



Kid Writing: Enhancing Kindergarten Writing at All Levels

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Kid Writing: Advancing Students at all Levels

Background Information

Teaching Context

When you walk into my classroom, the very first thing you notice is, of course, the children. Whether they are playing, working at centers or involved in a lesson they are always active and enthusiastic. My kindergarten classroom consists of only sixteen children, seven girls and nine boys who are all very different from each other. The children range from five years old to seven years old. One of our students receives emotional and instructional support while a second receives instructional support. Two of our students are of Korean descent and one is of Japanese descent. We also have one student of European descent. The only similarity among all of the students is when they smile you can see they are all missing at least one tooth, most likely a front one!

I am teaching in a full-day kindergarten class at Corl Street Elementary School. This is only the second year for full-day kindergarten in this school. At the beginning of the year, two of our children were attending for only half of the day, but by December all of our students were attending for the full day. Full day kindergarten allows for many more opportunities in the classroom and in the school. Children are able to attend all specials for 35 minutes as well as have more access to the computer lab on a daily basis. Students eat lunch from the cafeteria or from home in the classroom with the other kindergarten class, an experience also missed in half day kindergarten. In the classroom, full day kindergarten allows for students to spend time everyday in math, interactive and independent writing, and modeled and guided reading practice. In the traditional half-day

program, students would possibly only spend time two or three times a week in these activities and instructional opportunities.

What is Kid Writing

The full-day kindergarten teacher has a unique experience because students are gaining more experience with additional instructional opportunities and time. In our classroom, my mentor had the opportunity to have the students engage in Kid Writing everyday for the first time when full day kindergarten began last year. Kid Writing involves both the student and the teacher in the writing process. In the beginning, the teacher models drawing a picture and then she and the students work together to spell out words in a sentence. The teacher models how to say words and to listen for letter sounds and then to transfer the sounds heard to the paper. Students then create their own picture and use sound spelling to write a sentence about the picture they have drawn. The teacher helps students listen for sounds by saying the words and sounds for them. Once students have written their story a teacher writes using adult writing underneath what the students have written and points out the sounds that students recognized and used correctly. After all students are finished writing, the teacher chooses several of the students' writings to share and use for mini-lessons. Examples of mini-lessons can be pointing out how a student used spaces between words, or how they used lower case letters instead of capital letters within words and sentences. Kid Writing requires a lot of one-on-one work between the teacher and a student. When my mentor teacher taught half-day kindergarten, she would work with small groups only once or twice a week to do Kid Writing, but with

full day kindergarten, assisted by a student teacher and a para-professional, she found it possible to do Kid Writing everyday.

Importance of Kid Writing

As I worked with the students throughout the year, I noticed that some students were becoming independent and sound spelling on their own while others still relied on teacher support for the whole writing process. I also noticed that many students were having difficulty deciding what to write and draw about. Students were unsure of their writing skills and would stick to the same topics. One student wrote consistently about her cat, because she could spell cat. Other students' writing always began with "This is a..." because these were all words on the word wall, while still other students would write, "I don't know what to write about" several days in a row (**See figures 1 and 2**). I felt as if the students were becoming bored with the writing. They often rushed through by writing the same things. They would stop after just one sentence, and while for some students one full sentence took all their time, other students could easily have written a second sentence. I began wondering what would come next in their writing experience. I began an inquiry project on Kid Writing because I wanted to challenge the students more in their writing and to encourage them to challenge themselves. I wanted to see how each student's writing could advance, whether they were independent writers, relied on some teacher support or were still working on letter sound correspondence and needed complete teacher support. Writing is very important in kindergarten because for many students it is their first formal instruction. I knew that all of the students could add detail

or length to their writing or pictures but I didn't know how much, or what would be so challenging that it would become frustrating.

Wonderings

From the initial wondering of what would come next in the Kid Writing experience came even more questions. I wondered first how changing the Kid Writing format would affect different students. Would all students be able to move to a next step? What were the different steps/levels that I should encourage students to achieve? How would I know if students were becoming frustrated or bored? I also wondered how I would change the actual format of the lessons to encourage students to advance. Would changing the paper format affect their writing? In what way could I structure the lessons best to ensure a gradual advancement of their writing? How could I help students come up with ideas to write about? Would it be best for students to write their own stories or to focus on a personal moment or event? Would they be able to go back to their writings and add more to them? Could students sustain a story or a Kid Writing journal over two days or more? I took all of these wonderings to my mentor and my PDA and we worked through them to focus on one main question: **How can I encourage all levels of students to continue to advance in their Kid Writing?**

Research

In order to answer this question, I first needed to learn more about Kid Writing and how a child's writing advances developmentally. This would help me to know where my students were in their writing development and what the next step for them would be.

In Kid Writing: A Systematic Approach to Phonics, Journals and Writing Workshop, the authors, Eileen Feldgus and Isabell Cardonick, outline the Kid Writing process. They believe that phonics should be taught through use in writing, not separated out in worksheets or drill. Students are required to use phonemic awareness to hear individual sounds in words and then to correspond them to letter symbols. They are able to explore with different sounds the same way they would explore with different manipulatives in math. A philosophy of writing that is presented is that “*children need frequent, ongoing opportunities to play with written language and investigate how written language works*” (Feldgus 9). Children need support throughout the Kid Writing process, which is provided in adult writing and frequent mini-lessons for needed skills. Adult writing is included in every Kid Writing time. The teacher will write directly underneath the students’ writing using conventional spelling or what is called “adult writing.” Students are told that they are not expected to write exactly like adults do until they become adults; instead they should be doing their very best with Kid Writing. Kid Writing is essentially phonetic spelling, also known as invented or sound spelling, as opposed to conventional spelling. However, with invented spelling, it is important to celebrate students’ approximations of words. This encourages students to take risks and not worry about having the correct spelling. Learning to spell “*is a process that continues throughout a child’s schooling*” (Feldgus 11). As I explained above, the process for Kid Writing includes modeled writing with interactive writing before students are given the opportunity to begin their own personal writing. Modeled writing occurs when the teacher demonstrates for all of the students her own Kid Writing. The teacher shows how to pick a topic, to draw the picture and to begin writing. With interactive writing, the

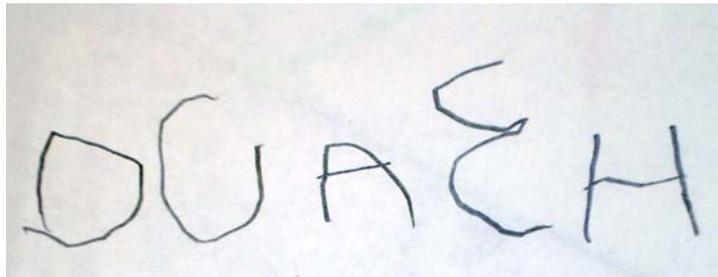
teacher may ask for students to pick a topic or to help her/him sound spell out the sentence. Teacher support is evident throughout the Kid Writing process as the teacher helps students to break words into sounds, praises their attempts at spelling and then underwrites their sentence using conventional adult spelling while continuing to praise student work. This process helps the students to begin to work independently but also allows them to take more risks because students feel more supported. One final important part of Kid Writing theory is the actual setup of the physical environment. Teachers need to “*litter their (students) environment with enticing language opportunities and guarantee them the freedom to experiment* (Feldgus 15).” Teachers should not only create a classroom that immerses students in words and literacy but also allow students to be involved with the words. Students should help to decide what sounds are important enough to be emphasized in the classroom and then be encouraged to use them in their writing.

Once I understood the theory and process behind Kid Writing, I then needed to learn more about how students’ writing skills develop. This would help me to recognize where students are in their development and identify where they are going in their path to becoming independent writers. Feldgus and Cardonick offer eight levels or stages that children will go through in their writing. The first level is *Emerging/Scribble* where there are no discernable letters but is an attempt to create a picture. The second level is *Pictorial* where a recognizable picture is present and may also include an imitation of writing, showing that the child realizes that writing often accompanies a picture. At the third level, *Precommuincative*, children may be able to print their own name or a known word. Most often they will string together a line of random known letters and will read it like a

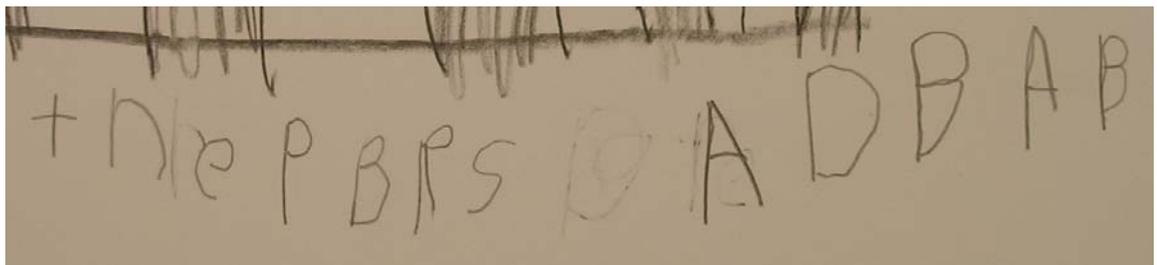
sentence but the sentence will change for them with each reading. *Semi-phonetic* students at the fourth stage will begin to use letters to match sounds they hear as they attempt to recreate a word. They will most often write from left to right and use one letter to represent a whole word. *Phonetic* students will now use beginning and ending sounds to create a word and may begin to use know words more often. At this fifth stage, some vowels are beginning to be included and spaces may appear between words. In level six, *Transitional*, students are beginning to write out words using middle sounds as well and are representing most syllables in words. Students are consistently using spacing correctly and may begin writing more than one sentence. In the *Conventional* level, students are spelling more words correctly but will still use phonics based spelling for new words. These students are also beginning to use some punctuation and lower case and capital letters. In the final stage, level eight or the *Advanced* stage, students are using more vocabulary, have mastered the spelling of common words and are using more punctuation. At this stage students also begin to organize their writing into paragraphs. At some times stages may overlap, or students may master one area before another. Every child is different and will develop at different rates but they will generally experience all of these stages. (Feldgus 153)

Constance Leuenberger, the author of The New Kindergarten: Teaching Reading, Writing and More, offers 4 classes of writers that correspond with the eight levels offered by Feldgus and Cardonick. Students who are considered **Prewriters** are those who use scribbling, whether it is random, more controlled or done with purpose, to create a beginning picture. Random scribbling is less recognizable than that which is done with a purpose. These students would correspond to the *Emerging, Pictorial* and

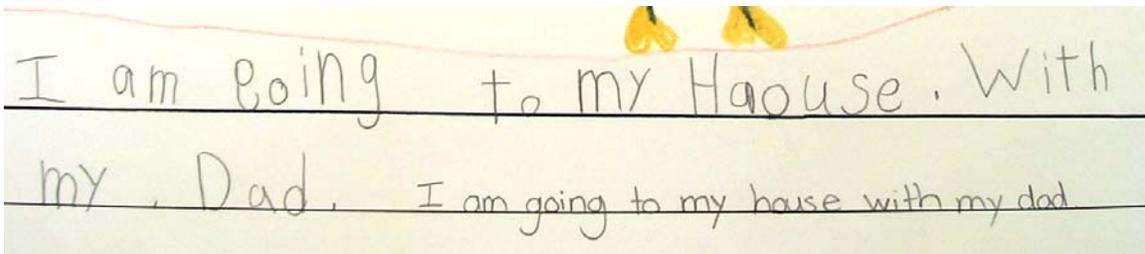
Precommunicative levels. Also, students who are in this stage may begin to make forms that look like letters and then move into writing random strings of letters before they move into the next classification, that of early writers. The following writing would be considered at the Prewriter stage. It says, “This is a three horn.” The students used some random letters and some that he heard. Instead of writing the word three, he chose to insert the number symbol.



Leuenberger classifies **Early Writers** as students who are beginning to take more risks. They are similar to the *semi-phonetic* and *phonetic* levels of Feldgus and Cardonick's stages of writing. These students are recognizing beginning sounds and are using pictures to tell stories. This sentence was written by a student at the Early Writing stage. He wrote, “The polar bears had a baby.” He mostly heard the beginning and ending sounds. He recognized the word “the” from the word wall and heard the long “a” sound in “baby”.

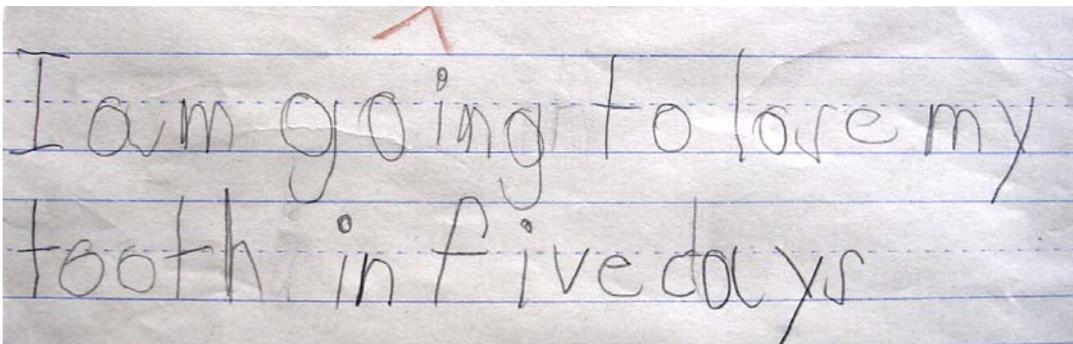


The third classification of writers is **Emergent Writers**. These writers are using pictures and words to tell the same story. They are beginning to use known words in their writing and are attempting punctuation, much like students in the *transitional* and *conventional* levels would. The following picture represents a student who is in the Emergent stage. She is using word wall words and spelling many words that are familiar to her, such as dad, correctly. She is using spacing, lower case and upper case letters and some beginning punctuation.



The final group of writers is **Fluent Writers**, those who can draw detailed pictures, explain the picture they drew using words and use known words and spaces in their writing. These writers correspond directly with the *advanced* level of writing development. This is an example of a fluent writer's work. She uses spacing, correct upper and lower case letters and can sound spell many difficult words correctly.

(Leuenberger 112-115)



My Inquiry Plan

How I Developed My Plan

Once I understood the philosophy of Kid Writing and how students' writing develops, I needed to decide the next writing steps for my students. At first, I thought I should engage them in story writing. I wanted to see if through creating a fictional piece of work, which could span several pages and followed the story format, their writing could be enhanced. I thought that this would focus students on their writing and give them a direction. After discussing this option with my mentor, we decided to talk with a first grade teacher to find out if story writing was a valid experience for kindergarteners and what expectations she had for students entering first grade. The first thing I learned was that story writing isn't even introduced in first grade because it is not seen as developmentally appropriate for students at this age. Instead, the first grade teacher believed that it was much more valuable for students to write about personal and meaningful experiences. Personal experiences are more concrete than fictional stories for children in kindergarten and first grade. She introduced me to a series of nine books by Lucy Calkins with Leah Mermelstein and Abby Oxenhorn that were used by the first grade teachers to guide writing instruction.

The two books I looked at were titled Launching the Writing Workshop and Small Moments: Personal Narrative Writing. These books focus on using interactive writing in the classroom, much like the Kid Writing book, and were to be used in the beginning of the school year, in September. I believed they would be most beneficial to my students because they focused on students who were between the *Pictorial* and *Phonetic* levels of writing. Each book was set-up by sessions and each session included

mini-lessons, discussion and sharing. After reading the books, I decided how I wanted to structure my lessons and mini-lessons to encourage students at all levels to advance in their writing skill. For students that were in the *pictorial* and *precommunicative* stages, I wanted to focus on their pictures and building their known word, also called sight word, vocabulary. I wanted to help them build a repertoire of words that they could use in their writing. For students, who were in the *semi-phonetic* to *transitional* levels, I wanted to focus on having sentences that told the story of the picture, as well as moving towards more independent writing. Finally, for students who were already writing independently at the *transitional* or *conventional* level, I wanted to work on helping them to become better risk takers, to stretch out their writings to more than one sentence and to expand their vocabulary in their writing. I also felt that it would not hurt the students to take part in all of the lessons because everyone needed to build their sight words or add more detail to their stories.

My Inquiry Lessons

The very first thing I did, during my first inquiry lesson, was to introduce new Kid Writing folders. Instead of using journals, I had students use folders that contained loose sheets of lined paper that had a space at the top for pictures. I hoped that this would encourage students to write more because there was more room for their writing. I also included an alphabet chart on the front and a miniature word wall on the back of their folder (**See figure 3**). As a result, students had easy access to their letters and to sight words. Students could also add to their word wall with words that they knew. The second part of my lesson I took from the Lucy Calkin book. Students began writing about

personal moments; things they had done or were going to do. This made the writing more meaningful to students because it was something about them. I hoped it would also keep my students from having writer's block because they could all think of something they had done or would do. I drew from our daily morning meeting and would remind students to think about what their "headline" news was if they became stuck. During this lesson, I modeled picking a topic of something we had all done as a class and demonstrated how I could use the new Kid Writing folder and paper. I then encouraged the students to think of what they had done or would do to write about and then allowed them to begin to work.

I planned four weeks of lessons for my inquiry. Lesson plans can be seen in figure four in the appendix. My first week I focused lessons on writing about personal experiences; what students had done or were going to do. I had students brainstorm ideas out loud and share with classmates. The second week we looked at pictures as a class. We decided what aspects made a really good picture. Students decided on using a background, using people or characters in their pictures, using lots of colors and finally having action. We created a poster and would always look back over our picture when we thought we were done to see if we could add any more to the picture. The third week, we looked at how we could add more to the story. We would take a large moment, or a big event, and write about what happened. The next day we would go back and look at that picture and think, "Can we tell any more about what happened?" If they could, students would take a new sheet of paper and write more about that moment. They could then staple the two pages together. Several students ended up with three or more pages in their moment story! The final focus was on taking a small moment and breaking it into what

happened first and what happened next. For this, students would take two sheets of paper, draw what happened first and what happened next and then write the story. Again, some students ended up using three pages to tell their moment story! Students could also then add more to the story the next day if they thought there was more to tell. Some stories ended up over 6 pages! However, a few of those were because students love to staple. A new rule was quickly established that only the teacher may staple stories.

How I Collected Data

My inquiry was very student centered and the majority of my data was based on student work. I collected samples of students' writing after each lesson from students of all levels. I collected samples of students' pictures, students' large moments stories and their stretched small moment stories. I also collected samples of their writing from the beginning of the year and their first Kid Writing experiences to compare.

Each Friday became an independent writing day, where students would try their best to sound spell without teacher help. Independent writing actively helped me to see how their sight word vocabulary was growing. I would also do small interviews with students to have them identify words and sounds I had added to the word wall and kid sound wall. The word wall is a list of words displayed on the wall and is organized by each letter of the alphabet. Words are placed on the word wall when it is believed that children have been exposed to them through big books and read aloud activities. We also add words when I find that students are attempting to use a word repeatedly in the Kid Writing and are having difficulty spelling it. An example would be the word "this". It is a very common word but can be tricky to sound out. Our word wall presently includes the

following words: am, and, are, can, do, from, I, in, it, like, my, me, of, on, see, the, to, this, went, will and you. The kid sound wall contains sound chunks that students use continually. For example, we have the “King of -ing”, the “Wiz of is” and the “Star of are”. We also have the digraphs *th*, *ch*, and *sh* displayed by pictures of students giving the THumbs up, pointing to their CHins or holding their finger over their mouth for the sh sound (See figure 5). During the individual interviews, I would have students write the sounds they would hear in words I gave them, including digraphs and blends, i.e. sounds like *bl* or *br*.

During the teacher supported Kid Writing, I used anecdotal recording sheets to keep track of who was writing independently, who used which word wall word or digraph and who was using spacing (See figure 6). I would write out their sentences and use symbols to signify which word was sounded out independently, which was a known sight word and which word/sounds required teacher support. I used these sheets with every student I worked with and instructed my mentor teacher and para-professional how to use them. This way I could get information about how each student was writing during the Kid Writing time, even the students I didn't work with directly on a specific day.

How I Analyzed My Data

In order to analyze my data, I realized I would need to select the student work of several children as opposed to every student's work. There are sixteen children in my classroom and they all write at least one page a day in their Kid Writing journals. If I were to look at every child's work from my four weeks of lessons and include samples of their work from the beginning of the year, I would become buried in paperwork. I

decided to take two students from three of the four level of writing as outline by Constance Leuenberger. These levels were Prewriting, Early writing and Emergent writing. I excluded Fluent Writers because we do not have any Fluent Writers in my class.

Group 1 Students- Prewriters

I selected two students from the Prewriting Stage. Tim¹ and Bobby were showing evidence of being in the *precommunicative* level of writing as described by Feldgus and Cardonick's eight levels of writing. Both students could write their names correctly, using upper and lower case letters. They were able to identify and correctly write approximately 60% of our sight words. Examples of words from the word wall these students had difficulty with but would use frequently are: *this, went, am, you*. On the other hand, they easily used the following word wall words: *the, my, we, and to*. Both students had difficulty with digraphs and memorizing sight words that were longer than three letters. Sounds like *-ing* and *-ou/ow* from our kid sound wall were frequently used correctly, while other sounds, especially *sh, th* and *ch* were often missed. Both of the students I chose from the Prewriting Stage showed evidence of moving into the *semi-phonetic* stage. They heard beginning sounds and some ending sounds; however, they often would insert a random letter to stand for an unknown word and did not use spacing in their writing. Before I began my inquiry, Bobby required teacher support for the entire writing process and would also need a teacher prompt to begin drawing. Bobby's stories often began with "This is a..." Tim also required teacher support but would begin drawing independently. Tim's stories often began with "I like..." Both boys began with

¹ All student names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

these sentences because they were familiar with the words. Bobby's drawings consisted of barely visible people or objects and were mostly scribbles in different colors. Tim's pictures were occasionally scribbles but his people and objects were easily seen. (**See figures 7-10 for examples of both students' work**)

Group 2- Early Writers

The second group of two students, James and Paul, were functioning in the Early Writing Stage. They showed evidence of being in the *phonetic* level of writing. They would occasionally write independently but mostly relied on teacher support to sound out words. These students used spacing in the writing and were hearing more than just beginning and ending sounds. They would occasionally insert vowels at random but were also able to insert obvious long vowel sounds correctly. Both of these students could correctly use any of the word wall or kid sounds at any time in their writing. James' pictures would often consist of only people in one color while Paul's pictures and stories revolved around animals, real and imagined. Both students would write about a similar topic every day. (**See figures 11-13 for examples of both students' work**)

Group 3- Emergent Writers

My final two students were Candace and Greg. They were in the Emergent Writing Stage and showed evidence of being in the *transitional* level of writing. They could write independently with little teacher support and were able to sound out letters to represent each syllable in a word. Both of these students were hearing vowels, both long and short, and using sight words that were not on the word wall or kid sound wall. They were consistently using spacing in their writing and also beginning to use some punctuation at the end of their sentences. These students also would occasionally write

more than one sentence or would write a compound sentence using “and” as the connecting word. Candace’s pictures were often very detailed and colorful but she didn’t use backgrounds very often. Her pictures revolved around characters, princes and princesses. She would often start her stories with “this is a…” I believe she did this because she did not want to challenge herself. These were words she felt comfortable including in her writing. Her focus was more on her pictures than on her story. Greg’s pictures and writing were often rushed. Letters were almost always uppercase and pictures were lacking in detail but had many colors. Greg would often write “I don’t know what to write” or he would spend 5 or 10 minutes sitting before he began drawing. **(See figures 14-16 for examples of both students’ work)**

Once I had chosen six students to focus on during the Kid Writing lessons, I began to analyze my data using samples of their Kid Writing from before and after my mini-lessons. I first compared my Prewriters, Tim’s and Bobby’s, previous and current writing. I also looked at my anecdotal notes to see what sight words they wrote independently and what words required teacher support. I looked over my interviews for sight words from before my lessons and after my lessons to see if they had added any more words to their repertoire. I looked to see what changes had occurred in their writing. I wanted to see if they were using spaces, if they were correctly using capital and lower case letters, and if their pictures had changed.

I began the same way for my second group, the Early Writers. I compared James’ and Paul’s previous writings to their current writing to see what changes had occurred. My focus was slightly different. While I still wanted to see if they had added more sight words and if their pictures had become more detailed, I was more interested to see if they

had begun to write more independently and if they had tried to stretch out their stories. I was looking to see if they were taking more risks in their writing by moving away from using only known words in their writing. These were the students who were writing the similar stories over and over each day. I looked through their work to see if they were using new words and writing about new topics. Were they starting to take risks in their writing? I also needed to use my anecdotal notes for this group to see what types of prompts I might have been using with them or if their writing was non-prompted.

To analyze the data for my final group, students who were Emergent Writers and already writing independently, my focus was on their risk taking. I compared Greg's and Candace's previous work with current work to see if they were beginning to stretch out the stories into several sentences or in some cases, several pages. These students already had a very good grasp of the word wall words, so I relied on my interviews and anecdotal notes to see what new words they had added to their sight word vocabulary. I was looking to see if they would begin to challenge themselves and if ideas would come more easily with the focus being on personal experiences.

For all three groups of students, I relied mainly on a comparison between their Kid Writing from September to February and the work they did during and after my lessons in March. I used my anecdotal notes and interviews as secondary and clarifying evidence of what they were learning and how their writing was changing. I wanted to let their writing tell me how their writing was developing.

What I Learned

My Claims

Claim 1. Kindergarten students are able to and are motivated to write about a personal experience - something they have done or something they are going to do.

Evidence: In the very beginning of Kid Writing, students were given free reign with what to write about. Stories would emerge about monsters, cats and even rainbows. However, after a few weeks of Kid Writing, I observed students talking to their partners and saying they didn't know what they could write about. When students would sit down with their journal they would sometimes sit for 5 or more minutes waiting for an idea. When I decided to introduce helping them by focusing their writing on personal experience, I observed that students would take their journals, sit down and begin almost immediately. All of the students in my groups were able to come up with a topic each and every day. When looking through their work, I did not find a single paper that said, "I don't know what to write." Instead students wrote about classroom activities, like our parade, and they wrote about activities that they did with their parents (**See figures 17-19**). Students loved to share something fun that they had done or somewhere they had gone. I began to see how the writing was having more meaning for students because they were so excited and eager to write about their experience. In my anecdotal notes I often recorded students saying how excited they were to write about something they had done with their parents, or somewhere they were going to go (**See figure 20**). We began an Authors' Chair to allow students to share their drawings and stories because students wanted to tell everyone their stories. During their sharing, they would often add even more to their story because they had so much to tell. As can be seen in the attached

papers, students who were writing only one sentence or whose stories began with “This is a...” began writing active stories about things they had done. Students also began writing about their feelings and how a certain event was fun or scary. This added more depth to their story by showing how it was meaningful to them because it made them feel a certain way (See figures 17-19).

Claim 2. All levels of students can add more detail to their pictures, whether it is through color, action or showing who is in the story and where the story takes place.

Evidence: When I looked through and compared students’ previous pictures to those that occurred after our picture lesson, I found several changes. Almost all of the students were beginning to add backgrounds to their picture. If students were outside, the sun and grass was almost always present. If the picture was inside, students would add a window or walls (See comparison pictures in figure 21). I noticed that students also started drawing more people and labeling them. I had done a modeled writing of our class during the parade and had drawn everyone and labeled them. Soon after this modeled writing, students began labeling the people in their pictures or would draw exactly 16 stick people to represent everyone in the class (See figure 23-24). Even animals began to show up more often as characters in students’ stories. I noticed students began to count how many colors they used. They would tell students during their sharing exactly how many colors they used. I also observed students reminding each other to use more colors in their pictures (See figures 22, 25 and 26)

Claim 3. Students learn from modeled and interactive writing.

Evidence: I had planned to use modeled and interactive writing because it was stressed in both the Lucy Calkins books and Feldgus and Cardonick's book on Kid Writing. Interactive writing is the focus in the book Sharing The Pen; Interactive Writing with Young Children by Gail Tompkins and Stephanie Collom. In it Linda Boroski, author of the introduction, states, "*Writers are engaged in their writing efforts. They are working hard to understand how written language works.*" (Tompkins 4). Interactive writing is supported by Lev Vygotsky's theory of "zone of proximal development" and scaffolding. This zone "*...is the range of activities that the child cannot yet perform alone, but can perform successfully with guidance from others who are more knowledgeable.*" (Tompkins 4). This guidance comes from the teacher scaffolding student's efforts. Scaffolding is the support of a "teacher, adult or other competent person" for a child who is performing in the "zone of proximal development" (Tompkins 4). During scaffolding, the teacher helps students achieve what they could not alone, while at the same time modeling effective writing skills and strategies.

In the Kid Writing that immediately followed each lesson, I found that students often displayed exactly what I had modeled. Looking at the writing done after I modeled labeling people in my picture, all of my students began to label their pictures and many are still continuing to label. My Prewriter students would not have been able to write as much without the careful modeling and following scaffolding. I observed that these students often lost their spot in a sentence when sounding out words. They would repeat words, skip words or sometimes change the sentence halfway through their writing. With teacher support, they were able to create stories of two or more sentences and hear more

sounds than they would if they were writing independently (**See comparison pictures in figure 27**).

Claim 4. Students of all writing levels are able to stretch out a story by adding more details or more pages.

Evidence: I found that the Prewriter's were adding more to their stories by adding more detail to their pictures or by adding a second page the next day. They would look at what they had written the day before and then decide if they could add more. If they could, they would draw a second picture and write another sentence or two. With my Early Writers, I noticed that they would also add to their stories the next day but they would occasionally add a third or even fourth page during following days. They were able to maintain a story for almost a week before they would choose a new topic! Finally, with my Emergent Writers, I have several examples of stories that are two to three pages long that they did in one day. They would draw two pictures about what happened first and what happened next and then write about them. Again, they might come back to that same story the next day and add another one or two pages of what happened next. They were able to add something new but that connected from one day to the next. (**See figures 28-33**).

Conclusions:

Implications For My Future Classroom

I believe this inquiry will have a very large impact on my future teaching. While this inquiry was mainly about students' writing, it was also about how we accommodate for different student needs in the classroom. Differentiated instruction is invaluable in a classroom of any size or in any grade. I learned that I need to support students who are just beginning to learn a new skill or concept. In addition, I need to be ready to challenge my students who are ready to move on to the next level. In my future classrooms, I will try to challenge as well as support all of my students so that they may continue to grow and change at their own pace.

I also will take a lot of knowledge about assessment and observation from this inquiry project into my classroom. I have experimented with several different types of interviews and anecdotal recording sheets that can be used in all grades and found which work best for me. I also have learned how to apply the knowledge I gain from these recording sheets. From these sheets, I can learn what each student needs, whether it is in the form of more support or more challenge, and I can create a way to meet each student's needs in different instructional and even behavioral areas.

New Wonderings

While I feel I have answered many of my initial wonderings, I am still left with several questions. From my work with sight words, I am now curious about how we can encourage students to use more sight words and to create their own list of known words for writing. How could I have better used the word wall and "kid sounds" during my

lessons to encourage students to use them? What are the words/sounds that students are expected to know for different grades? Would students use sight words more if they were more involved with the creation of the word wall and “kid sound” wall?

I am also curious about how the format of journals affects students of all ages’ writing. I found that some students flourished with access to more lines, while other students felt constricted by the lines and wanted more room to draw. What would be the best format for a kindergarten journal? Should students be allowed to pick the format of their journals? Should beginning writers use journals with lines or does that detract from the focus on sounds and make students more focused on handwriting?

Finally, I have become more curious about how students are developmentally different at all ages and in all aspects. From my research into the differences of writing development in kindergarteners, I realized how different students of the same age can be and what a wide span there is for their development. How can I know what is developmentally appropriate for students of all ages? Can I challenge all students while supporting them in math as well as writing? I found that working in large groups for writing, I am able to challenge students in their writing in different ways, but can the same be done in math? Is it better to differentiate math instruction through small groups?

Many new questions were raised by this inquiry and I hope to use my teaching and reflecting in future years as a way to help answer my questions. I know more questions will continue to be raised with each new experience that I have. However, with the experience I now have with inquiry and reflection, I am excited to continue learning for years to come!

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Glossary of Figures

Figure 1- Example of a student's writing that begins with "this is"

Figure 2- Example of a student who wrote "I don't know what to write about" and drew a random picture.

Figure 3- The new Kid Writing Journal. Includes an image of the front cover alphabet strip, back cover with word wall words and how the paper is organized inside.

Figure 4- My lesson plans along with interactive and modeled drawings and writings.

1. First lesson on use of new journal and how to choose a topic from personal experience
2. Lesson on how to pick a big moment to focus on one part of it.
3. Lesson on adding on to the moment that was written about in previous lesson.
4. Lesson on what makes a good picture. Included is a picture of the poster I created with student help.
5. Lesson on breaking an event into what happened first and what happened next. Students wrote two pages in one day.

Figure 5- Images of our classes Word Wall and Kid Sound Wall.

Figure 6- Blank anecdotal record sheet. Names have been removed.

Figures 7 and 8- Examples of Bobby's writing. Note the sentences begin with "this is..."
The pictures are mostly scribbles with some discernible objects or people.

Figures 9 and 10- Examples of Tim's writing. Both sentences begin with "I like..."
Pictures are mostly scribbles but people and objects are fairly easy to identify.

Figures 11 and 12- Examples of James' writing. Both pictures are done in one color with short sentences. Figure 12 shows James' difficulty in choosing a topic when he writes "I don't know what to write about."

Figure 13- Example of Paul's writing. His writings often revolve around animals, both real and fantasy. He also often begins with "I like" or "this is."

Figures 14 and 15- Examples of Candace's writing. Drawings are simple and writing consists of mostly familiar and word wall words.

Figure 16- Example of Greg's work. His drawings and writing are often rushed. This causes letters to run together and pictures to become difficult to identify. He also has difficulty in choosing topics as can be seen in his sentence "I don't know what to write."

Figure 17 through 19- Examples of students' work after Kid Writing became focused on

personal experiences. Students wrote about classroom activities and also included emotions.

Figure 20- Anecdotal record that includes students quote on writing about personal experiences.

Figure 21- A comparison of Candace's pictures. In the beginning of the year her pictures were simple, whereas after a lesson on pictures, she began adding background and more detail. In the second picture, one can see that her picture is inside through her inclusion of a door and a lamp.

Figure 22- Example of Bobby's picture. People are easier to identify as is a house and the sky. Compare to earlier pictures in figures 7 and 8.

Figure 23 and 24- Examples of work that includes labeling of people. Names of writer/artists have been removed.

Figure 25- A comparison of James' pictures. In the earlier picture, and in figures 11 and 12, James' used a single color. In the more recent pictures, he began using more detail and new colors. He also labeled himself but the name has been removed.

Figure 26- Anecdotal record that includes a quote on the use of colors. Names have been removed.

Figure 27- A comparison of Tim's earlier writing to more recent writing. His writing has become much less reliant on word wall words and he is beginning to take more risks while using teacher support and scaffolding.

Figures 28 and 29- Two of Tim's writings. In the first Kid Writing, Tim took a large moment and wrote about it over several days. In the second Kid Writing, Time wrote two pages about his experience at a friend's house using two pages.

Figure 30- One of Bobby's writings. In this Kid Writing, Bobby wrote for several days about his experience at an Easter Egg hunt.

Figures 31 and 32- Two of Paul's writing. The first is a story about his experience at an Easter Egg hunt. He wrote this story over 2 days. The second is a Kid Writing about space. He wrote two pages in one day about space.

Figure 33- This is one of Candace's Kid Writings. She wrote about her rabbit and her experiences with her rabbit over a five day period.