

**To Publish or Not to Publish:  
What Role Does Publishing Play in 3rd Graders' Writing  
Ability, Motivation and Confidence?**

Christina Preis  
Ferguson Township Elementary Intern  
Third Grade Classroom  
Cdp141@psu.edu

## Table of Contents

1. Abstract		3
2. Description of Teaching Context		4
3. Rationale		5
4. What Professional Literature Says		6
5. Clearly Stated Wonderings and Sub-Questions		9
6. Explanation of Inquiry Versus Project		9
7. Inquiry Plan		10
8. Data Collection		12
9. Data Analysis		15
10. Claims		18
11. Additional Learning		26
12. Implications for Teaching		27
13. New Wonderings		28
14. Reference Page		29
15. Appendix		
A. Surveys		
1. Pre- Survey 1		
2. Pre- Survey 2 (Likert Scale)		
3. Post Survey 1 (Likert Scale)		
B. Observations		
1. Spontaneous Observations		
2. Planned Observations		
C. Interviews		
1. Interview Transcripts		
D. Photographs		
1. Photographs of Students		
E. Data Analysis		
1. Analysis of Pre-Survey 1		
2. Analysis of Pre-Survey 2 (Likert Scale)		
3. Analysis of Post-Survey (Likert Scale)		
4. Analysis of Observations		
5. Comparison of Pre/Post Survey Results		

## **Abstract**

This inquiry focuses on whether or not publishing students' writing in a 3rd grade classroom can affect their motivation, confidence and ability as writers. It looks at how various factors play out in the students' minds and how these factors influence the students' attitudes towards publishing. Students were given the choice of several different publishing methods and were surveyed (pre and post) concerning their writing attitudes and their interest in writing.

## Description of Teaching Context

Ferguson Township Elementary School is a small, rural school located in a growing community in Pine Grove Mills, PA. The school is comprised of 327 students and 15 classrooms. There are 3 kindergarten classrooms, 5 primary classrooms, 4 intermediate classrooms, and 3 upper-intermediate classrooms in the building. The small school setting fosters a sense of belonging and community within the school, as well as within individual classrooms.

The third grade self-contained classroom I am student teaching in is made up of 24 vibrant and energetic students. The class is fairly equal in terms of gender, with 10 girls and 14 boys. There is little ethnic diversity within the school as well as within the third grade classroom I am in; in my classroom one student is Asian/Pacific, while the rest of the students are Caucasian. There is an equal range of upper, middle, and lower class families in Ferguson Township Elementary School. Four students in my classroom come from families who have divorced, unmarried, or remarried parents, and of these four students, one student is now part of a stepfamily and another student lives with his grandparents.

Academically, the majority of the students in my third grade classroom are reading at grade level and receiving regular classroom instruction. Three students receive Title 1 math instruction and two students receive Title 1 reading instruction. One student receives speech therapy, one student goes to learning support for reading and writing, and four students receive regular counseling.

Creative story writing is the emphasis of instruction during Writers' Workshop in the classroom. Students receive whole-group as well as small-group mini-lessons on the processes and techniques of writing. Topics range from brainstorming topics, to creating story maps and adding details, to revising and editing rough drafts. Although the focus of Writers' Workshop instruction is on creative story writing, other forms of writing are integrated into lessons during science, social studies, math, and language arts.

## **Rationale:**

### What led me to this inquiry and why is it important?

In December, I noticed the third graders' enthusiasm for independent creative writing had diminished slightly since the beginning of the year. For instance, whereas earlier in the year the students would be eagerly raising their hands to contribute to a story we were writing together during shared writing, by December the students would be sitting in their desks with their backs slouched and their heads down on their desks during independent writing time. I often observed students looking into space or playing with their pencils or erasers throughout the writing period with no sense of urgency or purpose for finishing their stories. These observations stayed with me and resurfaced a month later, on January 12, when I noticed a change in a few students' writing attitudes. This behavior change occurred when my mentor and I introduced the students to a book writing and illustrating contest being held at the local children's library in downtown State College, Schlow Memorial Library. After, and even during our explanation of the contest to the students, I saw an enthusiasm and excitement for writing that I had not seen in my third graders for a long time. I overheard students saying things like, "Cool! I am definitely doing that" and saw students exchange smiles and nods, signaling to their friends that they were planning to participate in the contest. A few days later one student in my class even brought in a rough draft of his creative story and informed his friends that he was going to type his story that night, illustrate the pages, and print out copies for his aunt, his mom, himself, and his friend. This student was most excited, however, about the prospect of his story being put into the Schlow Memorial Library or into his Aunt's bookstore in Bellefonte.

It was at this point that I had an epiphany: my mentor and I had not formally published the students' creative writing up to this point in the year. Immediately, memories of my publishing experiences in elementary school flooded my thoughts. I smiled as I recalled my first published "masterpiece," which I wrote in second grade, entitled, "The Hippopotamus and the Class." The excitement and pride I took in my first published book was remarkable. I remember

reading the book before going to bed every night (and sleeping with it next to my pillow) and reading (and rereading) the story to my relatives at family gatherings. In retrospect, I think my family was more excited than I was when I had another story published! The experiences I had with publishing were positive and extremely motivating, so I wondered if the third graders would feel the same way. Accordingly, reflecting on the students' apparent disinterest in independent writing, the students' reaction to the Schlow Memorial Library book contest, and my own experiences with publishing in elementary school led me to this inquiry project.

This inquiry project is important for me as a teacher for a number of reasons. First of all, my completion of this inquiry project may, either positively or negatively, influence my students' writing attitudes, ability to write, and motivation to write. Additionally, the conclusions I come to as a result of this inquiry project may guide my approach to teaching writing and Writers' Workshop in my future classrooms. Overall, in an already full and busy day, I feel that it is important for me, and for other teachers, to be certain that the practices and activities we plan are worthwhile and beneficial to our students. The goal of this inquiry was for me to identify and analyze the impact publishing has on students' overall writing attitudes and writing abilities. The knowledge gained from this inquiry could be used (by myself as well as other educators) to put effective time and effort into appropriate publishing strategies.

The research I completed on publishing in the classroom gave me insight into what professional literature reveals that experts have found concerning the influence publishing has on students' writing attitudes. My research on this topic also provided me with insight into various means and methods of publishing student work in the classroom. The results of my research on publishing intrigued me and further encouraged my desire to explore this wondering in the classroom.

### **What Professional Literature Says About Publishing**

Professional literature suggests that publishing plays a positive role on students' writing attitudes. According to Tobi Ensio and Krystal Boxeth (2000), the majority of the students in the study they conducted "experienced positive changes in motivation and attitude toward writing as

a result of having their work published in the community” (p. 31). Kathleen Dudden Andrasick’s review of literature in *The English Journal* (1993), confirms the positive effects of publishing, explaining, “Students respond strongly to audiences who are influential or who will find their writing useful. Students are serious about their writing and motivated to shape and revise carefully when they know it will be distributed in serious places or to large or exotic audiences” (91). This research implies that students respond positively to knowing that their writing will be shared with an audience and are more motivated to edit and revise their work more carefully when they know their writing will be shared with others.

Other research points out that publishing and sharing student writing helps build the confidence of young writers. For instance, according to research (Donlan, 1986) cited in “Classroom Inquiry: When Teacher-researchers Compare Notes on Writing Apprehension,” four activities that helped high and low apprehension writers build confidence included “watching the page fill up with writing, publishing each final piece, being allowed to illustrate a piece, and observing other students in the class writing.” (p. 89). This research, which discusses the influence publishing has on students’ confidence, coupled with the research I cited in the first paragraph, highlight the fact that publishing is a good way to motivate students to write, to encourage students to revise and edit their work, and to build confidence in young writers.

Still, other researchers have suggested that publishing students’ writing is important in the classroom for another reason: it gives students a sense of purpose for writing. This sense of purpose, according to various researchers, is a key factor in motivating and encouraging student writing both in and outside of the classroom. In “The Effects of Publishing on Student Attitudes toward Writing,” Ensio and Boxeth (2000) state that “In order to promote ownership and encourage student enthusiasm and creativity there needs to be an understanding of the greater purpose behind the act itself” (p. 3). Nancy Atwell (1998) argues, “A sense of audience—the knowledge that someone will read what they have written—is crucial to young writers. Kids write with a sense of purpose and passion when they know that people they care about reaching will read what they have to say” (p. 489). This research, which is consistent with coursework I

completed in Language and Literacy Education classes, implies that it is important for teachers to bring students through each step of the writing process and to stress the fact that authors and writers follow this process when they write.

Despite the research that claims publishing has a positive effect on student writing and student writing attitudes, and despite the trend towards a whole-language approach to language and literacy instruction that stresses teaching writing as a process, some teachers do not publish their students' writing. For instance, Judy Green (1999), in her book, *The Ultimate Guide to Classroom Publishing*, found that, "When it comes to publishing, some teachers admit that 'they haven't done any of that yet.' Some teachers blanch when you mention publishing. They see it as intimidating, time-consuming, and a lot of work" (p. 9). My own research complements Judy Green's claim that many teachers often reply, "they haven't done any of that" when discussing publishing students' creative writing. I emailed all 60 PDS interns on April 7, 2006 asking them if they would let me know if they had published their students' creative story writing yet. I only received 9 replies to my email, and of those 9 interns who replied, only 6 interns had published their students' creative writing stories. The other interns who responded reported that they had published their students' poetry, informational writing, and shorter creative writing pieces. Although this data indicates that only about 1/6 of the interns in PDS have published their students' creative stories thus far into the year, the results could be skewed if interns did not reply to the email although they had in fact published their students' work.

Throughout my research I was unable to locate literature that suggested publishing has a negative influence on students' writing attitudes, confidence, and abilities; however, the fact that I did not locate this research does not mean it does not exist.

After completing research on publishing in an elementary school setting, I was curious to see if my students would respond positively to publishing, as many students did in research studies conducted by experts and researchers. I wondered if the third grade students would show a renewed sense of enthusiasm and interest in writing if they knew their stories would be shared with people other than their teachers and whether publishing was worth a teacher's time and

effort. I began to wonder if there were certain types of publishing methods that were more influential than others and how, if at all, publishing would impact the students' writing abilities.

### **Clearly Stated Wonderings and Sub-Questions**

Overall, my inquiry focuses on the question or wondering, “What influence does publishing have on students’ writing confidence, writing motivation, and writing ability?”

Within this main question, I am wondering:

- Which method of publishing is most appealing and which is least appealing to students and why?
- What influence do different publishing methods have on students’ writing confidence and writing abilities?
- Is publishing worth a teacher’s time and effort?
- Does publishing motivate *all* students to write?
- Will students *choose* to spend more time writing at home or during free time at school if they know their writing will be published?
- Will students share their writing more frequently after publishing their writing?

### **Explanation of Inquiry vs. Project**

My inquiry spurred from a wondering I had about my students’ writing attitudes and beliefs. I came across this wondering because of my interest in the unknown; I did not know at the start of my inquiry whether publishing would have a positive, negative, or neutral affect on students’ writing attitudes and beliefs. I believe that my inquiry project constitutes an inquiry and not a project because at this point I am not necessarily seeking to improve writing in my classroom; instead, I am simply investigating what influence, if any, publishing has on my students’ writing, attitudes, and beliefs. Furthermore, I am not investigating the influence of only one type or means of publishing. In fact, within the realm of publishing, I am investigating and comparing the influence different types and methods of publishing have on students’ writing attitudes.

## **Inquiry Plan Description**

### The Steps I Took to Carry Out the Inquiry

After deciding on a main wondering for my inquiry project, I created a survey (Appendix A.1) using mostly yes or no responses to determine my students' beliefs and attitudes about writing, as well as their interest, motivation, and confidence in writing. I also asked questions on this survey that gave me insight into how the students felt about sharing their writing and their understanding of the reasons and purposes for writing. This survey gave me formal, pre-inquiry data concerning my students' writing attitudes. However, after administering the pre-survey to the students and looking over the data, I realized that I needed more qualitative data concerning the students' writing attitudes and beliefs. For instance, because most students replied "yes" to a question asking them whether or not they liked to write, I felt that it would be hard for me to determine the influence publishing had on the students' enthusiasm or motivation (or lack of enthusiasm and motivation) for writing using this data. Accordingly, I created another survey, this time using a Likert rating scale (Appendix A.2). I shortened the survey to eight questions and asked questions similar to the questions on the initial pre-survey.

Once I had my pre-inquiry data, I introduced students to publishing in the form of a mini-lesson and discussion during Writers' Workshop on March 15<sup>th</sup>. During this mini-lesson the students discussed why people write, what publishing is, why people publish, how often authors publish their work, and the hard work that goes into publishing. After discussing publishing with the students, I introduced several publishing options for the students to choose from when they were ready to publish. I also asked the students if they had any other suggestions for publishing, or sharing, their work with other people.

After introducing publishing and publishing options, I began conferencing with students who had stories completed that they wanted to publish. In order to publish a story, a student had to conference with a teacher and receive feedback on his or her story. During the publishing conferences, we discussed which publishing option the student wanted to complete and why. We also discussed the materials the student would need to finish his or her project and the steps he or

she would have to take to complete the publication of the story. Once a few students were involved in the publishing process, I sent a letter home to parents asking for their help in typing students' stories because my mentor and I were having a difficult time finishing students' stories in a timely fashion while still managing to help other students in various stages of the writing process.

Over the next four and a half weeks, the students worked on their various publishing projects with the help of my mentor, parents, and me. I met with students on a consistent basis to go over where they were in their writing or publishing projects. During my frequent "check-ins" with the students, I made sure they had a plan for what they would get done within the next few class periods and what they would do once they finished the next step in their publishing projects.

Periodically throughout the publishing process, I met with the students on the carpet and discussed their feelings about writing. For instance, on April 12, 2006 during Writers' Workshop, I asked the students again what they thought publishing was and whether or not they felt like they were true authors and writers. I realized that many of the students were stuck on the fact that authors, or at least famous authors, had their books published by big publishing companies. To involve students more directly in this aspect of publishing, the students and I brainstormed names for our own publishing company. The students decided on "KPK Publishing," which stands for Kaminski Preis Kids Publishing (Mentor last name, Intern last name, Kids Publishing).

As the students' publishing projects were completed, their stories were shared with an audience according to the publishing method the students chose. For instance, if a student chose to publish his or her story in the classroom library, I would make an announcement that another KPK Publishing book had been added to our classroom library. Similarly, if a student had recorded his or her story on the computer and added illustrations, I would make an announcement that another KPK Publishing story was available on the computer or on the classroom website.

Finally, at the end of my inquiry project I post-assessed my students (Appendix A.3) using the second pre-survey I administered before my inquiry project (the Likert rating scale survey). Although I post-assessed the students, my data collection is not complete. In fact, this inquiry project and my quest to understand the influence publishing has on students' writing ability, writing confidence, and writing motivation is ongoing and will likely continue as I move forward in my teaching career.

Throughout the entire inquiry process I collected data in multiple ways so that I would have systematic and substantial data from which I could draw conclusions about the influence publishing has on students' writing ability, writing confidence, and writing motivation.

### **Data Collection**

#### All of the Ways I Collected Data

I used a wide variety of data collection methods throughout my inquiry including pre and post-inquiry surveys, reflective journals, spontaneous and planned observations, photographs, and audio recordings.

The data collection began when I wrote a weekly reflection journal on my observation of students' interest in the Schlow Memorial book contest. This journal helped me formulate my main wondering for this inquiry project (What influence does publishing have on students' writing confidence, writing motivation, and writing ability?).

After deciding on my main wondering, I created a pre-survey (Appendix A.1) to find out more about the students' attitudes towards writing, reading, and sharing or publishing their creative stories. This survey consisted of nineteen questions that required students to put check marks next to the appropriate answer or choices that matched their beliefs about writing, reading, and sharing their writing. Three questions on this initial student survey required written responses. The students completed this survey individually, although the questions were read to struggling readers. When students finished the survey, they were asked to turn their papers over and read so that each student had the opportunity to finish the survey at his or her own pace.

After administering the first survey, I created another pre-inquiry survey to find out more qualitative data concerning the students' attitudes towards writing (Appendix A.2). I created this survey because I realized, after looking over the results of the first pre-survey, that the majority of my students responded that they *did* like writing. I knew that if I wanted to analyze the influence of publishing on students' writing attitudes, I would need to collect more specific and qualitative data. The second pre-survey I created was only eight questions and used a Likert rating scale. Questions about the students' writing attitudes and beliefs on this second student survey required students to choose a number between one and six, with one being the lowest rating (i.e., I hate it) and six being the highest rating (i.e., I love it). I decided to use a rating scale on this survey so that even if a student said he or she liked to write or share his or her creative writing, I could observe whether or not the intensity of his or her beliefs changed after my inquiry project. Like the first survey, the students completed this survey individually and were asked to read after they had finished; however, students were given the option of omitting their names on this survey. I allowed students to leave out their names on this survey because I did not want students to feel pressured to answer questions in certain ways because they knew I would see their responses.

Throughout the entire inquiry process I took spontaneous observational notes of students during Writers' Workshop. Whenever I saw or heard something I thought might be useful to me in my inquiry project, I wrote it down in a notebook (Appendix B.1). I always wrote down the date before I made any observations of students' conversations, body language, or facial expressions, among other things. I carried the notebook with me during writing time and had it out on my desk throughout the rest of the day so that it was easily accessible.

Although I spontaneously collected observational notes on the students, I also planned times where I would take notes of the students' responses (Appendix B.2). For instance, when I introduced publishing to the students in the form of a mini lesson and discussion, I had my notebook next to me so I could keep track of the students' responses to the various publishing methods and to the fact that we would be publishing in general. During these discussions, I

informally polled and interviewed the students concerning their responses. For example, when the students responded that they were “sorta” and “kinda” excited about publishing, I asked them why they felt that way. I wrote down their responses in my notebook (the same notebook I used during spontaneous observations) so I could refer to the notes later. I eventually transferred my hastily created, hand-written observation notes into a document on the computer so my observations would be easier to read.

A similar method of data collection used throughout my inquiry was a tape recorder. I used this tape recorder to record my discussions with students during their independent writing time. I did not have enough time to interview every student in my class, so I chose to interview 12 students who, based on district assessments, represented a wide range of writing and reading abilities in my classroom. I asked these students about the content of their stories, about whether or not they thought their stories were good, if they thought other people would enjoy reading their stories, and whether or not they were excited about publishing their stories. I felt that using the recorder during discussions would be a more efficient form of data collection because the students could potentially provide lengthy answers. I could listen carefully to the students’ responses after talking to them rather than trying to quickly jot down notes as they spoke. I listened to the informal discussions and transcribed the conversations into my computer so I could look at the students’ answers more thoroughly at the end of the inquiry process (Appendix C.1).

Another method I used to collect data included taking pictures of students as they worked on their writing, worked on publishing their work, or shared their writing (Appendix D.1). I decided to take photographs of the students because I thought that in some circumstances, photographs have the power to capture emotion that words cannot convey.

Finally, I re-administered the second student survey (the Likert scale survey) I used at the beginning of my inquiry project so I could compare the results of the two surveys. Comparing the pre and post surveys, along with my other forms of data, would allow me to make claims and statements about the influence that publishing has on students’ writing attitudes. After collecting

data in multiple ways, I sat down to analyze the data to determine what influence publishing has on the students' writing attitudes in my third grade classroom.

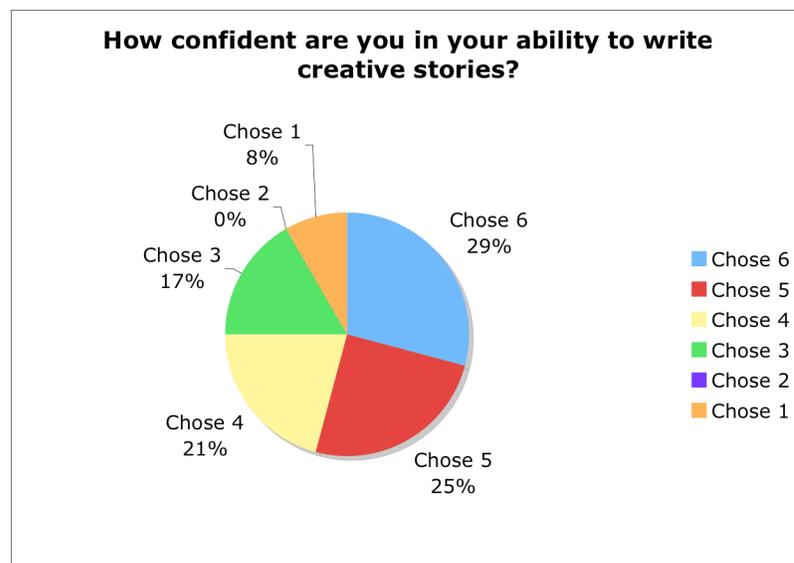
### **Data Analysis**

I tried to analyze and look for patterns in my data every week or two throughout the inquiry project; however, I spent multiple hours after my inquiry was complete analyzing all of the data at once. After administering the first student-survey, I sat down on the floor and went through each student's paper. I created a table on my computer (Appendix E.1) for each question on the survey; the table allowed me to look at the students' responses in a visually appealing and systematic manner. I started off by tallying the number of responses I got for each choice of a question. Then, I was able to calculate a total number of the class who responded the same way to various questions. For instance, for question number two on the first student survey, 19 out of 22 students responded "yes" to the question, "Do you like to write?" I went through the process of tallying the number of each choice and calculating a total for every question on the survey. An example of a chart I created for question number 2 on the first pre-survey is found below. The rest of the charts can be found in Appendix E.1.

2. Do you like to write?

	Yes	No
1	X	
2	X	
3	X	
4		
5	X	
6		
7	X	
8	X	
9	X	
10	X	
11	X	
12	X	
13	X	
14	X	
15	X	
16	X	
17		X
18		X
19	X	
20	X	
21	X	
22	X	
23	X	
24		X
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19/22</b>	<b>3/22</b>

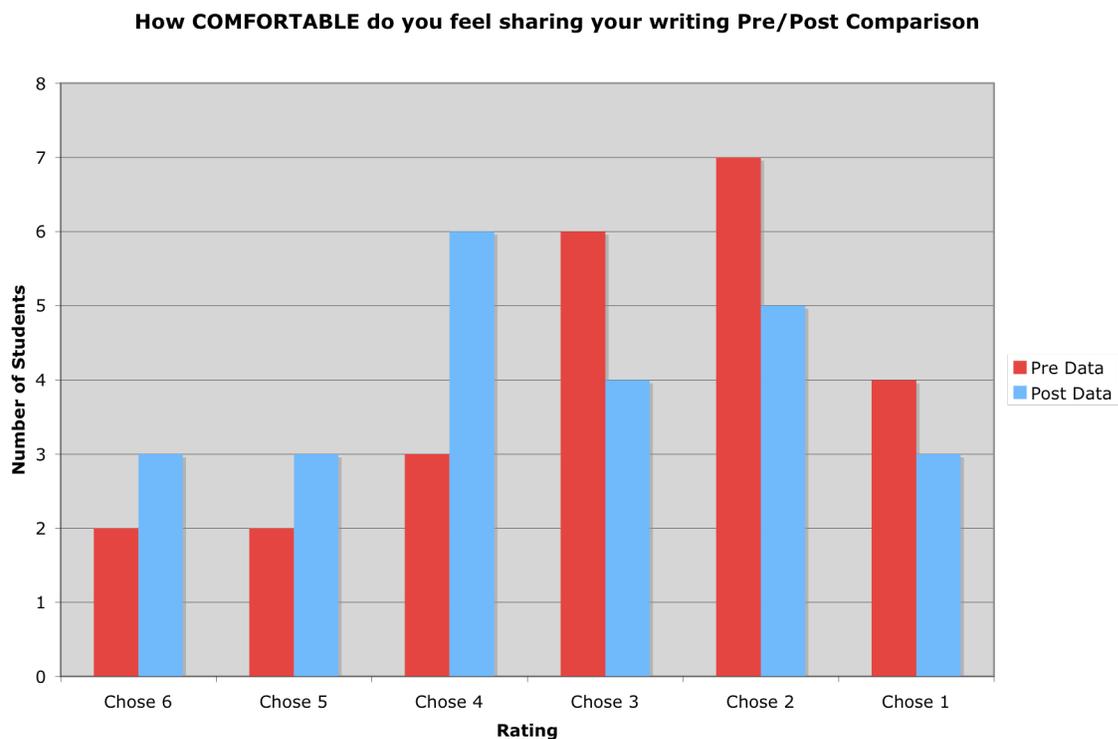
I followed a similar tallying process when I sat down to analyze the second pre/ post student survey I created (Appendix E.2 and E.3). This second survey used the Likert rating scale, which allowed students to chose numbers between 1 and 6 with 1 being the lowest rating (i.e., I hate it) and 6 being the highest rating (i.e., I love it). To analyze this pre and post survey, I tallied how many students chose numbers 1, 2, and 3 and how many students chose numbers 4, 5, and 6. This gave me a general idea of how the majority of the class felt concerning each issue or question. If students chose numbers 1, 2, or 3 I assumed that they felt negatively about the issue addressed in the question, whereas if students chose numbers greater than 3, (choices 4, 5, or 6), I assumed they felt positively about the issue being addressed in the question. After figuring out how many students responded negatively and positively, I tallied the number of students who chose *each* number choice. For instance, I counted how many students chose number 1, how many students chose number 2, and so on. From this data I created pie charts for each question on the second survey (pre and post). An example of a pie chart I created for question 5 on the Likert scale pre-survey is below. The rest of the pie charts from the pre and post Likert-Scale survey can be seen in Appendix E.2 and E.3 respectively.



The pie charts provided a visual representation of the percentage of the class who chose each rating on the survey. For instance, I was able to see that 29 percent of the class chose choice 6, the highest rating meaning “Very Confident,” for the question that asked “How confident are you in your ability to write creative stories?” I also held onto the students’ individual surveys so I could, after the inquiry was complete, compare pre and post data concerning changes in the writing attitudes of the class, as well as changes in the writing attitudes of individuals (I had each student’s class number written on the back so I could identify the respondent).

In order to analyze the observational data, I compared my notes on the students’ verbal and nonverbal responses to issues of writing and publishing that I took before the publishing projects and after the publishing projects. I read over my notes in a sequential manner so I could analyze and recognize any changes in my observations. As I read my observations, I put a plus, minus, or tilda next to observations I considered to be positive (+), negative (-), or neutral (~). I compared the numbers for positive and negative reactions and behaviors using observations I made before my inquiry and after my inquiry data collection was complete. This system helped me recognize the change in students’ attitudes towards writing and forced me to look more closely at my observations. (Appendix E.4).

After I had pre *and* post data for the second student survey (the Likert rating scale survey), I created bar graphs to compare the pre and post data for the students’ responses to each question (Appendix E.5). Below is an example of my comparison of the pre and post survey for question number 4, “How comfortable do you feel sharing your writing?”



The bar graphs helped me compare changes or consistency in students' attitudes about different issues concerning writing and sharing. I analyzed the bar graphs to decipher what influence my inquiry project had on students' writing attitudes. I also looked at individual responses from the pre survey and the post survey to analyze the influence publishing has on students of differing writing interests and abilities (again, I had the students' class numbers written lightly on the back of the surveys). In particular, I looked at those students who, on the first pre surveys, suggested negative attitudes and beliefs about writing and sharing their writing.

### **Claims and Evidence to Support my Claims**

\*Note: My PDA and I agreed that receiving survey responses from 24 students in my class constitutes multiple pieces of evidence.

#### **Claim 1:**

*Publishing had a slightly positive influence on my students' interest in writing.*

Evidence to Support Claim 1:

The results of both pre-surveys I administered prove that the majority of the third grade students in my classroom did, in fact, like writing and the time we spend in Writers' Workshop before my inquiry began. On the first pre-survey, 19 out of 22 students responded "yes" to the question that asked them if they liked to write. Similarly, on the Likert scale survey 79 percent of the students chose numbers 4, 5, or 6 (with 6 being the highest rating meaning they loved to write and 1 being the lowest rating meaning they hate to write) to a question asking how much they liked writing. The data collected on both pre-surveys suggests that the majority of the students in my classroom liked writing before my inquiry began. This data surprised me at first because my observation of the students during Writers' Workshop and the students' apparent disinterest in writing and Writers' Workshop were part of what led me to this inquiry; however, the fact that both pre-surveys yielded similar results added to the validity of the pre-inquiry survey data.

Despite the fact that the majority of the students in my class liked writing to begin with, the post- inquiry survey results and my observations of the students throughout and during my inquiry prove that the percentage of students who like writing increased slightly after my inquiry project was complete. For instance, in response to question number 1 on the Likert scale pre-survey, which asked the students, "How much do you like writing?" 79 percent of the students chose options 4, 5, or 6 indicating that they liked writing; in response to the same question on the post-inquiry survey 83 percent of the students chose numbers 4, 5, and 6. Accordingly, although the majority of the students in my class liked writing before my inquiry, even more students (4 percent more) like writing after my inquiry.

Another form of evidence supporting the claim that students' interest in writing increased slightly since the beginning of my inquiry is based on my observation of the students. My inquiry began as a result of my observation that students seemed disinterested in writing. In a journal I wrote on January 12, I noted, "most of the students had their backs slouched and their heads down on their desks during Writers' Workshop. As I observed students during this time, students were playing with pencils or sharpeners in their desks and looking into space."

Similarly, in my inquiry brief I explain, “Most of the third graders have not shown much enthusiasm for or interest in creative writing during the time we spend writing in school.” Thus, whereas my inquiry began as a result of observing an apparent lack of interest in writing, my observations after my inquiry more often than not highlight students’ positive responses to writing in the classroom. For example, I observed students smiling, clapping, and saying “yes” to their friends when I mentioned that we would be starting our morning with Writers’ Workshop on two occasions. The first occasion I observed the students’ excitement toward spending time in Writers’ Workshop occurred on March 23, 2006. The second observation of this overwhelming excitement towards writing and Writers’ Workshop occurred on April 14, 2006. I have no record, and my mentor and I cannot recall any instances, of any occasion when the students responded with “yeses” or clapping when I told them we would be starting the day with writing *before* my inquiry began. Thus, this change in my observations also supports the claim that publishing has slightly increased students’ interest in writing.

The survey results, my observations of students, and the fact that our writing program has not changed at all throughout my inquiry aside from introducing publishing, support the notion that publishing, although only slightly, positively influenced how much the students in my classroom like writing.

### **Claim 2:**

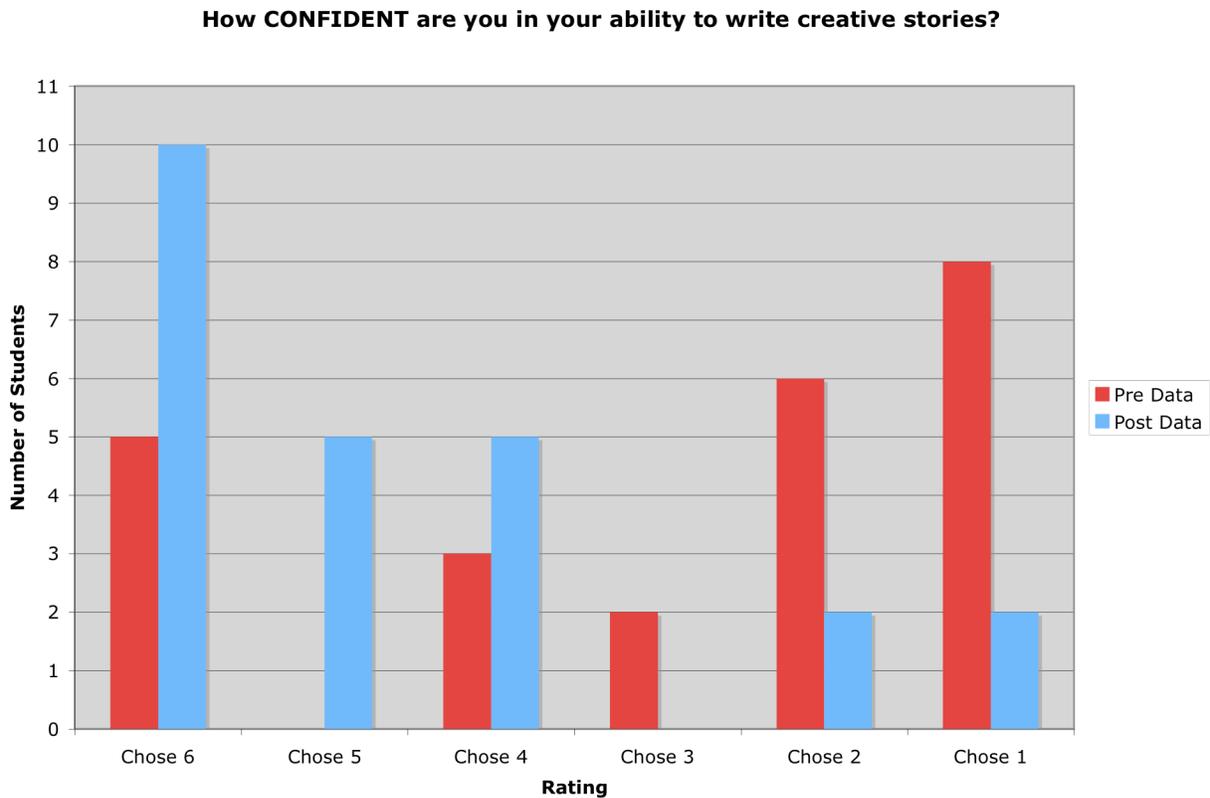
*My students’ confidence in their ability to write creative stories increased over the course of my inquiry.*

#### Evidence to Support Claim 2:

Evidence to directly support the claim that my students’ confidence in their ability to write creative stories comes from my analysis of the pre and post Likert scale surveys. On the Likert scale pre-survey, 75 percent of the students chose numbers 4, 5, or 6 (out of numbers 1-6) on the question that asked, “How confident are you in your ability to write creative stories?” Thus, going into the inquiry the majority of the students in my class were confident in their ability to write creative stories. On the post-survey, 84 percent of the students chose options 4,

5, or 6 on the post survey in response to the same question. The number of students who feel confident in their ability to write creative stories increased by 9 percent over the course of my inquiry. In fact, the number of students who chose option 6 (the highest rating) on this question increased by 14 percent. On the pre-survey, 29 percent of the class chose option 6, whereas on the post-survey 42 percent of the class chose option six.

As illustrated by the bar graph below, all of the blue columns (representing post inquiry data) from the Likert survey are greater than the red columns (representing pre- inquiry data) for options 4, 5, and 6. Furthermore, the majority of the students chose option 1 (the lowest rating) in the pre survey data, whereas the majority of the students chose option 6 (the highest rating) in the post inquiry data.



**Claim 3:**

*Publishing students' work slightly increased my students' interest in sharing their writing.*

Evidence to Support Claim 3:

Although the students in my classroom are confident in their ability to write creative stories, the majority of the students in my classroom still do not like to share their creative writing. On the first pre-survey, 9 out of 22 students said that they did not like to share their writing. This means that fewer than 50 percent of the students did not like to share their writing before my inquiry began. Similarly, on the second pre-survey (the Likert scale survey) only 42 percent of the students chose option 4, 5, or 6 when responding to how much they *liked* to share their creative writing. These numbers suggest that fewer than half of the students in my third grade class *like* to share their writing. In response to the same question on the post-survey 46 percent of the students chose options 4, 5, or 6. This is a four percent increase over the students' attitudes before my inquiry. An analysis of the survey data suggests that publishing has a very slightly positive influence on students' desire to share their creative writing. Further support for this claim will be gathered as I continue this inquiry into my future teaching.

#### **Claim 4:**

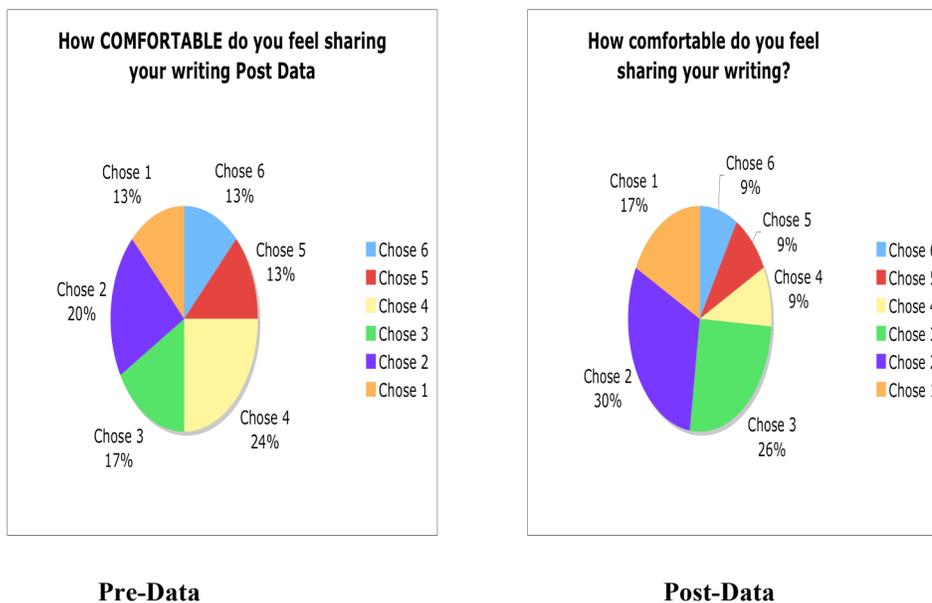
*My students feel more comfortable sharing their creative writing now that they have published at least one of their creative stories.*

#### Evidence to Support Claim 4:

At first glance it seems as though students "liking" to share their writing and students "feeling comfortable" sharing their writing are the same thing; however, I felt that students "liking" to share their writing and "feeling comfortable" sharing their writing were two different things. For instance, a student could not *like* to share his or her writing, but at the same time feel comfortable sharing his or her writing with peers if he or she had to. I felt this was an important distinction and therefore asked the students on the Likert scale pre-survey how *comfortable* they felt sharing their writing. In response to this question, 73 percent of the students responded with numbers 1, 2, or 3, indicating that the majority of the students in my classroom *did not* feel comfortable sharing their writing. However, when responding to the same question on the post-survey, 50 percent of the students chose options 1, 2, or 3 while the other 50 percent chose options 4, 5, or 6. Accordingly, the students are split fifty-fifty between feeling comfortable and

uncomfortable sharing their writing; however, because 73 percent of the students initially felt *uncomfortable* sharing their writing, the post-inquiry data indicates a 23 percent increase in the number of students who *do* feel comfortable sharing their creative stories. This indicates the beginning of a shift in students' attitudes about feeling comfortable sharing their creative writing. I will continue to look into the influence publishing has on students' comfort in sharing their writing to see if this shift continues to increase, stabilizes, or decreases as the students publish more of their stories.

A visual comparison of this data is found below. As you can see, the number of students who chose options 4, 5, and 6 (the yellow, red, and blue pie pieces) increased greatly from the pre data (left pie chart) to the post data (right pie chart).



Along with this statistical data I collected from surveys, the students' responses during discussions we had concerning publishing also suggest that more students are feeling comfortable sharing their writing. During a discussion we had on March 15, 2006, I polled the students to see how many of them were excited about publishing their writing. Less than half of the class raised their hands, and those who did wavered their hands back and forth while saying, "kinda," and "sorta." When I probed the students to find out why they were not excited, one

student offered, “I think that some people might be nervous about what other people are going to think about their stories.” Thus, the students seemed to feel uncomfortable sharing their writing with other people at the start of my inquiry. The fact that I have had numerous students ask me if they can publish more than one story and if they may chose a different method of publishing the second time they share their writing makes me believe that the students now feel more comfortable sharing their writing.

I think that some of this comfort comes from the fact that they can choose the method of sharing their writing. For instance, one student explained as we finished recording her voice on the computer on April 7, 2006, “I am glad you gave us choices. Other years we didn’t have a choice.” Similarly, another student explained that she chose to put her book in the class library for other people to read because “I messed up and said a bathroom word in second grade so I’m glad I don’t have to do that again.”

#### **Claim 5:**

*Publishing increases students’ motivation to write outside of the classroom.*

#### Evidence to Support Claim 5:

In my spontaneous observation notes on April 12, 2006, I noted that five students chose to spend their free time working on their writing projects. Although this is only five out of 24 students, it is an increase from before my inquiry where not even one student chose to spend their free time writing. In fact, two of the students who chose to work on their writing during free time were students who, on the first pre-survey, said that they did not like to write. Importantly, one of the students who said he did not like to write on the first pre-survey and used his free time in class to work on his writing also mentioned during his parent-student-teacher conference that he had started another story on his computer at home. His mom even asked, “Was your publishing in school what gave you the idea to write a story on the computer at home?” His

“yes” response further supports this claim. Therefore, a student who initially did not like to write was now writing on his own outside of school.

Furthermore, I noted on April 13, 2006, that one student chose to stay in from recess to finish her publishing project. Again, this student had initially chosen 3 on the Likert rating survey in response to “How much do you like writing?” and in response to “How much do you like the time we spent in Writers’ Workshop?” In addition to the students who chose to spend their free time in class and their recess writing, two students also chose to bring their writing folders with them to lunch on April 19, 2006 to write a story together on their own. Although the numbers of students are low, this data is meaningful because before my inquiry, I had made no observation of students choosing to spend any sort of extra time they had writing.

In examining this data, it seems as though most of the students who are deciding to spend their free time, lunch time, and recess time writing liked writing before my inquiry; however, three students out of the total eight students who decided to spend some sort of extra time writing were students who initially said “no” in response to “Do you like to write” or who chose number 1, 2, or 3 on the Likert scale pre-survey. Thus, it seems as though both students who like writing and students who do not like writing are motivated by publishing to write more often outside of Writers’ Workshop; still, more students who already liked writing were motivated to write more frequently outside of school than those who said they did not like to write.

**Claim 6:**

*Students preferred to share their writing in ways that did not require reading in front of the class.*

Evidence to Support Claim 6:

The students always had the option of reading their stories in front of the class before they completed any other publishing method (i.e., putting it in the classroom library, recording it on the computer, putting it on the website); however, only one student out of 24 students opted to do this. Furthermore, no one chose to read his or her story to another audience through the use of a video-conference, another method that required students to read aloud to their peers. The students also chose not to have an “Author’s Tea” when I brought up this possibility in class on March 15<sup>th</sup>. Consequently, 23 students showed a disinterest in publishing their stories in ways that involved reading in front of their classmates.

### **Additional Learning:**

*Involving parents and other resources in the publishing processes makes publishing more manageable for teachers.*

### Evidence to Support this Learning:

Throughout the inquiry process I had the help of my mentor teacher, the technology specialist at my building, and multiple parent volunteers. I do not think publishing students’ writing in the classroom and offering choices as I did would have been possible if I had not had extra support and help. Although I have never published students’ writing before, I am able to make this claim based on the sheer fact that it took me, on average, 45 minutes to finish a publishing project done in the form of an iMovie. In addition, when parent volunteers came into the classroom for spans of 30-45 minutes, they usually only finished typing one student’s story. My mentor also put hours of work into uploading the students’ publishing projects onto our website to make them accessible to families and other people who visit our classroom webpage. The entire process took about 45 days to complete, from the time I introduced publishing in the

classroom to the time all of the 24 students had finished and published their creative writing stories.

### **Implications for Future Teaching**

Based on my findings, I will continue to publish students' creative stories in the third grade classroom I am in this year as well as in my future classrooms. The results of my inquiry indicate that publishing has a positive influence on various aspects of students' attitudes toward writing. For instance, publishing positively influenced students' confidence and comfort level in writing as well as in sharing their writing. Publishing also encouraged students to write more during free time and motivated students to work efficiently during Writers' Workshop. Although the increase in these aspects of the students' writing attitudes was small, I believe that it is worth a teacher's time and effort.

The fact that multiple students voiced their appreciation that I allowed them to choose a method of publishing, coupled with the fact that there was a significant increase (23 percent) in students' comfort in sharing their writing, has convinced me to continue to allow students to choose which method of publishing they would like to complete in the future. However, I discovered that while it is worthwhile to provide students with multiple options for publishing, the fact is that it is very time consuming to take on such a task. I will, without a doubt, ask for parent and community volunteers to help me complete the students' publishing projects in the future as I did during my inquiry. I was very lucky to have a willing and enthusiastic group of parents who, in addition to my mentor, volunteered to come into the classroom to type stories with students. Parent volunteers also took stories home with them at night to type. In the future I will contact parents early in the school year to gain their support for the publication of their students' writing.

Finally, I will continue my inquiry into the influence publishing has on students' writing abilities. I will also continue to collect and analyze data concerning the influence publishing has

on students' motivation, confidence, and interest in writing so I have more data concerning the long-range impact of publishing.

### **New Wonderings**

As I stated earlier in my paper this inquiry is not over. Even after collecting data, analyzing data, and making claims about the influence of publishing, I still feel that I have a lot to learn. Because we only published one story and most students just recently finished their publication, I was unable to draw a conclusion as to what influence publishing has on students' writing abilities. I will, after the students write more stories, analyze their work and compare it to stories they wrote prior to my inquiry. Also, because the timeframe of my inquiry only allowed me to publish one story with each of my students, I am unsure as to whether the influence of publishing would increase, decrease, or stabilize as students publish more of their writing. Furthermore, because I am not sure what grade I will be teaching next year, I am curious to discover the influence publishing has on students at various grade and developmental levels.

Specifically, the following is a list of my new wonderings:

- When publishing influenced students' attitudes about writing, the influence was only slight. Will this influence continue to increase, will it stabilize, or will it decrease as students complete more publishing projects?
- What influence does publishing have on students' writing abilities?
- How often is it beneficial to publish students' work?
- Does publishing have a similar effect on students at different grade levels?

## References

- Andrasick, Kathleen D. (1993). "Classroom Publication: Motivation for Literacy." *English Journal*. 82 (6), 90-91.
- Atwell, Nancie. (1998). *In the Middle: New Understandings about Reading, Writing, and Learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Donlan, Dan. (1986). "Classroom Inquiry: When Teacher-Researchers Compare Notes on Writing Apprehension." *English Journal*. 75 (5), 87-89.
- Ensio, Tobi C. & Krystal R. Boxeth. (2000). "The Effects of Publishing on Student Attitude toward Writing." ERIC Research Report. University of Virginia. [ED 448 471]
- Green, Judy. (1999) *The Ultimate Guide to Classroom Publishing*. Ontario, Canada: Pembroke Publishers.