

# **Meeting Writing Expectations through Peer Editing**

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**Abstract:**

What do students think about while they write? Are students concerned about what grade they get? Would peer editing help them to recognize mistakes or work harder to find their own before peer editing? To improve the quality of fiction and nonfiction writing, students were paired and engaged in peer editing for three different types of writing. The inquiry seeks to discover whether the quality of writing improved, time was used productively, and students benefited from the experience of peer editing.

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## **A. Background Information**

### **What led me to this Inquiry and why it is Important**

For the most part I write for personal reasons. I have kept journals since the age of nine. I felt relieved to release the building ideas and stories onto paper. I would write letters to my parents when I was mad, or explain the latest drama with my girlfriends. My writing was for me. As I matured, I began to write and share installments of a story that unfolded weekly, awkwardly mirroring my life. My friends, acquaintances, and enemies names had been changed to protect the innocent, but everyone enjoyed reading about the choices I had made for their character.

The illusion of fame from sharing my work with others soon wore thin and I became my only audience again. My stories took on new meaning. I wrote myself into stories and solved problems and issues in my life through writing. About the same time I learned how to handle myself without the “written rehearsal”, academic writing weighed me down. Now, my only personal writing is correspondences, and even those are labored. I do, sometimes, create stories in my head and think about writing them down, but the stories are low priority in the scheme of life. That same spark of release that I remember from pouring out my thoughts comes occasionally from a weekly reflection. Those are few and far between.

Oddly, my reflection on writing includes no mention of academic writing until more recent years. I do remember my first report in second grade, and feeling very grown-up. I do remember keeping a reflective portfolio through elementary and junior high schools. Writing a reflection for each article was daunting, but not discouraging. I do not remember lessons. I do not remember being taught. I do not know how I got to this place in my understanding or attitude towards writing. I do not know who to thank for teaching me how to release my thoughts onto paper.

And, so it is now, through teaching that I give myself a second chance to look at writing and appreciate how to grow as a writer. I immediately began to realize that writing is a very complex process. First, a thought must be developed. Next, the thought must be organized into words. The words are passed through neurons and nerve endings to the hands and fingers which hold a writing utensil to paper. The words are then broken up into sounds and letters and formed with the utensil attached to the paper. This process, with its complex connections, leaves so much room for mistakes; it becomes a wonder in itself that children are able to write.

In the fall my mentor teacher was enrolled in a writing class. This meant, from the beginning of the school year, my mentor teacher taught writing lessons from a curriculum to gather feedback for her class. During writing I found myself in the background of the classroom, only helping students that came to me for help. I felt uncomfortable about affecting the students' writing. My own perspective of writing being personal drew me away from being concerned with content. I feared students may have a negative response to critical feedback of content, and restricted my comments to exposing superficial elements such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar. I did not want students to be turned off from writing, something that I had once thoroughly enjoyed. It became such a barrier that my editing exceeded their understandings and I was missing out on teachable moments and lessons. I was blinded by looking for anything that gave the impression of being neat.

How would it be possible for me to teach students to coordinate all of the parts involved in writing to produce a whole that they were proud of? I became aware of a huge void in my comfort level when it came to teaching writing. I could recall the district and state standards for third grade writing, but I could not define a path on how to get to that point. I was concerned

about grading writing, especially story writing. I felt the whole process to be very subjective. I wanted to be able to support my grades comfortably. I had found my personal struggle.

The further I observed my mentor I saw her guiding more and more. I felt conflicted, wondering what message I was giving by “guiding” students to an acceptable story. Arlene Silberman in Growing Up Writing: Teaching Our Children to Write, Think, and Learn, shared that contrived writing, she feels, destroys children’s natural desire to write about real concerns. Was I interfering with a delicate means of self-expression? As I continued to see students write I saw the formula of a beginning, middle, and end develop. Teacher guiding had lead to the intentional discovery of the three parts of a story. Writing did have a formula, and, it too must be taught.

### **My Teaching Context**

The State College Area School District is located in central Pennsylvania, in close proximity to the Pennsylvania State University. The district has 10 elementary schools (kindergarten through fifth grade), two middle schools (sixth through eighth), an alternative school, and one high school. The 2004-2005 academic year began Septemer 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004 and will conclude June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The elementary school day is from 8:44 a.m. to 2:50 p.m. The district curriculum is unit based, driven by social studies and language arts. Units are taught in learning communities, called divisions. The intermediate division, third and fourth grades, has three units per academic year and three grading periods. Third grade is the first year for letter grades.

My third grade classroom has twenty-five students. One of the twenty five students is a new student as of three weeks ago. There are twelve males and thirteen females. There are three adults in the classroom, a paraprofessional, mentor teacher, and student intern, making the student to adult ration in the classroom about 8:1. There are six students receiving Title I reading

support, three receiving Title I mathematics support, and one attending learning support for reading and writing an hour each day. Two students attend speech class, and one sees the counselor for emotional support on a regular basis.

Writing workshop takes place about three times a week for 40 minutes to an hour. The assigned writing in the beginning of the year was for the most part informative. The school year began with writing about the student. Writing associated with the first unit was non-fiction. With the second unit writing assignments included fictional pieces and focused on developing stories. Writing is given a letter grade, A through D, on teacher determined criteria. The grade at the top of the paper is accompanied with a brief justification. Writing also takes place in a science journal. Science takes place two times a week for about 50 minutes. The science journal was, until this grading period, given a completion grade.

When I first attempted to take on the task of grading students writing I could see that my expectations for the students writing were different from their own. The class expectations for writing had been developed in September as a class. I compared the grade my mentor teacher gave them to the rubric and found inconsistency. The class had long outgrown the skills the first rubric demanded. It was time to create a new rubric.

#### **Final wondering and questions:**

I began my inquiry process by paying attention to what their writing looked like. I was shocked at how many words were missing, or misspelled. I could not believe the forgotten spelling rules and absent punctuation. Writing workshop is a chance for all the skills of grammar and punctuation mini-lessons and spelling to be applied. I felt frustration from the reoccurring errors I was seeing in student's work because I knew that they knew better. I tried to make each student read his or her writing to him or her self before it could be turned in. It was clear that

self-editing was not occurring. I began questioning, what do students think about while they write? Do they like to write? Are they even concerned about what grade they get? Would peer editing help them to recognize mistakes or work harder to find their own before peer editing? In the end I found my wondering: *Could peer editing help to improve writing and therefore meet teacher's writing expectations?*

## **B. Inquiry Plan**

### **All of the Ways I Collected Data**

The first step in the inquiry process was to speak with veteran teachers about their writing workshops and their experiences with peer editing. Secondly, I researched writing expectations for third graders and gathered as many rubrics, criteria, and self-editing examples that I could; I wanted a basis to follow. Thirdly, I went to the students to gather their impression of writing and the writing process. Lastly, I implemented a peer editing program for three different genres of writing in the classroom (science journal, informative, and narrative).

### **What Others Think/Know about Writing**

Writing is taught in elementary school to build communication skills that will carry students through the rest of their academic, professional, and personal lives. Ray Lawson, a high school English teacher stated "And if young men and women can express themselves with fluency and grace, they've got the makings of educated people. Tell me, can you think of any discipline other than writing that can accomplish all this?" (Silberman 1989). There are many motivations for writing, as well as many benefits. Writing develops self-concept and has a tremendous sense of power attached to making meaningful marks. Writing can also be used to escape emotions or become aware of other's feelings. (Lamme 1984).

That being said, we know more about learning how to read and learning how to do math than we know about writing (National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy 1995). Current technology today, while limiting the occasions for formal writing to the classroom, has created a need for all people to be skilled writers. Formal writing, found frequently in the classroom, is open to criticism, which makes students feel more vulnerable about the writing process. Writing is a reflection of some thought process; it is not a translation or transcription of fully formulated thoughts. Adults have developed a perception that writing is a “think then write” process. Children produce writing in forms that they do not know about, it is not thought about in a formal sense (Schewevel and Raph 1973). Therefore, academic writing is very strenuous, unnatural process. Writing, then, should be thought of as a tool for thinking, a way to communicate, and a form of creative expression.

The revision process requires a very mature writer. Third graders are often sequential writers. Many writers at the third grade level find it difficult to move around, add, or delete phrases or sentences (Jacobson 1999). As a concerned educator, I found that I am not alone with my concern of self-editing. However, it is a reoccurring theme in the research of children’s editing of writing that it is teachers that impede on the editing process through poor evaluation procedures, poor instructional practices and an inadequate classroom environment where students are unable to discuss their writing (Kolling 2002). Writing in elementary schools is often a silent, individual, impersonal time. However, writing is a not a silent activity. Writers need to talk about their writing and the thing that seems to make or break many writing workshops is the presence (or absence) of productive talk (Ray, 2001).

Through my research, I found very little data about peer editing in an intermediate classroom. Most research was based on a sixth through ninth grade classroom. I spoke with

other intermediate teachers at my school informally about peer editing in their classrooms with regard to writing workshop. A fourth grade teacher was enthusiastic about the process and the positive effects it had on student writing. She said that she used it more frequently in the past, but time for writing workshop is now limited, and peer editing is often cut from the process. She also mentioned, that while peer editing was not always possible due to time restraints, she encouraged dialogue about writing. She clearly recognizes the social aspect of the writing process. A third grade teacher shared that peer editing in her classroom had been generally beneficial, but time was sometimes wasted by students. She said it was difficult to keep an eye on all students throughout the peer editing process. Each time she used peer editing she made the decision of who was paired with whom. The difficult part was to pair students together that would be effective workers with one another.

In order to fully understand the expectations for third graders' writing I reviewed State Standards for writing and district standards. The Pennsylvania State Standards for the quality of writing in grade 3 include: writing using well-developed content appropriate for the topic, writing with controlled and/or subtle organization, writing with an awareness of the stylistic aspects of composition, revising improve detail and determining whether ideas follow logically, and editing using the conventions of language (Appendix A). I found very similar expectations in the district standards. According to the State College Area School District, to be a proficient narrative writer in the expanding stage (third grade) there must be a complete story, sentences of differing lengths and complexities, descriptive language, and meet all grade level standards for spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. To reach the highest score, advanced, the story line must be engaging and sustain the writer's attention (Appendix B).

On a more local scale I reexamined the rubric for the classroom, which was developed as a class at the beginning of the year (Appendix C). Recently progressing from second to third grade writing, students expectations included a story blending together, many sentences, and beautiful printing. By March students were frequently writing pages of narratives, with beginning, middles, and ends. It was clear that expectations had changed without being formally recognized.

I kept three pieces of writing from the last writing assignment before peer editing. I choose three pieces of work from students working at high, average, and lower writing level. I wanted a baseline for students work prior to peer editing. I also wanted record of the grading process before the new expectations had been openly established. I found that my expectations for students were to have three cohesive parts of a story, including a developed ending, no missing words, and applied spelling rules.

The first data I gathered from students was in the form of individual interviews with me. The purpose was to find students' views of writing and their understanding of the connection to writing and grading. I decided to personally interview each student because I wanted to ask further questions if the primary response was unclear. I also wanted students to feel they could elaborate without being daunted with blank lines for explanation. Through the course of the week I met with 24 students and asked each student seven initial questions:

- Do you like writing workshop time?
  - Why or why not?
- What do you think about when you write: getting your ideas down, correct spelling, or good handwriting?
- Do you read over your own stories before you turn them in (never, sometimes, usually, always)?
  - If yes, do you ever fix problems?
- Are you able to predict what your grade will be?
- Do you worry about what your grade might be?
- Are you ever disappointed by the grade you receive?

- Do you read over the comments at the top when the writing is returned to you?
  - If yes, do you think about the suggestions the next time you write?

I prefaced each interview explaining that I was gathering information so that my mentor teacher and I could make writing better. I asked each student to be honest with me about what he or she thought so that he or she would see an improvement in his or her classroom. I took students aside individually, as well as away from the mentor teacher.

### **How I Analyzed Data**

After calculating all the results I found only one of the twenty-four students said that they did not enjoy writing time. He said that writing “hurts my head” and it was difficult for him to think of “stuff”. Two students said they really enjoyed writing if they liked the assigned topic, but if they didn’t, they did not really care for writing. The other 91.7% of students said they enjoyed writing time. Many students stated they enjoyed using their imagination and finally putting the story ideas down on paper. Other students’ reasons for why they enjoyed writing included getting good grades, and that time flies during writing time making lunch come faster.

Sixteen of the twenty-four interviewed, 67%, focused on getting their thoughts down while writing. Only 29% thought about spelling and 17% thought about handwriting and neatness. Students that shared they thought about other areas, for the most part named personal goals for their writing. These other areas included adding descriptive language (2), staying on topic (2), getting done on time (2). One advanced writer thought about adding humor.

In regards to self-editing, 68% of students sometimes reread their work, 17% usually do, and only 2 of 24 always reread their work. Of those that do reread before turning in their work 20 change something at least sometimes. Generally, students changed incorrect spelling, added punctuation and capital letters. Only one student said she reworded sentences occasionally. Two

students said they did not change anything while rereading their work. Two students claimed they did not reread their writing at all.

The last four questions yielded telling results. The class was almost equally split between being able to predict their writing always, sometimes, and never. Only 25% of the 24 students worry about what their grade might be, 29% sometimes do, and 46% do not worry. Eleven students have also been disappointed by a writing grade, and 13 have not. Students were worried about staying above a C and disappointed about receiving a C or lower. One student said she was disappointed by a B. Lastly, all of the students claimed to read the comments given by the teacher as justification for the given grade. However, five students did not think about the comments as suggestions the next time they wrote.

It was reassuring to see that students enjoyed the writing process and viewed writing as a chance to use their imagination and express themselves. The clear point was a miscommunication or confusion between the student and teacher expectations. As a class, a new rubric for narrative writing was developed based on the elements of the old student generated rubric (Appendix C). Students were eager to adapt the rubric to all the writing skills they had developed. The students quickly included dialogue, varied sentence structure with description, and a beginning, middle, and end. Character development, cohesive events, and satisfying ending were also areas of discussion. The new rubric (Appendix D) better met the needs of the students and teachers.

As a narrative writing rubric had been developed it was also important to create a science journal rubric. The process went quickly as it followed the narrative rubric process. The science journal entries are shorter, and frequently include graphics, so expectations are slightly different. Students did include mechanics expectations of complete, detailed sentences, correct

punctuation, and correct spelling. The content expectation is to clearly explain concepts with evidence from the experiment and science terms (Appendix E).

My last step in preparation was assigning a peer editing partner for each student. I examined the grade book and the records about what each student struggled with. I also used my own background knowledge from conferencing individually with students about writing. Keeping in mind, third grade student's preference to work with same gender partners, I paired students with same gender partners to encourage on task work. I matched students who have already developed dialogue, or have a tendency to finish first or last, or need to develop more descriptive sentences. Students would work with the same partners the duration of the peer editing inquiry to build comfort and consistency.

### **What I Did to Carry Out Inquiry in the Classroom**

After the first science journal entry students were assigned to their peer editing partner. The peer-editing process included reading the whole journal once to make sure the sentences made sense and the reader had no problems understanding the journal. Second, questioning, are the punctuation, spelling, and capitalizations correct? Lastly, are all the requirements of the journaling assignment met? Students were asked to sit next to their peer editing partner anywhere in the room they would like. Students were also instructed to start the conference with a positive comment and to use pencil to circle words or make suggestions. I asked that the room be silent for the first 5 minutes to encourage careful reading and thinking. During this time, I was monitoring some of the weaker readers and writers to help them with their conferences.

After the peer editing exchange students responded by anonymously answering a four question survey about their opinion of peer editing. The questions were:

- For the science journal, what grade were you shooting for?
- Was it difficult to edit your friends writing?

- Was it difficult to have a friend edit your writing?
- Did editing help you with your writing?
  - If yes, did it help you with your thoughts and ideas, spelling and punctuation, or meeting the requirements?

Twenty-one students expected to receive A's on the assignment, only 2 expected Bs and 1 expected a C. Nineteen of twenty-four students had no difficulty editing their partners work. Nineteen of twenty-four also had no difficulty allowing their partner to edit their writing. Fourteen people claimed they benefited from the editing process. Nine people received spelling help, 5 people suggested help with thoughts and ideas, and 3 found their partner helped meet requirements. While grading, I found that 2 people received Cs and 3 people received Bs, the rest (19 students) received A's.

The second peer editing session occurred with an informative writing assignment. Students researched and wrote a two paragraph report on a chosen subject. Students met with the same peer editing partners. During the instructions, the class reviewed etiquette for peer editing, which included complementing the writer before making suggestions. Students were given a two-sided half sheet to guide the evaluation (Appendix F). The first side was a content based evaluation and the second side was a mechanics based evaluation. Students were instructed to read the writing once through and use the front, then read the writing a second time through for the back.

The peer editing process was noticeably more calm and orderly than the first. The expectations for the peer editing process were more clearly defined. Before the process began, one student asked to finish the part that he was working on while his partner read his paper. Students were able to respond that everyone was working with their partners papers at the same time. After the peer editing process students completed the identical four question survey, as they had with the first peer editing session. Twenty-three students expected to get A's, only one

expected a B. Nineteen people felt comfortable editing their partners work, and 5 did not. Twenty people felt comfortable having their partner read their work, while four did not. The class was split between thirteen people who believed that editing helped their writing, and eleven did not. Seven people had mechanics help, five people had help with thoughts, and four people had help with meeting requirements. Two people wrote in their peer editing partner had helped them with cursive. During conferences students had the opportunity to share their writing and the writing process. One parent stated her enthusiasm with the peer editing method, and liked that students knew what to look for in each others writing and their own.

I used the same guide to grade the writing as the peer editing partner used to edit the paper. I made comments about the grade on the same half sheet. The writer could then see that the expectations were the same for me, as the grader. Sixteen students received A's and eight students received B's. Most of the B's were because of spelling errors. A few students still had the circles from their peer editing partners around the words that were misspelled or missing punctuation, but the errors had not been corrected.

At the beginning of the creative writing assignment, students were asked to fill in a story map after a brainstorming session. After students were given time to record their ideas, they met with their peer editing partners to discuss the story. Students were able to verbalize their ideas and solve problems or holes in their stories. Once they finished the story, or were close to finishing, peer editing partners met again to edit the written work. Students were given another half sheet as a peer editing guide (Appendix G). As in the previous peer editing conferences, the first read was for content, the second for mechanics.

My last piece of data collection was a final student survey. Instead of having students reflect only on the creative writing editing, I wanted an idea of how students perceived peer

editing over the whole inquiry project. I wanted student input to strengthen or weaken my own opinions of peer editing. Of the twenty-five students surveyed, 88% said their writing had improved from peer editing. One student wrote, “I do think it helped, because it taught me to know that everybody has problems with their writings.” Another student wrote, “...when my eye catches something that is wrong I can fix it,” observing the improvement in her self-editing skills. Interestingly, one student wrote, “I think my writing has improved because my teacher gave me a writing rubric”. Most students chose the science journal as the easiest piece to edit because it was the shortest or because everyone wrote something similar. Students were divided about the most difficult writing to edit. Lastly, there was a true or false portion with seven questions. The data is found below.

	True	%	False	%
• I think my partner and I were well matched writers.	17	68%	8	32%
• I was sometimes too nice with my partner. because I did not want them to feel bad.	11	44%	14	56%
• It was difficult for me to find errors in my partner’s work.	13	52%	12	48%
• I didn’t really want to help my partner with his or her work.	2	8%	22	88%
• My partner and I worked well together.	21	84%	4	16%
• It was hard for me to hand my partner my work.	6	24%	19	76%
• I would like help from a friend with my writing in the future.	18	72%	7	28%

### C. What I Learned or Now Know

#### *Claim 1: Students’ writing improved because expectations were known*

Overall, as I reflect on the written work after peer editing, the letter grades earned have improved. It is difficult to reflect on the writing grades previous to the peer editing inquiry because someone else graded writing using a different rubric. However, more students are consistently meeting writing expectations. The range for the past two assignments was A to B-. The errors were generally spelling mistakes and few missing words. Students, however, had mixed impressions of peer editing and whether it was beneficial for them while answering the

reflective questions after each peer editing session. When I calculated the results for the final reflection, 88% of students believed their writing had improved. I believe that the writing improved because students had a better understanding of the expectations, just as one student wrote, “I think my writing has improved because my teacher gave me a writing rubric”. Through student discussion and input a new rubric was developed (Appendix D). Students, therefore, had no question of the expectations for the writing.

During the peer editing sessions the students took on two tasks: writers and readers of work. I believe that the checklists for editing helped them in both roles (Appendix F and G). While I created these checklists, each element came directly from the rubric, and their own expectations for their writing. The checklist serves the writers as a guide to meet all the expectations. In this position, students feel that they know what the grader will be looking for. I also believe, as a writer, there is pride in preparing a piece that a friend will read. Students are eager to share their best work. During conferences I asked students how they felt about peer editing informally. Most students shared that they liked having someone read their work, especially for the nonfiction writing, a piece most students were especially pleased. When I asked if there was a particular reason why they liked peer editing, no one could give me a definite answer, but students did share that they knew what needed to be in the writing to get an A. I believe this is students’ inability to verbalize a sense of comfort in knowing what is expected.

***Claim 2: Through peer editing students are learning to be critical readers and writers***

The time restraints that restrict writing workshop have not allowed students to share their work frequently. Occasionally students who have exhibited a new technique in their writing (i.e. flashbacks or dialogue) share aloud to the whole class in hopes that other students will attempt

the new skill. However, not all students are at the level in their writing that lends itself to try the particular technique. In which case, the writer has two poorly developed ideas or concepts, instead of concentrating on the story element he or she is working on at the time. With peer editing partners, students are reading the work of someone very close in writing ability. The writing, then, mirrors skills that the reader could, and should, be able to use in their own writing. This is a wonderful benefit of reading others' writing, but being a writer requires deep reading and comprehension skills (Lamme 1984). Students must be looking for how words are used, the elements of a story, how they connect, finding details, and predicting. Reading the writing of a peer allows them to practice these skills.

Another skill developed through the peer editing sessions, is just that, practice peer editing. Peer editing is something students will continue to use throughout their academic and possibly professional lives. By practicing at ages 8 and 9 students are beginning to be aware about how to be critical readers while remembering the reader's emotions. Some students, when reflecting, shared it was difficult to have students read their own writing. Through practice, and positive experiences I would hope that students would be able to feel more comfortable in the act. I was originally concerned that students would feel insecure about having a peer read their writings, especially the creative writing. Creative writing tends to be personal and leaves the author more vulnerable to criticism. Six students claimed they had trouble handing over their writing to someone else, but no genre of writing was more difficult than the other two. As a class, almost everyone was very positive about the experience; nearly all students responded that they wanted to help their partner.

***Claim 3: Most third graders are not fully prepared for editing***

Learning to revise takes time and maturity (Jacobson 1999). For many student writers, writing's purpose is an act of self-expression rather than for perfection. This is especially difficult for students editing creative writing. Also, third graders have difficulty differentiating editing and revising (Jacobson 1999). On post peer editing reflections more students commented on spelling, punctuation, and cursive, than make suggestions about thoughts, ideas, or organization. This could be an element of difficulty sharing writing suggestions with a peer. In the final peer editing reflection, over half the students shared it was difficult to find suggestions for their partner's writing even though most of them wanted to help. This could be from a lack of confidence in writing style or mechanics, or the inability to read as critically as editing requires. Some students' writings included the editing partners' circles; corrections that were suggested were never altered by the author.

Secondly, students' comments on the peer editing guides were short and quick, often just a check in the box, or good. I realized that students were imitating the remarks my mentor teacher I had made when we had read student work in the past. Many of our notes on their writings were indicating corrections or expressing approval with good work. Informal student-teacher writing conferences with me, especially in the beginning of the year, were limited to mechanical corrections, which could be why students felt comfortable making only those superficial remarks. The students had no model for how to ask questions that would prompt writers to think deeply about the expression of ideas (Myers 2002). Every new skill requires time before it is used with consistency, and mastery requires lots of practice (Jacobson 1999).

## **D. Conclusion and Future Directions**

### **Implications for My Future Practice**

My inquiry began because of my own challenge to grade student writing and fear of implementing my own writing workshop. While the rubric and student input have helped, I still struggle to grade writing. Through research I have gained a better understanding of what my expectations should be for third grade writers. I have an improved my insight of students' impressions of writing workshop and how students meet writing expectations. Through the experience of peer editing, I also know how to implement peer editing in the classroom and what changes I would make.

This year, I am privileged to work in a classroom with students who are enthusiastic about writing workshop. They are expressive and look forward to the opportunity to record the stories from their imagination onto paper. While this is not always the case, as a teacher, I believe it is important to understand the attitudes of students towards a particular academic area. If my students were not as enthusiastic about writing, I do not think I could attempt to improve the quality of writing or implement the peer editing venture as successfully. If the atmosphere of writing was a negative one, I believe my first objective would be to increase moral during writing workshop. Because I was in an environment of willing writers, I had student interest in attempting improvement.

Through the peer editing process students' writing did improve, because I believe they had a better understanding of the expectations. I think the most beneficial portion of the experience for students was to revise the rubric together. Students played an active role in discussing and expressing their own expectations for their writing. I believe that students' understanding of the expectations is an important piece in being successful in all areas of

academics. Students should be aware of the assessment techniques of the teacher. As a teacher, I can help students to be successful by inviting them to be a part of creating the expectations. When students are a part of making the classroom rules at the beginning of the year they take ownership in the social expectations of the classroom. Because I have found the same is true of curriculum expectations, as a teacher I will invite students to be a part of the expectation process with me.

I am not sure that I would use peer editing in a third grade classroom in the future. Through the peer editing sessions and the students' reflective surveys I have come to understand why most research studies begin peer editing with fifth grade. The maturity required for reading critically is still developing. While students are still sharing ideas and writing skills with their peer editors, it may be a more efficient and better monitored approach to share in small groups. I would have more control and ability to guide students in a few small groups rather than many pairs.

### **Future Wonderings**

Through implementing peer editing in a third grade classroom, I feel I have a good understanding of what is required to prepare students for peer editing. I have found that while third graders are not necessarily ready to edit, they were better prepared than they were at the beginning of third grader. I wonder, at what age does peer editing become really effective. Would students be ready by fourth or are the researchers right in waiting until sixth grade? Is it possible that there is no set age, but the maturity of the class as writers, would determine peer editing ability?

I also think that with more time, I could guide students through mini-lessons and more modeling to improve student feedback. I wonder how peer editing would have progressed if

students had more examples of meaningful responses. Would peer editing, then, be more effective? If I were to implement peer editing in my classroom again I would guide students more frequently, in a sustained process, so that meaningful and maybe more effective editing and revising could take place among peers. Lastly, would peer editing be a better suited task for friends? Only 68% believed they were well matched with their peer editing partner. Should students pick their own partners?

I learned a lot about the writing process through my inquiry in peer editing. In reflection, there are things I would change and more questions to be answered. Although, I feel that I have a strong basis of how to implement a writers workshop, and what to expect. I have a new found confidence in teaching writing. I look forward to building and nurturing my future classroom into the successful writers that the world calls them to be. The inquiry project has challenged me to analyze my decisions and grow as an educator, for which I am truly thankful.

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