel comfortable since he was being pulled from the classroom and I did not want him feeling disheartened that he needed extra help. I sensed that Handy was thinking of writing as just a matter of following rules, not a creative activity. So, I began by telling him that we would be practicing our writing by learning to write like an author. The expression on his face indicated that he was intrigued by that idea.

During week one I also provided my first mini lesson that focused upon topic selection. I explained to handy that we were going to be starting our writing workshop by writing about personal narratives. Writers can find it helpful to write about true stories from their own lives because it will help them select what personal story to write about. He also stated that he did not remember writing a personal narrative many times before.

To do this, I modeled how writers have writing territories, or areas of their life that they are experts on. I thought aloud about topics from my life that I could write about such as my family, summer camp job, my pets, church, and hobbies. Then I talked to him about how from these territories I can get ideas for my personal narratives. For example, from my family territory I could write about things my family did together, such as a Thanksgiving Day experience. I then helped Handy think of five territories he could use to think of personal narrative topics. We brainstormed, and he thought of five writing territories. Later he added another territory, which demonstrated that he understood more about the process of writing and the purpose of these territories.

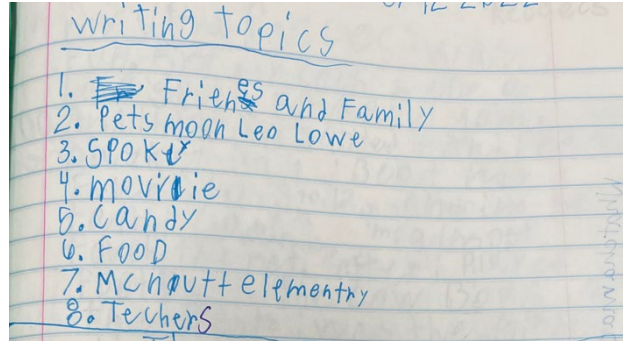


Figure 3.1: Writing Topics- This image reflects the writing topics that Handy chose in the first writing session in week 1.

### 3.4.2 Week 1- Reflections

Before meeting with Handy, I knew I would be working with a child in third grade, but I had not met the child yet. To prepare, I reviewed my class documents I received from Dr. Tice when taking a class about writing workshops at UTA. When learning that Handy was chosen by his teacher because she believed he had great potential as a student but needed special attention to his learning process, I felt nervous that the process may not work as well as his teacher anticipated.

After working with Handy, I was encouraged because even though he told me that he did not like writing at all, when I asked him to, he did write a personal narrative. He was much more excited about the pictures he drew and sharing those with me, but he also enjoyed working with me and was willing to give writing like an author a try.

To begin my work with Handy, I wanted to assess his writing ability. To do this I asked Handy to write a personal narrative, or a true story from his life and Handy chose to write a story about his previous Halloween. Handy wrote this story with 5 sentences and drew pictures to convey detail. What I noticed about Handy's writing is that his overall

idea was coherent, but his sentences were short, and his words would run together. He did focus on the topic about Halloween, and it was coherent, but his story lacked details or elaboration to convey what took place. I also could see that Handy did not place spaces between his words and also did not use conventional punctuation and capitalization.

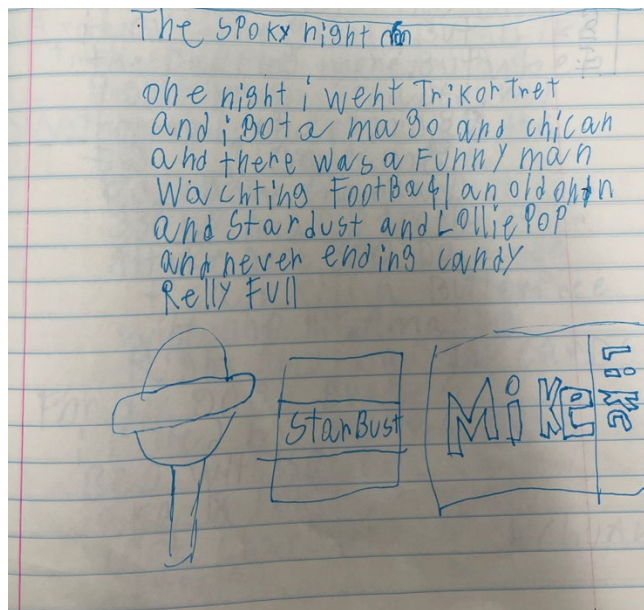


Figure 3.2: The Spooky Night - This image reflects the first personal narrative that Handy wrote. It was about the previous Halloween, and he relied heavily on pictures for details.

### 3.4.3 Week 2- Narrative Account

During the next session, Handy was excited to see me and told me that he was looking forward to writing. He added that he thought all weekend about stories that he would like to write. During the mini lesson I provided, I demonstrated how to refer to the writing territories we had written last week to select a new story to write. Handy was excited to tell me a story that he had been thinking about for his next workshop session. I reminded Handy that right now we were focusing on “Taking the story from our brain and putting it down on paper so that we would never forget it.” I also reminded him that his



was a rough draft, so we did not need to worry about grammar, spelling, or correct punctuation, but that we capture all of the events of the story. After Handy finished writing, I had a writing conference with him. The conference always begins with the student or teacher reading aloud the piece. Then the teacher tells the student what they liked or learned, and then asks any questions that are not clear. To follow the recommended procedures of a writing workshop, I asked Handy to read his piece aloud to me, which will help him hear his thoughts aloud. Next, I told Handy what I liked or learned, and then asked him a question about the sequence of events in his story, asking “in your piece you told how you named a dog and then talked about her being fast and then sitting on the couch. Can you tell me what happened?” I told him that he knows his story better than his reader, and that adding details to his story will help his readers know what happened.

The next mini lesson was based upon a need seen in his writing. I showed him how I wrote a piece where I did not provide enough details and elaboration and I modeled to him how I was reading a piece and then thought of some other things I needed to add so I wrote more details I wanted to add and wrote an arrow where I wanted to add it. I read a little more and then added some details that I wanted to add in that paragraph, and then wrote an arrow and added that. From this mini lesson I wanted him to see that authors revise their writing and that we can always go back and change what we write. By this method, I showed him writing arrows to revise.

Another mini lesson I provided was also based upon observing Handy’s writing. This mini lesson focused upon placing spaces between words. This mini lesson took place through a game activity that occurred at the very end. I would write a sentence with the words properly spaced out, and then the same sentence with the words as one block. I

would then ask Handy to read to me the sentence with the words not separated by spaces. With the sentences that were not spaced, Handy could only read them about a third of the time. Then I showed him sentences with the spaces between the words, which he answered correctly. Handy then wrote his own sentence with the words spaced together, and then rewrote the sentence with the proper spaces. This allowed him to practice spacing his words and allowed him to create a sentence for me to solve.

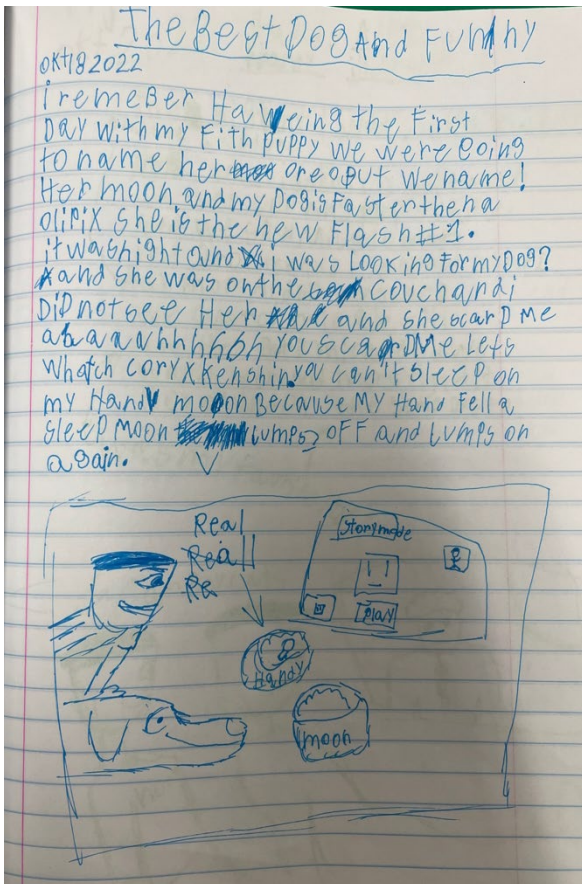


Figure 3.3: The Best Dog - This image reflects one of Handy's writing artifacts.

#### 3.4.4 Week 2 - Reflections

During the rough draft portion of the writing workshop the student focuses on establishing content. The student does not focus upon grammar and punctuation as that is addressed during the publishing phase. If the student has to focus upon grammar and

punctuation, it will take away from their composing. However, I also knew that these were skills that were integral to Handy's writing development. Therefore, I arrived at the solution of teaching these skills during the mini-lessons and working with Handy to include them in the post-conference after he was finished with his story, and we had discussed the content.

I was hesitant to model my writing process and take away time from Handy free writing, however after the second day of meeting in week 2, I could see that my modeling was making a huge impact on Handy's learning. Handy would talk aloud after reading his completed story and compare his to mine. He would begin reading his story, then pause and state that he forgot to put spaces between his words and use my example story to find the appropriate size of a space between words. I could see that Handy was adjusting his writing from being simply a way to place his thoughts on paper as quickly as possible, to a process that is geared towards the final product a reader will enjoy with ease.

#### *3.4.5 Week 3 - Narrative Account*

During week 3, my mini lesson focused upon how to continue writing and developing previously started stories rather than beginning a new one for each session. The writing workshop approach includes recognizing that students will not begin nor end a piece each week. Students write every day, but they do not necessarily begin a new piece at the same time. Now that we had been writing for two weeks, I felt as though Handy had enough short stories that he could go back and revisit and continue writing. This would also be beneficial to Handy as it would require him to read back his writing, which could encourage him to think about the structure of his stories and whether the punctuation used was correct.

During this mini lesson, I modeled adding details to a personal narrative by selecting a story that I had written and reading it aloud. I would discuss that I felt that there was more I could add. After this, Handy and I looked at drafts of stories he had previously written, and I encouraged him to choose a story where he wanted to convey more of the details of what had happened to his readers.

Handy was excited to continue writing a previous story. Handy stated that he remembered more of it and wanted to add the details. Before we began, I wanted to convey to him the importance of writing so I showed him the spaces in my writing and his rough draft and told him that we could use a pen or pencil to see how far apart his words should be. After a few minutes of writing, Handy paused and stated that he did not think he left enough space in between words. Excited that Handy understood my mini-lesson, I invited him to share why he thought this was important and Handy told me that he wanted his reader to be able to read his work easily.

Despite Handy's proven understanding of how much space should be between words in a sentence, and stating that he would fix this, Handy did not add any more space between his words as he continued writing. After he finished his story, I had a writing conference with him where he read his piece aloud and I shared what I liked or learned, and then asked questions about parts of his writing that were not clear to me. I then pointed out the lack of space to Handy, using our spaces game as a reference to what we had discussed, and we brainstormed how to fix this. Handy first thought adding a line between each word would help as it was simply a revision and not a final copy, but then decided that would look too much like a lowercase "l." Handy wanted to go back and fix all his

previous writing and I told him that we did not have time for that today, but that we can *continue to work on our writing in the future.*

#### *3.4.6 Week 3 - Reflections*

I did not see much growth in Handy's writing ability. However, Handy did seem to understand the "why" behind aspects of the writing workshop. I was excited that Handy grasped the concept of going back to previous stories to write other drafts and he was glad to add details to his previous stories. This took place seamlessly. Previously, he preferred writing a new story because he "had so many ideas of what to write about" when we met. I felt as though Handy was not progressing as I had predicted during this week because he was not spacing his words after the first 2 sentences 60% of the time. In other words, he seemed to forget about the process of writing when becoming lost in the idea of placing his ideas on paper. However, I had plans on what writing tool to practice next with Handy and was hopeful that he would begin to automatically space his words the next week. He was showing signs of remembering he needed to space his words, as he would bring it up during the writing conference without prompting. Handy was also progressing on punctuation because he had about 15% less run-on sentences in this weeks' stories than his first story.

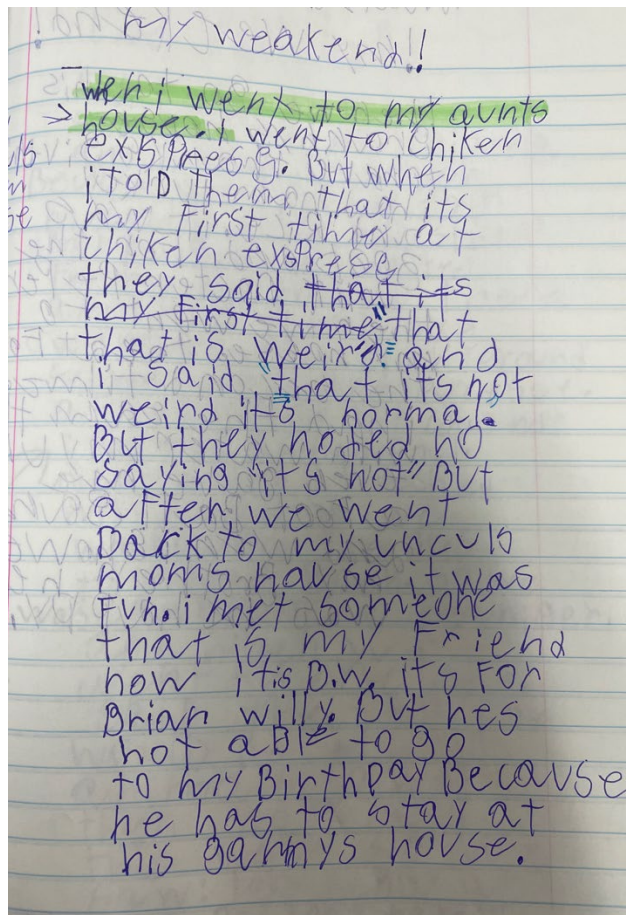


Figure 3.4: My Weekend - This image is an example of Handy's writing during week 3. It displays the continued lack of spacing between words, but the addition of periods in his writing.

#### 3.4.7 Week 4 - Narrative Account

I have noticed that Handy leaves out a lot of details in his writing, and only writes a beginning, middle, and end. This pattern is one I began to see develop during the lessons in week 3. Handy would orally recount his story before writing it, but when writing he would leave important information out, such as who was present in the story, and would add a story out of order. To correct this, I began modeling identifying each part of a story before writing it. Handy and I began to integrate this into his oral recount of the story by

me asking prompting questions for the beginning, middle, and end, and him responding to each question. This structure helped improve his writing by the end of the week.

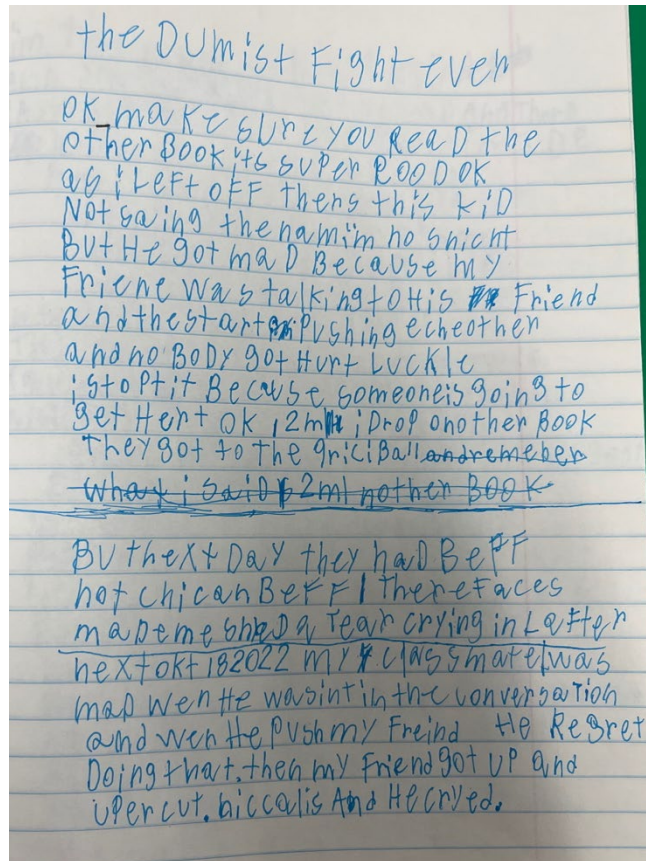


Figure 3.5: The Dumbest Fight Ever - This is an image of one of Handy's writing artifacts from week 4. It reflects the author's voice that Handy had not yet fully developed.

#### 3.4.8 Week 4 - Reflections

I met with my mentor professor to plan out the next action steps. We discussed strategies for how to begin progressing Handy's learning and to begin to add dialogue into his writing. This week I also began to become discouraged that Handy and I were not making much progress on writing conventions that we had been working on for weeks. Handy seemed to be working hard, however I was not seeing many results.

I began to doubt the efficiency of my instruction. Handy would begin by working hard to leave the correct amount of space between each set of words, however he would defer back to his old style of writing within a paragraph of his story. He was running out of stories that he would want to write about, and he would spend most of the session just wanting to talk. Discouraged, I tried to lean into the conversations, but found the balance between them and the assignment at hand.

#### *3.4.9 Week 5- Narrative Account*

For the week 5 session, Handy and I worked on adding details into his writing. Handy was not adding many details into his writing, therefore we worked on finding details in a sentence at the end of the lesson. To do this, I would write a sentence and he would highlight all of the details in the sentence. We would practice with sentences that did not contain many details, and then work out how we could add detail to create mental images for the reader. Handy really enjoyed this “game” and dedicating the last 5 minutes of each session to it greatly improved Handy’s ability to think of details for each personal narrative of his. Throughout week 5, I saw Handy’s writing improve in including details, using capitalization, and eliminating run-on sentences.

#### *3.4.10 Week 5 - Reflections*

I began to become very proud of Handy’s work ethic. He was working hard to remember all the lessons we had gone over and was even beginning to check his own work for grammar errors. I started to really see more results from the writing workshop than week 4, and this helped me become encouraged to continue to push Handy in his writing skills. I believe that Handy’s progression was stymied because of his habit of jotting



thoughts down without proper spaces between words or punctuation and not because of the lack of efficiency in a writing workshop.

#### *3.4.11 Week 6 - Narrative Account*

By week 6 Handy and I had a clear routine for the writing workshop lessons. We would begin the lesson by reviewing a grammar rule or an example of my writing to continue modeling to Handy, then continue the lesson by transitioning to a story Handy would like to write or finish one of his stories. About halfway through we would work on adding details to that story, and then end the lesson with the details game that I had created. This was working well for Handy, however I felt as though it was time to move on to a new activity. I brought in a poetry book, *Sing a Song of Popcorn* selected by Eva Moore, Mary Michaels White, Jan Carr, and Beatrice Schenk de Reginiers, to read with Handy if we had time at the end of each lesson. My plan was to use literature to show examples of correct spaces in words as well as how adding details to a story really creates that mental image in the reader's mind that the author is wanting. This proved to be one of the most useful activities I could have brought. Not only was Handy finding great joy in being able to control choosing the poem to read, but he also loved the pictures in the book, the funny characters in the goofier poems, and the silliness of it. What Handy did not realize was that from this he was growing exponentially in identifying details in a sentence. We would use these poems to identify when the author added a detail that altered our image of the poem. More than most literature, poetry packages mental images into a vibrant, yet concise package for the reader. This made it ideal for the learning writer.

#### *3.4.12 Week 6 - Reflections*

I could tell that Handy was doing well in writing personal narratives. He was understanding how to write with a beginning, middle, and clear end in mind. He also was beginning to add more and more punctuation and did not need many reminders on using spaces. His work already looked much more advanced since the beginning, and when editing some of his work, Handy was very proud and astonished at his progress.

#### *3.4.13 Week 7- Narrative Account*

In week 7, Handy and I started to brainstorm on what Handy would like to write about for his final published work. This is a story that will undergo the revision process much more heavily than the other pieces of work that he had written. I told Handy that we were still going to use personal narratives, but it could be any story he wanted to write, if it was something he could write that was longer than most of his work. I invited him to think of new stories to write, review the previous stories that we had written over the past weeks' sessions, or to simply be on the lookout in his writing in the coming two weeks for a story he wrote that he loved. I modeled to him from one of my personal narratives that I could still say a lot about that day, whereas in another story of mine I had already told the reader everything I wanted to say. I laid out the timeline for him: these next two weeks we would continue as normal, at the end of week 9 we would choose a story to edit, in week 10 we would edit the story, and in week 11 we would illustrate the story and wrap it up. Handy was sad to realize that the sessions were coming to an end, as was I, but he was ecstatic with the idea that he would have a finalized story that was bound, one he could show to his friends, sister, and mother.

### 3.4.14 Week 7- Reflections

I felt as though my time with Handy was running short, and I was correcting more and more of Handy's writing errors, adjusting my expectations with his progression of writing throughout the week. Initially at the start of the writing workshop, I had planned to start with personal narratives and then exploring other writing categories for Handy to work on. However, this week I decided to remain on personal narratives for the rest of the sessions as Handy was still gaining a lot of knowledge from these. I felt as though they aligned with his mastery of writing as they allowed him to develop an author's voice, were an easy way to recall details to add into his stories, and Handy was now very familiar with the flow of personal narratives.

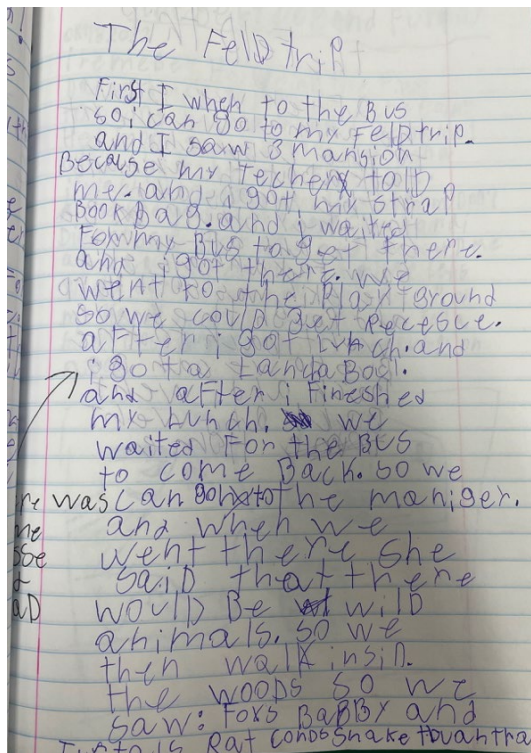


Figure 3.6: The Field Trip- This image demonstrates how Handy would draw an arrow during the revision process of the post-conference of the writing workshop to add in new details to the personal narrative.

#### *3.4.15 Week 8 - Narrative Account*

In week 8, Handy continued as normal with his progress. We worked on identifying details in poems by taking a paragraph of each poem, or the whole poem if it was no more than 6 lines long. With each paragraph we would underline the details found and list them by which of the 5 senses they added to the story. By doing this, I encouraged Handy to write details that incorporated all of the 5 senses. I believed that this would be another strategy for helping Handy when he was struggling to place the reader in the setting of his story.

#### *3.4.16 Week 8 - Reflections*

From the 5 senses activity, I saw Handy develop the details of a story in an organized manner. Handy is a child who loved the artistic aspect of writing, altering his way of thinking about a story to naturally incorporate as many sights, colors, and vibrancy in his memory of the story he was writing as possible allowed him to finally extend his story's length naturally. I found that Handy was beginning to write stories that were at least one page long 100% of the time, and about 25% of these stories were between one page and one and a half pages in length. All this added length to Handy's stories was content that also added to the imagery in his personal narratives. As we were working on creating mental images in a reader's mind through details in a story this week, I was very satisfied with these results.

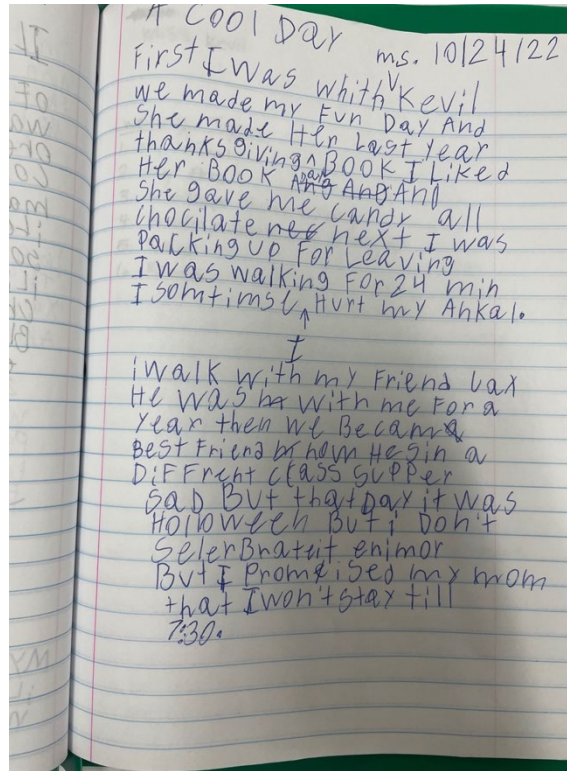


Figure 3.7: A Cool Day with Ms. Kevil - This image depicts the revision process of the writing workshop. As students write and reread their work, if they feel as though there are more details to add students are free to draw an arrow and add in as much detail as they would like.

### 3.4.17 Week 9 - Narrative Account

In week 9, Handy and I reviewed his folder of stories for one that would fit the attributes of a finalized project. Handy enjoyed seeing how much he had progressed but did not feel as though he could extend any of his stories. I explained that my goal for him was a story that was two pages long. He was excited at the challenges, as he had only been writing one to one and a half pages so far for each story and decided that he wanted to write a new story about his favorite birthday he had experienced. This was his birthday the previous year, and he had received five tickets to go to Six Flags with his family and two

friends. He said that this was a perfect story because he could think of details for each of the 5 senses, and I agreed.

### 3.4.18 Week 9 - Reflections

I felt as though Handy had met my previous expectations of first half a page, then a whole page, and that this would be the perfect story to motivate him to meet the goal of two pages. I knew that Handy wrote a story that is 2 pages full of great detail and the author's voice was far more mature of a writer than when we had begun the process and he wrote a quarter of a page and drew a picture in the first lesson. I could not wait to see the finished project, and to show Handy his progression to a bound story he wrote, too.

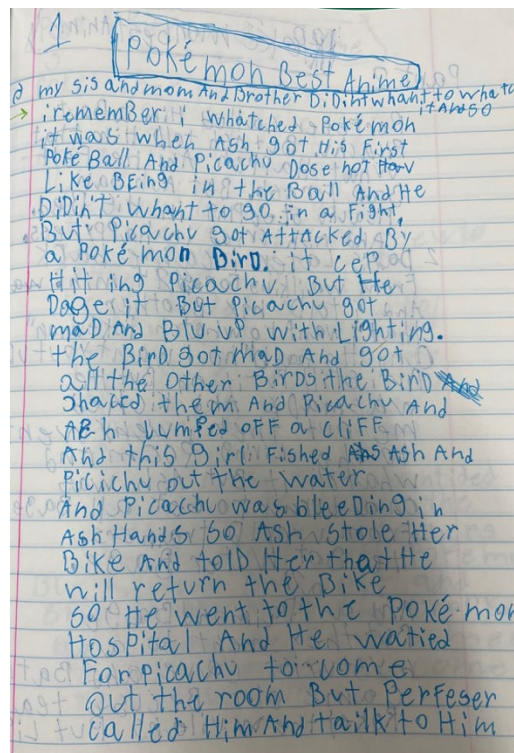


Figure 3.8: Pokémon is the Best Anime 1 - This is the first part to a story written over a period of three different sessions in one week. This story represents one of the later

stories written by Handy during the 11 weeks. It depicts the growth in detail in personal narratives and improvement in spacing, punctuation, and capitalization.

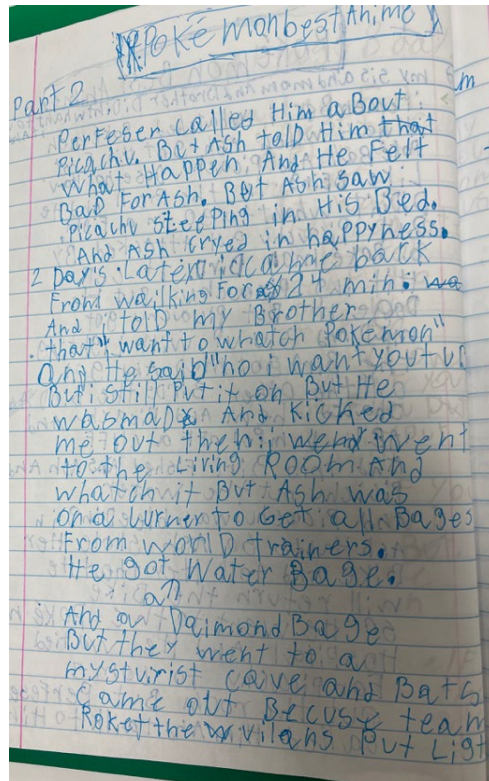


Figure 3.9: Pokémon is the Best Anime 2- This is the second part to a story written over a period of three different sessions in one week. This story represents one of the later stories written by Handy during the 11 weeks. It depicts the growth in detail in personal narratives and improvement in spacing, punctuation, and capitalization.



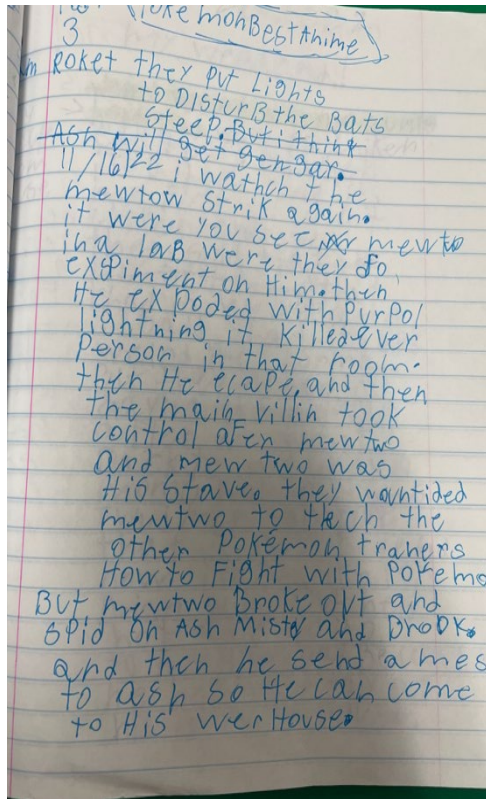


Figure 3.10: Pokémon is the Best Anime 3- This is the third and final part to a story written over a period of three different sessions in one week. This story represents one of the later stories written by Handy during the 11 weeks. It depicts the growth in detail in personal narratives and improvement in spacing, punctuation, and capitalization.

#### 3.4.19 Week 10 - Narrative Account

This week I entered knowing that we were a little behind on the timeline. While handy and I knew the topic we would be writing about, we did not yet have the completed story to edit, as per the original plan. Because of this, I encouraged Handy to write for most of the hour on Monday and Wednesday, eliminating the end of the lesson writing “game” and half of the conference time I would usually conduct. By Thursday, Handy had a decent story, upon which I had already made notes of what to edit with him. It was, however, a challenge to get him to extend it beyond a page and a quarter. Handy’s response to this



finalized personal narrative was to work hard to say exactly what he wanted in this story as he wanted the published product to be perfect for his audience of friends and family. This mentality was slowing his writing down greatly, and I reminded him that this stage of the writing workshop is worry-free, meant only for placing his thoughts on the paper. I also scaffolded the instruction greatly to provide support for him to make it to two pages without worrying about what to write. This took the form of me asking prompts such as “What were the other characters doing at that time in the story” and “What was your reaction to that event?” By the end of the week, Handy had written a story that was ready to edit.

#### *3.4.20 Week 10 - Reflections*

As I knew that I had originally planned for the final story to be completed at the beginning of week 10 so that we could have ample time to edit the story together, I was a little worried of how this week would progress. Therefore, I cut the writing “games” that Handy and I would play at the end of each lesson and conferenced less with Handy on his writing of this story. The mini lessons that I would conduct were on brainstorming how Handy could work on extending his story and ending his personal narrative with a concise and clear end that was not too sudden. I felt comfortable ending the week with the story that Handy had written, confident that he would be proud of the final product we would edit the next week.

#### *3.4.21 Week 11- Narrative Account*

On Monday, Handy and I went through and edited the story for any grammar errors, and then places where the story could be more fluent for the reader. To do this, I first had Handy go through it himself to self-check his work. He was familiar with this as he had done this in class as well as in our previous lesson with the stories he had written. After

Handy self-edited, I then went through it with him. This was primarily to help rearrange some thoughts in his story, as he found most grammar and sentence errors himself. Handy and I spent a considerable amount of time rearranging the story to have a clear ending that flowed well with the body of his personal narrative. To do this, Handy and I would highlight sentences that interrupted the flow of the story and would then decide if it was a detail that was important to the story's progression. If so, Handy and I would reread the story for an adequate place for the detail. After the editing process was complete, I typed it up and formatted it for him. I then had Handy draw a picture to illustrate the story, which became the cover of his published work. Finally, I included everything in the final copy and bound it together for Handy to keep. Upon receiving his published personal narrative, Handy's smile grew into a huge grin, and he reread the story twice. He showed it to a friend of his walking in the hallway, and told his friend that writing was "really fun, you should try it sometime." Based on this, I would conclude that my prediction that the writing workshop would benefit Handy's writing skills was true, but also that writing workshops are beneficial to building a student's confidence in their academic ability.

#### *3.4.22 Week 11 - Reflections*

This last week revealed to me that growth in writing is not something that happens to where we see growth immediately. Handy plateaued in his progress during week 4 and 5; however, he was listening to the writing skills I was teaching him the whole time. Writing is simply a process that cannot be internalized after a few lessons. It takes time to develop the skillset needed to become an advanced writer. Now that Handy has developed the skills and attitude needed for writing, I believe that he will continue to grow into an advanced writer.

my six ~~Flags~~ Birthday  
 After we waited for  
 or blamed to digest the  
 food a box. After we  
 did the mine cart  
 it was fun. It was  
 the first roller coast  
 I've ever been on. For  
 then we went to  
 the driving one we  
 were on a track so  
 we wouldn't fall over  
 but if you barley put you  
 on it goes slow but if you put  
 put your foot on it but  
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 go a lot faster. But if you  
 put your foot hard  
 you will go fast but  
 then we went to the  
 govt cart you can  
 drive freely  
 and I drove by myself  
 and I went so fast the  
 my friend couldn't catch  
 up to me. After I went

Figure 3.11: My Six Flags Birthday (Handwritten Copy) - This represents the final draft of the personal narrative Handy chose to “publish” or revise completely.

## My Six Flags Birthday

By Handy

For my 8<sup>th</sup> birthday I went to Six Flags. And I got \$65 in one day. I went to pick up my friend. And we went to Six Flags. Then I waited for Omar to come. But he came, so then we went on the Mexican Hat. We did Rock paper Scissors with workers but he won so we were scared because if he won the ride goes fast but if we won it goes slow.

But he won so it went fast and we were screaming loud but after that we did the ship one and I went side to side. And it was fun, then we did the tea cup and my friend was screaming like a baby. But after we ate an ice cream sandwich and it was good. Then we saw a roller coaster it kept doing a loop, but my mom and sister wanted to ride it.

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After we waited for our stomach to digest the food. After we did the mine cart it was fun. It was the first roller coaster I've ever been on. Before then we went to the driving one we were on a track so we wouldn't fall over.

But if you barely put your foot on it it goes slow, but if you put your foot on it but not too hard you will go kind of fast. But if you put your foot hard you will go fast. Then we went to the go cart you can drive freely. I drove by myself and I went so fast that my friend couldn't catch up to me. After I went home.

Figure 3.12: My Six Flags Birthday (Typed Copy)- This represents the final draft and the version I typed up for Handy of the personal narrative Handy chose to “publish” or revise completely.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was ongoing throughout the study. Analysis during the study included interpreting the log entries and child's writing (artifacts) after each writing workshop session to address the child's needs in subsequent session. The analysis also entailed a process of reading, interpreting, and rereading the child's work to recognize patterns and themes that emerged to address the research questions. Analysis of log entries and child's writing at the end of the project entailed a recursive process of reading and rereading to uncover what took place over time. This analysis is used to address the research questions: 1) the responses of the child and factors that play a role and 2) the growth and a prospective teacher and factors that play a role.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

What follows is a discussion of themes that emerged from the data regarding research question one and themes that address research question two. In the analysis of the data, themes emerged in addressing the research questions. More specifically research questions one is as follows: When providing a writing workshop to a child, what types of responses does a child have and what factors play a role? Research question two is as follows: When a prospective teacher implements a writing workshop, what types of learning take place and what factors play a role?

#### 4.1 Research Question One: Responses of the Child and Factors that Play a Role

In addressing the first research question, the data shows that there was actual growth in the writing that Handy produced during the semester. The written products of Handy show he became more proficient in elaborating as he wrote. Handy also grew in using writing conventions. Along with spacing between words, Handy started to use capitalization and punctuation.

Notably, Handy also experienced affective changes about writing. Handy responded to the writing workshop by moving from disliking writing to looking forward to writing. In the first session, Handy stated that he did not enjoy writing and asked to draw instead. By only week two, he expressed a desire to write and told the prospective teacher that he was thinking about new stories to write over the weekend between week one and week two. At the end of the study, during week eleven, Handy found a classmate in the

hallway outside of the conference room in which he and the prospective teacher conducted the writing workshop and exclaimed that the friend should try writing because it is fun.

#### 4.2 Research Question Two: Growth of the Prospective Teacher and Factors that Play a Role

The second major theme that emerged in regard to the development of the prospective teacher is that the prospective teacher was able to trust the process. At the same time, the prospective teacher was able to see that modeling was very important because Handy was more confident to try new strategies when it was modeled. This encouraged the prospective teacher to trust the process that growth would come, even if it sometimes comes in small increments.

The prospective teacher's major growth in learning to trust the process is shown in week four. In week four the prospective teacher was discouraged because she did not see as much progress as she wanted. Because of this, the prospective teacher considered dropping the mini-lessons and allowing Handy more time to write. However, while reflecting on Handy's work, the prospective teacher realized that it was the mini lessons that helped him grow. Before this instance, the prospective teacher initially was discouraged in week 2 because she worked in multiple ways to show Handy how to use correct spacing and he would adopt this, but after a while he would revert to using incorrect spacing. Therefore, the prospective teacher was very discouraged about this but over time Handy was able to write an entire piece and use correct spacing. This showed the prospective teacher that she could trust the process and growth in writing is not always instant. At the very beginning of the writing workshop, the prospective teacher was starting to doubt whether the writing workshop could really work with a child who was so far below grade level in writing development. Along with his writing he would use pictures to convey

details. The sentence structure, the punctuation, and the elaboration were far below what one would expect from a child in third grade. The prospective teacher began to doubt whether a writing workshop would be able to help a child that is far below grade level. However, the prospective teacher continued with the writing workshop approach and saw that Handy changed his attitude about writing very early. He would be excited about learning to write, and this encouraged the prospective teacher to continue with the approach. One thing this shows that the prospective teacher learned is to trust the process of this method. This is significant as it is very easy for a classroom teacher to fall back upon instructional experiences they have conducted or observed.

Another theme that emerged regarding research question two is that the prospective teacher's confidence in trying a new approach was bolstered by the child's new enthusiasm in writing. Similarly, the child's progress in actual writing is an event that came about over time reinforced the belief that the writing workshop would be effective. In week seven, the prospective teacher thought she may need to progress from personal narratives to another type of writing. She then realized that Handy was just starting to feel confident in writing personal narratives. This showed her that growth in writing takes place over time and children should be provided with ample time to feel comfortable with writing in one way before moving to another.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The writing workshop is advocated in the field of English language arts and reading. However, this approach is not implemented in most classrooms, and writing is rarely taught in other classrooms. Therefore, when prospective teachers work in classrooms for field experiences, they are not apt to be able to learn about implementing a writing workshop by working with children. An overall purpose of this study is to understand what takes place when a prospective teacher does implement a writing workshop working with a child during a semester. More specifically, the study has two major research questions:

1. When providing a writing workshop to a child, what types of responses does a child have and what factors play a role?
2. When a prospective teacher implements a writing workshop, what types of learning take place and what factors play a role?

#### 5.1 Significant Findings

The first research question addresses the responses of the child to a writing workshop and factors that play a role. The data reveals that Handy grew in his ability to add details to his writing in order to convey his points to his readers. The child also grew in his ability to use common writing conventions. This aligns with the principles that the National Council of Teachers of English has set forth. The second principle of the NCTE position statement, *Understanding and Teaching Writing: Guiding Principles* (2018), is that writers grow when they broaden their repertoire and when they refine their judgement

in making choices with their repertoire. This is completed by Handy as he grew through the writing workshop in his ability to convey his ideas to his reader through additional details. As the child would revise and refine his writing, he would practice connecting his writing with his audience and confirm the choices he would make with these connections.

The writing workshop can be very integral to a child's writing education as it allows the child ownership of their writing and selection of their own topics. A child's writing workshop experience often begins with the teacher guiding students to personal narratives, as the child can remember what took place and draw upon these memories to add details into their writing in an easier manner. This follows the principles learned in the LIST 4374 resources stated in chapter 2. This study found that the specific writing workshop method of the teacher modeling writing during the mini-lesson greatly impacted Handy's writing. Handy would demonstrate comprehension of a writing convention taught in a mini-lesson by repeating or correcting his own writing based upon the modeling of the prospective teacher in her own writing. For example, Handy stated that his writing could be as detailed as the prospective teacher's writing, if he revised his earlier stories to include more details just as the prospective teacher did.

During all writing workshops, the teacher does not tell the child what to write, but instead holds writing conferences to discuss the child's writing. This relates to the second research question, when a prospective teacher implements a writing workshop, what types of learning take place and what factors play a role, as the prospective teacher was required to have faith in this process. A significant finding in this study in relation to the second research question is that the teacher must follow the writing workshop paradigm exactly in order to have successful results with the child. Knowing what to do and seeing the gradual

impact on Handy gave the prospective teacher the confidence to not give up on the writing workshop and the confidence to use it in her own classroom in the future. This relates to the third and fourth principles of the NCTE position statement, as confidence was gained from the writing workshop method, providing Handy with multiple contexts of writing experiences. It also provides risks for the child to grow in. The risk Handy faced of ongoing assessment by foremost himself and then the prospective teacher, allowed him to grow in his perspective and ability to envision the rest of his pieces of writing. This gave Handy the confidence to continue writing, which in turn produced growth in his writing, which in turn gave the needed confidence to the prospective teacher.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS

These results support using a writing workshop in a classroom and making it possible for prospective teachers to implement a writing workshop. Children need the ownership, support, and audience that a writing workshop provides. Through this authentic writing experience, the child grew in writing and discovered a love for it. In turn, the prospective teacher became more confident about implementing a writing workshop in the classroom.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Ashley Kevil attended The University of Texas at Arlington and there she obtained her B.A. of Education. She plans to have a career as an Early Childhood to sixth grade educator upon graduating from UTA. Ashley Kevil has lived in Arlington, Texas her entire life. She is excited for the opportunity to give back to the community by becoming an educator in the Arlington Independent School District, the same school district she attended from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade.