

**Kinder-garden Blooming with
Writers: Kindergarten writing
across genres**

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Introduction/Rationale:

Writing is a critical component of the kindergarten language arts curriculum, and is a skill that kindergarten students will use for the rest of their lives. Thus, it is very important to lay the foundation for strong writing skills in kindergarten. As an experienced teacher, my mentor teacher began the school year incorporating free exploratory writing using kidwriting during writer’s workshop. The students had the opportunity to develop their own stories without having a teacher-directed prompt. Kindergarten students are only five years old and many have not had the life experiences that an adult may have had to write stories using prior knowledge. Many students would write their stories based on characters they saw on television, or a video game and wrote all of their stories in one genre.

When the students wanted to write something different, they would tell me that they could not think of a topic for their story. I began to question the free exploratory writing technique after seeing the difficulty the students had developing a topic and continuously writing one type of story in the same genre. In our different units of study, we had the students write responses from a directed prompt. I looked through the students’ responses and compared them to their free exploratory writing and concluded that when the students were writing with a self-directed topic over a period of time, they wrote more in-depth and detailed sentences.

During a writer’s workshop lesson, one student asked me what they should write about, and I told the student to walk around the room and see if they could develop a topic based on something in our room. At the end of the lesson, the student came back to me and said, “Look I wrote a story just like the book, ‘A Dark Dark Wood’.” This sparked a curiosity in me and after talking with my mentor teacher we began inquiring if kindergarten students are capable of

writing in various genres. I was very intrigued by the student who used literature to get an idea for their story, and I wondered if my focus was to teach the students to read like writers it would affect my students' writing. My next question was how would I teach the students to read like writers and after I began researching children's authors from a variety of genres, I noticed many patterns and techniques that different authors used in their books and I began to develop mini lessons to teach students these skills. My focus was to show the students how they could use these techniques in their own writing.

Background Information:

To have a successful year of teaching using differentiated instruction, it is vital for the teacher to understand and analyze the profiles of the students. The students' strengths and needs are the driving force in the creation of lesson plans; therefore, a thorough understanding of the diverse elements that affect a student's performance in class is very important. It is important to know as much as possible about each student. For all students to have maximum success and feel accepted by the teacher and other students, the teacher needs to be aware of the strengths and needs of individual students, and collectively plan instructional groups for each child to grow and succeed.

In this kindergarten class, there are 23 students, 13 girls and 10 boys. There are a variety of strengths and needs in this classroom. These students bring their own unique strengths to the class. Five students started the school year at six years old, 14 students started the school year at five years old, and three students started the school year only four years old. This is not a factor of great importance when planning lessons, but it may contribute to the maturity level of the students, which a teacher should be aware of.

There are three students who moved to the United States from Korea just a few weeks before school began. These students came to school the first day only speaking and understanding very few English words. Differentiated instruction is vital for these students including: clear and concise signals for transitions, images for instructions, and individual instruction for letter sounds and handwriting.

At the beginning of my inquiry process, we had four students at the very beginning of the emergent reading level. These students rely on pictures to tell the story and they know most letters names and many letter sounds. There are six students in the middle emergent reading level and these students know all the letter names and most of the letter sounds. These students understand the concepts of print including capitalization and some punctuation. There are seven students that are at the end of the emergent reading level. These students can identify predictable patterns in books and can identify rhyming words, syllables and initial/final consonants. Four students are in the developing reader stage. These students can read books with predictable patterns independently and are beginning to use word study strategies to identify difficult words in a story.

The literacy groups we have developed are adapted to the needs and strengths of the different groups of students. The literacy groups are the same as the learning station groups, because many of the stations will be based around word study and reading activities. The students are grouped according to their reading abilities. Each group has a name that reflects that unit that we are studying, so that every student will feel special and included. These groups are changed every few weeks, so students are not tracked. Mixing up the groups, having the stronger students work with the students who need more support, will benefit all students by having the students work collaboratively to achieve a common goal. Some weeks, the groups

also change on various interests that certain students share about a topic. Our literacy stations have five groups and five stations. This small group instruction focused on individualized needs will help the students gain the skills necessary to become fluent, independent readers. Because reading is directly related to writing, it is very important to take my students reading abilities into consideration when developing my inquiry wonderings and data collection.

In addition to academic profiles of students, behavior profiles are important when creating a positive learning environment for all students to succeed. There is one child who is diagnosed with Bi-Polar disease, Post- Traumatic Stress, and Oppositional Defiant Disorder. There is also one student who shows characteristics of Oppositional Defiant Disorder. These students will often defy the teacher's instructions and refuse to work on assignments. I believe that guiding these students through the writing process, using literature, will help these students develop literacy skills, and also write or draw through some of their frustrations. There are two students who are easily distracted and have slight attention issues and require more time to accomplish tasks. These factors are important when placing these students in reading and writer's workshop seating arrangements, making sure to limit distracting items and other students who may also be distracting.

This is a classroom full of different personalities, interests and learning styles. There are two students who have very strong, independent personalities that many times clash and cause disruptions and fighting during learning stations. There are three students that are quiet, shy and do not like to share information in front of students. There are two students who talk to each other and disrupt the teacher when working in small groups with one another. All of these considerations about the students academic, social and behavior are important when deciding on seating arrangements for writer's workshop. My students were developing their kid writing

abilities since the beginning of the year, and we have found that strategic seating arrangements mixing the strong independent writers and the writer's still developing with their reading and writing skills, has helped the motivation of all students. Understanding the dynamics of my classroom will help me to develop an inquiry project that is adapted and beneficial to all of the students in my class.

Inquiry vs. Improvement Project Paragraph

A teacher improvement project is a linear approach to teaching that is facilitated in the classroom using outside research and experts that dictate how a successful classroom is run (Dana & Silva p. 2). Unlike an improvement project, my inquiry-based approach to my burning question will incorporate the knowledge and expertise of other professionals in my field of study, but will focus on the questions and data that I will collect in my own classroom. My wonderings will change and be further developed through my inquiry process, and my goal is not necessarily to improve writer's workshop in my classroom, but rather to see the influence of authors and different writing techniques on my kindergarten students' writing. I am inquiring to develop a greater understanding of my students as writers and to see if they are able to write in multiple genres and if the authors we spotlight influence their writing. The research and data that I will collect will develop my wonderings and create new wonderings about kindergarten writing that I will continue to utilize and expand upon in my professional development as an educator.

Wonderings:

As I analyzed the students' writing during our designated writer's workshop time and the students' prompted writing samples, I saw a marked difference between the two different types of writing. The students enjoyed the writing during their free explore time using their creativity

to foster their writing. When the students turned in their prompted writing, the students were not writing as much, but were using literature and our thematic units to gather their information.

This sparked a wondering if students can continue to use their creative kidwriting, but implement mini-lessons using various authors of a variety of genres and writing techniques to guide their writing. My main wondering focuses on using literature to guide the kidwriting process.

Main Wondering:

Will introducing kindergarten students to various authors and books from a variety of genres, influence the developing, emergent writers in my classroom?

Additional Wonderings:

Will students use the books read to develop a topic for their books?

Can students incorporate an author's writing techniques in their own writing?

Will teaching specific skills to students using an author's writing, help students to incorporate them into their own writing?

Will teaching students as authors and writers, using authors, help students learn and utilize the writing process?

Can thematic units, and books related to the unit, influence students to incorporate non-fiction elements in their writing?

Can teaching students about elements of punctuation used in a particular style of text, help students learn different punctuation and incorporate the punctuation in their writing?

Research:

My wonderings led me to researchers who have studied and practiced many theories about developmental stages of young learners and the writing process. When using authors to guide students' writing, it is important for students to relate to the author and find the author's books valuable and useful. When the students read literature from a writer's perspective,

“Ordinary people, who live ordinary lives-people like you and me-can write stories, poems, and books like those of the authors we admire”(Calkins & Hartman p. IV). Sharing this information with the students and showing the students that they will be creating books like real authors, is an important element in my inquiry process. Teaching the students that they are the authors of their own life stories, and using the books that they love to read and listen to, will allow the students to read like writers and value the writing process (Calkins & Hartman, 2003, p. IV).

It is important to begin the writing process by emphasizing particular elements of an author’s story that you would like to draw the students’ attention to. The students will then begin to read like writers focusing on the detail and style of different authors and books (Ray & Cleveland, 2004, p. ix). In the research and classroom experience in kindergarten and first grade classrooms, Katie Wood Ray and Lisa B. Cleveland’s motto is, “No matter what, let them write everyday” (2004, p. ix). This quote references the students having time to write every day. When the students write everyday and are introduced to various authors and writing techniques, it will guide the writing process. Using strategies learned from other authors and the students would also gain a sense of form and genre in their own written texts (2004, p. ix).

My goal for this inquiry project was not for kindergarten students to meet a set criterion of objectives and write at least one story in several different genres, but more to give my students the tools and strategies used by published authors to help the students read like writers. My goal is give the students the opportunity to use the published authors’ strategies in their own writing. Katie Wood Ray and Lisa B. Cleveland describe this philosophy of not forcing kindergarten students to write in a particular way but instead, “when we get those markers and that paper in their hands, worlds of possibilities simply open up for all kinds of interesting development that feel natural and joyful and absolutely appropriate” (2004, p. x). It is important for

kindergarteners to have the opportunity to explore a variety of different types of writing using the skills and techniques reinforced by the teacher and literature.

The skills necessary for reading and writing are very similar and when taught together rather than two different entities, the students will begin to make connections and make improvements in their reading and writing abilities. One of my wonderings is to see if kindergarten students are capable of reading from a writer's perspective. I wanted to see if the students would listen to literature and recognize techniques that the author used and incorporate those techniques in their own writing. Lisa Calkins uses a quote to describe this process and says, "My husband and I are going to buy a car soon," Mrs. Calkins says. "Whenever I drive now, I find myself noticing the differences between Toyotas and Subarus, Pintos and Chevetttes. All my life I have been surrounded by cars, yet until now I have not taken note of the different makes"(Calkins, 1994, p. 5). Teaching these skills in a literacy-enriched environment will help the students make connections and conceptualize the skills of reading and writing (Calkins, 1994, p. 6). After reading several books by the same author or books that have similar writing techniques, the students looked for similar patterns across the literature. After modeling and practicing, the students quickly noticed the patterns and literary elements of various authors.

When students are encouraged to write stories instead of prompted journal pages, it enables the students to feel like writers. Their work is never ending and the students can elaborate on their topic and continue the writing process for several days until the students feel their book is complete. When the students believe they are writers and create books, they will begin to look at books differently (Ray and Cleaveland, 2004, p. 14). Katie Wood Ray and Lisa B. Cleaveland state, "Everything they (the students) notice about how books are made becomes something they might try when they make them"(2004, p. 15). The research I found about

writing and my wonderings about my kindergarten students' writing led me to inquire about how using literature to teach writing would enable students to write in multiple genres.

Inquiry Plan Description:

I was led to my inquiry wonderings when I observed my kindergarten students during writer's workshop. I noticed a difference between my students' writing when they were given a specific topic to write about, and when they wrote stories from a self-derived topic. When the students wrote about a topic they came up with on their own, the amount of writing was increased, and the students' writing was more detailed and descriptive. When the students shared their writing with me, I noticed a few students took ideas from stories that we read during a read aloud, and created their own version of the book. This instilled a curiosity in me to see if introducing kindergarten students to various authors and books from a variety of genres, would influence the students' writing.

I created a basic timeline for my inquiry process (See Appedix A). I began my inquiry by teaching mini lessons during our designated writer's workshop time for six weeks. The mini lessons were 15-20 minutes long and I introduced an author or various books that use a specific technique to the students.

The first mini-lesson I taught focused on teaching the students how every student in this class is an author and we were going to make books just like real authors do. I consulted with my mentor teacher and my school librarian to choose authors and books that were developmentally appropriate for kindergarten. My mentor is very knowledgeable about various authors and their styles of writing. When I began my mini-lessons, we just began our transportation unit. My mentor gave me the idea to use Donald Crews' books as my first author,

because several of his books are written about various modes of transportation. His books also have great teachable concepts for students to use in their writing, because they related to our current unit. Donald Crews' books are literary non-fiction, which is a great genre to teach kindergarten students to show them they can write about facts and items they know about by telling a story. I also chose books that were relevant to kindergarten students; therefore, helping the students to make connections and utilize various techniques in their own writing. Because my inquiry project overlapped Dr. Seuss's birthday, I introduced poetry to the students using Dr. Seuss's books. The amount of time that I spent on each author or writing technique varied depending on student interest, curriculum and my objectives. Having a thematic unit, such as space, allowed me to introduce various space books to the students. We looked at non-fiction elements of space books and also the genre of fantasy to help the students understand various genres.

My mentor began writer's workshop in the beginning of the year, teaching and guiding the students writing using kidwriting. The students have had several months to practice using kidwriting and continued to use kidwriting throughout my inquiry process. The books I used for my first few mini-lessons focused on helping the students to use authors to gather ideas to begin their own books. I had the students discuss what they notice about the books that I introduced to them. I modeled techniques used by the authors and the students had the opportunity each day to create their own books.

The students had 30 minutes each day designated to their kidwriting stories and after our kidwriting time, the students gathered on the rug for a sharing segment of the writing process. Two student star authors, who were chosen by the teacher, would read their stories and the

teacher and other students gave the author positive feedback. In addition, the class had the opportunity to ask the authors questions about their books.

After several weeks, my mentor and I held individual conferences with each child to discuss their writing and the writing process. In addition to conferences, I collected student work, and student questionnaires to guide my inquiry.

Data Collection:

I collected my data using several different components. I collected student work, observations of the students, student interviews, and information from writing conferences. I collected data from several different areas to have a comprehensive view of my students as writers. I began collecting a baseline data to have a full understanding of where my students were in their writing before I implemented tools and strategies to guide the students. My baseline data included a collection of the students' kidwriting in their prompted journals, and an informal interview with the students to find out what they liked to write about.

The baseline data that I collected helped me to understand the interests of the students and guided the literature I chose for my writer's workshop mini lessons. After I selected literature to use for the lesson, I developed objectives and concepts that I wanted my students to learn and analyze. In addition to using literature from particular authors, to help the students read like writers, I chose books written by various authors that used the technique of creative punctuation that made their stories more interesting and fun to read. After several mini lessons using authors and writing techniques, the students discussed "what they notice" about the books, beginning with teacher model and practice. I would write this information on a piece of construction paper and we would display this information in our author in the spotlight section of

our bulletin board (See Appendix B). In the teacher model, I would pick out items that I noticed including: patterns in characters and topics across books, punctuation, font and writing styles, and also the genre of the books. The students then developed ideas of what they noticed about the authors and various books.

After implementing the writer's workshop mini-lessons using various authors and author techniques, I conducted interviews with the students to understand how they felt about writer's workshop. The interview consisted of questions including: what the students enjoy writing about, where they get their ideas from, and if they enjoyed writer's workshop. The interview consisted of five questions related to writing and writer's workshop(See Appendix C). There are 23 students in my classroom, but I interviewed 21 students. One of our students does not speak or write in English and another student leaves our classroom for learning support during our writer's workshop period, and it would be unfair to include these students in my inquiry process.

The main form of data that I collected was my students' writing samples of books they created during writer's workshop. I collected these writing samples each week to sort and analyze. The next form of data that I collected was student observations during our sharing time after kidwriting. Although, because of time constraints, we did not always have time for students to celebrate their writing, we had sharing at least three times a week. When it was time to choose students to share their writing, I looked for students who tested out different strategies or techniques in their writing. Katie Wood Ray and Lisa B. Cleaveland describe this as, "being on the lookout for smart things we see children doing that we want to bring to others' attention during mini-lessons or share times"(Ray & Cleaveland, 2004, p. 37).

In addition to collecting the students' writing samples and interviews, I collected a series of observations and quotes from the students as they were writing. I developed a book of kid quotes where I recorded the students' quotes and thoughts about their writing (See Appendix D).

Data Analysis:

Student Writing Samples

After collecting student work, student interviews and observations, I organized this information into groups and categories to develop claims based on the evidence I collected. In order to systematically understand if the students were able to write books in various genres, I created a chart that organized the student samples that I collected into different genres (See Appendix G). After sorting the students' samples, I found that I had six different categories and genres that the students' writing displayed.

After I analyzed the students' topics for their stories, I made a list of all of the authors and books that I used during the mini-lessons to help the students look for topics and techniques used by the authors. I sorted each of the writing samples into piles that used a topic or character from a piece of literature that we read. I then organized the students writing samples into categories based on the techniques and tools used by the various authors. I created a chart of the authors, techniques and patterns used in their books. In the chart I tallied the number of student writing samples that used the techniques and tools from the literature we read and studied (See Appendix C).

Student Interviews

After analyzing the students' writing samples, I systematically approached the student interviews. I created charts that showed all the students' responses to each of the questions.

Having the charts sorted by questions, helped me to gain a holistic view of all the students' responses to each of the questions. The first question I asked the students was, to describe what their favorite part of the school day was. I organized all of the students' responses into categories. Based on the categories, I created a chart, making special note to the students who answered writer's workshop as their favorite aspect of the school day (See Appendix C). The results showed that 6 students chose writer's workshop as their favorite aspect of the school day.

The second question I asked was only for the students who did not respond to the previous question with writer's workshop as their favorite part of the day. This question asked the students if they enjoyed writer's workshop. I then created a chart that tallied the students' responses (See Appendix C). 100% of the class stated that they enjoyed writer's workshop.

The next question contained two segments. Part A asked the students what their favorite type of book or genre is when listening to read alouds. Part B asked the students what their favorite type of book or genre they enjoy writing. The chart that I created for this lesson had three columns. The first column contained the students' response to their favorite genre to listen to, and the second column contained the students' response to their favorite genre that they like to write. In the third column, I placed a check if the students' favorite genre was the same for both listening to stories and in their own writing (See Appendix C). This helped me to see if there was a connection between what the students enjoyed listening to and what they enjoyed writing about. The evidence I found was inconclusive and I was unable to see pattern or connection between these two elements.

The fourth question I asked the students was where they got their ideas from for their stories. I sorted the students' responses into categories and tallied the number of students who

stated that their ideas came from the literature read during writer's workshop and various other times throughout the school day.

The fifth question that I asked the students in the interview, was to choose their favorite piece of writing. I then asked the students to explain why they chose that particular book as their favorite. When I analyzed this question, I tallied the amount of stories that used topics or techniques from the literature that we read in our classroom. The information I gathered and analyzed from student work, interviews and observations generated several claims about kindergarteners' writing abilities.

Claims:

Claim 1:

The kindergarten students in my classroom created books from a variety of different genres using the authors and the authors' techniques studied during our writer's workshop mini-lessons.

Evidence:

Student Work

The student writing samples that I collected after studying a genre or style of writing during the writer's workshop mini-lessons, in addition to the various other literature that was read to the students throughout the day, led me to the claim that the kindergarten students used the literature from a particular genre to guide their stories. The data that I collected showed that the students were not just copying a story, but took the idea and genre from an author and created their own version of the story. The students that were only writing in one genre on a specific topic when I collected my baseline data, tested and practiced writing in various genres that we studied. For example, the writing samples that I collected from student A display the various

genres used in his writing. When I collected my baseline data, student A wrote every one of his stories about Spongebob. After collecting my data, student A wrote a literary nonfiction book using the idea from the published book, “Brown Bear Brown Bear What do you See?” He also wrote an Alphabet Adventure book using the “Alphabet Adventure” book as a guide. Other genres this student wrote were, math books and nonfiction (See Appendix F).

The other students in the class also began writing in different genres and styles using the authors and genres we discussed. The thematic units of study that we have in Kindergarten created an opportunity to incorporate non-fiction literature in my inquiry. The non-fiction literature that we read was not during our writer’s workshop time, but used as a teachable moment to help the students read like writers and have them think about how they could use the books to guide their book creations during writer’s workshop. The other genres that were used in the student writings that I collected stemmed from the literature that was read for our morning read-aloud, thematic books, writer’s workshop mini-lessons, chapter books read after recess, and literature read at the end of the day. The data that I collected from student work included six different genres and styles including: fiction, non-fiction, fantasy, math, literary non-fiction, and chapter books (See Appendix G).

Student Interviews

The interviews that I conducted with the students included a question about what style or type of book they enjoy writing during writer’s workshop and also if they have tried writing books that have different styles or genres (See Appendix C). In my data I found that 71% of students said that fiction/story books were their favorite type of book to write. My data also concluded that 23% of students said that non-fiction/fact books were their favorite books to write

about and one student stated that chapter books were her favorite type of book to write. This showed me that students are writing and enjoying various genres.

Claim 2:

The students used the authors studied during writer's workshop and other published literature to create topics for their books.

Evidence:

In the data that I collected the students used the books and authors to generate ideas and topics for the students' books, but the students did not take a published book and copy it word for word. During the writer's workshop mini-lessons, the students discussed how to take an idea from an author and create their own version. The students shared with one another how to take a specific topic and change it to create a unique version of the story.

Student Work

The data that I collected from the students' writing samples showed that the students used the title and the characters from the literature that we read to create their own books. The students used the same characters, but incorporated their own life experiences into their story. Student C created a story using the title and character from the book, "Chalkboard Bear." This student did not copy everything that happened in the story, but took the character, Chalkboard Bear, and created a story of everything chalkboard bear would do with her at school (See Appendix G).

Other titles and topics of published books the students used included: guided reading books, author studied books, and chapter books (See Appendix G). Teaching the students to create books and write like published authors, helped the students to read like writers and to look for topics in the books we read. This stemmed from Katie Wood Ray and Lisa B. Cleaveland's book, *All about the Authors*, when they state, "We believe that all there is to know about how to write well

is found in well-written texts...we want them to leave us knowing that the way to learn to write well is to study the writing of people who write well while you're writing yourself (2004, p. 16). When the students created topics for their books, they used literature from our teacher directed writer's workshop mini-lessons, and developed topics from multiple literary resources (See Appendix E).

Student Interview

The data that I collected from the students' interview, demonstrated that the students obtained the ideas and topics for their books, using the literature we read in our classroom. When I asked the students where they acquired the topics for their books, 76% of the students responded that they generated their ideas and topics from the books read throughout the day. In addition 38% of the students, who used literature to guide their writing, acquired their ideas from the authors we studied during our writer's workshop mini-lessons.

Student Quotes

In addition to the students' writing samples and interviews, I collected the students' quotes about their books while they were writing. The quotes show a true depiction of the students' thoughts and ideas, because when the quotes were recorded while they were in the moment of writing and not reflecting in response to a question. For example, when I went to help student C, who prefers to draw more than writing, she said, "I decided to take a break from my Princess book and try an idea that I got from Dr. Seuss (See Appendix D)." When asking student D about his book, he responded, "I am doing a roller coaster book, I got the idea from the Donald Crews book we read (See Appendix D)." This showed me that the students used topics from the literature read in class to develop topics in their own writing.

Claim 3:

As the students started to read like writers, they used techniques and styles of published authors in their own writing.

Evidence:

After studying various authors during our mini-lessons, the students discussed similarities and patterns in the books of each author. After I modeled and practiced how to read like a writer and look for particular details, the students generated a list of things they noticed about each author (See Appendix B).

Student Work

When studying the techniques of the author, Donald Crews, the students discovered that Donald Crews writes about transportation and uses lots of details and clues in his books. The students also discovered one technique that Donald Crews used, was to write his words in large bolded print to show the reader the powerful intention of the text (See Appendix E). The students then used this idea in their writing to “hook” the reader. The students began using more detail in their illustrations and used larger print when writing an exciting segment of their text (See Appendix E).

Additionally, we had several mini-lessons that focused on looking at literature that used onomanapia and punctuation used in interesting ways. The students discussed the importance of these tools and techniques and several students incorporated these techniques and tools in their own writing (See Appendix E).

Student Quotes

In the observations that I recorded of student quotes, one student stated, “Look, I am putting a clue on each page just like Jan Brett does in her books.” The students were looking

critically at text and literature and used the ideas and techniques that published authors' incorporate and the students connected this information into their own student-derived topic. Furthermore, during a writer's workshop mini-lesson on Dr. Seuss books, one student stated, "I'm going to write a rhyming book and use the nonsense words like Dr. Seuss. It will be, I had a mop that gloped and oped." This student captured two techniques that Dr. Seuss used in his writing including: rhyming words and nonsense words. Additionally, students also used various illustration and formatting techniques from published authors. After reading a piece of literature that had several pages with the text and illustrations positioned vertically, one student tested this technique in their own story and said, "Look, my book has a page that goes long ways just like the book that we read." The students were able to verbalize various writing techniques used by authors and included these techniques in their books.

Other Observations:

After analyzing my data and observations, I began to see patterns in my students writing and feelings about writing, but I had inconclusive evidence to create a well-supported claim. I found that my students were more motivated and enjoyed writing throughout my inquiry process. In my student survey, all 21 students responded that they liked writer's workshop because they liked to make books. In addition, during the students' free playtime, several students took out their writing folders and wrote books during their choice time. My observations of student motivation showed that the students were able to write independently for 30-35 minutes each day. There were several days where the students did not need any reminders to stay on task. I have included a picture to show the students engaged in writing and drawing during writer's workshop (See Appendix H).

Conclusions/New Wonderings:

From this inquiry, I have learned a great deal of information about myself as a teacher, my views and philosophies about writing, and how my students' feel about writing and the writing process. I now see how important and connected the reading and writing processes are when teaching, and when taught as one cohesive unit, the students' writing will reflect this connection. Choosing literature that reflects the students' interest and guiding the students to read like writers, will impact that students writing.

I will definitely take the approach to writer's workshop as creating books like published authors. I have seen that it helps students to take pride in their work and feel like real authors by using techniques that published authors have used. It was fascinating to see how the students took an idea or technique from an author and use their creativity and sound spelling to create their own versions of stories. Beginning writer's workshop by discussing where authors get their ideas for stories and focusing on a few important techniques, I rarely had a student who could not think of a topic to write about. At times, it was hard to believe that I was in a kindergarten classroom with the ideas and amount of detail the students used in their writing. Having the students' create their own stories helped the students to focus on their strengths and interests and helped to instill an enjoyment in the writing process.

Although I have seen the tremendous effects of using literature to guide students in their student-derived topics, I feel that it is important to supplement their writing with prompted, journal writing topics. This is an important skill to have for emergent writers and it will also give students who have difficulty creating a topic and using all of the elements of story writing including: illustrations, writing, and having a beginning, middle and end to a story. I also know that the results I found were based on the specific personalities of the students in my class and

this style of writing may not work for other classes or in my future teaching. I will use the information and evidence I gathered from this inquiry project to guide my future teaching, but I will also ensure that which ever writing program I use with my future students will focus on the students needs, strengths, and various interests.

New Wonderings:

- Because this was the students' first exposure to writing and the writing process, would this have had the same effect on students in other grade levels that have been writing for several years?
- Will the students carry their love for writing in the following years?
- I wonder if the kindergarten students would be able to write poetry, which is an abstract topic, using published children's poetry as a guide.
- I wonder if the students would be able to use this writing process of creating books, using published authors as a guide, at the beginning of the year when they are still learning the basic concepts of print.

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