

"Power of Poetry":

Integrating Poetic Devices
and Forms to Spark Creative
Writing.

Inquiry Project
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Table of Contents

Part I: Background Information
Pages 3-7

Part II: Inquiry Plan
Pages 8-15

Part III: What I Learned and Now
Know
Pages 16-23

Part IV: Conclusions and Future
Directions
Pages 24

Part V: References
Page 25

Part VI: Appendixes A-R

Part 1: Background Information

“Miss Malloy, what do you mean you are not sure?” To a classroom of eight and nine year old children, I am expected to know everything and when I say I am unsure about an answer to a question a puzzled look from an innocent child stares back at me. Throughout this year, it has been difficult for my third grade students to understand that I am still learning and taking classes to enhance my teaching career. Students are often under the impression that adults, especially teachers, know all, fear nothing and can do anything. This misunderstanding is extremely complementing; however, it is also a tremendous motivator. The fact that my students think that I know all motivates me to inquire about questions I have and to learn all I can to enhance lessons that will support my classroom community.

This year the third grade classroom I have been interning in has twenty-two students. There are eleven girls and eleven boys ranging in age from eight to nine. The students have a variety of extracurricular activity interests including football, cheerleading, gymnastics, karate, pottery, and computers. Many students enjoy reading, watching movies, and taking care of their pets. Majority of the students work well independently and participate in whole group discussion; however, there are a few students that require special attention.

Academically, the students range from low to high capabilities; however, most students are average learners who are able to work independently and follow instructions. There are two boys, Kevin and Nate, and four girls, Kelly, Jill, Sally and Molly, who are extremely talented students who are self-motivated, obedient, helpful, and efficient. These students are the social leaders in the classroom and are easy to get along with. On the other hand, there are two boys, Skip and Tom, who complete their assignments extremely slowly. They do not listen to instructions, never sit still, and present a challenge in regards to behavior. Sam and Lily both

have IEP's and are sent to learning support for reading and math. Sam is diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and operational defiant disorder. He does not complete much work, needs very individualized lessons, and completes most assignments on the computer. Lily has reading anxiety and is very artistic. She can work independently; however, needs extra time to complete assignments. Majority of the students read and write at the expected third grade level and try very hard to overcome any challenges they have.

Socially, majority of the students are very friendly, caring, and willing to help one another. They work very well together; however, some students have trouble sharing. The older children seem to be more bossy and in control during group activities and DPA. At DPA, I often see the boys playing together and the girls playing separately. There is one student, Rob, who is very gifted academically; however, often acts very immature if he does not get his own way. There are not any personalities that are too strong or overpowering, which makes our classroom community very easygoing.

Overall, room 81 is a great environment to work in. The students are all very kind and recognize each other's strengths and weaknesses. The talented students are not conceded and often go out of their way to help those who struggle academically. The shy students mingle well with outgoing children and the entire class gets along nicely. I am very impressed with how well the students work together and believe that their generous personalities will continue, as they grow older. When presented with the inquiry assignment, I was confident that the academic and social context of my classroom community would lead me to many wonderings. One area I noticed all students, whether low, average, or high academically, needed work on was writing skills; therefore, I used this as a starting point for my inquiry.

When discussing with my PDA, Kimber Mitchell, and mentor teacher, Linda Witmer, about what subject I was passionate about, I immediately answered writing. As a product of a Catholic school environment, I remember nothing about elementary school except reading and writing. We used textbooks, diagramed sentences, and a drill and practice method to know our grammar. One of my concerns about teaching in a unit-based curriculum was trying to find the time to teach the necessary grammar skills that have helped me become a strong writer. My advisors recommended that I use this strong belief in writing as a part of my inquiry project.

As I began to think more about what direction I wanted go with writing, my classroom was beginning the Festival of the Arts (Festival) unit and we were preparing for the Pennsylvania State Standard Assessment (PSSA). The Festival unit was broken down into three main components: art, music, and literature. Poetry was the focus of the State College Area School District curriculum for the literature component of the unit and I took on the responsibility of organizing the poetry lessons.

I knew teaching poetry would be fun; however, I was avid about teaching my students to learn how to write. I found that, "...true learners are more engaged in learning through thematic teaching and more hands-on activities than traditional drill and skill models..."(Bertrand and Stice, 2002, 266). This research made me realize that I needed to find a way to integrate writing skills into this poetry unit. I wanted to be able to continue with the thematic unit and teach writing simultaneously, but how? I decided to use this as the basis for my inquiry project, but was not very sure about how I wanted to begin the inquiry process.

I presented this idea to my advisors and immediately they agreed that the integration of poetry and writing skills could be interesting. I was also informed that analyzing poetry is often apart of the reading comprehension section of the PSSA, which is when my project began to

expand. I consulted with Lori Korman, the Title I teacher at Gray's Woods Elementary, and asked her for ideas on how to teach comprehension skills that assist students while taking the standardized test. I also asked her for sample test questions that she used to prepare her students. We consulted the book entitled, PSSA Reading Coach Grade 3 and Grade 5 by Stuart Margulies, Ph.D. and found that being able to analyze, interpret, and write poetry was in fact a standard that third grade students were expected to meet (2002, 7). I received resources from Mrs. Korman (see appendix A) and began to form my wonderings and purpose for my inquiry project.

Initial wonderings:

- How can I teach third grade students to analyze, interpret, and write poetry?
- Is it possible to use poetry as a vehicle to teach grammar and poetic devices?
- How can I find time in a unit-based curriculum to teach grammar skills?
- How do I get children to apply what they are learning to experiences in their own lives?
- What are children's stereotypes about poetry?
- How can I teach children to think less concretely about literature?
- How can I prepare students for the poetry and constructed response portion of the PSSA?
- How do you teach students to acquire a deeper level of thinking?
- How can I meet the standards of a unit-based curriculum and teach the skills necessary for the PSSA?

Purpose:

With all of the wonderings in my head, one thing I was confident of was that I wanted my poetry lessons to be more than simply writing poems that rhyme or are written in a certain format. I decided the purpose of my inquiry was to enhance my students' ability to interpret, analyze and create pieces of poetry in a way that would enable them to make connections

between various genres of literature. I designed this project to teach grammar skills through poetry lessons and to prepare students for the constructed response portion of the PSSA. The research was an attempt to determine how I could incorporate the standards as well as grammar skills into a unit-based curriculum that is often so busy. I hoped this project would allow my students and myself to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for poetry as well as enhance their comprehension and writing skills.

Overarching Question:

Poetry is a very complex form of literature that is often simplified to teach to younger children. I am not a devoted poet; however, I do know that poetry is very powerful and can be a creative way to express emotions and practice writing skills. I did not want to simplify poetry for my students and contribute to the stereotype that all poems rhyme. The path I was going to take to organize my wondering and help my students enjoy the art form of poetry was very cloudy; however I knew that my overarching question was:

How can I use poetry to teach my students comprehension and grammar skills, while meeting the PSSA standards and collaborating with the SCASD Festival of the Arts unit curriculum?

Part II: Inquiry Plan

While planning for the Festival of the Arts unit, I allotted a decent amount of time to teach in depth poetry lessons. I was pleased that my inquiry project incorporated content that would easily fit into the schedule of my classroom. To begin preparing for the poetry lessons I went to the library and took out many different poetry books. I had poems about dogs, cats, seasons, etc. I found a variety of books with many different forms of poetry, but no books regarding teaching poetry. I went to Barnes and Noble and found a variety of teacher resources regarding teaching poetry. I purchased a book entitled, Power of Poetry by Joan Groeber. This book was a teacher resource that was geared toward students in fourth through eighth grades; however, it included many different ideas on how to teach poetry. After analyzing the book, I knew it was a great resource that would assist me in challenging my third grade students.

Data Collection

By looking through the book, Power of Poetry, I was able to narrow down the forms of poetry I wanted to teach. I also researched the Pennsylvania Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening Academic Standards and discovered that “Pennsylvania’s public schools shall teach, challenge and support every student to realize his or her maximum potential and to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to read, analyze, and interpret literature”

(http://www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=76716&stateboard_edNav=|5467|&pde_internetNav=|). The specific standards that correlated with my inquiry project were:

1.3. Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

1.3.3. Grade 3

- A. Read and understand works of literature.
- C. Identify literary devices in stories (e.g., rhyme, rhythm personification)
- D. Identify the structures in poetry (e.g., pattern books, predictable books, nursery rhymes).

- F. Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.

Pre-assessment - January 16, 2004

After understanding which standards I wanted to meet during my project, I developed a pre-assessment and a sequence of lessons that each had a specific poetry form and device. I began the data collection for my inquiry project by giving each student a pre-assessment (see appendix B), which asked them questions regarding their knowledge of poetry, parts of speech, and poetic devices. I reminded the students that there was no right or wrong answer, only great ideas! Getting an idea about what the students knew about poetry gave me a developmentally appropriate starting point and helped me understand the amount of background knowledge my students had about poetry.

The first question on the pre-assessment asked, “What is a poem?” Seventeen of my twenty-two students (77%), including the high academics, wrote answers that indicated a poem is a rhyme. For example, Jill wrote, “A poem is a rhyming sentence,” Tom answered, “A poem is a story that has rhyming words in the story,” and Kelly thought, “A poem is rhyming words put together I think.” It was evident, based on the above answers to this question and many others, that my students, even the high achievers, were very unfamiliar with the technicalities of poetry. My classroom has many creative minds and my goal was to help the students grasp an understanding of what poetry is so they would find the excitement and energy surrounding the art form.

After reviewing the students’ pre-assessments, I decided to focus my first poetry lesson on parts of speech because, although most of the high academics answered correctly, very few average and learning support students could identify the nouns, verbs, and adjectives in the sentence on the pre-assessment.

Lesson One- January 21, 2004

I introduced my students to poetry by teaching them how to write a *Diamante poem*. “A Diamante poem is arranged in the shape of a diamond. It helps students apply what they know about opposites and parts of speech. A Diamante provides them with the opportunity to study how words relate to one another outside the context of a sentence or paragraph” (Groeber, 2001, 29). The lesson plan I developed (see appendix C) began by writing two sentences on chart paper and the students identifying the adjectives, verbs, and nouns in the sentences. As the students’ struggled, I explained each part of speech. Then, to review, we tossed a soft ball around and each student named any noun, verb, and/or adjective.

Following the review, I told the students that we were going to start our poetry unit by writing a Diamante poem. I read many examples of a Diamante poem and pointed out the use of specific parts of speech and antonyms. As a class, we did an example poem together and then the students worked individually to come up with their own Diamante. I developed an instructional chart (see appendix D) to assist the children while writing their Diamante independently. This first lesson was very successful and I began to see my students react positively to this kind of “non-rhyming” poem.

Lesson Two- January 28, 2004

The second lesson I did was with an *Acrostic poem* form and the poetic devices simile and metaphor. Many students expressed their familiarity with Acrostic poetry in the pre-assessment; however, they were used to composing a list of attributions that begin with the title letters of the subject. Although that is one way to write an Acrostic poem, I wanted my students to write a statement or question by using the title letters of the subject. “The purpose of either Acrostic form is to develop an image related to the theme” (Groeber, 2001,17). I wanted my

students to understand that poems have a purpose and an Acrostic poem should help the reader visualize the subject of the poem. I required each student to use at least one simile or metaphor in his or her Acrostic poem. The lesson plan for the Acrostic lesson (see appendix E) outlines how I challenged my students to think about poetry as an art. They were not merely listing qualities to describe themselves; they were creating a mental picture for the reader about their subject. The class and I spoke about how similes and metaphors are “figurative” and completed a worksheet (see appendix F) together. The students understood that by comparing two things they could create a better visual representation of what is being described. My class and I also discussed what idea the comparison was helping to convey.

The creative language that was used in their Acrostic poems taught me that they were grasping concept that poetry is a story. Students were also able to point out when they heard a simile or metaphor in a piece of literature and could explain what two things were being compared. The students were excellent at describing what the simile and/or metaphor was explaining and this showed me that the students were ready to analyze a poem.

Lesson Three- February 25, 2004

The third lesson did not focus on a form of poetry or device. This lesson (see appendix I), required the students to read the poem Things by Eloise Greenfield from her book entitled Honey, I Love. Next the students needed to answer multiple-choice questions and a constructed response question. The objective of this lesson was for the students to be able to find the message that the author was sending in the poem. I wanted students to understand the purpose of poetry; therefore, I began the lesson by doing a roundtable discussion asking each student to write their response to, “What is the purpose of poetry?” (see appendix J).

After we discussed their answers, I read a variety of poems by Mattie J.T. Stepanek and as a whole we discussed the meaning behind the young author's poems. We also conversed about the broad language that was used to send the message and how poems are open-ended, leaving the readers to make their own interpretations. The completion of the worksheet (see appendix K) was extremely guided because I wanted the students to grasp the concept without guessing. I knew this was the first experience with interpreting poetry; however, I felt it would be very beneficial for them to share their ideas and understand that poetry is a story that can hold a variety of messages.

This lesson was also good practice for the PSSA because they were asked to relate the message in the poem to an aspect of their own life. According to my mentor teacher, all constructed response portions of the PSSA require students to relate the story and/or poem to their own lives.

Lesson Four- March 3, 2004

The fourth lesson was extremely successful. I developed the lesson plan (see appendix L) based on the poem Riding on a Train by Eloise Greenfield. In this poem the author creates a story using her senses. She also used personification, onomatopoeia, and alliteration. After reading this poem to the students, we had a discussion about the kind of language used by the author and how it gave the reader the feeling of riding on a train. I defined the different devices used for the children and then we brainstormed ideas about what we would see, hear, and feel while playing at recess. The students were asked to create their own poem about recess using their senses and the three devices.

Their finished poems (see appendix M) were very creative and, by student request, we wrote another set of poems about eating at lunch. I was extremely pleased by the language the

children were using. I could see them using strong adjectives and verbs and enjoying writing the various poems. The students were very good at using personification and came up with great examples such as, "...cars running down the road" and "...fruits and veggies flying into my mouth." The stronger students, Kevin and Sally, especially took their time to complete the poems and really were taking the purpose of poetry to heart.

Each time the students wrote poems throughout my inquiry they were anxious to share their poems with the class. They enjoyed when I wrote a poem with them and this was a good way for me to model my expectations of the lesson. During the poetry sharing, each student would listen and point out the device and/or parts of speech in each poem. It was a good way to review all of the lessons and keep all of the concepts fresh in the students' minds. Sharing poetry was very calming and showed how each lesson built on the students' ability to express their emotions through poetry.

Poetry Contest

The final lesson was a chance for the students to use their creativity by writing a poem without any guidance. They were given the opportunity to write a poem on the topic of their choice and developed their own criteria for the poem. They decided that the poem needed to be at least ten lines, needed to include one example of all poetic devices, and had to contain strong parts of speech. I motivated the students to make their poems meaningful and creative by entering one poem from each student in a poetry contest (see appendix N).

The poetry contest was an opportunity for K-12 students to win cash prizes and/or have their poem published in the annual anthology, A Celebration of Young Poets. A fellow teacher in the building used this contest in the past and many of his students' work were published. I shared some of the Gray's Woods student poems that were published and this captivated my

classroom. The fact that my students' could publish a poem was very exciting for me and helped motivate them to take pride in this last poem.

The students' poems (see appendix O) were absolutely amazing and they really seemed to enjoy writing free verse poetry. The poetry contest was a great incentive because it helped the class see that poetry is one of the few forms of literature that is open to many different styles and interpretation. I was proud to see the students' intensely working on creative poems that could potentially be published. Many students scrolled through the Spring 2003 version of A Celebration of Young Poets and other poetry books contained in our classroom poetry basket to get ideas. The poetry basket was full of the original books I pulled from the library and was in the classroom for the students to read during silent reading. Students were also returning from library with their own poetry books to add to the poetry basket. The immersion of poetry began with this inquiry project, but the students took responsibility and became very enthusiastic about poetry.

Post Assessment

To complete my poetry unit and data collection, I gave the students a post assessment (see appendix P), which was very similar to the pre-assessment. I was very pleased to see that nineteen of my twenty-two students (86%) no longer thought of simply a rhyme when asked to define a poem. Their definitions for a poem showed their understanding that a poem is written to express feelings. They were also able to identify the parts of speech and poetic devices without hesitation.

Data Analysis

The sequence of lessons and implementation of my inquiry project seemed to be very successful. I was able to collect data from each lesson and also began to develop further

questions based on the data I collected. Despite the series of lessons I created, I was unsure where I wanted to go with all of the information I had collected, until I heard a former intern, Julie Brun, present her inquiry project. Her inquiry was focused on writing and getting her students to write in an organized and detailed manner. This led me to the idea that my students were writing more creatively because of poetry and that was my “ah-ha” moment.

I realized that not only was I teaching skills and getting my students to think more critically about poetry, I was teaching them language to use in their writing. I went back and flipped through their homework (see appendix H) and stories (see appendix G). Sure enough, there were many adjectives, similes, metaphors, and personification evident. I developed the wondering:

“Does teaching poetry lessons motivate students to write more creatively in their fiction writing?”

From this point on, the primary way I analyzed my data was by researching how students reflected their poetry skills in the poems they created and in additional writing samples. I found that all of my high learners frequently used adjectives, similes, and strong verbs, in most of their writing, especially homework and creative stories. I began to praise those students’ for using creative writing and when I brought attention to their use of creative language, more average students began to reflect the same kind of creative writing skills. Also, by comparing the pre and post assessment (see appendix Q) I was able to gain an understanding of how many students learned the material and I was very pleased to learn that only six out of my twenty-two students were unable to answer the questions correctly on the post assessment.

Part III: What I learned and now know

After implementing my inquiry lessons, analyzing my data, and doing research, I have learned a great deal about how to teach creative writing through poetry. Unfortunately, I will be not be able to analyze the results of the contest and/or the PSSA testing; however, based on the growth they have shown in the poetry unit, I feel confident that my students were able to clearly organize their thoughts and write creative responses to the PSSA questions

It is evident that my teaching plan was effective because of the connections that were made between poetry and writing by my students. Although this was not the initial intention of my inquiry unit, it proved to me that, “Inquiry is a never-ending cycle”(Bertrand and Stice, 2002, 267). I am now able to make the following claims about what I have learned:

Claim #1

Reading, writing, and analyzing various forms of poetry is a strong vehicle for helping third grade students to understand that poetry is a complex genre that involves both purpose and mechanics.

It was evident that by immersing my third grade students in various forms of poetry, they were able to understand that there are many forms and purposes of poetry. The stereotype, “all poems rhyme,” that the students held in January clearly no longer exists. The students’ were able to make comparisons between the various kinds of poems and make conclusions about the messages in poems.

The student claims made during the round table discussion in lesson three were very different from their initial definition of a poem in the pre-assessment. In the round table discussion, students shared that the purpose of poetry is to “give feeling to the reader” (Sam), to “tell your feelings and to tell a story” (Sally), to “add meaning to your life” (Molly) etc.

Discovering the purpose of poetry can be scary, for both teachers and students, because it is one of the unique genres of literature that is open to interpretation. Poetry is often a hidden literary genre and is only advertised in a rhyme or specific format. In lesson three, the students saw the “Power of Poetry.” They answered the constructed response question very personally. The question stated:

“In the poem, Things by Eloise Greenfield, the author is sending an important message to the reader. Describe what this poem is telling the reader by using specific examples from the poem. Then, describe a time when you experienced something that had an impact on you or describe a time when you made something that was so important that it couldn’t be replaced.”

This was a very complex question for third grade students to answer; however, it reinforced that poetry it is not only for the reader to read, like an Acrostic or Diamante, but also for making connections to his/her own life. In her research for Harvard University, Susan Bisson argued that, “... that the very elements which make poetry seem harder are a means to making the learning experience fruitful and exciting for students” (<http://learnweb.harvard.edu/2821/c5.cfm>, introduction). Bisson’s statement is very powerful and based on the students’ answers; I agree that although it is difficult, students have the ability to master the art of analyzing poetry. One student shared:

“In this poem, the author is trying to send a message that says there are more things in life that are more important than candy and a sandcastle.... When I moved to State College, I put

**a sad face on me...It still makes me sad. I will never forget
Honey Brook just like the author never forgot her poem.”-AS**

The amazing connections made by this student, and many more, made it evident that the students were not afraid of poetry and knew that it was a thought-provoking genre. Susan Bisson also stated that, “... if students and teacher are to grow more confident in approaching poetry, they must come to be sensitive to the ways in which poetry differs from other sorts of literary texts and, as a result, come to build an approach to poetry based on these differences” (<http://learnweb.harvard.edu/2821/c5.cfm>, introduction).

After building a sequenced, integrated approach to poetry, I feel poetry is soft subject that need to be taught gently; however, it is a strong way to help students think critically and creatively if they are immersed in it enough.

Claim #2

Poetry is an effective tool for teaching parts of speech.

Often in thematic units, the idea of getting activities done outweighs the importance of the content. I took my passion about writing and understanding the parts of speech and attempted to make it less segregated. Students are not often interested in learning nouns, adjectives, and verbs; however, it is very necessary to teach. I chose to fit in parts of speech through my Diamante lesson and it was very successful because not only did the students produce beautiful poetry, but also they were able to identify the parts of speech they needed to use to create the poem.

After teaching the Diamante lesson and reviewing the parts of speech, students were much better at identifying the parts of speech in a sentence. Based on the data from the pre

assessment it was evident that approximately half of my students could not identify adjectives, verbs, and nouns in a sentence. The sentence on the pre assessment read:

The wet, white, snow drips from the bare branches of the tall tree as it slowly melts in the heat of the warm sun.

In reference to the sentence, the students were asked, “Are the underlined words verbs or adjectives?” Eight students answered incorrectly. They were also asked, “Are the circled words nouns or adjectives?” Six students answered incorrectly. This evidence proved to me that I needed to review parts of speech with my third grade class (see appendix R).

Having students apply the parts of speech to a Diamante poem helped them see what makes the words different from one another and also see where the words fall in a sentence. This poetry lesson also aided students during morning work lessons. Some morning work lessons require the students to compose lists of nouns, proper nouns, pronouns, etc. After the writing the Diamante poem, majority of the students were able to complete morning work assignments very independently. They were also writing descriptive sentences with strong verbs and adjective in their homework assignments. For example, they needed to write an expanded sentence using a spelling word. For the spelling word *clear*, Sally wrote:

“Today in Japan it is clear and the shiny, yellow sun is shining down on the people.”

For the spelling word *second*, Tom and Sally wrote:

“My second favorite food is nice, juicy, delicious, amazing, tuna!”

“I came in second and won a shiny, silver metal.”

The increase in the use of adjectives in all of the students writing samples was very impressive. The post assessment results also showed that only four students were still struggling identifying the parts of the speech in the sentence from the pre assessment.

Integrating parts of speech, such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, in poetry was very successful because the lesson was engaging and also required students to use their creativity. The Diamante focuses on nouns, verbs, and adjectives; however, I am confident that poetry would be a great way to teach any or all parts of speech because it is exciting for the student and time efficient for teachers.

Claim #3

Integrating forms of poetry and poetic devices helps enhance students' ability to write and interpret poems.

Sequencing lessons to teach both a poetic form and a poetic device simultaneously was a very resourceful way to assist children in understanding how the device is used in more than one poetry form. Although, teaching students that all poems do not have a specific form and not all poems rhyme can be difficult, I found it was much easier to ask the children to write a poem if they knew devices rather than forms.

It was evident in the students' post assessments that they understood what a poem is and why an author might choose to write a poem. Some student responses were:

“An author might want to write a poem to express his or her feelings”-Sally

“A poem is a way that the author can express themselves”-Lily

On the pre and post assessment, the students were also asked, “What did you learn during the poetry unit?” Answers to this question included responses such as:

“I learned that not all poetry rhymes” –Andrew

“I learned about similes and metaphors”-Skip

“I learned that poems are a way to express yourself”-Jill

Based on the above responses and many more, I was able to conclude that my students have the ability to write quality poems because they understand what the purpose of poetry is.

Through my lessons, I noticed that students were able to interpret a poem more easily because they knew poetic devices. For example, after learning what a simile was, the students were able to identify similes in many poems and genres we read. The students’ did not take as much notice to the form of poetry and they focused more on the strong language rather than the pattern of the poem.

Initially, nine students predicted on the pre-assessment that a simile, **“means your happy” (Skip) and is “something you make with your lips”(Kevin)**. After my sequence of lessons the students were simile experts. They found metaphors more challenging; however, they mastered similes. Similes were showing up in a lot of their writing and on the post assessment were able to define a simile. Seventeen of my twenty-two students knew that a simile is a way to “compare two things using like or as” (Jill).

In their final poems, the students did not hesitate to include poetic devices, especially personification and similes, and they did not choose to use a poetry form. I am confident that the knowledge the students have about poetic devices led them to write and interpret poetry more easily. One final poem that is a great example of the students’ use of devices is by an average student, Scott:

Baseball Game

When I’m on the baseball field I smack the ball and whack!
 I fly around the bases like a bird and score a homerun!
 My teammates jump with glee like kangaroos in the air.
 I love the thrill of winning awesome and sweet baseball games!

The students' poems made me extremely proud. I am confident that a few of them will win the contest and I know that I will teach poetic devices in this manner again in the future.

Claim #4

Meeting creative writing and reading comprehension standards through poetry is very effective way to integrate skills.

Students were able to take what they learned about the figurative language used in poetry and apply it to other forms of writing. I feel through this inquiry my students did not only meet state and district standards, but exceeded them. I was very impressed when I began to see my students use similes in the writing. Kevin pleased me when he took the time to write a six-page story, which included strong descriptive sentences and similes. During goal setting conferences I was congratulating Kevin on his work and asked him:

“Do you think poetry helped you write more creatively?”

He smiled and answered, “Definitely!”

I was also explaining to Kevin's parents how he did a fantastic job connecting poetry to his writing and sparked my new wondering. Kevin's mother shared with me that, “Kevin had difficulty writing creatively in second grade. I was so excited to read his story and see so much description. His poems are unbelievable. Thank you.”

This was such an unexpected compliment; however, it was all the evidence I needed to conclude that integrating poetry skills enhances creative writing.

Poetry is a powerful tool for helping students to sense, observe, and describe the world around them.

One of my many goals as a teacher is to help students apply what they learn in school to the real world. I believe being keen observers in all subjects in school will help students to be

more aware of their surroundings as they grow older. Connecting the five senses to poetry aided the students' ability see, feel, and hear the importance of details as you describe an experience.

I used poetry as a path to stress the importance of writing with details that will enable the reader create a picture of what is happening in the story and/or poem. In my fourth poetry lesson, I had my students get in touch with their five senses by reading the poem, Riding on the Train by Eloise Greenfield. I wanted the students to clearly describe what they saw, heard, and felt in her poem and then write a similar poem about what they see, hear and feel at recess. The students were extremely descriptive and enjoyed using personification and onomatopoeia in their poetry. Integrating the poetic devices helped them think more abstractly about the world around them.

The students' poems came out excellent and in all of the poems I could easily picture the author playing at recess. For example, a line of Tom's poem was, **"I see....cars running down the road,"** and Nate wrote, **"I hear....beep, beep, tweet, tweet."** Challenging the children to focus on the sounds they hear, what they see, and how they feel helped them pick up on the importance of observing the world around them. This lesson helped the students to understand that poetry is written in a style that allows the reader to visualize exactly what the poem is describing. The students easily picked up on this skill and reflected it in their poetry and creative writing.

Part IV: Conclusions and Future Directions

Discovering the “Power of Poetry” was such a rewarding experience. It has enabled me to take a close look at how beneficial it is to integrate skills through thematic units. I challenged myself to explore a way to teach grammar and ended up with an excellent way to teach creative writing skills.

This inquiry process will have many implications on my future teaching and has led me to many new wonderings. I am now motivated to find out if poetry could be used a vehicle to teach comma use, direct quotations, and/or additional skills that will enhance the quality of student writing. Learning about inquiry and how to question my teaching has enabled me to develop lessons that are more specific to the needs of my student and lessons that challenge them to make connections between subject areas. My individual inquiry project has helped me see that integrating skills has a huge impact on how students use content. By teaching poetry, I have found that students learn best when they are able to apply what they are learning to a variety of areas.

Many of my advisors, fellow teachers, and parents were impressed to see the quality of poetry that my third grade students were producing. In the future I will integrate skills more often because I want my children to be able to apply everything they learn in school to their lives outside of the classroom. This poetry inquiry project has benefited my lesson development immensely and I feel all pre-service and veteran teachers should have the opportunity to explore their in-depth wonderings!

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