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Teacher Inquiry Paper

**Pennsylvania State University
University Park Campus
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Hitting the brick wall

You see, I was always the dumb smart kid. The kid who could act smart, and seem like they have it all together, but in reality I was not quite grasping it. This façade I had worked well. So well that I breezed through high school never learning proper grammar and was still excelling in all my literature courses. 1, 2, 3 years of college passed. I slid into my fourth year. The research papers started flying. I wrote a paper and I failed. This time however there was no way out; I was not fooling anyone. At 21 years old I hit my academic brick wall so hard that it began to crumble all around me. It was not until later that I realized I hit the wall which expended my boundary of knowledge. The professor was kind enough to sit me down and aid me through the process of rewriting this written pile of garbage that lay in front of me. She asked me to explain my ideas. She thought my ideas were firm; my knowledge of material was evident. The only problem was that through transferring my knowledge to paper it was somehow lost in translation. The professor helped me write the paper again.

She began talking about sentence structure—oh? What? I was already lost. I was too proud to admit that I did not know what writing was about. Right then going over the paper I felt like I was being exposed to the world, like my surface smartness was now stripped away and I was left being the dumb kid. I still did not really understand what a verb and adjective were and I felt too vulnerable to admit it. As my professor went through the paper, I kept drifting into the past, trying to find out where I went wrong. I was taken back to eighth grade staring blankly at the board trying to figure out what sentence diagramming was and what it meant. I justified that lack of knowledge with a

sixth grade memory of playing Hillary Clinton in a Language Arts role. That image was defeated to fourth grade when my teacher was talking about story formats and I was clueless. That image was replaced by my wonderful spelling quizzes of fifth grade. These mental images of my past continued on. Each good memory defeated by a bad, a bad replaced by a good. The professor continued to talk. I nodded and said some things to show I was listening, but I was not. I could not. I was too busy trying to find where I went wrong. In the end I was left with an edited paper in front of me, a paper I somehow took part in editing but had no recollection of doing. The suggestions that were given to me I barely heard. (See Appendix I)

Where did I go wrong? The answer was left somewhere in the past beyond my memories' boundaries. I left that day feeling emotionally and mentally exhausted, yet I still needed to go home and rewrite this paper. How? I just felt like someone ripped open my soul to share with the world that I really had no clue. Someone else knew my secret—I am the dumb kid. I always joke about how stupid I am, but now someone really knew I was. My educated, well-rehearsed front has been broken. The wall was crumbling, and I was being shown for who I really am. I still do not know where I stopped learning. I only know I became very good at covering my weaknesses until this final year in college. I am documenting my hope to figure out what I have been missing all these years in order to share some of those experiences with you.

I will be advancing into my professional teaching career which will obligate me to write without mechanical errors. Therefore, it is at this time that I feel the need to learn how to

write professionally. The process of relearning information that you should have already grasped is difficult. The beginning of my writing analysis was rough. I thought everything I had ever written was fine. Eventually I realized that my brain was telling me something was not written properly, but my stubborn pride was telling me everything was written the way I intended it. Therefore I was wondering:

- How does a beginning teacher, like me, experience the process of learning to become a better writer?
- Would I see an alteration in my writing and how much?
- I was curious to find out what aids me in my learning and what constrains my learning.
- I wanted to know if I could learn how to write mechanically correct.
- What will the emotional process be for me as I learn to write?

Sifting through the rubble

I assumed I would read a few books, learn a few tricks, and then I would be well on my way to benefiting my writing. When I tried this approach I realized that this inquiry project was not going to be as simple as that. I discovered very quickly that I had to admit to myself that I needed to learn to write. This revelation led me to realizing that I in fact had a huge emotional attachment to my writing. I discovered that by journaling into my past and analyzing my emotions I was able to detach the bond I had with my writing and look at it with a more critical eye.

I have taken many steps to complete my inquiry project. I was still curious to find out where I went wrong in the past that would bring me to this point today. As I mentioned before I was preoccupied with finding out the answer. I found that when I explored my past in my initial journal entry I was able to release my obsession with figuring out what

went wrong so many years ago. It was at this point that I discovered I was able to move on and focus my efforts into learning grammar, syntax and mechanics. As a basis for my learning I used the parent letters I had to write for my student teaching unit. I took these weekly letters to the Writing Center on campus. Initially, I found myself relying on the tutor to find my mistakes and help me correct them. These various tutors explained to me the reasoning behind grammar and syntax. The tutor was pointing out errors with syntax such as this example from my Inquiry Brief: “Visitation to the Writing Center with someone I will work closely with to provide support and clarification of my learning.” That sentence was altered under the direction of a tutor and it now states, “Visitation to the Writing Center and someone with whom I will work to provide support and clarification of my learning.” (See Appendix VI) After attending a session at the Writing Center and getting a more focused idea of my weaknesses I began browsing through two writers’ resources.

A particular writing how-to book which I found extremely helpful is copyrighted 1996 and entitled WRITERS INC School to work: A Student Handbook which outlines many key points of the writing process. I found that the sections on the “Basic Elements of Writing”, “Forms of Writing” and the “Proofreader’s Guide” were especially helpful. I also utilized a section of the book entitled Writer’s Resource. The introduction to the “Writer’s Resource’ contains a variety of lists and guidelines you will find helpful throughout the writing process.turn to this section when you need to clarify the definition of a particular writing term...” (Sebranek, Meyer, Kemper, and Van Rys 131). I did just that. I often turned to this section of the book in order to help me clarify the

terms I heard the tutor talking about. I learned that the definition for syntax is “The order and relationship of words in a sentence” (132). Prior to actually looking this up I always heard the term and never understood what it meant.

I also found the Harbrace College Handbook Twelfth Edition very helpful. The Harbrace College Handbook defines the various mechanics of writing and provides examples to support your learning. This book is set into chapters and sections which focus on particular points of writing. The book even contains a chapter titled *Sentence Sense* which shows a breakdown of a sentence to the simplistic parts of verb, adjective, noun, etc. I found this to be especially helpful considering that I was not fully sure of what those parts were in a sentence (Hodges, Horner, Webb, Miller). I learned that a verbs role is as the predicate or major part of the predicate; an adjective is usually a word that describes the noun; and I learned more (13-14).

Through the process of relearning all this material I discovered that I did at one point hear this material. “I remembered hearing the definitions lectured to me; I do not remember learning them.” As I wrote in my journal entry of March 29, 2004:

I sat in class on a spring day, the breeze coming through the window curling the end of a piece of paper on my teacher’s desk. I stared at this paper trying desperately to escape while the teacher was rambling about the parts of writing. I had to test on the parts of speech the next day, but she already said she would keep the posters up around the room. These posters allowed us to find the definitions of the parts of writing. I could simply copy them down and pass the test.

It was amazing how these definitions brought back memories of my boring classroom language arts periods which were of little to no interest to me. I did not have to

demonstrate my learning; I just had to copy or regurgitate the information that was told to me. I remembered the wording for the test and then, because it made little or no sense to me I forgot it. Though the Harbrace College Handbook is set up repetitiously and definition based I was able to focus more on the concepts than I ever was in elementary school. (See Appendix II)

As I progressed in my writing I felt more comfortable so I began reading my own writing and questioning it with a tutor at the Writing Center. I was still relying on the knowledge of the tutor to help me answer my own misconceptions about grammar and syntax. Still with the tutor, I eventually found myself correcting my mistakes and explaining my reasoning for correction. Just recently I discovered I am self-correcting more grammar and syntax alone than I have ever before. For example, I had written in the April 6, 2004, Parent letter, “They learned that the sun and other stars are composed of gas and dust particles. They learned that stars are different colors because there are different gases burning in stars.” I changed these two weak and not well formed sentences into, “They learned that the sun and other stars are composed of gas and dust particles; and that stars are different colors because there are different gases burning inside.” (See Appendix VII)

Recycling the rubble to build a climbing staircase

I have been looking through the past works of my Language and Literacy Block, and other courses for which I have written papers. As I look through these past works I am amazed at how I wrote. I am particularly fond of my explanations of my opinion, and my ability to describe a situation so that it feels like you are there yourself. I liked the

majority of what I wrote in my Literacy Autobiography on September 17, 2002 for my Language and Literacy Education course.

Here is an excerpt I like:

Nearing the end of second grade I was sitting in the front of the room and could not clearly see the blackboard. Sensing a potential problem I received a routine eye exam with the nurse. I later was taken to the eye doctor to find out that I in fact was losing my eye sight quite rapidly. My parents hadn't realized that there was a problem for the simple reason that everything I did at home was at close range. It was then on that I began a rush of doctor visits and the downward spiral of my eye sight."

Other times I now look at my writing and find myself criticizing the way I wrote or the language I used because of what I know now about word choice, organization and sentence/word alignment.

Here is an excerpt I am not pleased with:

At some point in the beginning of first grade I remember quite vividly a writing workshop. We were re-learning how to hold a pencil; I never held that piece of wood the way Mrs. Wright (my first grade teacher) insisted I did—too uncomfortable. Mrs. Wright is a right handed teacher; I am a lefty. This posed slight problems for me. When she would explain how to make a letter or a word with the pencil I would mimic her movements, right handed and all. I thought that was the proper way to write the letters and/or word groups. When I wrote while in class instruction I used my right hand; however when it came time for me to write at home, or on my own in class work I would utilize my left hand. Obviously I became ambidextrous after a short time. It was, however, only for a short time until my newfound writing technique was discovered. Mrs. Wright realizing what I was doing put an abrupt halt to it, making me write with my left hand continually. I have since lost that ability, though I do write legibly with my right hand.

Here is how I would now write this portion of the paper:

In the beginning of first grade I remember quite vividly a writing workshop. Mrs. Wright, my first grade teacher, insisted that we all hold the pencil the proper way; this was the purpose for the writing workshop. We were once again learning how to hold a pencil. I never seemed to hold a pencil the way I was supposed to. Quite frankly I found the proper grip to uncomfortable. When a letter or word was made

by the teacher I would mimic her movements, right hand and all. During class instruction I used my right hand because I thought that was the proper way to write. However, when I would write at home, or on my own in class I would utilize my left hand. I quickly became ambidextrous. I wrote this way for a short time until my newfound writing technique was discovered. Mrs. Wright realized what I was doing and put an abrupt halt to my writing practices. She made me write with my left hand continually.

Notice how I slightly condensed the paragraph. I also made the paragraph more factual and deleted parts of the paragraph I felt were unnecessary. I rearranged the words in some sentences to agree with each other, and I also corrected punctuation errors that I did not notice the first time.

In hindsight, I am changing language or sentence structure now more than ever before. I am finding myself happily self-correcting instead of muttering through the process upset that I made a mistake. The happiest moment for me this entire inquiry was to find that I am taking responsibility for my writing and the whole process. My over-critical self-perceptions have changed into a positive learning experience. I feel that because I am focusing on the mechanics of writing I find that I am also improving my writing on other levels as well. I am using vocabulary that I have long since forgotten to pay attention to. I am more aware of punctuation, organization, flow and syntax. I have been actively reading over my work and moving parts of my literature around.

The most important thing for me to discover is that I am happy to be doing this, I feel as though I have been missing a piece of my literary life for such a long time. Finally, I am on my way to being a professional writer instead of a poor writer who fakes her way through her literary career. I found that I could not admit I was unable to write; therefore,

I constrained my own learning for many years. Joking about your weaknesses, and actually admitting to yourself your weaknesses, are two very different things. I would easily joke about my weaknesses and this would mask my own feelings of insecurity. I think that often your self confidence and the way you present yourself are often perceived as the same. They are not. I feel this way in my writing because I am often perceived as a strong individual writer, but I am actually not. (See Appendix V)

Climbing the staircase

I am slowly climbing a staircase that is built with the rubble from my academic brick wall. As I tread over the brick that once barricaded my learning, I am seeing myself in a whole new light. Instead of being the dumb kid, I am seeing myself as a life-long learner. I have built back my confidence and have realized that it is all right to be bad at something. I am now certain that I will exhibit life-long learning and improvement in writing. I have also learned that it is fine to simply admit your weakness and get back to the basic concepts which will help you build an understanding of the material you somehow missed earlier in your life.

As a beginning teacher, I see this as an awesome opportunity to extend my knowledge. I still have a lot of questions; however, I feel that I am well on my way to developing a concrete sense of the mechanics behind writing. I believe that this will help me as a future teacher, because I will have a firmer understanding of the material and will be able to teach it with more fluidity. I know that material is not grasped by every student the first time it is stated. I realize that students need various opportunities to learn material and

show they have learned it. I will have the students demonstrate their understanding as well as explain their knowledge of the material.

I believe that this acknowledgment of my weaknesses will help me help other students beyond writing. I know what it is like to be poor at something and have to break through the barrier stopping you from learning it. I realize the sensitivity in learning something that is difficult for you, and I wish to make the process enjoyable.

I feel that I still have a long way to climb before I consider myself a polished writer. I do not yet feel comfortable in explaining the parts of writing or a sentence. However, I know that I am getting to the point where I will be able to explain writing on different levels. My understanding of the subject has grown and will continue to grow through my own commitment to being a better writer.

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Appendix

I: Initial Journal Entry March 14, 2004, *At 21 years old I hit a brick wall*

II: Journal Entry March 29, 2004, *A look back into my elementary writing years*

III: Journal Entries April 2 & 4, 2004, *Relearning material*

IV: Journal Entry April 8, 2004, *Me a teacher?*

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VI: Inquiry Brief March 2, 2004

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I

Journal Entry (March 14, 2004)

At 21 years old I hit a brick wall.

An alcoholic partakes in many steps to attempt to solve their addiction. In many ways I assimilate myself to an alcoholic. I do not feel that I have a writing addiction; I like to write but I do not *have* to write. I do however feel that there are steps in which I need climb in order to free myself of this obvious writing malfunction I seem to have. Therefore you will see me talking in steps—baby steps if you will.

Step one: Admitting your problem (faults)

I have a writing handicap!

I have spent years at the top of my class in every literature or English course I have ever taken. No one ever told me that I was a poor writer. Of course, the creative writing initiative kicked off when I started really writing in school. I am convinced that to creatively write you need your own style and this is why my poor mechanics went unnoticed for so many years. I will discuss other possibilities later. Creatively speaking, I never had writer's block. The trouble begins when I need to write formally. The mechanics behind writing have somehow escaped my brain.

Step two: Figuring out where **you** went wrong

What went wrong? How did I not learn this stuff?

I recall sitting in eighth grade Language Arts class staring blankly at the chalkboard. The chalkboard had some concept where you break down a sentence in a scaffolding manner. I still do not understand this method. In order to do this scaffolding breakdown I needed to understand what a verb, an adjective, a noun, and others were. Well I had no idea, somehow I never learned that either.

As the teacher was taking sentences apart I raised my hand. I wanted to know what was going on. I asked her to explain this sentence breakdown, she did. I did not understand it any better. I asked again, she explained it again, the same way; I did not understand it any clearer. (I discovered this trait of re-explaining subject concepts the same way over and over again was contagious. It seemed that the teachers in the following years would also “teach” me the same way.) Finally after the third time of explaining the concept to me I just smiled, and pretended I understood the concept by regurgitating the words she just used. I copied the examples down and hoped the idea would stick in my head. It did not.

You see, I was the dumb smart kid. The kid who could act smart, and seem like they have it all together, but in reality I was not quite grasping it. This façade I had worked well. So well I breezed through high school never learning proper grammar and was still excelling in all my literature courses. I wrote as I spoke—flamboyantly factual.

My definition: *Flamboyantly factual: 1. To write colorfully and use facts 2. To paint an accurate picture with many words. 3. The overabundance of adjectives which appears to spark creative images in your mind

I suppose because I wrote, and it made sense it was good writing. I suppose because I wrote creatively and used many commas it was good writing. I imagine that because I deciphered poetry and could defend my understanding I was good. I could speak very well with no hesitation, therefore I was good. I never had an outline drafted before I spoke or presented material. In fact I am still not sure how to draft one.

When my senior year in high school approached we had a senior project that needed to be completed and passed before graduation. I also had to write a research paper and defend myself and my project in front of a panel. The paper was written easily. I delivered my presentation to a panel consisting of administration, faculty, and outside community members. I delivered this 30 minute presentation without any use of note cards or any formalized outline. I basically knew what to say and said it.

I was accepted into college. I wrote my first English 015 paper. When I received the paper back I was given a C. Oh my! What was that grade on my paper? Immediately I thought, this teacher hates me, I am not C material. I was afraid I would fail her class so I went to speak with her. When I finished speaking to her I realized that this teacher in fact liked me. She just caught on to my flamboyantly factual style of writing and did not enjoy the reading. I realized I had to work harder. So I did. I was once again the dumb smart kid. I still did not know what a verb, an adjective, or a noun was.

1,2,3 years of college passed. I slid into my fourth year. The research papers started flying. I needed to write for grammar. Prior to my senior year the writing I did was primarily creative or response based. I still did not really understand what a verb and adjective were. I found myself failing my own standards again. I wrote a paper and I failed. This time however there was no way out; I was not fooling anyone. At 21 years old I hit an academic brick wall.

I hit my academic wall so hard that it began to crumble all around me. It was not until later that I realized I hit the wall which expended my boundary of knowledge. The professor was kind enough to sit me down and aid me through the process of rewriting this written pile of garbage that lay in front of me. She thought my ideas were firm; my knowledge of material was evident. The only problem was that through transferring my knowledge to paper it was somehow lost in translation.

The professor helped me write the paper again. She was talking about sentence structure—oh? What? I was already lost. I was too proud to admit that I did not know what writing was about. Right then going over the paper I felt like I was being exposed to the world, like my surface smartness was now stripped away and I was left being the dumb kid.

As my professor went through the paper I was taken back to eighth grade staring blankly at the board trying to figure out what the sentence breakdown was and what it meant. I justified that lack of knowledge with a sixth grade memory of playing Hillary Clinton in a Language Arts role. That image was defeated to fourth grade when my teacher was

talking about story formats and I was clueless. That image was replaced by my wonderful spelling quizzes of fifth grade. The memories went on. Each good memory defeated by a bad, a bad replaced by a good. The professor continued to talk. I nodded and said some things to show I was listening, but I was not. I could not. I was too busy trying to find where I went wrong. In the end I was left with an edited paper in front of me, a paper I somehow took part in editing but had no recollection of doing so. The suggestions that were given to me I barely heard. Where did I go wrong? The answer was left somewhere in the past beyond my memories boundaries.

I left that day feeling emotionally and mentally exhausted and yet I still needed to go home and rewrite this paper. How? I just felt like someone ripped open my soul to share with the world that I really had no clue. Someone else knew my secret, I am the dumb kid. I can take criticism about my personality, or about my body. I always joke about how stupid I am, but now someone really knew I was. My educated, well-rehearsed front has been broken. People were always surprised when I was not top honors, because I always seemed to do so well. I always seemed so put together. Now that pretense was crumbling, and I was being shown for who I really am. I went home and cried for hours. When I exhausted my tears I took the dog out for a walk and then came home to eat some of my soul food, popcorn. Then I cried some more.

Step three: Setting the record straight
Apologies and Emotional righteousness

I still do not know where I stopped learning. I only know I became very good at covering my weaknesses until this final year in college. I cannot even remember if I did ever tell that professor that I had no clue. If I did not I am saying it now.

I do not feel like the system failed me, I am not bitter towards anyone. I do feel like I failed myself. That is why I have chosen to write about my experiences. I am documenting my hope to figure out what I have been missing all these years in order to share some of those experiences with you.

IV

Journal Entry (April 8, 2004)

Me a teacher?

I never wanted to be a teacher, ever. I wanted to work with animals, be a vet; animals were more honest and easier to get along with. Now that I am looking back into my past I wonder if was always meant to be a teacher.

I had a difficult time focusing in school. I was always staring off thinking about other things that were occurring in my life or around me. I even remember analyzing the way the teacher in front of the room taught. I recall in elementary school the teacher teaching and me figuring out how I would teach the lesson. The weekends would come and I would teach my much younger brother and sister while playing school with our chalkboard. I would teach them a lesson we had but I would teach it my way, and at their level.

I am not sure why I would re-teach the lesson my way, but I do know the lessons I re-taught I learned because I had to explain it and demonstrate my knowledge. My brother and sister were not the easiest students either. They were always asking questions that I did not always know the answer to therefore, we would find out answers.

I think in hindsight that teaching was always my niche and perhaps a good one for me because I like to learn in creative ways, and so I like to teach in creative ways as well.

When I begin to teach writing I want to make it fun and not so definition based. I had fun in writing, and had a blast creatively writing. I unfortunately never learned the specific parts of writing. I think a large part of that is because of my lack of enthusiasm for definition based learning.

II

Journal Entry (March 29, 2004)

A look back into my elementary writing years:

~I recall trying to learn as I sat in class on a spring day, the breeze coming through the window curling the end of a piece of paper on my teacher's desk. I stared at this paper trying desperately to escape while the teacher was rambling about the parts of writing. I had to test on the parts of speech the next day, but she already said she would keep the posters that hung around up. These posters allowed us to find the definitions of the parts of writing. I could simply copy them down and pass the test. I did not have to demonstrate my learning on the test I simply had to copy definitions from a poster or from my short term memory. I had other things I would rather be doing, like playing outside. How long until I got to leave?

~Writing, yeah what fun! I cannot wait to get started. How much time do I have? I am going to write about everything I can! I wrote about whatever came to my mind, and it was my journal and the teacher never saw it. We wrote in it frequently, practically daily and that was our writing time.

~A teacher who checks our work. This teacher makes sure we are working. I write a paper about something, I turn it in, I get it back with some remarks about the content and subject, an A paper. Wow! As I look back I wonder if I did ever mechanical corrections, if I did they were never enough to take away that A I received.

~I did have to work though. The teachers I had did require us to hand in work. The work was handed back to us with comments. Come to think of it I am not sure what I was being graded on. I cannot tell if I do not remember because it was so long ago, or if it was simply because I had no idea what I was being graded upon.

III

Relearning Material (April 2&4, 2004)

Journal Entry:

As I read through the Harbrace College Handbook I am noticing that these definitions are seemingly familiar. I remember hearing the definitions as they were lectured to me however I do not remember learning them. It is likely that as the teacher droned on about the parts of a sentence and how to find a verb, an adjective, or whatever I sat and stared blankly nodding here and there throughout the lesson. A typical look of understanding was across my face, and yet it was so false because I was bored. I was a student who needed to be engaged all the time, keep in up and involved. I raised my hand a lot and answered a lot, but that did not mean that I was retaining what I was learning.

Journal Entry:

Oh my goodness! I am self-correcting! I just caught myself stopping my typing to look at a sentence and figure out how to re-word it so that it was mechanically correct. I was just typing my parent letter of April 5, 2004 and I halted to redo a sentence. I mean totally erased the sentence and reconstructed it to make better sense. How awesome is that! Normally I would have used the sentence and tried to make it work by changing a few words. I had enough power to let it go and start over. I am so proud of myself!

Journal Entry: (April 17, 2004)

Confiding in friends

I just got finished talking to an old friend, she is a year younger than I and is attending Penn State. We went to high school together. We did 4-H and Track and Field together as well. She and I were talking about how things have been really rough for both of us lately, we vent every so often to each other, it makes us feel better. It was from our conversation that I realized that people do not always seem as secure as they appear. We began talking about how her life is going and we ended up talking about high school. It was at this point in the conversation that I became very surprised. She said that growing up she wanted to be like me. Amazed and slightly flattered by this I asked why she would ever want to be like me. She simply replied because you are a people person, you are pretty, so sure of yourself, funny, involved in so much, and popular. Ironically I never felt that way-ever. I feel like people think I am insensitive; I know that I am not pretty, just look at my complexion; I am a far cry from sure of myself, in fact I am consistently second guessing myself and am afraid I will make the wrong decision; I do not find myself funny, I think I am down right boring; I am involved in a lot of things; and popular, well, that is not true, I was just friends with everyone no matter your popularity. As you can see by this example she saw me as one person, the person I like to have everyone see and yet I am someone completely different on the inside. My point to saying this is that your self confidence and the way you present yourself are often perceived as the same. They are not. I feel this way in my writing. I am often perceived as a strong individual writer, but I am actually not.

VI

Leigh Anne Dustin

Inquiry Brief

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March 2, 2004

VII

March 29, 2004

Dear Parents,

Hello! This week I have officially begun my student teaching, which will take place for the next five weeks. As part of my student teaching I am responsible for creating and implementing the students' lessons. This includes transitioning, making the schedules for the week, and informing you about the happenings in your child's classroom.

This week we began our Astronaut Training Program (Space Cadets) to initiate the beginning of our space unit. The children are now signing in every morning with their first and last names. We are busily preparing many astronaut necessities for our space journey. This week in Centers we made astronaut helmets.

In order to prepare adequately for our space journey it is necessary to learn about our solar system. The focus this week was on the moon. The children learned some interesting lunar facts such as that the moon has no atmosphere, that it does not make it's own light, that the moon never really changes shape, and that Earth has only one moon orbiting around it. The children discussed and learned about the moon's phases as well. An extension was made into Centers time when the students created the moon's phases and labeled them.

The students have a lot of creativity and therefore the other Centers consisted of creating Space Alien Sock Puppets for dramatic play at Choice Time; and making a space station that landed on an unknown planet.

During Language Arts this week the children have been focusing on their word families. The children used highlighters to highlight the common endings in their packet. In another activity the children created words by playing a little game using the word families -at, and -an. They also began recording information about space in their space information books during handwriting. A research table about the moon was created this week, so the children could freely look at books about the moon. The children have continued their participation in reading groups as well.

The math concepts we have been continuing to develop have also taken a space spin. The children worked on measurement and estimation when they made spaceship flyers, estimated the amount of steps it would fly, and then flew their flyer and did a final measurement. The children have continued to work on number writing, making equations (both addition and subtraction) and counting.

Stephen Krensky came to Radio Park on March 24 to talk with the children about writing. Through the use of imagination, Mr. Krensky gave a wonderful introduction to choosing names for stories. He then proceeded to talk to the children about story writing. The children were excited to hear all about his books and how he created them. He told the children that sometimes he does not even know the names of the characters in the beginning, or even where the story is going to lead. He explained that the books are written by him, they go to an illustrator, then to the publishing company. He also showed the children the different stages of the book binding process. The children had a wonderful time!

As always feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns. Mary can be reached at school at 231.4115, at home 466.6119, or e-mail at mby12@scasd.k12.pa.us.

Sincerely,