Where Do I Begin? Instructional Strategies for "Hitting a Home Run" with Editing

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Abstract: After students complete writing a piece of literature, what are they thinking when they are finished? Do they read through their work to catch their mistakes, or do they want to turn in their work just so they can say they're finished with it? Do they try to make their papers sound the best that they can by polishing up their word choices? Do they even know where to begin when they *want* to edit their papers? To improve the quality of fiction and nonfiction writing, I introduced my second grade students to what I call "*Home Run Editing*." This editing strategy gives children a three-step process to edit their written work and that of their peers. These second graders became absorbed in *Home Run Editing,* peer editing, and other strategies resulting in the children experiencing a mixture of several approaches throughout the inquiry. The inquiry seeks to discover how this approach to instruction in editing affects the quality of students' writing, how they feel about proofreading and editing now that they have a guideline to follow, (and if this has changed since before I began this inquiry) and what value there may or may not be for students to edit one another's writing.

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A. *My Teaching Context*

Through the collaboration of the Pennsylvania State University and the State College Area School District (SCASD), I have been granted the amazing privilege to be a teacher intern in an incredible second grade classroom at Lemont Elementary School. Lemont Elementary School has approximately 170 students in grades Kindergarten through Second grade. With the support of my mentor teacher, supervisor, and colleagues within the school, I was able to experiment with new teaching strategies and techniques in a safe and encouraging environment. Without this opportunity, I would not feel quite as comfortable performing in front of a live audience of students on a daily basis.

My second grade classroom is comprised of twenty distinctive and animated children. These unique personalities create an environment that is dynamic as well as challenging. There is an equal ratio of males-to-females within the classroom (10 girls and 10 boys) all of which have varying achievement levels. I classify my students based on achievement levels due to the fact that I am careful not to label the children in my classroom. Having said that, there are nine students in the classroom, five females and four males, who are high achieving students. Seven students are average achieving students. Of these students, four are females and three are males. There are four low achieving students, one female and three males. Four students receive Title I services. One of these Title I students also receives learning support in writing. One child has Autism and he receives learning enrichment for language arts, while another student receives enrichment in mathematics. Three children leave the classroom for speech. Lastly, one child receives his language arts instruction at a different school because he

needs learning support; therefore, his participation will not be considered as part of this inquiry. Although there is a range of achievement levels within the classroom, I feel that these differences allow for a unique learning environment. All of these unique individuals have grown and learned from one another throughout the school year, building a strong community of second grade students.

On a typical day, one would see my second grade children participating in mathematics, reading, social studies, science, writing, and playing and talking with one another. Knowing that the children learn in varying ways, I have learned to adapt my lessons to meet their specific needs. Being aware of the interests of my students had become an essential factor in my teaching.

My second graders are very well behaved and can accomplish most any task when they put their minds to it. At this time in their writing, they are all very creative, but most have trouble with the conventions of their writing. Seeing children struggle with the conventional aspect of their writing became a concern for me and allowed me to form a topic for my inquiry project: editing!

B. Rationale

What Led Me to My Inquiry?

To be honest, writing was never one of my favorite subjects. I always thought that my work was never quite as good as my peers' work. I felt that a large part of this was because I did not know how to successfully edit my own writing; I never knew exactly what I needed to look for while editing. Where do I begin? What am I looking for?

Throughout my entire educational career, I never truly had a firm grasp on how to thoroughly edit a paper. When asked to edit my peers' papers, I felt self-conscious about my editing skills, and never thought that I was giving them the help they needed to improve their pieces of writing. I feel that my inability to edit comes from never having a solid base or thorough understanding of this subject matter when I was younger.

I believe that part of the reason I chose to do my inquiry project on editing writing was because, as a student myself, I never truly mastered the technique. I always wished that I could have had a rubric or set of structural guidelines to follow. Secondly, I stumbled upon this inquiry project at a unit-planning meeting at Lemont Elementary School. The teachers were working diligently, planning projects, and thinking of interesting fieldtrips to supplement the unit, when suddenly it was time to go over the writing standards. As the group discussed the first and second grade writing standards (see Appendix A), we came across several standards stating that students should be able to edit their papers without the assistance of an adult. This topic brought up a great deal of controversy. Teachers were concerned that their students would not be able to meet this standard. At that moment, inquiry came to me! I knew that this was something that I struggled with, and from our discussions, it was something that the children at Lemont Elementary School tended to struggle with as well. I thought that I could try to put my writing fears behind me and create a plan that would help my second graders become successful editors.

I wondered what editing strategies my mentor teacher used in the past and if her students used peer editing. She stated that peer editing was not something that ran smoothly with her students. I decided I wanted to try to supplement the editing process

with several mixed strategies: providing a combination of opportunities for the students to peer edit, and to edit their own work as well.

When I decided to do this inquiry, I had actually already started a rather in-depth inquiry project with language arts station time and reading groups. I decided that I no longer felt that my previous project was an inquiry; it seemed to be more of an improvement project. Rather late in the game, I changed my inquiry and I knew I needed to get to work as quickly as possible.

I believe children (even during the primary years) do indeed have the ability to edit if they are introduced to these skills in a manner that resonates with them. Teaching editing to children requires persistence, patience, and practice. Since editing is a skill students will likely use throughout their lives, I believe it is a worthwhile investment to be very thoughtful and deliberate about how we introduce children to editing during the elementary years.

C. Literature and/or Other Experts:

What do the experts have to say about editing? Research suggests (Cowley, 2002) that while students can express themselves reasonably well without getting the basics completely right, their writing will never be as good as it might be if they are not technically accurate. "From my work as a writer, I know that revision is more than a stage in a four-, five-, or seven-step process" (Lane, 1993, p. 5). Teaching writing and revision to children has to be done in a manner that reaches out to all children, since editing plays a rather extensive role in the Pennsylvania Writing Standards (see Appendix A). Most students do not learn to edit through isolated activities such as grammar worksheets. Students are unable to carry over this information from one technique (i.e. a

worksheet) to their writing piece; they see the two as separate pieces with no relationship whatsoever (Mullen, 2003). Therefore, teachers need to find a way to assist students in making that connection. The first step is to allow the students to edit on their own!

The following excerpt is an example of a teacher who found "letting go" of editing her student's papers to be a very difficult task. "For years, I consistently asked my students, 'Did you proofread and revise your paper?' 'Oh, yes, Mrs. Frank,' was usually the immediate response. How could they revise when I had not taught them or shown them how? I had edited *for* them on occasion or taught them a few things to 'fix;' but I had not taught them specific skills needed for editing" (Frank, 1995, p. 135). According to Kolling (2002), one of the major problems noted is that student's writing and editing are often ineffective because of the *way* writing is taught in the classroom. She quotes Wilcox (1997) stating, "Teachers often edit too much for their students. Teachers need to be better at focusing on the writing process, and not on the final product. Teachers may be guilty of doing too little for students in the editing process. They do not provide enough helpful, specific suggestions for guiding students to improve their writing" (Kolling, 2002, p. 10). As a concerned educator, I felt that I did not want to force my students to edit without first giving them a set plan to follow, but where do I begin? This question was one I constantly struggled to answer. What techniques are best?

To save colleagues from continuing to make the mistakes he made, "Ray Lawson led a system-wide committee that devises ways to teach grammar by replacing lessons from a publisher's text with ones drawn from the students' own writing" (Silberman, 1989, p. 127). Correcting student work as a class helps the students retain the

information better. Children can participate in a Conversation as Inquiry Group or a CIG
to help an individual child improve his/her work. This technique offers students the
opportunity to edit their peer's writing in a whole-group setting. During the CIG, the
children hold a discussion on the topics that are of interest, or that are in need of being
reviewed in the presenter's sample piece of writing. The class follows a "protocol" that
helps to give direction to the group's discussion. The students begin to give "warm"
(positive) and "cool" (constructive criticism) feedback to the presenter, or student whose
paper is being reviewed. The students must always give warm feedback about the piece
first, and then follow up with sharing some cool feedback to improve the mechanics of
the paper. A second grade teacher in the State College Area School District, Amy
Gilmore, is an advocate of the CIG. In a personal interview with Ms. Gilmore, she stated
that her second grade students responded in a positive manner to the implementation of
the CIG. "The students were very good at giving their peers constructive criticism" (A.
Gilmore, April of 2006). While a CIG can give students guidance in editing, having a
checklist helps to give students direction as well.

"To aid students in the editing of their own writing, Christensen recommends,
'Provide a checklist or other format to use as a basis for editing'" (Mullen, 2003, p. 8).
Administering a "checklist" gives students direction in their editing endeavors. When
creating an editing checklist, it is important to make sure that it is not too ambitious.
Three or four skills are plenty. The longer the list, the less likely it is that students will
pay attention to it (Fletcher, 2001). While a checklist is one strategy that helps guide
students in editing and revision, editing with different colors is another. Mullen (2003)

states that, "Editing with color encourages the child to focus on a specific skill while editing and assures the teacher that each child has actually done the editing" (p. 8)

Finally, there is one last editing strategy that strikes fear in the hearts of many educators. This strategy is the dreaded *peer editing*! To quote one Lemont Elementary School teacher, "Peer editing is not a good use of time and has no real value; students just do not understand the concept. They only want to 'be done' with their writing" (Lemont teacher, March of 2006). Other teachers in the building concur with this viewpoint. Through the use of anonymous teacher surveys, I found that even experienced teachers felt that peer editing was not a good use of writing time. While a number of teachers felt this way, I still felt as though I wanted to find out what made peer editing so impossible. Although many educators have found only limited success with peer editing, I felt it was important to explore this topic further to find out for myself if peer editing is truly as unconstructive as I had been hearing. Therefore, I explored this topic to see what other researchers believed.

Mullen (2003) initially believed (along with many other experienced educators) that if his students could not edit their own work, they would not be able to edit another student's writing. Literature does not support this claim! Mullen quotes Willis (1997), stating that "[T]eachers should set up interactive classrooms where students are free and eager to consult one another about their writing. A writing classroom that is quiet is suspicious" (Mullen, 2003, p. 8).

Also, according to Mullen, peer editing offers a number of benefits:

students learn style and organization by reading others' papers; students become more aware of audience and purpose for writing; students more readily accept and use peer criticism; students learn to identify specific errors and correct them; students try not to repeat their mistakes because of

peer feedback; their motivation to write and revise increases; and students develop a better social relationship within the classroom. (Mullen, 2003, p.8-9)

Having students peer edit creates a real audience for students, allowing them to visualize whom they are writing to.

Using a variety of editing strategies helps reach a number of different students. It is the job of the teacher to know his/her class well enough so that each strategy can be utilized to its maximum potential. Each student is different from the next; therefore, each student may want/need to use a differing editing strategy. Editing is important. According to Willis, (1997) "[t]he best stories are not written but rewritten" (Mullen, 2003, p. 6)

D. Wonderings and Questions:

Overall my main question was, **I wonder how deliberately incorporating "Home Run Editing" instruction and other dynamic, student-centered editing strategies may affect the quality of my students' writing, how they feel about proofreading and editing in light of the strategies made available to them, and what value there may or may not be for students to edit one another's writing?** Within this wondering, I have several sub questions:

- *What are the effects and implications of deliberately teaching student-editing skills (e.g. self-editing and peer editing) and how may it affect the way my students approach writing?*

- *What does it mean to be a "good editor" and is every student capable of becoming a "good editor?"*

- *How do I let children know how to appropriately give feedback to one another without it getting "out of hand" (e.g. being overly critical of one another or students getting their feelings hurt)?*

- *How can I make editing their writing interesting, engaging, and exciting to students? (Is such an idea realistic or even possible?)*

- *Will this affect my students' writing across subject areas (beyond language arts)?*

- *If I incorporate peer-editing activities during station time, how will I accommodate the students in Title I (who leave our classroom during stations everyday, missing one whole station each day) so that they will be able to participate in all of the activities that the other students do?*

- *What might I learn from tracking (only) specific children throughout the new change rather than the whole class?*

- *What strategies do other teachers employ to effectively introduce or instruct strategic editing skills in their classrooms?*

- *How does student age and/or grade level affect and inform the way teachers approach editing skill instruction?*

- *How may deliberately teaching about editing help to make editing time with the teacher more meaningful?*

- *How might my inquiry be different or similar in terms of editing when it comes to poetry?*

- *Will changing my inquiry project so late in the year hinder the results of the inquiry?*

I am hoping that I will be able to find some answers and develop new questions that can help improve my student's writing habits. Also I hope to peak their interest in editing – so that students develop an appreciation for the value of proofreading and the editing process.

E. Inquiry vs. Improvement Plan

The distinction between an "inquiry" and an "improvement plan" is something that I struggled with during the initial stages of my inquiry project. What distinguishes my inquiry from an improvement project? When I began my endeavor into inquiry, my initial inquiry topic was changing language arts station time to better manage student

behavior. After implementing many station time activities/strategies, I found that my initial inquiry started becoming an improvement project; therefore, I completely changed my inquiry topic to editing writing. I can see how this change evolved when looking back over my initial inquiry idea. I found that the student's work (i.e. journals, writing assignments, worksheets, etc.) was beginning to suffer because they were not proofreading their work the way that I believe they could and *should*. As I was sitting at a unit-planning meeting, the topic of editing writing came up with regard to the standards. The primary teachers (some of whom are very experienced teachers) and I were confused as to why this was a standard that the children were expected to meet. There was a great deal of debate among my experienced colleagues about how to effectively meet this standard.

My inquiry came out of my genuinely not knowing how to meet this Pennsylvania standard. Initially, I did not know what I could do to help, but I knew that something could and should change. Also, I was unsure if trying to deliberately instruct second graders in how to edit was realistic (in terms of developmentally appropriateness) or of value to them. I especially wondered how it might affect each student differently. My mentor teacher was not completely "on board" with implementing certain editing strategies. She had a great deal of skepticism about peer editing, as she had tried to use it earlier in her career, and found it to be a waste of time. Although I respect her feelings and her opinions a great deal, I still felt as though I wanted to make my own discoveries (perhaps even "mistakes") through my inquiry. I needed to learn for myself just how powerful my ideas about editing instruction might be. I did not believe "the standards" were going to go away; therefore, I felt this was a good inquiry topic. I wanted to try

different strategies and to record and analyze data *now* while student teaching, since I have a supportive net under me. I was curious to see what the implications might be for my children's editing skills and for my own awareness of how to help students develop these.

F. Inquiry Plan Description:

What I did to carry out inquiry in my classroom:

To begin my inquiry, I surveyed my students to gather information about their thoughts and feelings about writing, and to see whether or not they believed they could edit independently. I administered a two-page pre-assessment survey to each student in the class (see Appendix B-1). The results suggested that although the children do enjoy writing (whether it was a story or a research paper), they felt uncomfortable with the idea of editing their papers on their own because they do not know how or where to begin. While looking at this data, I graphed each answer so that I would have a clear picture of where my student's feelings fell in terms of editing (see Appendix B-3). The results of this survey provided a starting point for where I would begin to implement editing strategy instruction, as well as the degree of how much background information I would need to cover.

I also interviewed the children about their feelings regarding peer editing. To introduce the question about peer editing, I gave them a scenario of what peer editing means, and I asked if they would appreciate/feel comfortable editing a peer's paper. I asked two students – a hypothetical "Student A" and "Student B" - to pretend that they both wrote a paper that had to be turned in. I asked, "would you like it if you switched papers and were able to check for correct spelling and read through it for things that

needed to be changed?" Most students said that they would "really like to edit" one
another's papers, but they also said that they "didn't know where to start checking for
mistakes." One high achieving student stated, "I would not like to edit someone else's
paper because I can't edit my own." He did not feel that he knew where to begin to edit
his friend's paper. I thought that he made a very valid point. How can you edit your
paper, much less a peer's, when you do not even know where/how to begin?

      After analyzing the surveys and the interviews, I thought that the children needed
a skeletal system or map to follow in their respective editing journeys. I decided that I
would implement one system that could be readily used by any student. Also, I intended
to introduce a number of varying strategies since the children learn in very different
ways. That way, the children could choose the strategy (e.g. *Home Run Editing*, CIG,
independent activities, editing the morning letters, etc.) that best fits their learning style.

      Based on my findings from the students' surveys and interviews, I concluded that
the children needed more background information on the topic of editing. Coincidently,
our writing unit at this time was poetry, which posed some problems in terms of
compatibility with my inquiry. For instance, poetry abandons many traditional
punctuation and grammatical rules at the license of the poet. I tried to be as flexible as
possible in how I integrated several mini-lessons on editing into the writing curriculum.

      Based on the student surveys, I felt that the students needed a "system" to give
them a starting point in their editing. During my first mini-lesson on editing, I introduced
a strategy that I designed with my PDA: "*Home Run Editing*." *Home Run Editing*
provides a general outline of what I thought were the most important ideas of editing,
based upon the Pennsylvania Writing Standards for second grade (see Appendix A).

I set the editing process up like a baseball field with three bases and home plate (see Appendix C-1). I showed the students that when they begin to *Home Run Edit*, they start by "running with their eyes" to first base. Here they made sure that their paper contained appropriate capitals and periods and that the structure of their paper had the appropriate conventions (a beginning, middle, and end). After they checked for these items, the children moved to second base. At second base, the children were to make sure that all spelling was correct and confirm that the words used in each sentence made sense logically in terms of tense, singular-plural agreement, and other word endings are appropriate. I encouraged students to refer to the word wall to make sure their "no excuse words" were spelled correctly. For third base, students were to read over their papers and consider whether or not they should add more "describing words" (a.k.a. "adjectives" and "adverbs") to their sentences to allow the reader to better visualize their story. This corresponded perfectly with how the children had been learning about how to "make skinny sentences fat" by adding describing words. For example, during station time, the children completed "Stretch It" worksheets where they added describing words to a sentence to improve how the sentence sounded. In order to reach home base, I expected students to "take a victory lap around the bases" (or conduct one final read through) to make sure that their papers were their best work. Each student went through a piece of his/her writing, and edited it with the *Home Run Editing* strategy. Once I had introduced the concept of *Home Run Editing* to the whole class, and they were familiar with the idea, I gave each student a copy of a *Home Run Editing* guide sheet to keep in his/her writing folder to use whenever s/he needed it (see Appendix C-2).

After a week of putting the *Home Run Editing* into play, I found that the children were having difficulty when it came to third base: adding descriptive language; fortunately this was the base which coincided easily with the poetry writing unit. For my second mini-lesson on editing, I focused on descriptive language (a standard for becoming a proficient writer) (see Appendix A). The children brainstormed words that they could use to make sentences "come to life" and incorporate more vivid imagery into their writing. To practice using descriptive language the children created poems choosing their three favorite foods. I told the students that they had to describe the foods so that the reader could "almost taste them." They then had to edit their poems using their new "editing pencils" (see Appendix D). They used these special pencils each time they wanted to edit their papers so that I could easily see where they made changes to their papers. Also, the pencils were an incentive for editing. They all wanted to use the "cool pencils" to edit.

Informed by an interview I conducted with a second grade teacher at another building (A. Gilmore, April of 2006), I decided the third mini-lesson I would incorporate would be a Conversation as Inquiry Group (CIG). The concept of a CIG is for a group of people to work together to help one person solve a particular problem, dilemma, or piece of work that needs to be corrected. During the CIG lesson, the class collaboratively edited one child's paper who needed help with a particular concept in his writing. Although I had to modify the time allowances to account for our busy schedule, I modeled the CIG discussion format and ground rules after the "Tuning Protocol" (see Appendix H-3). For that day, I served as the facilitator, and one of my students, *"Will"* was the presenter. The rest of the class gave *"Will"* "warm" (positive) and "cool"

(constructive) feedback about his piece of writing. I was pleased with how well the children responded to the CIG, and how capable they were to effectively edit a paper that was not their own in a way that helped the student in sharing his paper.

Once I became convinced that they could effectively edit a paper that was not their own in an appropriate and constructive manner, I felt that my students were ready to begin peer editing; this was the fourth mini-lesson I taught the children (see Appendix H-4). I reiterated points about how to give "constructive feedback" without hurting their friend's feelings. This was something that I was very careful to constantly remind my students about. Also, I continually stressed that we are trying to make our friends paper the "best that it can be" reminding them that if they received constructive feedback it was just because their friend was trying to help them "write a really good paper."

Also, throughout the course of my inquiry, I incorporated editing activities at station time so that students could continually practice editing. Each day they completed "Fix It" papers, editing worksheets, and/or they edited stories and journals that they had written on a previous day. All of these activities helped to reinforce and build the children's editing skills.

G. Data Collection

Throughout my teaching, I have found that every child in my classroom has unique interests and needs, therefore, I collected multiple forms of data so that I could have a more well-rounded sense of how my students responded to the different strategies I introduced. In order to solidify and prove my findings during the interventions, I needed to collect data in order to back up my conclusions. I used a number of varying methods of data collection to accumulate an array of information that could support my claims.

1. Student Surveys:

My first method of data collection was the pre-assessment student survey I gave at the beginning of my inquiry. I thought this would be a helpful tool to help determine a baseline of my students' perspectives about editing. I created a survey (see Appendix B-1) for my students where they could tell me how they felt about writing, which kinds of writing were their favorite (i.e. journals, research papers, stories, etc.), how they felt about editing with an adult or teacher, and their feelings about self editing. I told the students that this survey was something that they could be honest about – that it was important and appropriate for them to tell me how they really felt.

This survey gave me a clear understanding of what does and does not tend to excite my students in writing, while also giving me a starting point from which I could begin to introduce and instruct the students to use multiple editing strategies. I also learned how much background information the students already had and what I would need to cover. The post-assessment student survey I designed, distributed, and collected allowed me to analyze how effective my different editing strategy instruction was.

2. Student Interviews:

I asked students how they might feel about trying peer editing strategies. I did not want to add this to my student survey because I was unsure if all of the students knew what peer editing meant. Therefore, I gave the children a scenario of what peer editing might look like and asked if they would feel comfortable editing a peer's paper.

3. Teacher Surveys:

During a weekly division meeting, I asked the teachers at Lemont Elementary School to complete an editing survey so that I could get a better sense of how they taught editing in their classrooms (see Appendix E-1). This survey consists of six short questions asking teachers to share how they used editing in their classrooms, if they believed peer editing was an effective tool for editing, and if they felt that editing should be a part of the Pennsylvania State Standards for writing.

4. Teacher Observations and Anecdotal Notes:

Over the course of my inquiry, I took notes on how the children in my classroom responded to certain editing techniques I introduced. I quoted phrases that the children said about editing. Taking anecdotal notes was a way for me to record these interactions (see Appendix F).

5. Student Work:

I collected and studied student worksheets and writing assignments in order to analyze student progress and growth over the span of my inquiry project. Looking at both the quality and quantity of these artifacts allowed me to pinpoint specific mini-lessons or strategies that seemed especially successful (or not) for certain students (see Appendix G).

6. Lesson Plans:

There are several lesson plans that I used in presenting the mini-lessons about what it means to be a "good editor." The lesson plans that I implemented indicated the preparation that went into effectively presenting the information to the students (see Appendix H).

7. Interview:

To make sure that I was instructing the students properly, I decided to interview an expert teacher who facilitated unique approaches to editing strategy instruction in her classroom on a daily basis. I decided to interview Amy Gilmore, a second grade teacher at Park Forest Elementary School. She had experimented with the Conversation as Inquiry Group (CIG) modified protocol strategy along with individual and peer editing strategies that aided in their understanding/success of these editing techniques.

8. Video Recordings:

I also videotaped the children during peer editing time so that I could see if and how the children were participating in constructive editing discussions of each other's papers.

H. Data Analysis
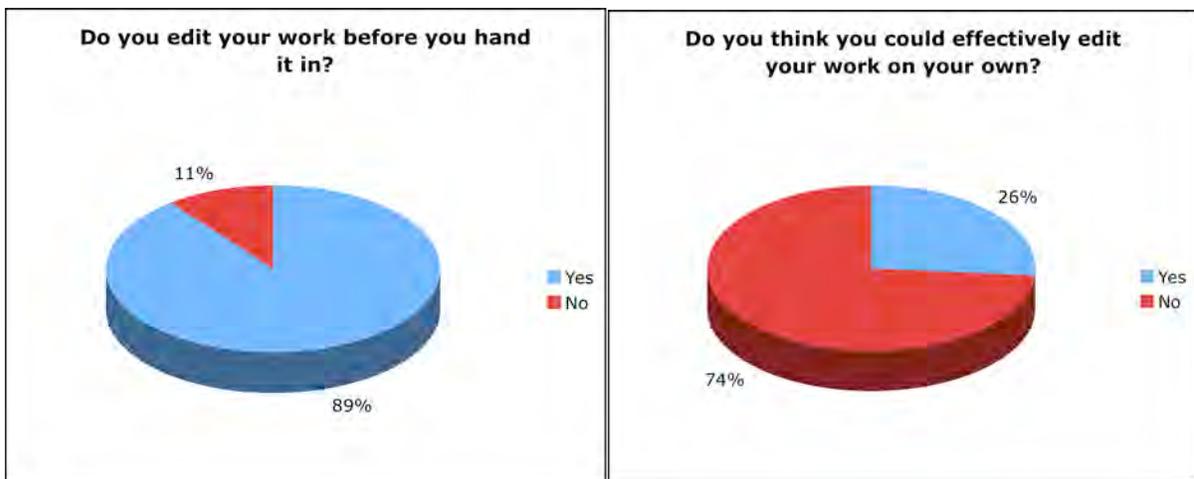
To begin my inquiry, I *surveyed my students* to gain an understanding of what their feelings were about writing and editing (see Appendix B-1). During the initial survey, after graphing student answers, (see Appendix B-3) I found that eleven students said that they liked to write, while eight said that they would prefer to participate in

another subject. In contrast, 89 percent of the students stated that they felt they edited

their work before handing it in, but only 26 percent of these second graders said that they

felt comfortable editing their papers on their own (see above charts). As it turns out,

although some children felt as though they do edit their papers, a large number of

students clearly did not know what it meant to truly edit their papers. To end the survey,

I interviewed each of the students on their feeling about peer editing. Of the 19 students

surveyed, 17 stated that they would "love to peer edit." The two students who did not

want to peer edit said that they do not feel they could edit their own papers so how could

they edit their friend's papers? After hearing what students had to say about their editing

abilities, I knew that although they believed they had been editing their papers, they told

me that they did not feel comfortable editing on their own. My findings led me to believe

that I needed to implement something that could aid the students in their editing

endeavors.

 After surveying my students, I decided to survey the teachers in my building. I

collected data and looked for patterns about editing strategies (see Appendix E-1). I

graphed the information (see Appendix E-3) and found that out of the seven teachers in

my building that completed the survey, five of them (71%) actually taught editing in their

classrooms (the Kindergarten teachers do not teach editing). All five of these teachers

wrote that they felt unsuccessful with peer editing in their classrooms and they were not

particularly fond of peer editing because they said that it was not a "good use of time."

Also, three out of seven teachers wrote that they had adults within the classroom

(paraprofessionals or teachers) who edited the student's papers (see Appendix E-3). In

regards to the Pennsylvania Writing Standards, six out of the seven teachers surveyed

wrote that they hate/do not like that editing is a standard (see Appendix E-2). The information from the teacher surveys gave me insights as to how the teachers in my building felt about both editing in general and specifically about peer editing; the surveys also reaffirmed my sense of where (in what grades) it was appropriate to begin my interventions.

I photocopied all of the students' work (see Appendix G), and recorded notes on how they were progressing in their editing throughout the course of my inquiry. I kept a record of activities that went well and were successfully completed by my students, while also keeping track of lessons that did not go as planned and when students were not showing progress (see Appendix F). I made a note of interventions that I used to aid students with their editing, making it easier for them to understand.

As I analyzed my data, I found a common pattern in most of the students' work. As a whole, the class' editing abilities improved. They made fewer errors than they had previously in their writing. For example, the students completed a worksheet calling upon them to edit a letter. Their first attempt at editing the letter yielded dismal results, but when I gave the children a checklist to follow, the children's editing abilities quickly improved; I noticed that even student handwriting improved for most of the students (see Appendix G-3) which I had not anticipated.

Overall it seems the children's editing abilities have quickly improved over the course of my inquiry and, perhaps more importantly, I have seen that they can learn to edit – a standard for which I was not certain was a reasonable expectation of a second-grader. This led me to believe that my students benefited from the editing strategies I employed! What I found equally as interesting was that different students embraced

different strategies; therefore, teaching multiple strategies seems to have been an important facet of the class' success with editing. Although improvement was visible, I discovered that many children hit a plateau with their success in editing. I began to see a pattern in the student's work where their editing was not *improving* anymore (e.g. work was beginning to look sloppy and children were hurrying to complete the task). The children were beginning, once again, to practice sloppy editing habits.

Throughout the course of my inquiry, I kept records of how the children were responding to the various techniques that I introduced. I recorded direct quotes that students stated during lessons, both positive and negative (see Appendix F). Since I found that the children's work was not improving like it had been, I reviewed my notes after the children completed editing assignments and worksheets, and tried to see what I could modify to better convey, to my students, how to edit. Based on my notes, I found that children were having difficulties adding descriptive language and taking their time correcting all of the errors in their piece of writing. My response was to create four mini-lessons to cover editing topics that were unclear, in hopes that editing abilities would begin to improve once more.

To assist students in their learning, I embedded four editing *mini-lessons* into the writing curriculum (see Appendix H) so that students were continually reminded of procedures that they had learned earlier. If a lesson did not go well, I evaluated what was difficult for students to understand and what I could do to help clarify different editing strategies for these students. I tried different editing techniques in an attempt to spark the interest and understanding of those students who were unsure of their editing abilities. I

also used my interview with an experienced teacher to create a lesson based on specific editing strategies that have been successful in the past with her second grade students.

During peer editing, I decided to videotape conversations that transpired between children in order to capture all that occurred during peer editing discussions. I wanted to see if this peer editing activity helped or hindered the children's editing abilities. Was the dialogue meaningful and did it improve the child's paper? I reviewed all footage from the peer editing exercises several times as I looked for common themes to appear. I looked through my notes and found that a common theme arose. I discovered that children are more than capable of participating in meaningful and constructive dialogue about editing. After reviewing the videotapes, I noticed several instances where the students were engrossed in conversation about a particular piece of writing that they reviewed that seemed to puzzle them. The children asked questions of their partners that helped clarify the parts in the paper that were unclear for them to understand. This resulted in a more polished and effective final copy of each student's paper.

Finally, as my inquiry came to a conclusion, I decided to complete a post survey (see Appendix I-1) to assess what the children learned throughout my inquiry. The number of students participating in this survey was one less than the initial survey because one child in our classroom moved away. I graphed each of the four questions that were on the post survey (see Appendix I-3). The first question stated, "How do you feel about writing?" This time, thirteen students recorded that they liked writing while only five wrote that they prefer another subject (see Appendix I-3). The second question's results showed that seven students thought that peer editing was the most useful editing technique that they learned, six preferred the CIG, four thought the *Home*

Run Editing checklist was the most helpful, and one student favored self-editing his own paper (see Appendix I-3). After practicing each of the editing strategies I introduced, 72 percent of my students stated that they now feel comfortable editing independently, 11 percent wrote that they could "maybe" edit on their own, and 17 percent circled that they still do not feel comfortable editing independently (see Appendix I-3). In the pre-assessment, only five students (26%) stated that they felt they could successfully edit independently (see Appendix B-3). This was a substantial improvement! The last question on the post assessment was about peer editing. The children were asked to rate their feelings about peer editing on a modified four point Likert scale (McKenna, 1990). Eight students wrote that they *love* to peer edit, six *like* peer editing, two children *do not like* it, and two students *hate* to peer edit (see Appendix I-2).

As I analyzed every individual piece of the data, and considered the data collectively, the following themes emerged:

- Using various activities and strategies to deliberately teach and reinforce editing skill development increases students' motivation toward and interest in editing.

- Most students are more prone to take their time and thoroughly check for mistakes and/or areas to improve when they have a structured guide or editing checklist to refer to as needed.

- Second grade students can handle the mature expectations associated with peer editing in regards to giving constructive criticism and suggestions in ways that demonstrate a high degree of consideration toward the feelings of others.

- Peer editing can be worth the time and investment involved in making it an effective learning experience for all parties in the classroom, provided that there is a supportive classroom climate and the teacher is willing to try to introduce strategies to help students find the peer-editing strategy that may work best for them.

I. Claims

Claim # 1: Using various activities and strategies to deliberately teach and reinforce editing skill development increases students' motivation toward and interest in editing.

After analyzing my anecdotal records (see Appendix F), throughout several different kinds of activities, I found many instances where students were very excited to edit. First, I introduced *Home Run Editing* to the children, and had each child go through their piece of writing and edit it using the newly taught technique. This activity was intended to be done independently, or so I thought. As the children were editing, several pairs of students began raising their hands asking, "Can I edit my friend's paper?" I immediately said yes and began observing these groups of students using the *Home Run Editing* strategy, "running to" each base with their partner. One student stated, " *'Amy'* helps me to edit my paper. She can see mistakes that I missed." Results showed that out of the 19 students completing this assignment, after Home Run Editing their papers, only five students still had to make corrections, all 14 remaining students effectively made changes to improve their papers. This was the moment when I knew that the children were becoming excited about editing and had the potential to effectively participate in peer editing.

The second instance I noticed where the children were excited about editing was when I intentionally made mistakes in the morning letter. The children immediately began laughing when they saw the letter on the board, and all of the children wanted to fix the errors before we began the lesson. When the children were finally able to come to the carpet to read the morning letter, they were ready to correct every mistake they could find. As a class, the children corrected all of the mistakes that were in the morning letter.

Below you can see the before and after images of the morning letter and how effectively the students were able to edit it.
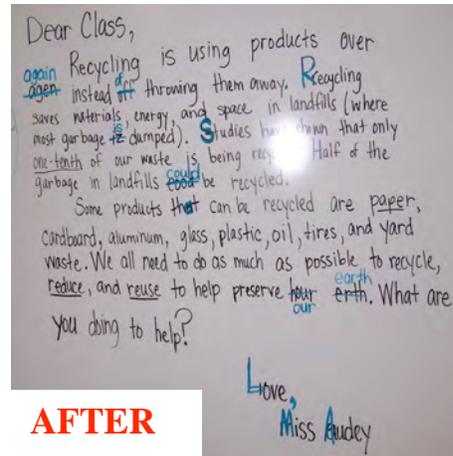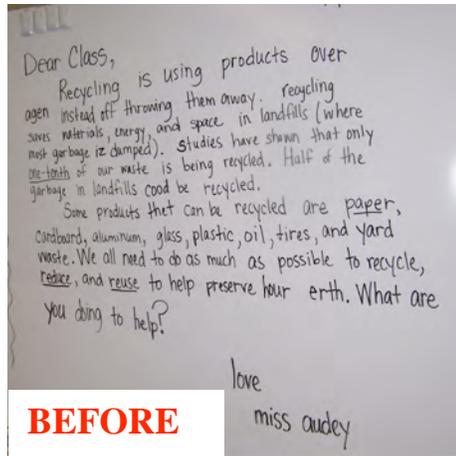
Next, third base on the Home Run Editing strategy is: adding descriptive language to your piece of writing. I wanted to teach the children a mini-lesson on descriptive language since it was something that they were having trouble with. The children were doing well generating ideas for their descriptive writing pieces. When they proofread their pieces of writing prior to writing it on their final piece of paper, one child asked, "Can you move the Home Run Editing poster board closer so that I can see it better?" This showed me that the children wanted to use a strategy that I taught them!

When the children edit their papers, I brought in special "editing pencils" for my students to use while they edited. These pencils were brightly colored and had erasers on them, just in case they make an error when editing (see Appendix D). When I introduced the editing pencils to the class the children went wild! They asked, "Where did you get those?" "Can I have one?" "I can't wait to use them!" I was so excited that they wanted

to use them. Now, every time that the children edit their papers they remind me to bring out the editing pencils.

Lastly, the children wrote letters to Penn State students who had sponsored a field trip for our students. One child was not able to write her "sloppy copy" of the letter the previous day. I told her to start on the "good paper" so that she was able to stay caught up with her peers and that she did not have to edit it. *"Megan"* replied, "But I want to edit a paper!" I was so excited I almost jumped out of my skin! She said the four words that I wanted to hear: *I want to edit!* Overall, through the implementation of a variety of activities, the children were able to continuously and consistently keep their focus and interest on their editing.

Claim # 2: Most students are more prone to take their time and thoroughly check for mistakes and/or areas to improve when they have a structured guide or editing checklist to refer to as needed.

The children completed an editing worksheet on their own at stations without any guidance. After looking at these worksheets, I found that six out of the fourteen students still had errors in the worksheets *after* they edited it. I thought that the students might need some direction when editing the worksheet, something to hold them responsible for their editing. Therefore, I created a checklist based on the *Home Run Editing* chart (see Appendix C-3). This one page checklist helped to structure editing in a way that was easier for *most* students to follow. After the children completed the worksheet using the checklist, I recorded the number of students who still had corrections to make. This time, only three students still needed to make changes after editing. What was shocking to me this time was that of the three children who needed to make corrections, two of the students had previously completed the worksheet perfectly *without* the checklist. When

these two students used the checklist, it seemed to be a hindrance more than it helped.

When I asked these two boys what they thought about the checklist *"Steve"* said, "I don't

like to use it. I like just going through the paper and edit what I see needs to be

changed." *"Kevin"* stated, "It wasn't bad, but I don't think I needed it." As a result, I

feel that checklists work for some children and for others I feel they are an added,

unnecessary step in the process of editing.

After I found that *some* students prefer not to use a checklist, I had the children

edit letters that they wrote to the Penn State students for hosting their field trip to the

farm. This time, they had the option of using a checklist or not. I found that out of the 18

students who completed this assignment, 12 students used the checklist and six did not.

After reviewing their letters, four out of the six students who did not use a checklist to

edit their papers had no mistakes in their work; they did a better job without the checklist

(see Appendix G-4). Overall I found that a checklist is a valuable tool for *most* children

while a hindrance for some. It is a matter of personal preference and how comfortable

they are with their editing skills.

Claim # 3: Second grade students can handle the mature expectations associated with peer-editing in regards to giving constructive criticism and suggestions in ways that demonstrate a high degree of consideration toward the feelings of others.

As I traced back through my anecdotal records, I noticed that in previous editing

activities I made notes that students of all achievement levels were editing to simply

"complete the task;" they still were not taking their time and editing as carefully as I had

hoped. I was concerned that the children were not truly absorbing themselves in the

editing process. Although their writing was improving, I wanted the students to

accurately understand how beneficial it is to take the extra time to edit. Finally, I found what I was waiting so patiently to see!

This claim arose out of an editing activity that was completed during station time. The children were asked to edit their reptile reports that they wrote, but this time they would edit a *friend's* paper using sticky notes to make corrections without actually writing on their partner's paper. After they finished writing on the sticky notes, they could then begin a dialogue with their peer explaining why they made the changes that they did.

As the children were engrossed in editing, I noticed that they were reading each sentence in a rather *slow-paced* manner, checking carefully for errors. It looked as though they were on a scavenger hunt and the "errors" in the paper were what they were trying to find. As they found items that needed changing, they would turn to their peer and ask them what they meant by what they wrote. The editor did not want to change something if they were not perfectly sure that they should. An overwhelming, 18 out of 18 students in the classroom made some type of change and/or suggestion to their partner's paper. All of the children read/edited their partner's paper carefully, but the *type* of feedback given to their partner varied.

I found that the children in the higher achieving groups wanted to give a great deal of "suggestions" to their peers. Meaning that on top of changing grammatical errors in the paper, the children wanted to add words, phrases, or punctuation marks that would improve the overall read of the paper. Children in the lower achieving groups gave feedback that was necessary to improve the conventions of the paper with minimal "suggestions." Although the type of feedback given through the varied achievement

levels was diverse, I found that all students were more than willing to give some type of feedback. For example, *"Sean"* is a child who commonly forgets to capitalize the beginnings of sentences in his work. While he edited *"Jennifer's"* paper, he caught all four of the sentences that did not start with a capital letter but should have.

Furthermore, I found, through video recordings, that student dialogue during and after peer editing was purposeful and truly helped the other editor see his/her mistakes in a more apparent method. I noticed that students are very good at delivering constructive criticism in a kind and thoughtful manner. They were careful not to hurt the other person's feelings.

After reviewing the videotapes, I found several instances where the students were engrossed in conversation about a particular piece of the paper they were reviewing that seemed to puzzle them. For example, two girls, *"Megan"* and *"Amy,"* were reviewing each other's papers. In the video clip, *"Megan"* was giving feedback to *"Amy"*. *"Megan"* had a lot of feedback for *"Amy,"* but since *"Megan"* presented why she changed the parts of the paper that she did in such a kind and thoughtful manner, it made it easier for *"Amy"* to handle. The girls discussed the paper for approximately five minutes and then *"Amy"* turned to me and said, "Miss Audey, I think my paper is really good now!" This showed me that although *"Megan"* found several mistakes in *"Amy's"* paper, she understood that *"Megan"* was there to help her and make her paper the best that it can be.

Not only do the children converse about the mechanical errors in the paper (i.e. periods, capitals, etc.), but the children also discussed their *suggestions* to making the paper "sound better." For example, one child could not find any mechanical errors in the

paper that he was editing; therefore, he decided to suggest words that his partner could change to make the paper sound more powerful. *"Logan"* was very good at explaining why he made the changes that he did. He told his partner *"Alan,"* "You don't have to change this but I though it sounded good like this." *"Alan"* ended up changing most of what *"Logan"* suggested, but with some of the changes he said, "I think I like it better the way that I had it." Both children were very respectful to one another's feelings, thus making the dialogue between them more meaningful to the outcome of the final product of the paper.

Claim # 4: Peer editing can be worth the time and investment involved in making it an effective learning experience for all parties in the classroom, provided that there is a supportive classroom climate and the teacher is willing to try to introduce strategies to help students find the peer-editing strategy that may work best for them.

I asked the children to complete a "post-survey" of their editing experiences. After the completion of this second survey, I was pleasantly surprised to review the children's answers. As stated on pages 25 and 26, the second question's results showed that seven students thought that *peer editing* was the most useful editing technique that they learned, six preferred the CIG, four thought the *Home Run Editing* checklist was the most helpful, and one student favored self-editing his own paper (see Appendix I-3). After the children learned all of the editing strategies that I introduced, 72 percent stated that they feel comfortable editing independently, 11 percent wrote that they could maybe edit on their own, and 17 percent circled that they still do not feel comfortable editing independently (see Appendix I-3). In the pre-assessment, only five students (26%) stated that they felt they could successfully edit independently (see Appendix B-3). This was a substantial improvement! As previously stated on page 26, the last question was about peer editing. The children were asked to rate their feelings about peer editing on a

modified four point Likert scale (McKenna, 1990). Eight students wrote that they *love* to peer edit, six *like* peer editing, two children *do not like it*, and two students *hate* to peer edit (see Appendix I-3). I was so impressed to see that the majority of students felt good about peer editing and felt that it was a useful editing technique. Based upon the results of the post survey, clearly the students to not see peer editing as a waste of time. Peer editing has improved the way that children look and feel about writing.

Conversation as Inquiry Group (CIG) is a part of the "peer editing family." Children were very receptive to giving a single child feedback on his/her paper. After *"Will"* presented his paper to the class, he immediately wanted to present the second half of that story. He was so excited to hear how his classmates felt about a piece of work that he was proud of. The days after my class participated in the CIG, six students approached me and asked, "Can I do what *"Will"* did with his paper?" I was ecstatic to see that the children responded positively to this intervention. From the CIG, I felt that the students understood the skills associated with editing another person's paper. I wanted to see what they could do when they peer edited.

As I watched the children engage in peer editing, I grew with excitement. All the negative talk about peer editing disintegrated when I watched and listened to the interactions about editing. Although I researched experts who stated that peer editing is a useful technique, I could not fully understand the true meaning behind their words. It took observing my classroom of second graders to open my eyes to the benefits of peer editing, and its effectiveness within the classroom. These students are far from mastering the skill of editing, but I feel that they are now powered with the knowledge of effective editing strategies.

J. Conclusions – Implications for my future practice as a teacher:

This inquiry project is far from over! Throughout the remainder of this year, I will continue experimenting with editing strategies in my classroom to see how my student's writing improves as a result of learning new techniques about editing. This inquiry has given me insight into how I will teach editing in my future classroom.

If I am fortunate enough to teach at the primary level, I will certainly use the editing strategies that I experimented with in my second grade classroom at Lemont Elementary School. Based on the outcomes of my student's editing skills, I feel that students are more than capable of effectively editing their own papers, as well as that of their peers'.

Although I feel that the children did a great job with editing, I believe that it is something that cannot be forced upon the students. Due to time constraints, I did not get to fully introduce editing strategies as effectively as I would have liked. I feel that editing is a process that should be introduced in small steps so that students can master one new technique at a time. I also wish that I had started my inquiry earlier. I would be interested to see how it would have continued to develop. Also, I feel that although editing is a Pennsylvania Standard, it is something that could not be mastered by the end of second grade. Editing is something that should be introduced early in the children's primary experience so that they have an opportunity to continually build on their editing abilities each year.

If I happen to teach in an intermediate grade, I feel that the lessons I taught my second graders will be of value to children of all ages. Lessons may need to be modified to appropriately suit the new class's abilities. Individuals, at any stage of writing, can

always use new editing strategies to edit their writing more effectively. Through my inquiry, I have developed a whole new list of wonderings that I will continue to explore in years to follow.

As I conclude my piece of writing, I still feel that I have a lot of learning to accomplish on the topic of editing. I feel incredibly lucky to have been a part of the children's "Ah Ha" moments during their editing times. I hope to see the same results in future classrooms to come. Again, I want to leave you with this thought, according to Willis, (1997) "[t]he best stories are not written but rewritten" (Mullen, 2003, p. 6)

K. New Wonderings:

Throughout my inquiry, I have developed a whole new list of wonderings that I may be able to use in my future practice as an educator:

- *Would my results have been different if I had had more time to follow through with my inquiry?*

- *What would the outcome of my inquiry be if my mentor teacher had been more supportive of peer editing?*

- *Would my findings have changed if I had focused my inquiry on a grade level other than second grade?*

- *Would my inquiry have been different if I had implemented the editing strategies at a time that the children were not learning about poetry in writing?*

- *Does the time that one introduces editing strategies matter (i.e. the beginning of the year versus the middle of the year)? When is it most effective?*

- *How would my results have changed if I was the only adult in my classroom and did not have the help of two other adults?*

L. References

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Appendix B:
Pre-Assessment Student Survey, Survey Results, and Charts and Graphs

Appendix B-1: *Pre-assessment Students Survey*

Name: _____

1. How do you feel about writing?
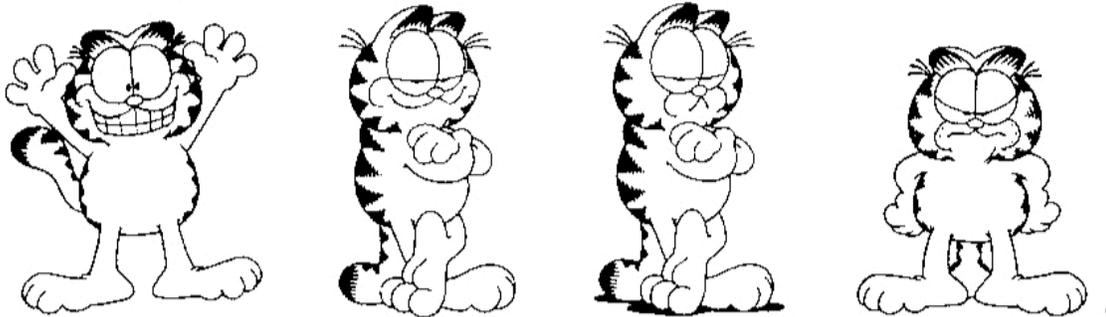
2. What kinds of things do you like writing the BEST?

    a. Stories

    b. Journals

    c. Research papers

    d. Other _____

3. What kinds of things do you like writing the LEAST?

    a. Stories

    b. Journals

    c. Research papers

    d. Other _____

4. Do you feel that when you write something it is the best work that you can do? (circle one)

      YES   NO

5. Do you edit your work before you hand it in? (circle one)

      YES   NO

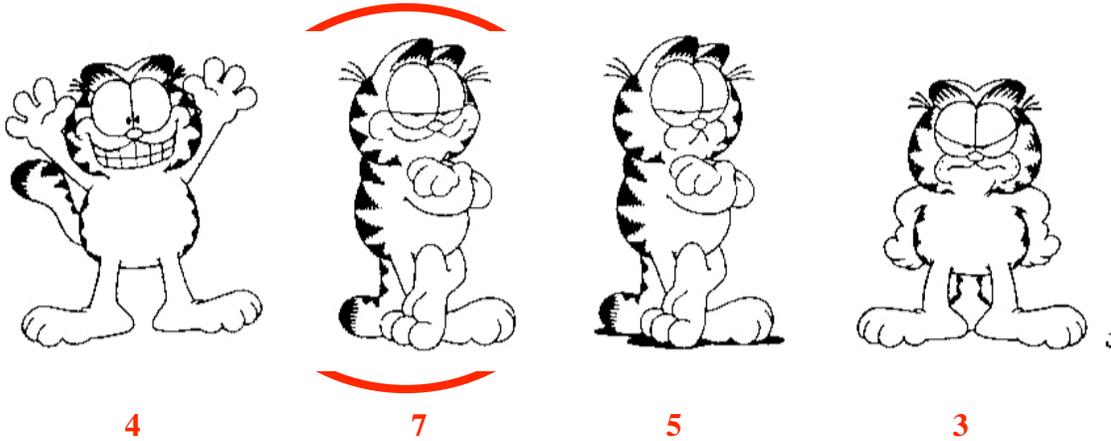6. Do you like to edit with the teacher? (circle one)

      YES   NO

7. Do you think that you could edit like that on your own? (circle one)

      YES   NO

Appendix B-2: *Survey Results*

Name: ___RESULTS_____

8. How do you feel about writing?

     4   **7**   **5**   **3**

9. What kinds of things do you like writing the BEST?

   a. Stories   **10**

   b. Journals   **0**

   c. Research papers   **9**

   d. Other __"Fairytales" (appeared once) counts as "Stories"___

10. What kinds of things do you like writing the LEAST?

   a. Stories   **6**

   b. Journals   **5**

   c. Research papers   **8**

   d. Other _____**0**_____

11. Do you feel that when you write something it is the best work that you
    can do? (circle one)

        YES **11**   NO   **8**

12. Do you edit your work before you hand it in? (circle one)

        YES **17**   NO   **2**

13. Do you like to edit with the teacher? (circle one)

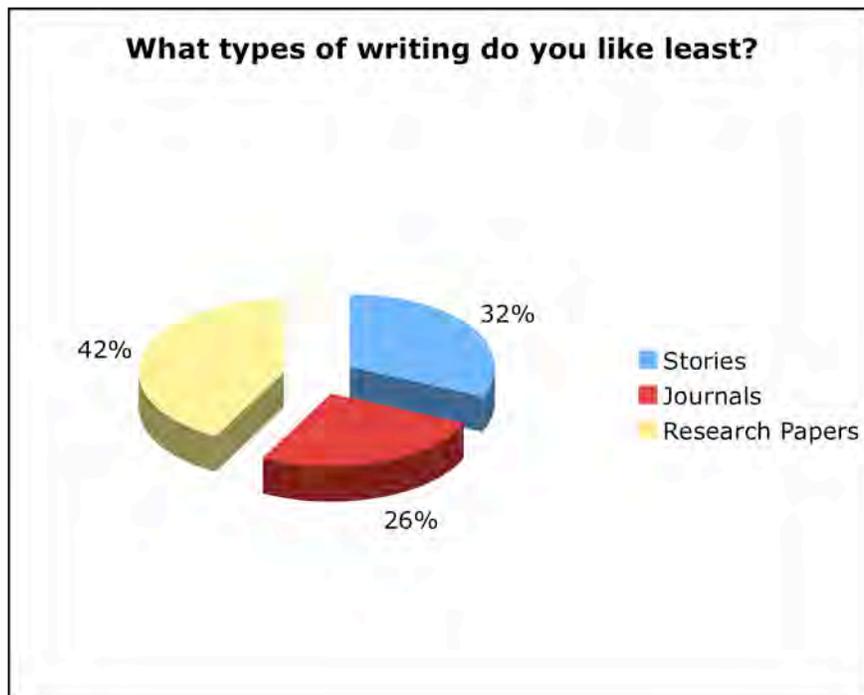   YES **17**   NO   **2**
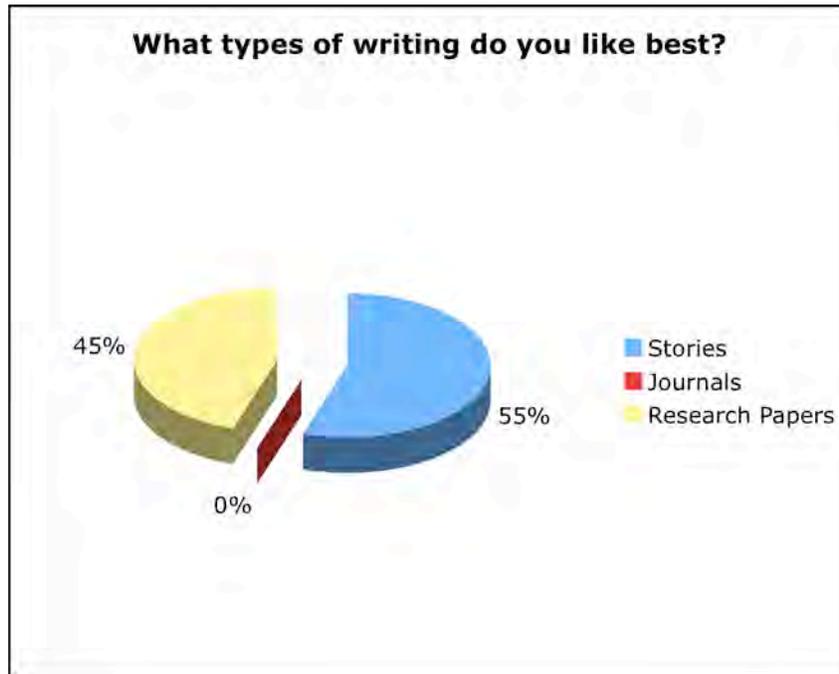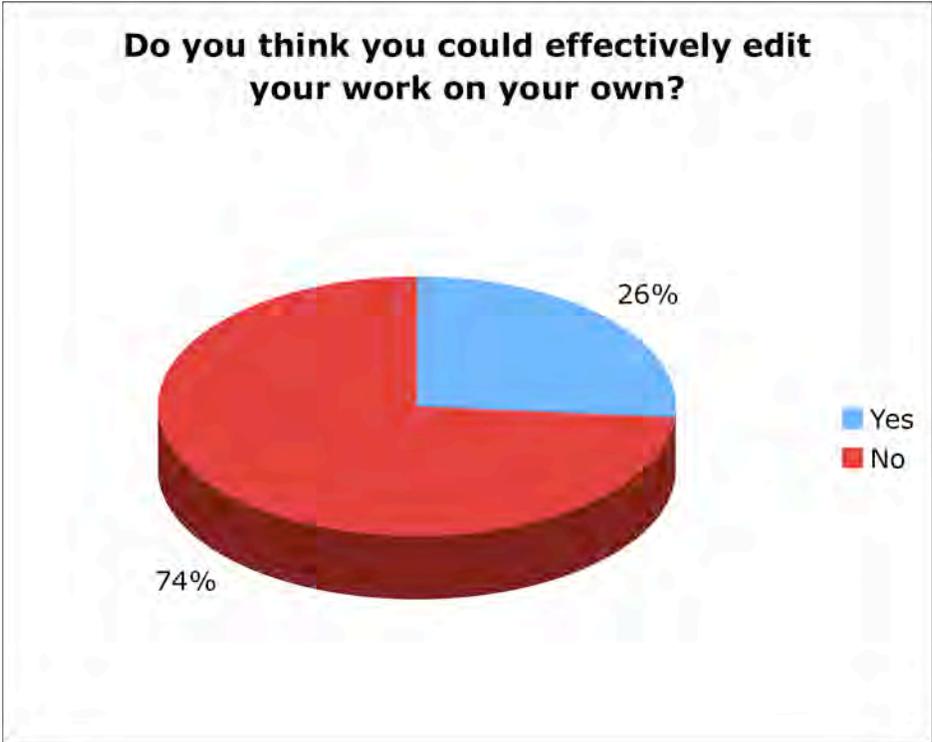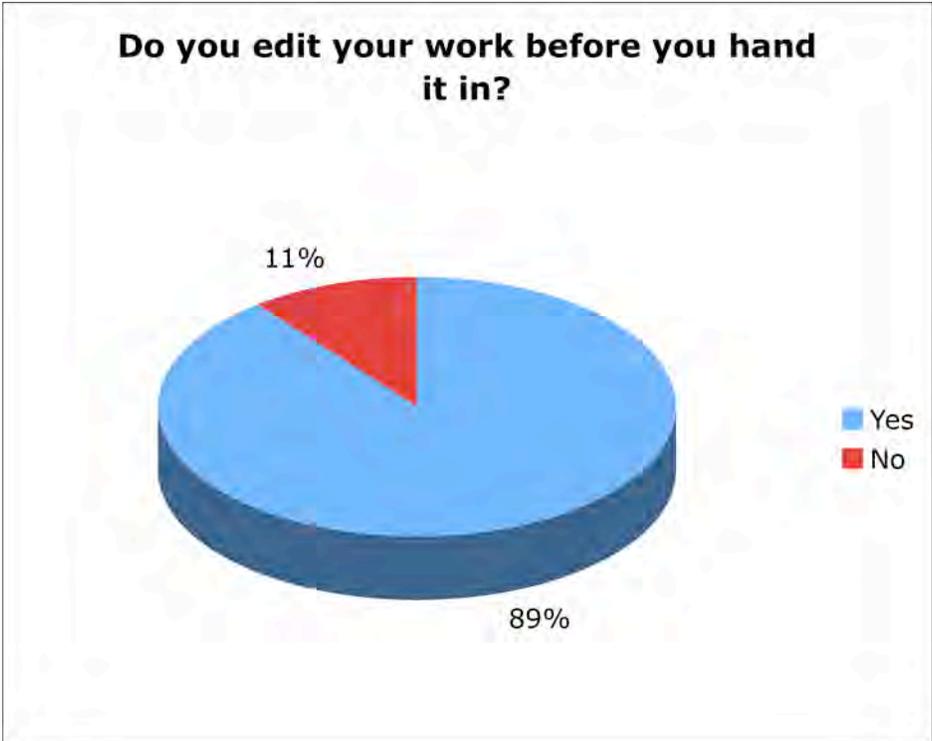
14. Do you think that you could edit like that on your own? (circle one)

        YES **5**   NO   **14**

Appendix B-3: *Student Survey: Charts and Graphs*

Do you edit your work before you hand it in?

11%

89%

Yes

No

Do you think you could effectively edit your work on your own?

26%

74%

Yes

No

Appendix C:
Home Run Editing: Chart, Worksheet, and Checklist

Appendix C-1: *Home Run Editing Chart*

BASE # 2

Grammar/Language/Spelling

Ask Yourself:

Are your sentences complete sentences?

Do the words in your sentences make sense?

Are your no excuse words spelled correctly?

BASE # 3

Descriptive Language

Ask Yourself:

Can you add describing words anywhere in your sentences to make your ideas more clear for your reader?

HOME RUN EDITING

BASE # 1

Simple Rules

Ask Yourself:

Do you have capital letters where they are suppose to be?

Are there punctuation marks at the end of your sentences?

Do you need to add punctuation marks in your sentence (comma, quotation marks, etc.)?

Does my story have a BEGINNING, MIDDLE, and END?

HIT A HOMERUN!

Is your piece of writing the BEST that it can be?

Round the bases one more time!

Ask yourself all of the questions on the bases again!

Appendix E:
Teacher Editing Survey, Teacher Results, and Graphs

Appendix E-1: *Editing Survey*

<u>EDITING SURVEY</u>

1. Do you teach editing in your classroom? (Circle One)

    YES   NO

    If yes: What does editing look like in your classroom, do you do peer editing?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

2. Can your students edit their own papers?

    YES   NO

3. Do your students need the help of an adult to edit?
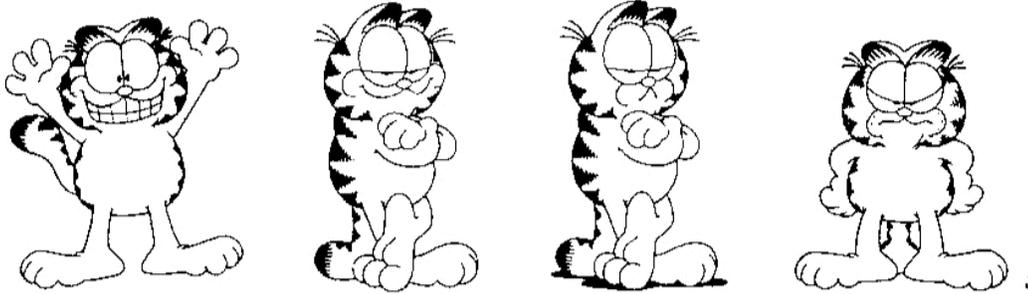
    YES   NO
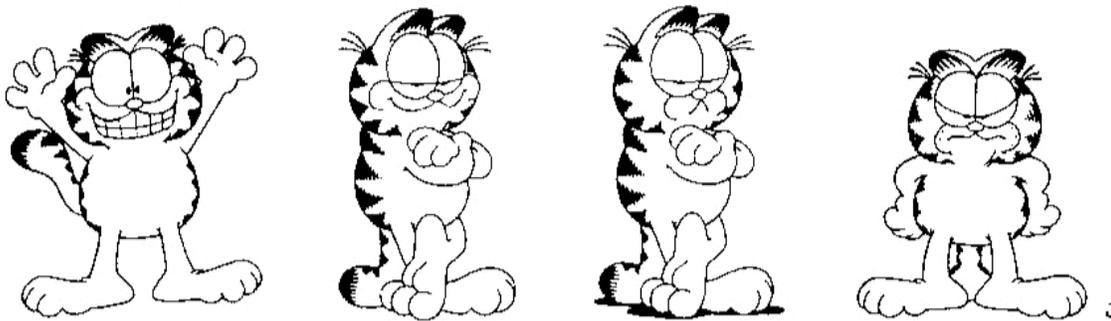
4. Have you tried peer editing?

    YES   NO

5. If yes, how effective has peer editing been in your class? (circle one)

Explain what was so effective/ineffective about peer editing:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. How do you feel about the idea of editing being a PA Writing
   Standard for first and second grade? (Circle the Garfield that applies
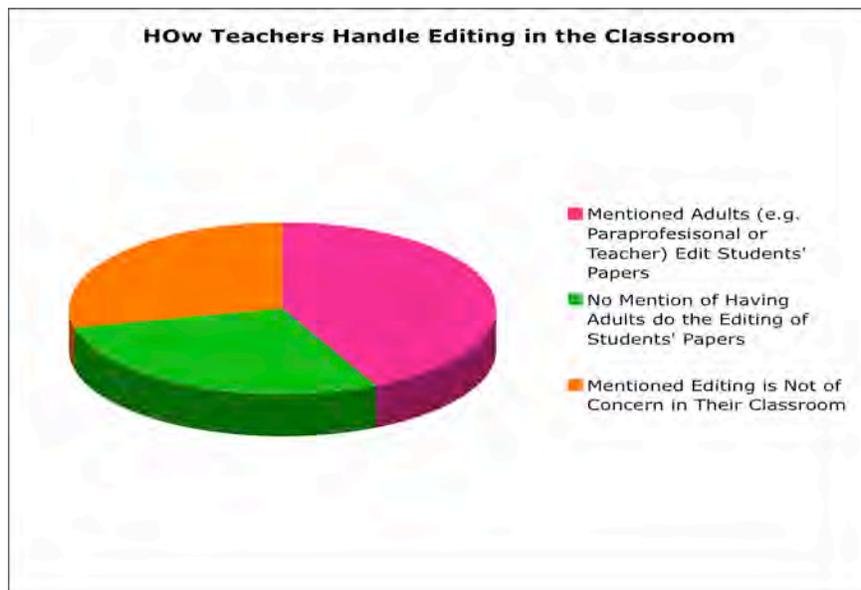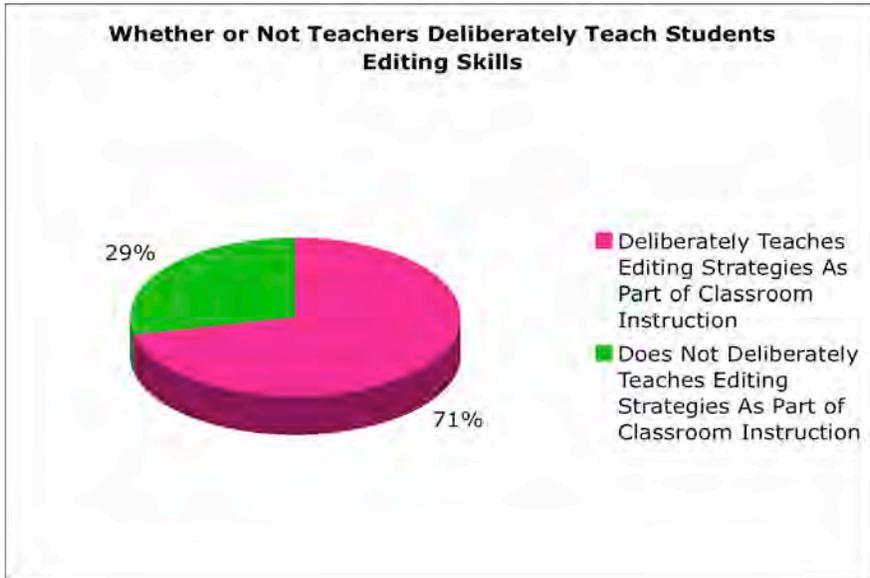   to your feelings.)

Explain why you feel this way:

_____
_____
_____
_____

GRADE YOU TEACH: _____

THANK YOU!!

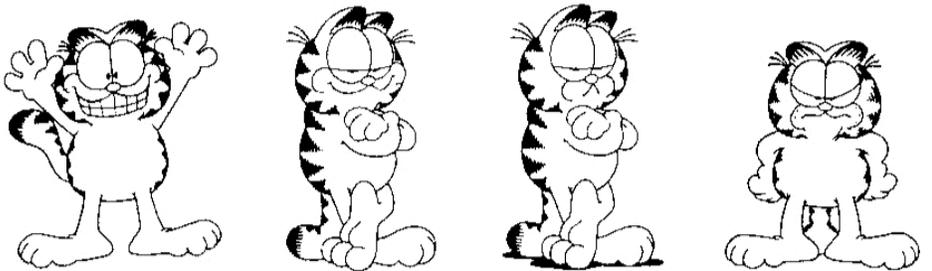***Appendix E-3:*** *Graphs from Teacher Editing Survey*

Appendix I:
Student Post Assessment Survey, Results, and Charts/Graphs

Appendix I-1 ~ Student Post Assessment Survey

Name: _____

   15.How do you feel about writing?

2. What editing strategy do you find the **most** useful? (circle one)

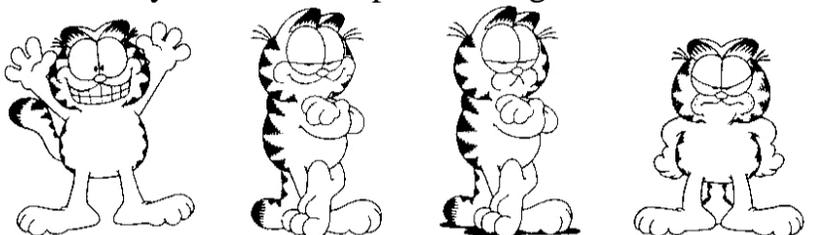A. Home Run Editing Checklist

B. C.I.G

C. Peer Editing

D. Other: _____

3. After learning all of the editing strategies that you did, do you think that you could edit your paper on your own? (circle one)

       YES   NO

4. How do you feel about peer editing?

Appendix I-2: *Results from the Student Post Assessment Survey*

Name: ___**RESULTS**_____

   1.How do you feel about writing?

   5   **8**   **4**   **1**

2. What editing strategy do you find the **most** useful? (circle one)

A. Home Run Editing Checklist   **4**

B. C.I.G   **6**

C. Peer Editing   **7**

D. Other: _____ **1**_____

3. After learning all of the editing strategies that you did, do you think that you could edit your paper on your own? (circle one)
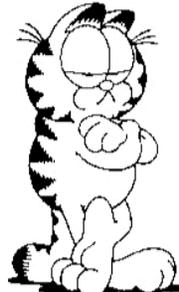
          YES: **13**   Maybe: **2**   NO: **3**

4. How do you feel about peer editing?

   8   **6**   **2**   **2**

Appendix I-3: *Graphing Results from the Post Survey*

After learning editing strategies, do you think that you can edit on your own?

11%

17%

72%

- YES
- NO
- MAYBE

How do you feel about peer editing?

Category	Value
I HATE it!	2
I don't like it	2
I like it	6
I LOVE it!	8

Series1