

“How do you spell that?”

Helping kindergarteners become more independent writers!

An Inquiry Paper by

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Abstract

My students have always loved Kid Writing, but as the year progressed I found many of them to still be extremely dependent upon the adults in the room to help them write their words. I felt like our room was overflowing with word families, kid writing friends, word rings, etc. that went unnoticed and unused. How could I get my class to use the tools right in front of them? What did I need to do to help my kindergarteners become more independent? This inquiry project focuses on helping the kindergarten children in my classroom use the tools available to them to become more effective writers.

Introduction and Background Information

I am a kindergarten intern at Ferguson Township Elementary School in State College, Pennsylvania. It is one of ten public elementary schools in the State College Area School District. The school is nestled between two churches in a small, rural neighborhood in Pine Grove Mills. My school contains grades K-5 with at least two classes per grade level. There are thirteen classroom teachers, eleven Penn State PDS interns, eight full-time Para-professionals, two learning support teachers, and one principal who manages two buildings.

There are twenty-two children in my kindergarten class, eleven boys and eleven girls. Nine of my children, five girls and four boys, attend RTI, response to intervention, every morning for forty-five minutes to receive additional support in language arts. Two of the boys in my class represent different ethnicities, one Middle Eastern, and one Asian

American. Two of my children receive instruction outside of the classroom about once a week for speech, one boy and one girl.

I have four children, two girls and two boys, who are especially easy to get along with, but they have trouble getting work done. One of the boys in this group has extreme trouble staying on task, while the girls in the group are reading at grade level, and the other boy is very gifted.

I have eleven children who are high achievers and social leaders in the classroom. They can influence others very easily. Six of them are girls, four of whom are reading at grade level and two who are gifted. Of the five boys in this group one of them is in need of strong emotional support, one of them is reading at grade level, and two of them are gifted.

In the class I also have three students, two girls and one boy, who are very quiet and anxious to conform. One of the girls is in need of strong emotional support, while the other two children have a learning disability.

Finally I have four children in my class, three boys and one girl, who are nonconformists. They all represent some challenge in terms of behavior. Two of the boys are in need of strong emotional support while the other two children are gifted.

Rationale

What led me to my inquiry?

As a teacher who has carried a passion of writing through her entire life, I love seeing children thrive and enjoy their writing rather than being extremely wrapped up in the mechanics and the crutch of the teacher in the room. Through this initial inkling I

have branched my thinking toward the minds of kindergarteners. It is unrealistic to have a class full of independent writers in any elementary grade, but it is important to have children who know where to look for the answers.

In my current classroom I found that even my most advanced writers were forgetting to use the tools they had available to them. This was confusing for me because I felt my mentor teacher and I were introducing frequently used words and Kid Writing friends effectively. We had engaging hooks and easy ways to remember the correct spelling of these words, but it just was not sinking in and I could not figure out why.

This challenge began to linger with me at the end of the day, and I decided to delve into the Kid Writing manual my mentor had in the classroom. The authors had developed a writing philosophy for young children that stated, “the most valuable gift to young language users is to litter their environment with enticing language opportunities and guarantee them the freedom to experiment with them. Every day in a Kid Writing classroom is a celebration of learning! (Feldgus, 1999, pg. 15).” After reading this passage I spoke with my mentor and we decided that the writing strategies we used in our classroom needed an intervention. It became very important to me to figure out not only why the students were not using the tools but also how I could help them use the tools available to them to become more effective, independent writers.

Why is my topic important?

“All children need to develop effective and efficient strategies for decoding unknown words (Feldgus, 1999, pg. 1).” As teachers it is our job to figure out how to best facilitate this development in our children. Through this inquiry I have been able to

understand this need, the components involved, and how to best mesh them together so they may solidify in the writing skills of my students.

How does it affect my teaching now, and how will it affect my teaching in the future?

One of my core beliefs of education is that all children are able to reach their own personal best with gentle guidance and the willingness to try. I feel that if children are continually dependent upon teachers and other adults for help with their writing they will not seize the opportunity to grow, and become more independent with their writing. In order to create an environment where my students can thrive as beginning writers I have decided to inquire into an area of early literacy I find increasingly important - using tools and manipulatives to grow as writers. It is my hope and intention that by learning more about early writing tools I will be better equipped to teach children how to write effectively and independently.

Wonderings and Sub-questions

Main Wondering

As I began my inquiry I felt it was most important to focus on the question: How can I help my children become competent independent writers? I wanted to find ways to help my children use the tools they had available to them to develop into more independent writers. As I began to narrow my focus and explore research materials I realized that my question was much too broad for the kindergarten spectrum. As a result I redirected my main wondering to be much more succinct. My wondering now reads:

How can I help my students use the tools available to them to become more effective, independent writers?

Sub-Questions

- What strategies would be most effective?
- What activities and lessons would be most helpful for my students?
- How does student writing change over time?
- How do Kid Writing friends, word families, word rings, etc. influence children's writing?
- What are the factors that get in the way of making children more independent writers?
- Where can my students turn to help them with their writing rather than solely depending on the teacher?

Inquiry versus Project

An inquiry is different from a project in that inquiry implies a question to be answered or investigated while a project is defined by a topic. Inquiry is much more abstract and requires patience as well as the ability to be open to new, maybe even uncomfortable ideas. While projects and inquiries can possess the same themes, their focus is different. My personal inquiry project is focused around how I can help my students develop as independent writers using the tools they have available to them. I realize that by using engaging materials and involving my students more in the writing process over a six-week period it is unrealistic to expect a significant change in their

writing. What I do hope to do in this inquiry project as a result of my wonderings is to instill the beginning skills in my students to know where to look for answers to their writing questions.

If I was to turn my inquiry into a project there would be no question, I would have a more succinct focus, knowing exactly what I am looking for and what I would do rather than being open to many possible answers, interventions, and solutions. To do an inquiry you must be able to wonder about your current processes before moving on to future ones.

Inquiry Plan

After my main wondering and sub-questions were firmly developed I was ready to set out a plan for the development of my inquiry project. Appendix A highlights the plan timeline I created. I knew the first step I wanted to take with this inquiry was getting an indication from the parents as to how independent, and advanced their child's writing was. "Teachers must always keep in mind that parents, and caregivers may not fully understand the importance of 'Kid Writing'. Therefore, as the teacher it is important to open a dialogue about the writing processes that are in play in your classroom (Feldgus, 1999, 12)." I sent home a parent questionnaire in the Friday folder asking parents for their feedback as soon as possible. I explained that the survey was to help me develop the most appropriate activities for Kid Writing. The information I received from the parent survey expressed to me that I also needed to conduct a baseline survey with the students to compare the similarities and differences between the parents and the students. After the initial survey from the parents, which felt too broad, I felt the inquiry would work best

with a focus on a select group of children. As a result I picked six children to work with daily during writing activities. Three boys and three girls, two from a very independent level, two from the class median, and two students who are extremely dependent during writing activities. During the course of my inquiry I sat with these children and scripted their conversations, asked them to complete specific tasks, and spoke with them in a comfortable, informal way about their feelings toward writing, as well as their writing development.

After the first week of my inquiry, I introduced two new components to the students' writing folders. The first was a colored copy of all of the Kid Writing friends we had met thus far. I changed the font of the word I wanted the children to use so they could easily find what they were looking for during writing activities (for example, king of ing). The second handout was a scaled down version of our class neighborhood. I created houses on a street with all of the kindergarten word families on them. In order not to overload the students with too much information I covered all of the houses with families we had not met yet with "For Sale" signs. The signs are detachable so that after the class was introduced to a new family they could rip off the sign and use the new family in their writing.

I felt it was important for the students to have personal copies of all of the tools I was looking for them to use. I wanted the materials to be as accessible as possible, to ensure each child was able to use them. After some time with these materials, I chose to survey the students to gauge how they were feeling about Kid Writing and their own progress.

Throughout the next three weeks I introduced new word families and Kid Writing friends to my class. During this time, before the students were handed their journals, I set forth daily expectations. The students were to use a specific type of word in their free-write, Kid Writing story and circle the word. For example, during the first week I told the children that they **MUST** use at least one Kid Writing friend word in their story and circle the word. If a student raised his/her hand with a completed story I asked him/her if they had used a Kid Writing friend and circled it before I agreed to read and under-write his/her story.

The final piece I introduced during the inquiry was the very elaborate, over-decorated, author's chair. Every day one child who had demonstrated all of the daily guidelines in his/her story was chosen to come to the front of the room, sit in the chair, and share his/her story with the class. The teacher rewrote the story on the white board for the rest of the class to see and praise the student for his/her work. To conclude the writing experience for the day the entire class gave the author a round of applause for their great work.

Data Collection

I collected data for my inquiry in eight ways: parent questionnaire, student surveys (administered once to whole group, and a second time to inquiry group) observations, personal tools, lesson plans, student interviews, author's chair, and mini assignments during writing activities. Each method of data collection is described in this section.

Parent Questionnaire

Before beginning any intervention with the students in my classroom, I felt it was important to have some understanding of how the parents felt about their child's writing. I also wanted to know if the students in my class talked about some of the tools we use for writing at school, at home. In almost all circumstances children come into kindergarten with at least some prior exposure to writing (in my class, all of the children had prior exposure). Most children see their parent's writing and wonder what those marks across a sheet of paper mean. In many homes three, four and five year olds are encouraged to write their numbers and letters often and correctly (Curran, 2000, pg. 25) I felt that by better understanding what kind of writing goes on at home I would be better equipped to work with the children at school.

I sent the questionnaire (Appendix B) home in the children's Friday folders on March second. I wrote a brief paragraph explaining to my students' my reasons for questioning their thoughts about their child's writing. . Although I did not include a place for them to write their name or their child's name, in order to be certain my analysis would not be tainted, many parents included names anyway.

The questionnaire consisted of five questions; two multiple choice, two open-ended, and one scaled answer question. The questions I asked swayed between how their child felt about writing, and how they felt about their child's writing. For example, question three reads: What types of writing do you feel your child excels at most? (I.e. free write, letters, cards, prescribed topics etc.) This was an open-ended question addressing the parent's feelings about their child's writing.

Student Surveys

After reviewing the parent questionnaires I felt that it was important to also give a baseline survey to the students in my class. Through much of the research I was gathering, I was beginning to see parallels between my teaching philosophy and that of others when it came to student involvement. By involving some of the input from my students I would be better equipped to guide the direction of this inquiry.

The student survey (Appendix C) was given the Monday we returned from spring break, March 19. The survey consisted of three questions for the entire class to answer, and one extra question that the pre-selected inquiry group completed. Two of the questions had pictorial answers that were related to the students' personal feelings about Kid Writing. The third question consisted of three yes or no sub-questions that analyzed their own writing ability (do you use finger spaces? Do you use periods? Do you write left to right?) The six children in my inquiry group completed the fourth question the next day. This question (What kind of writing do you want to do?) was open-ended and required more time. I only had these six children answer the question because I wanted the children to have enough time to thoroughly answer the question. Only having six responses also allowed me to thoroughly analyze the students' responses.

I read each question aloud to the class leaving ample time for them to answer the question. I continually reminded the class this was not a test, and it was okay to answer each question honestly. I wanted the children to feel comfortable answering no to certain questions if it was truly how they felt. Once everyone completed the survey, I collected the surveys, and the students had choice time. I felt it was important to change subjects

because many of the children seemed stressed after the survey. It had taken twenty-five minutes to complete and I could tell that many of the children were really putting thought into their answers.

Observations and Student Interviews

When I was developing my timeline for this inquiry it became apparent to me that it was going to be extremely difficult to focus on all twenty-two children. In discussions with my mentor we decided that it would be more beneficial to the inquiry to narrow my focus to a select group of students. As I described earlier I chose to work with six students during all writing activities. My group consisted of three boys and three girls, a boy and a girl at a very independent writing level, two at the class median, and two who were extremely dependent writers.

During Kid Writing these six students knew they were to sit with me to do their writing. At first I was using a clipboard to take notes during the writing time, but this seemed to interfere with the children's writing. Five of the children were very aware of me watching and seemed wary in their writing. The two independent writers were constantly looking over my shoulder to read what I had written and it became obvious that this method of note taking was not going to work.

Remembering a similar situation from a reading in The Reflective Educator's Guide to Classroom Research I decided it would be best to camouflage my note taking in a Kid Writing journal in order to blend in with the group during writing. I used a blue folder and a red journal just like all of the children in my group and the distraction seemed to disappear. The only issue that arose was that I had no picture to go along with

my story. To appease my group I drew a small picture in the corner of every page of my notes, this seemed to take all mystery out of my writing and the children continued on with their writing as if I was not even there. Appendix D includes notes I took on the group throughout the inquiry time period (February 28, March 5, March 13, March 20, and March 28).

During writing sessions I held informal interviews with my inquiry group on March 28 (Appendix D). I asked all six of them if they felt that their writing had improved at all since they had been sitting at the horseshoe table (our designated writing table) and I asked them why or why not. I asked them if they felt like they were using their tools more now than they had been at Christmastime and why they thought there was, or was not a change.

Lesson Plans

During the course of this inquiry I had written multiple lesson plans to help guide my teaching during writing activities. Appendix E includes two lesson plans I used with my students. The first was taught at the beginning of my inquiry timeline. I felt that the children might be more engaged during a writing activity that was different than what they were used to. A polar bear had been writing to the students for weeks. As a conclusion to his letters, I thought it might be fun for the students to write back. They really enjoyed the activity and created very different sentences than they normally would.

The second lesson plan is a more general plan that we follow at least two times a week. I felt that it was important to include this plan because it highlights how Kid Writing is normally conducted in the classroom.

Personal Tools and Author's Chair

Given that my focus and main wondering was figuring out how I could help my kindergarteners use the tools available to them to become more effective, independent writers I knew that I needed to make the tools more accessible to my children. Kid Writing friends and word families were the words my students seemed to use most in their writing, thus I wanted them to be able to find the words as quickly as possible.

As I described earlier, I created personal, index card sheets for each of my students to keep in their writing folders. One contained all of the Kid Writing friends that had already been introduced to the class (more were glued to the sheet as necessary), and the other was a scaled down version of the word family neighborhood from our classroom (Appendix F).

After the first few weeks of my intervention it became apparent that the children enjoyed talking about their writing. In order to create an outlet for this I designed a chair cover with the words "Author's Chair" on the front and yellow stars sprinkled across it. After the children had completed their Kid Writing for the day I chose someone to share their work with the class. In order to be chosen the student had to follow the daily prompt (using Kid Writing friends, word family words, Buzzy words, finger spaces etc.). I rewrote their story on the white board, as they had written it, and they got to come and sit in the author's chair. After we discussed the story, adult writing, and praising, the class applauded the author and we concluded writing.

Mini Writing Assignments

This data came about after I had been watching the development and impact of the previous interventions on my class. I was revisiting my main wondering and considering ways in which I could gauge the children's progress thus far. I developed the first assignment about halfway through the inquiry.

Before the children are to begin their Kid Writing for the day there is usually some discussion. In the past we had used this time to simply introduce new Kid Writing friends or word families but I had found that this was ample time to capitalize on teacher expectations for student writing. In the first week back from spring break I began to ask the children to use a specific word, word fragment, or word family member in their writing. In order for the student to say they were finished with their writing they were to have used the daily expectation at least once and have it circled in their story. I continued the assignment throughout the remainder of the timeline, rotating the expectations daily.

The second mini assignment was completed on March 20. Before the students began their writing for the day I asked for volunteers who thought they could write down all of the Kid Writing friends on a Post-It note (appendix G) in two minutes or less. I explained to the class that I was curious to see how many friends they could name and that the assignment was just for fun. Fourteen students from various writing levels agreed to give the assignment a try when I suggested the activity.

Data Analysis and Results

In order to best understand the data I had collected I organized it by the date in which it was put into motion. I then created a Word document for each group of data with measurable answers. As I broke down each group of data I organized them into piles according to the answer of the first, most important question and then continued to break the groups into sub-categories in accordance to the answers given. After I had all of the data broken down into smaller grouping systems I looked through the document to take note of any trends that may have developed. After I had done this for all three measurable data collections I then compared the overall consistencies among them as well as individual student trends where applicable.

Parent Questionnaire

To analyze the parent questionnaire, I had to first consider how many parents returned it (20 out of 22). From that point, I noted how many parents responded 'yes' to the first question, does your child enjoy Kid Writing? (13) I then pulled out those thirteen questionnaires and charted their answers for the rest of the survey. I then returned to the remaining questionnaires in which the families had all answered, 'sometimes' to the first question, (does your child enjoy Kid Writing?) and charted their answers for the rest of the survey. For the two open-ended questions I wrote down a few of the key phrases that I found in all of the questionnaires.

After I had all of this information documented I was able to go back through and analyze the data. I found that out of the seven families that responded yes to question one (their child enjoys Kid Writing) and yes to question two (their child talks about at least one of the writing tools at home) they had rated their child's writing independence a five

or better 100% of the time, and at a seven or better 80% of the time. The survey also displays the trend in families who answered yes to the first question, but no to the second question rated their child's writing independence at six or lower 80 % of the time. Of all seven families who answered sometimes to the first question (does your child enjoy Kid Writing?) nobody rated their child above a seven for writing independence and five people rated their child a five or lower.

Student Surveys

Before I analyzed the student surveys I read through them several times. I wanted to see how each student responded to the questions and see if their answers were similar or different than I thought they would be. I was surprised to see that many of my struggling writers circled the smiley face to show that they really likes Kid Writing, while many of my very independent writers circled the normal face to show that they like Kid Writing sometimes. After noticing this occurrence I brainstormed a list of reasons why this might be the case. I decided that it would be important to guide the advanced writers to more challenging prompts during writing in the future. This response will stick with me throughout the remainder of year. I now see that it is important to offer a wider range of writing activities and opportunities for my students.

After I was finished reviewing the responses I again created a word document to show the students' progression through the questions. All twenty-two students in the class prefer kid Writing Friends 2:1 to word families. I found this answer to be eye opening on my part. It showed me that I needed to work on my creative introduction and involvement with the word families in the classroom environment. The survey also

showed that children who answered the first question with a medium face were much more honest about their personal writing mechanics (for example, I do not always use finger spaces or remember periods).

I reviewed my inquiry group students survey separately, as well as with the group and found them to fit in well with the class median. These six children were, however, the only children to answer the final question as per my request. Out of the five children who answered the question they all put time and thought into their answers. None of their answers were the same and most, 4 out of 5, were ideas that would be applicable to the rest of the class (writing wherever they want in the classroom, writing on wacky paper, writing outside, writing stories about kid writing friends). I plan to integrate their ideas into our writing time in the future as well as open the forum to the rest of the class to answer this question (what kind of writing do you want to do?).

Comparing Parent and Student Surveys

After I had analyzed both sets of data separately I felt it would be important to compare parent responses with student responses. Out of the twenty parents who returned the survey eleven of them chose to include their child's name. I pulled these surveys as well as these eleven child surveys to compare the data. Out of the five families that said their child spoke of Kid Writing friends at home the child also circled Kid Writing friends as their favorite (over word families). Both children whose families said their child spoke of both Kid Writing friends and word families at home hesitated when having to choose which was their favorite (there is some marking next to both answers).

Of the four families who said their child did not speak of either writing tool at home, their child answered Kid Writing friends as their favorite.

Personal Tools and Author's Chair

The data I collected in these areas are in my own observations and in the students' journals. The improvement in my students' writing is undeniable. The children began circling words every time they wrote. The correctness in their spelling improved, their confidence improved, and ultimately their writing independence improved as compared to before these writing tools and the author's chair was incorporated into our room.

Mini Writing Assignment

I began to integrate mini writing assignments, or prompts into the Kid Writing block throughout the months of March and April. Throughout March I prompted the children to include specific words, word chunks, or word family words into their stories. In order to analyze this data I reviewed the Kid Writing journals of three of my inquiry group children (Appendix H). I compared entries from one week prior to the prompt to the day of the prompt and found that in all three cases, 100% of the time, the child had written more, and spelled more words correctly in the story with the designated prompt.

The second mini writing assignment I used was the Post-It note challenge. To analyze the data, I first separated the Post-Its into three categories, students who said they really liked Kid Writing (7), student who said they sometimes like Kid Writing (6) and students who did not like Kid Writing (1). I then put all of the notes back together into

one pile and split them into groups according to how many of the nine Kid Writing friends they were able to write in the two-minute time frame. 6 students wrote all 9 words, 3 students wrote 8 words, 3 students wrote 7 words, 1 student wrote 5 words, and 1 student wrote 4 words.

In order to make sense of this data I knew that I needed to split the groups a final time into even more specific groups combining the first two categories. After doing this I found that 4 out of 6 students who sometimes liked Kid Writing were able to write all 9 friends. 2 out of 5 students who really liked Kid Writing were able to write all 9 friends and the one student who does not like Kid Writing not only chose to participate in this activity but she got 7 out of the 9 friends written.

Observations and student interviews

To analyze my written observations of my inquiry group I read through my notes several times noting growth in each child as well as facts I found interesting over the course of the plan. I took formal observation notes on February 28, March 5, March 13, March 20, and March 28. After I completed my supplemental notes, I read through them to compare the areas of growth in each child. I found that all six of the inquiry group children had begun to include Kid Writing friends, or word family words into their stories daily. I also found that 4 out of the 6 children became significantly more independent during writing activities.

While the inquiry group was working on their Kid Writing on March 28 I asked each child a few informal questions (Appendix D). The first question, (Do you think your writing has gotten better since you have been sitting at the horseshoe table?) received

mixed, inconclusive responses. Three of the children said yes, and three said no. I prompted the children who answered no to explain. Two of them said they didn't know why it hadn't improved, and one child said, "My writing was always really good, and it still is." The second question (Do you think you are using your tools more now than you were at Christmastime?) Had a more conclusive answer, 5 yes, and 1 no. For this answer I prompted all of the children to elaborate. Once child replied, "Because they are more fun now and I have mine to keep."

Lesson plans

I chose to include two lesson plans in my inquiry. One of which describes the normal Kid Writing process in our classroom and one that describes a one-time writing activity. Although there is not much data here to analyze I feel that this is an important collection to address. In reviewing the preliminary questions I had included in the plan, I was able to see how much further the general questions and conversation of the class bring the lesson.

Claims and Evidence

Claim 1: By making writing tools engaging and hands-on students will use them more in their writing.

My main wondering throughout this inquiry was how I could help kindergarteners use the tools available to them to become more effective, independent writers.

Throughout the process I found that by making the tools more fun and relatable to the students they began using them more, thus writing more independently. During the

informal interview I help with the inquiry group on March 28, one student, E, reflected upon if she had been using writing tools more or less since Christmastime. She said more, “because they are more fun and I have mine to keep.” This quotes shows that by making the tools more readily available to the students they will use them more.

The authors of Words Their Way have written that in order “for instructional approaches to be meaningful for a young writer there is great value in integrating talking, reading, writing, and drawing. Teachers must recognize opportunities to get children talking about writing (Bear, 2004, pg. 95).” After creating the hands-on, personal tools for each student in my class they began to discuss them frequently with others, even during non-writing period times. I overheard conversations during choice time, recess, lunch and Kid Writing periods in which the children debated the “coolest Kid Writing Friend” or the best word family.

Claim 2: It is important to ask children how they feel about the writing process, although the answers may not always be conclusive.

“To facilitate students becoming active members in a classroom of writers, teachers must also integrate the learning of social roles, knowledge, and skills (Bear, 2004, pg. 95).” One of my core beliefs as an educator is that children should have an active role in their education. I agree with the above quote from Donald Bear in that children will try harder during writing if they have had some say in what they are doing. Because of this I created the student surveys to be completed by my children, with an extra question designed for the inquiry group.

While I still feel that it was important to allow the children to reflect on their feelings about writing and ideas for future practice, I do not feel that their answers were conclusive. Although the answers did not benefit the class as a whole they did affect the way many of the students wrote their stories in the following weeks. They repeatedly referred to their favorite tool (Kid Writing friends vs. word families) and worked on the areas they felt needed improvement (finger spaces, periods, writing left to right). This is best highlighted in the following example from Z, one of the inquiry group children.

Claim 3: Discussing writing expectations daily will have a positive effect on student's writing.

Throughout my experiences with children I have found the more times you remind them of your expectations while they are thinking about the assignment, the better the results will be. In my kindergarten classroom the children get very excited for Kid Writing. They enjoy the time to create a story that is their own, but often times they get

too wrapped up in what they are writing/drawing about to remember what is expected of them. Throughout this inquiry I set specific expectations of the students' writing before they received their journals, while they were writing in their journals, and before I underwrote their stories.

The daily discussions about their writing expectations had a definite affect on their writing. All twenty-two students became more aware of what they were writing. All of the students began to use their tools more often to help them complete the task (such as using at least two Kid Writing friends in their story, or one word family word), and most of the students began to circle the expectation words on their own in all forms of writing. The best evidence to support this claim comes from simply viewing the three inquiry group children's work in Appendix H. Through these images the improvement is undeniable.

Claim 4: I feel that it is important to engross children in the writing process from the beginning of the year.

Conducting this inquiry over a two-month period is not nearly enough time to see sufficient growth in young children. Although many of my students are well on their way to becoming efficient independent writers I feel if these steps were taken from the beginning of the year, the students would be well adjusted to the routine and their writing would show this. Although I do not have sufficient evidence to support this claim I do think it is an important one to make. Kid Writing, by Eileen Feldgus states that there are two key elements that make (Kid Writing) a success for children. First, having a balanced

literacy program, and second, starting writing workshops on the first day of school!
(Feldgus, 1999, pg. 31)

Conclusion

Implications for Future Teaching

From this inquiry, I have learned several things about my practice as a future teacher in regards to writing. It is important to have writing routines set into motion from the first day of school, “children must perceive themselves as writers to become writers (Feldgus, 1999, pg. 32).” I want my students to feel that they have a voice in the classroom, and that their opinions and concerns will be heard. If children have ideas for writing, (new words, writing activities, word families, kid writing friends) which they feel might benefit a majority of the class I want them to feel comfortable sharing and contributing to the classroom. “When we, as kindergarten teachers, provide an environment that fosters the love of learning and a wonder about words and writing, we can hook children into discovering and enjoying the writing process (Leuenberger, 2003, pg. 112).”

I will gradually introduce new writing tools into our writing routine making sure that they are not only engaging and beneficial, but that students have easy access to them. Writing tools are essential in the development of all writers and I will ensure that my students have as much available to them as they need to succeed as independent writers.

Although student concerns are an indispensable component to my writing program as a teacher, parent concerns should be just as important. I plan to make the communication between my classroom parents and myself as open as possible. I want the

parents, as well as the students, to feel that they can come to me with writing woes (or any concerns for that matter) and that their thoughts will be heard. Children are writers at school as well as at home and by keeping this communication line viable to the entire classroom community they will undoubtedly grow as not only writers, but students as well.

New Wonderings

As a result of this inquiry, I have developed new wonderings on this topic. I feel that although I have answered some of my own questions through this inquiry, it is important to remember that with a different group of children, in a different setting, the results will not be the same. I might be able to adapt what I have learned, but new students require new approaches and interventions. Writing is a subject very dear to me, and an area in which I hope to continue to grow as a teacher. It is important for me to continue to inquire into this area of writing in any building or grade level I teach in to help my children develop into efficient, independent writers.

In addition to my original wonderings, here are some new wonderings I have:

- How will differentiated instruction affect the inquiry?
- Are there other tools available for writing?
- Can the idea of Kid Writing friends be altered for other subject areas?
- How does sharing affect the writing of the author, as well as the rest of the class?
- What other ideas are circulating through the profession about writing tools?

- What other data is important to collect to further the results of this inquiry?

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