

From Teacher's Chair to Author's Chair: Assessing the Effects of  
Adding a Sharing Time

Erin E. Edwards  
Panorama Village Elementary School, Kindergarten  
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Table of Contents:

I. Description of teaching context.....	3
II. Rationale.....	4
III. Literature/research.....	6
IV. Wonderings.....	9
V. Inquiry plan description.....	10
VI. Data Collection.....	12
VII. Data Analysis.....	13
VIII. Claims.....	18
IX. Conclusion .....	25
X. New wonderings.....	26
Works Cited.....	27
Appendix A.....	28
Appendix B.....	32
Appendix C.....	34
Appendix D.....	37
Appendix E.....	38

## **I: Background Information**

When I found out that I was going to be completing my internship in kindergarten, I was very unsure of what to expect. I worried that teaching kindergarten may not prepare me for when I had my own classroom. This attitude was caused by a misconception I held about kindergarten and kindergarteners. I thought that kindergarten was all about play and learning school rules. I thought kindergarteners were only interested in play and only capable of learning basic concepts. After seven months of observing, assisting and instructing in a kindergarten class, I realized I could not have been more wrong about what kindergarten teachers strive to teach and what kindergarteners are capable of learning. My mentor is teaching concepts that I never imagined students that young could learn, and my kindergarteners are absorbing the information and concepts with curious and engaged attitudes. My students began the year knowing more than what I had expected to teach them. Most of my 18 students showed up the first day with some knowledge of letters and words. Since September, I have been amazed at the speed at which even the lowest students have acquired literacy skills. At this point, 17 of the students are capable of some form of writing independently. I was, and still am, very impressed at their achievements in writing that I began to pay closer attention to the variations and changes in it. Some of these observations and interests are what led to this inquiry project.

The kindergarten class I am interning in is a little out of the ordinary. Many of the students have older brothers and sisters who have been through my mentor's class, so a few of the parents had begun to prepare their children for the year prior to September. There are 10 girls and 8 boys in the class. Most of the students are from white, middle to

upper class homes. Although the State College Area School District does not allow students to be labeled before first grade, there have been indications that one of the students has severe learning disabilities. Three of the students, two girls and one boy, are English as a Second Language (ESL) students. They come from Russian homes and go outside of the room to an ESL specialist for 30 minutes a day. None of the students have behavior problems that are out of the ordinary for children five to six year olds.

Our classroom is located in Panorama Village Elementary School. Panorama is on the outer edge of State College, giving it somewhere between a suburban and rural feel. The school accommodates students from kindergarten through third grade. There are three kindergarten classes in the building. This year is the second year that Panorama, and my mentor, has had a full day kindergarten class. Having a full day to teach has created even more opportunities for kindergarteners to learn and practice literacy skills.

## **II: Rationale**

My mentor uses a literacy program called Kid Writing to teach reading, writing and phonemic awareness. Kid Writing is a program based off of the Writer's Workshop, but is specifically designed to meet the needs of an emergent reader/writer. In Kid Writing, students are encouraged to write at their own level. If they do not know their sounds, they can write a magic line, or ---, in place of a word. If they know a few sounds, they can write any sound they hear for each word. As the students increase their phonemic awareness, they begin to include more letters in their words. They are also encouraged to use environmental words (words posted around the room) and site words from their word rings. After students have completed their Kid Writing, they read it to

the teacher and she writes the “adult writing” at the bottom of the page, pointing out the students’ success at hearing sounds. The teacher never discredits the students’ writing by pointing out what they did “wrong”. Instead, the teacher ignores letters that are incorrect. After the teacher has written the adult writing, the students are asked to go back and read the adult writing.

Before working in a kindergarten classroom, I could not imagine the students being so successful at writing. It is evident by observing their writing that they have learned an amazing amount about phonetics, word rules, and story structure. The enthusiasm that some of the children have about writing, and the speed at which they were able to acquire literacy skills, are what led me to an interest in Kid Writing.

After I began to lead the Kid Writing station I made a lot of interesting observations about Kid Writing. I noticed that the students that were enthusiastic about writing were producing writing that was very different than students that were less excited about it. The excited students’ writing was normally longer, more detailed, and came closer to having a beginning, middle and end. I also noticed that my reaction to their Kid Writing had some influence on their excitement in their writing. The students that were already excited about their writing became even more excited and returned to their writing with fresh engagement and concentration. When I would express interest in or excitement over students less excited about their work, they often would react by verbalizing other ideas they had. Then, after I expressed interest in those ideas, they would begin to write the ideas down. This strategy seemed to work for some students better than others. I began to wonder to what extent outside interest could influence student writing and student attitude toward writing. I wondered what would happen if

there were more people interested in the children's writings? Would the student's pride, interest, and attention to their writing increase? That is when I decided to consider adding a sharing time to our daily schedule so that students could encourage each other. However, there were other factors to consider too. My students were writing at many different levels of fluency. Sharing with a teacher has a certain level of security because teachers encourage. Sharing with peers is more stressful because they are much more likely to criticize. I was very interested to see what sort of effects sharing time could have on my class, if there were any at all. If there were positive effects, I would be excited to explore different aspects of sharing time to see how I could best use it to increase student performance and attitude toward writing. If there were negative effects I would be sure to find other ways to encourage writers. Before I began sharing time, I searched for research that was already conducted on sharing time.

### **III: Research**

Before I considered starting an author's chair, I wanted to see how author's chairs have been set up in other classrooms, and why other teachers have decided to use them. I was not really sure what sharing time would look like, how long it should last, or what my part as the teacher was in it. I was also interested in the many ways other teachers had used sharing time and for what purposes. I found many resources that discussed sharing time. I found that although many resources discussed sharing time in different grades with different practices and emphasis, there were many common characteristics that the experts all found essential. These included: using sharing time as a time to teach focused mini lessons, including both praise and pushes (suggestions to improve the

writing) in my comments about the writing, and using the authors chair as an opportunity to instill or encourage additional pride in the students about their writing.

All of the research I found indicated that sharing time was an excellent time to teach mini lessons.

“One of the greatest advantages of whole-class share is the amount of teaching that occurs in a short period. It is through whole class–share, writing aloud, and shared writing that I do the bulk of my teaching. Mini lessons can be integrated effortlessly in these public forums, and all students, not just the ones in the author’s chair, listen and learn.” (Routman, 2005)

This idea was very exciting to me. Originally, I was just interested in how the attention and encouragement from fellow students would affect a student’s writing, but after doing some research I began to understand that the possibilities of adding a sharing time could extend much further. Sharing time could provide another opportunity to teach literacy. I realized it could give me the chance to talk about specific skills. Regie Routman (2005) says that she is “always on the lookout for someone who has tried something that I demonstrated in a mini lesson.” She tells the students before they write that she is looking students who are trying to use certain things that she had talked about in past mini-lessons. (Routman, 2005) This works both as reinforcement of the concepts the students learn and incentives for them to take risks and try new skills. In addition, the research praises sharing time as a time where teachers can learn what to teach. Pulling mini lessons directly from student writing allows the teacher to address the exact needs of the students. “By using children’s work, we not only honor the importance of the work, but also concretely link the mini lesson to the children’s’ real needs. It is only through children’s’ writing work and questions that we can truly know their needs. (Kid Writing pg 45) Sharing time is a great way to take a writing conference

and turn it into a time to teach mini lessons closely related to what students will see in their own writing. I knew after doing this research I would want to include mini lessons, but with limited time and so many students I wasn't sure what form these lessons would take. How long would it last? How many students should share? What exactly should I cover? I still had a lot of questions.

Literature suggests that mini lessons based on sharing time should be short. Teachers should pack what they can into the time they have, without taking away from the writing itself. In the book "Kid Writing" (1999), the author suggests that the teacher should choose three students a day to share their work and choose three topics from their writing to discuss. "That is nine mini lessons a day. Over the course of 180 day school year, that is 1600 opportunities for focused mini lessons!" (Kid Writing, 1999) In Writing Essentials, the author also suggests three points for each student. She says that the teacher should pick one or two things to celebrate. These are things that the author did well, but that maybe the other students struggle with. Then, she chooses one or two things that the student could do to make his/her stories even better. The author cautions, though, "Limit compliments (allow a few; avoid false praise; move on to suggestions)." (Routman, 2005) Using these suggestions, I decided if I did add an author's chair, that I would have three students a day and choose two focused praises and a push for each. Before I committed to a wondering, I wanted to see what positive effects the author's chair has had in the past.

The author's chair has had positive effects on students in the past. The research I found focused on the way that it affected student pride and how the mini lessons could help students improve their writing. "For me it is essential that children are deeply

involved in writing, that they share their texts with others, and that they perceive themselves as authors.” (Fisher, 1998) If the students feel that they are just completing an assignment, then writing is just work. However, sharing can help students see writing as an accomplishment, something to be proud of. Holdaway says “the best assessment for knowing if learning has taken place is when children come to us and want to show us their work. They share when they feel good about what they have done, when growth has occurred, and when learning has taken place.” (Fisher, 1998) When I read this, I realized that for sharing time to work, I would need to pay close attention to who wanted to share and when. I was excited about adding sharing time to see if it would increase my students’ pride in their work. However, what I could not find in the research was how sharing time would affect specific elements of their writing. My students were all struggling with different things in their writing, and I really began to wonder if sharing time could be used to address each of their needs.

#### **IV: Wonderings/ Inquiry vs. Improvement**

After studying the author’s chair, my wonderings began to take a more solid shape. I knew that there was a good chance that sharing time could positively influence my students’ pride in their writing, but what about other aspects of their writing? A lot of them already took pride in their work. They were struggling with other things. Some students were really creative, but never paid attention to mechanics of their writing. Some of them were becoming fluent writers, but never knew what to write about. Others just hated the whole experience of writing. I began to wonder: **How will adding a sharing time with mini lessons affect my students’ writing in the areas of creativity, mechanics and over all attitude toward writing?** I later began to wonder some other

things: 1) Will the possibility of sharing cause them to take more risks in creativity and mechanics? 2) Will the students enjoy sharing time/ will it be motivating? 3) Will adding a sharing time cause more division between the high and low achievers?

I believe these wonderings helped shape my true inquiry because I really did not know where this study would take me. The answers to my wondering were completely open. Adding a sharing time could affect writing in any way, in any area, or not at all. I had no idea where this journey might take me. My inquiry is all about exploring a question I had and trying new techniques that I might want to use in my own classroom next year.

### **V: Inquiry Plan**

To complete my inquiry project, I really only had four steps to complete. The first was to pre-assess my students. I had to find out where they were in their writing before we added sharing time. The second step was to introduce to the students what sharing time was. This is a very important step for a teacher to follow if he/she plans to add a sharing time. A lesson on the authors' chair should begin with praise and excitement over the students' achievement and a discussion on respect. In my lesson, I praised the students on how far they had come with their writing. I told them that I wanted to give them a chance to share their work with their friends. But, I also reminded them that whenever our friends share, we have to be careful to be respectful. I told them that everyone came to kindergarten in different places, and that everyone had a come a long way. It is important to celebrate how far our friends have come. When they become even better writers, we should encourage them, and be proud of what they have learned. This is a way each of us can be a good friend! This lesson was particularly important

because of the varying levels of achievement in the classroom. I planned to share every student's writing at some point. This meant that I had to be prepared for negative comments that may have come when the higher achievers heard of the lower achievers' stories. I wanted sharing time to have a positive affect on students' attitudes, not to embarrass or shame any student. I also reminded them to be good listeners when someone else was sharing and to be thinking of questions or positive comments to say to the author after the story was shared. We also decided to applaud everyone who shared. Next, I explained how sharing time worked. I said I would choose three students every day to share their Kid Writing. I said I would be looking for students that included things we had been talking about as a class, or a student that had shown improvement in an area he/she was struggling in. I told the students that they always had the right to pass and not have their work shared. If the student wanted to share, he/she would come up and sit in the author's chair. This was exciting for the students because the author's chair was really just the teacher's chair that we used for read alouds. Then, the student could show the class his/her picture. I would crouch next to the author and then read the story.

After the lesson on how sharing time worked, the students were eager to begin sharing. The following day, after station time, we began step three of my inquiry project: our first sharing time. While the students came in and out of the Kid Writing station, I began to look for whose work I would share. I chose three students who had incorporated some of the things we had been discussing as a class. One student had used describing words. One had tried to use talking marks. All three had a beginning, middle and end. I also tried to choose students who had particular interest in sharing their stories. When sharing time began, I introduced the authors one at a time. The student

would show the picture, and then I would read the story. (I read the stories because sometimes kindergarteners stumble over their own words. In an older grade it would be appropriate to have the students read their own story.) Then, I would tell the students two things I noticed or really enjoyed about the story. After that, I shared one thing that the student and I had discussed at Station time that he/she could try to focus on tomorrow to make his/her story EVEN BETTER! Then, the other students and I would give the author a hand for his/her accomplishment. Finally, I would ask if anyone had a comment or a question. I made sure to direct the questions so that the author's work was not attacked. After all three students had shared, I told the students that I would be looking for new children who had these things in their writing to share tomorrow.

My class had sharing time three times a week, after every Kid Writing station. I began in February, and continued even after my inquiry project was complete. Before I decided to continue it, though, I had to post assess the affects of adding sharing time. I analyzed my data to see how it had affected each aspect of writing included in my wondering and then decided whether to keep going or not.

#### **VI: Data Collection:**

To discover the answers to my wonderings, I had to collect data on three things: mechanics, creativity and attitude. The best way to measure changes in writing was to study writing samples from the students. I collected writing samples in two ways. One was a daily, informal analysis of the students' writing. I collected and analyzed this data for two months. I did not look at every story for every student. I chose a few students who I felt represented most of the class, and analyzed their writing daily. The second way I collected samples of student writing was by taking three base writing samples

during the course of the inquiry project. These writing samples were not completed at the Kid Writing station and were not written in the Kid Writing journals. I asked the students to write their story on a separate piece of paper. I told them that it was to be the best they could do by themselves (no teacher help). I collected these writing samples the day before we began sharing time, a month into my inquiry project and after two months, near the end of my inquiry project.

The third part of my wondering, the part about student attitude, was harder to measure. To discover whether the students' attitudes changed, I needed to find what their attitude toward writing was before sharing time was added, and the attitude they had about Kid Writing after sharing time was added. I did this by conducting interviews with each child before sharing time was added, and after two months had passed. The interview questions included: 1) What is your favorite part about Kid Writing or what is easiest? 2) What is your least favorite part about Kid writing or what is the hardest part? 3) Do you like Kid Writing? 4) Do you write at home? 5) Do you like to write pretend or real stories more? (Results of these interviews in Appendix B) I was worried, however, that the answers to the questions would be highly influenced by how writing went the day I interviewed the student, so in addition, I took informal note of comments that some of the students said about writing.

## **VII: Data Analysis**

After I collected all of my data, I had to figure out how to analyze it so that it would be meaningful. I divided the analysis into three parts: attitude, mechanics and creativity. To analyze the data for attitude I compared the information in the pre-sharing time interviews to the data from the post sharing time interviews. I looked at both the

number of students who said they liked Kid Writing and the number of students who indicated that they wrote at home. (See Appendix B) I compared the numbers to see how many children's attitudes changed and if the number of positive attitudes in class were similar to the number of students who wrote at home. I thought it was important to check the number of children writing at home because it can work as an indication that the child does enjoy writing. Interviews are not always accurate, so finding out whether they write at home helped me see if their answers matched their practice. In addition, I compared the answers the children had to observations I made in class.

To discover how sharing time affected the mechanics of Kid Writing, I went through and marked all the writing samples. I highlighted four things. (For highlighting code and for a sample of highlighted work see Appendix A) The first things I marked, in blue, were the grammatical and spelling errors in the writing. This does NOT mean every mistake the students made was highlighted. Kid Writing is the student's best effort. I only marked words that the students had already learned and spelled wrong anyways. For instance, words on the students' word rings and words commonly used and posted around the room were expected to be spelled correctly. The four students who had yet to learn the ten small words could not get a marked off for spelling. They could, however, get a mark for not having a necessary word or a magic line to stand in for the word because at the start of this inquiry, every student knew they needed to have some representation for every word. Students could also get a mark for not having a period in an appropriate place or for not capitalizing at the beginning of a sentence. If the student did not have a period and did not capitalize where the next sentence should start, I only counted it as one mistake. I tallied the mistakes for every child for the three samples. I

then made three tables. These tables are called Table 1 for sample 1, Table 2 for sample 2, and Table 3 for sample 3. (See Appendix C) Each table had a row for each student and columns for mistake ratio, describing words, talking marks, creative language and beginning, middle, and end. After I had made the tables, I entered in the number of mistakes each student made in each writing sample. After looking at my data for mistakes, however, I realized that this data was not fair because the students were writing much longer stories by the end of the study, so there were more opportunities for them to make mistakes. To counter this, I counted the number of sentences in each story. Then, I divided the number of mistakes in the story by the number of sentences to find the mistake to number of sentences ratio. I made a new table, Table 5 (Appendix D), with each student's three ratios to compare how the ratio changed through out the study. Last, I found which sample each student had the lowest mistake ratio for. I tallied how many students had their lowest in the first sample, how many had the lowest in the second sample, and how many had their lowest in the third sample.

Also, under mechanics, I looked at the number of talking marks, or quotation marks in each of the students' writing samples. I highlighted talking marks in yellow. I counted the number of times talking marks were used for each students for each sample, and added them to tables 1-3. After I had written in the number of talking marks for each child for each writing sample, I made a new chart. This chart had a column for sample one, sample two and sample three. I had a row for describing words; creative language; beginning, middle, and end; and talking marks. This table is called Table 4, and is found in Appendix C. I wrote in the number of students who used these things for each sample. This helped me compare the number of students using these things for each sample.

The last thing I checked under mechanics was the use of beginning, middle, and end. During a regular lesson we had talked about story structure and how stories should have a beginning, middle and end. We reinforced this concept during sharing time. If a student had a good beginning, or a nice conclusion, I would point it out. Sometimes I would say, “Today I am looking for stories that each have a beginning, middle and end to share.” To analyze the students’ use of beginning, middle, and end, I recorded “yes” or “no” on Tables 1, 2, and 3. Then I tallied the number of students who had beginning, middle and ends for each sample and added these numbers to Table 4.

The last thing I looked for in the stories was the creativeness. The creativeness in a story is hard to measure because of the subjective nature of it. However, I did try to analyze the growth, or lack of, according to my definition. It was easier to measure the creativeness of the language they used than the creativeness of their story as a whole. I measured the language by reading through each story and by highlighting language that I considered creative in green. I considered language that was not necessary to the story, but that added to the quality of the story, creative language. This included things like sound effects, or language that breaks the story to talk to the reader. I also highlighted describing words, or adjectives, in pink. I recorded all of this information for each student for each sample into tables 1, 2 and 3. I added the total students using these things for each sample and added these numbers in to Table 4. (See Appendix C)

To analyze the creativeness of the subject, I came up with my own definition of creativity and my own rating system. My definition is: Creativity is the degree in which the students removed themselves from their life experiences and took risks to construct an unfamiliar or unique story. This definition is made from my own ideas of what

creativity is. I realize this is not the same definition that another teacher or person may have come up with, but it is the definition I try to measure in this study. To measure it, I came up with a rating system that I thought was fair considering the subjective nature of what I was trying to measure. I was not rating the stories on quality. I feel that every kind of writing has value, and I think students should be writing a variety of genres. However, because my wondering included “increasing creativity”, I had to find a way to measure creativity according to my definition. I had three categories. There were two kinds of stories in the first category. They were stories that came directly out of the students’ experience, or retellings, and stories that were nonfiction, or a collection of facts. These stories all received one point. The second category included stories that were inspired by something like a song, book, computer game, TV show, or other story, and stories that were made up but could happen in the students’ everyday lives. These stories received two points. The last category, category three, included only stories that were created in the minds of the students. These were stories that were mostly removed from the students’ everyday experience. These stories received a three. I recorded each stories creative score onto a table called Table 5. (Appendix E) At the end, I tallied the number of students who received a three for each sample. I also added up the entire classes points to come up with a class creative points total for each sample. This made it easier to compare the class’s attempts to write creative stories. These two totals are shown on the bottom row of Table 5.

## **VIII: Claims:**

After analyzing the data I collected from my study, I found that adding a sharing time did have an affect on the students and their writing. I found three major claims:

### **Claim 1: Adding a sharing time affects student writing in the area of mechanics.**

I have three pieces of evidence for this claim. The first comes from the mistake ratios that I found in the student writing samples. After I found all the ratios and put them into a new chart, I could easily compare how the mistake ratios changed between each student's three writing samples. For each student I circled the sample in which they had the lowest mistake ratio. (Appendix D, Table 5) There were three students who had their lowest mistake ratio in the first sample, five students who had their lowest mistake ratio in the second sample, and eight students who had their lowest mistake ratio in the third sample. As the samples went on, more students made fewer mistakes. In addition, I suspect the reason there were three students whose ratio went up was that those three students took more risks in their writing as a result of a mini-lesson given during sharing time where I encouraged students to take risks. I really believe these improvements were a result of sharing time. For example: During sharing time, I chose David's story to share. I pointed out two things I loved about his story, but found one thing he needed to work on. I discussed with the class how I noticed a lot of students had been putting capitals in the middle of sentences. I told them David was going to be looking for those. The next day David said to me, "Ms. Edwards, I know you are going to share my story. I was really careful with my capitals today." I looked over the story and there was only

one error in capital letters. This was only one example, but it happened for many other students.

Another way the mechanics improved was in the use of talking marks. Students often try to include dialogue in their stories, but do not know how to write it differently than the rest of the story. During a couple of sharing times, we discussed how dialogue can make a story really interesting, and how talking marks, or quotation marks, help the reader know that it is a character talking and not the story teller. I measured the number of times students used talking marks before these discussions, in the middle of the study, and at the end of the study. (Appendix C, Table 4) Before sharing time, in sample one, none of the students used talking marks. In the second sample, five students had used talking marks. After two months of sharing time, seven students used talking marks in their writing. In addition, when I ask the students what they like about their friend's story that was being shared, they often mention the dialogue as an interesting part. I believe that the mini lessons during sharing time helped the students learn where to put the talking marks, and the comments from the other students and me helped them to want to put dialogue in the stories.

The third thing I looked at for mechanics was story structure. I wanted to see if the stories had a beginning, middle and end. Before we began sharing time, during sample one, six students had a clear beginning middle and end to their story. (Appendix C, Table 4) During sharing time I would often point out the beginning, middle, and end of the story by the student who was sharing. A couple of days I said I would only share stories that had a beginning middle and end. For both the second and third sample, 12 students had a clear beginning, middle and end. This is twice as much as the original

number. I feel that having a sharing time really influenced the way the students thought about story organization.

Looking at these three pieces of evidence I really feel that adding a sharing time improved the students' writing in the area of mechanics. Most of the students had fewer mistakes per sentence, even though they were taking more risks. More students were using talking marks. More students had a clear beginning, middle and end. This was a lot of improvement for kindergarteners in just a two-month period.

**Claims 2: Student attitude toward writing did not change as a whole because of sharing time, but it was influenced. Students are less afraid of failing, and more eager to begin their writing.**

This was a difficult claim to make because I had some evidence for the attitude changing and some for it not changing. In the pre-study interviews, 13 students said they enjoyed Kid writing, and six said they did not like Kid Writing. (Appendix A) I was surprised when the post-study survey reported the same numbers. (Appendix A) During the study, I really felt like their attitudes may be changing because of the comments they would make to me. All of the students expressed extreme interest in having their writing shared. They would often point out things in their stories they were proud of, and say things like, "I bet you will read my story today." They often asked me to share their stories, and if I could not they would seem disappointed. I actually had to add a "Share with my Friends" time so that students who were enthusiastic about their work could still get to share their stories. I paid particular attention to the comments made by some of the students who had the worst attitude about writing going into the study. One of the students who reported at first that he hated writing and that there was nothing he liked

about it said later that he still did not like writing, but that he did like writing down his funny ideas so other people could read them. He was very eager every day to share his writing, and insisted that he share with a friend if I could not share his work. Another student who disliked Kid Writing to the point of defiance when it was time to do so, would come to the Kid Writing station first and begin his story without help after we began sharing time. He still would refuse to write a lot, but expressed pride in what he wrote and often asked to share his work with the class or another teacher.

Another reason I feel that student attitude was affected a little came from their answers to one of the interview questions. I asked the students “Do you ever write at home?” 12 students responded they did write at home before we added sharing time, and two months later after we added sharing time 16 students responded they wrote at home. (Appendix A) Two of the students who began to write at home reported that they did not like Kid Writing before or after the study. Although these students claimed to still not like Kid Writing, they had begun to write at home in their free time.

More evidence I have about changes in attitude comes from the questions in the interview “What is your favorite or the easiest part of Kid Writing?” and “What is your least favorite or the hardest part of Kid Writing?” (Appendix A) Before we added sharing time, the answers to this question were very general. Eight of the students answered drawing the picture or coloring was their favorite part. Six students said writing was their favorite part. Four students answered writing stories. For the least favorite thing, ten students said writing. Four said either sounding out words or writing hard words. The rest could not think of an answer. After we added sharing time, the students were much more certain about what were hard for them. They were more

comfortable saying that it wasn't all of writing that was hard, just specific things. Their answers for what they liked included: writing funny stories, writing funny words, thinking of ideas, making pictures, getting the adult writing and specific stories they were really proud of. For things they did not like they had really specific things: finding where the talking marks go, tricky blends, thinking of a good story, writing words I already know (they are expected to write these words correctly and not just sound them out), making my letters turn the right way, writing on the computer, writing too much, spelling hard words, and coloring. The students seemed much more aware of what was difficult for them. Less of them seemed to think writing in general was bad, and more knew what specific thing they didn't like. This means, although they may still not enjoy writing as a whole, many of them are able to enjoy some parts, and I am able to support them in the parts that are harder.

The last thing I noticed about attitude dealt with their comfort level and their willingness to take risks. Although I do not have concrete evidence, many observations I made brought me to the conclusion that they are more willing to take risks. Some of the students who were limiting their writing to words they could find around the room began to sound words out and take risks. Also, some of the students who seemed troubled when many of their words were different from the adult writing began to discuss happily why they chose to write it the way they did. I think by comparing their work to the other students, they began to realize that Kid Writing was not about right and wrong, but about giving their best effort. This made them feel much more safe about taking chances.

The students' overall attitude toward writing may not have changed but, after sharing time was added, they seemed more willing to do it, more comfortable and proud

of their work, more willing to do it in their spare time and more sure of what it is about it they don't really like.

**Claim three: Sharing time positively influences the students' creativity in writing.**

I found that adding a sharing time increased my students' creativity in writing in three ways. They used more creative language, expressed their ideas more clearly by using describing words, and had more stories that were removed from their everyday experience.

When I first began this study, I noticed that many of the students' ability to write was surpassing what they were actually writing. They were capable of writing a lot of words fast, but they were not writing longer or more detailed stories. I think a lot of this was because they were not writing stories they could easily expand on. I wondered if writing stories that were more creative in nature, and less like a retelling of a real life event, would give them the opportunity to take their writing further. During sharing time I began to encourage and praise different creative aspects of writing. The first aspect we worked on was the use of describing words. Describing words are not necessary, but they do add to the aesthetics of the writing. They are especially useful when writing a story that is from the authors mind because they help the reader see what the author has created in his/her mind. After analyzing sample one, I found that only 4 of the students used describing words in their writing. (Appendix C, table 4) I began to point them out in student writing during sharing time. After a month, when I took the second sample, there were still only four students who used describing words. One of these was the one who had used them in her last story. I continued to point them out during sharing time, and had a day where I only read stories in which there were some. For the third writing

sample, 12 students used describing words. Most of the students who used them, used more than one. (Appendix C, Table 3)

Another thing I looked for in the stories was creative language. Although I have a certain definition of what a creative story is, I believe that stories about everyday life and nonfiction stories can still have very creative aspects to them. I decided to measure creative language and voice, in the writing. In the first sample, only one student had any language that was not necessary to the story. (Appendix C, Table 4) By the second sample, 9 students had included language that existed to improve the way the story sounded. By the third sample, 10 students were using creative language. The students often made comments to me like, “Doesn’t this part make you feel like you are in the story?” By comparing their writing, I could really see a shift from using writing as a way of retelling facts to a way to express an idea or story they created to a reader in an interesting way.

During the data analysis section of this paper, I described the way I rated the stories on creativeness. Although this is very imperfect in the way it describes their writing, and although it does not give their ideas true justice, it did help me look at what kind of stories the students were writing. For the first sample, three students were writing stories that received a three. (Appendix E, Table 6) These stories were removed from the students’ direct experience, and came mostly from their imaginations. I added up the all the points for the students for the first sample and came up with 29 class creativity points. For the second writing sample, 14 students wrote stories that received a three. There was a class creativity point total of 46. For the third sample, the count went slightly down to an eleven for students who had a three, and a class count of 43 creativity

points. The initial jump I attribute almost totally to sharing time. Once we began to share the stories, I think the students began to see what kind of story they liked to hear about. They began to want to make their own creative stories. They especially liked to put funny things or action things involving their friends in their stories. They often got ideas from each other, and talked about their stories while writing. Looking at the pre and post interview questions I noticed that the number of students who preferred writing real stories to pretend stories went from seven to two. (Appendix B) Also, the number of students who liked them equally went from five to three. This means seven children changed their preference to pretend stories. In addition I noticed that the students expressed more enthusiasm about their creative stories and were more eager to share them than with real stories. I think this is proof that sharing time positively affects the students' creativity in writing.

## **IX: Conclusion**

After completing this inquiry project, feel that I discovered, for my current class, answers to my wonderings. I found that sharing time is not only a great way for students to share and take pride in their work, but it is also a great place to incorporate mini lessons based around student work. Also, I found it to be great motivation for the students to push themselves and to try new things. Sharing time helped my students improve in the mechanics of writing, it helped them to try more creative and longer stories, and it helped them get over their fear of writing. I really enjoyed learning about my students, their writing, and sharing time, and I am eager to see how it continues to help this class, and future classes, improve their writing.

**X: New Wonderings**

- 1) Does sharing time with a friend have educational potential?
- 2) How will shifting the responsibility of the mini lessons to the other students increase or decrease the effectiveness of sharing time?
- 3) Does sharing time, and its tendency to increase the number of creative stories, negatively affect the students' ability to write, or interest in, nonfiction?

## Works Cited

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## Appendix A

### Highlighting Code:

Pink: describing words

Yellow: talking marks

Green: creative language

Blue: mistakes











## Appendix C

**Table 1:**

Student Number	Mistake Ratio	Describing Words	Talking Marks	Creative Language	Beginning/Middle/End
1	1	0	0	0	Y
2	1	0	0	0	Y
3	0.5	0	0	0	N
4	2	0	0	0	N
5	1.3	0	0	0	Y
6	1	0	0	0	N
7	0.33	1	0	0	N
8	0.6	0	0	0	Y
9	1	0	0	0	N
10	0.5	2	0	0	N
11	1	0	0	0	Y
12	1	0	0	2	N
13	0.5	0	0	0	N
14	2	3	0	0	N
15					
16	0.33	1	0	0	Y
17	1	0	0	0	N
18	0	0	0	0	N

**Table 2:**

Student Number	Mistake Ratio	Describing Words	Talking Marks	Creative Language	Beginning/Middle/End
1	3	0	0	0	Y
2	1	1	1	2	Y
3	0.5	0	0	0	N
4	0.33	0	2	1	N
5	0.33	0	1	2	Y
6	1	0	0	0	N
7	1.3	0	0	1	Y
8	0.33	3	0	1	Y
9	1	0	0	0	N
10	1.2	5	1	1	Y
11	0.25	1	0	1	Y
12	0.25	0	0	0	Y
13	0.667	0	0	0	Y
14	0.84	0	0	0	Y
15					
16	1.25	0	1	0	Y
17	0.7	0	0	1	Y
18	0.2	0	0	1	N

**Table 3:**

Student Number	Mistake Ratio	Describing Words	Talking Marks	Creative Language	Beginning/Middle/End
1	0.4	2	1	3	Y
2	0.6	2	0	2	Y
3	0.5	1	0	0	N
4	0.8	2	1	0	Y
5	0.5	2	0	1	Y
6	1.5	1	0	0	N
7	0.44	12	0	3	N
8	0.44	0	0	2	Y
9	0.5	2	1	1	Y
10	0.9	13	0	1	Y
11	0.6	2	2	2	Y
12	1.6	0	2	2	Y
13	0	0	0	1	Y
14	0.42	1	0	0	Y
15					
16	0	1	1	0	N
17	0.14	0	1	0	Y

18	0.67	0	0	0	N
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**Table 4**

**Attached**



## Appendix E

**Table 6:**

Student Number	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3
1	2	3	3
2	2	3	1
3	3	1	3
4	2	3	3
5	1	3	3
6	1	3	3
7	1	3	2
8	3	3	3
9	1	1	2
10	2	3	2
11	3	3	3
12	2	3	3
13	1	3	3
14	1	3	1
15			
16	2	2	2
17	1	3	3
18	1	3	3
Number of 3's	3	14	11
Classroom Creative Points	29	46	43