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Changes in Kindergarteners' Writing Complexity When Using Story Elements

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CHANGES IN KINDERGARTENERS' WRITING
COMPLEXITY WHEN USING STORY ELEMENTS

by

Lynne M. Watanabe

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

CHANGE IN KINDERGARTENERS' WRITING COMPLEXITY WHEN USING STORY ELEMENTS

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Master of Arts

This study examined changes in kindergarteners' writing complexity after implementing writing instruction based on story elements (character, setting, problem, and solution). Writing samples from six students of three ability levels (i.e., beginning, intermediate, and advanced) were collected over a six-week period within a guided writing context. These samples included three types of texts (oral language, pictures, and written text) and were analyzed using two analytic rubrics specifically created for this study, one for writing development and the other for the inclusion of story elements. Findings from this study suggest that all students, regardless of ability level wrote in more complex ways when they used story elements as cues to incorporate detail into their writing. Additionally, all of the students included the four story elements in varying degrees, and the acknowledgment and use of different types of text in each writing sample provided a more accurate representation of the student authors' thinking.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The word literacy has many definitions (Watson, 2002). However, many researchers agree that literacy is, at its core, a combination of reading, writing, and oral language (e.g., Calkins, 1994; Clay, 2002; Dyson, 2002; Kress, 1997; Watson, 2002). They further add that all three of these aspects of literacy are necessary in becoming literate, which begins as young children learn to communicate, represent, and understand the intended meaning of thinking. Alexander (2004) explains that literacy is a continual process that begins at birth and continues throughout life. The beginning of this process, when literate behaviors and understanding emerge is known as emergent literacy. This perspective acknowledges the literacy knowledge and processes of children from birth through the early years of schooling as they move from non-conventional to conventional means of communication and representation (Yaden Jr., Rowe, & MacGillivray, 2000). Ultimately, literacy knowledge and processes are constructed as children begin to experience, notice, experiment with, and make meaning from the texts and contexts around them.

Early literacy research and literature emphasizes the relationship between the three aspects of literacy; reading, writing, and oral languages (Clay, 2002; Dyson, 2001; Gee, 2001, Kress, 1997; Richgels, 2003). A child's ability in any one of these three areas influences the others, and increased competency in one area manifests itself as increased competency in another. Despite the connection among reading, writing, and oral language competencies in the literacy process, writing is sometimes recognized only for its ability to enhance reading rather than its ability to represent, convey, and assess all of children's literacy abilities (Kress, 1997).

Statement of Problem

The writing component of literacy is often overlooked and ignored in research, instruction, and assessment (Wilcox, Morrison, & Wilcox, in press). Despite the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing, instruction and experiences in early childhood classrooms tend to focus primarily on reading, not writing. Clay (2001) explains that teachers and parents know the importance of reading for young children, but do not know the value of writing for those with emerging literacy skills. She adds, “When teachers do not expect children to be able to write, they do not give them opportunities to write, and therefore they will observe that the children do not write” (p. 14). It is important for educators to more fully examine writing as a process and a skill to determine what is known about how individuals learn to write and how this can be applied in all classrooms (Clay, 1975, 2001). However, the non-conventional nature of young children’s writing makes it, in some ways, problematic to teach and assess.

Emergent writers experiment with communication and representation as they move from non-conventional to conventional forms of writing (Dahl & Farnan, 2002). This experimentation results in a complexity that is influenced by the interactions between student author, the text, and context (Gee, 2001). Non-conventional texts make it more difficult for researchers to study the writing of young children and lead to gaps in emergent writing research. However, these texts enable children to more fully represent their thinking.

The multifaceted and non-conventional nature of emergent writing tends to cause researchers and practitioners to lower their expectations and accept limited writing from young children or label whatever they do as acceptable. Often, students are not encouraged or instructed to meet their full potential (Calkins, 1994). Many children can

and should be writing with greater skill and ability than they illustrate through their written products. Research fails to examine the full capabilities of students, while practitioners fail to challenge young children as a result of predispositions concerning their attitudes towards and knowledge of writing instruction and assessment (Clay, 2001).

The multifaceted and non-conventional nature of emergent writing raises questions regarding what constitutes appropriate instruction and assessment. In many classrooms, instruction tends to focus on the writing process, the mechanics of this process, the traits of quality writing, or the sociocultural nature of representing meaning through text. The intended meaning that the child is trying to communicate and represent is often overlooked (Calkins, 1991). Children's writing can be enhanced when instruction and assessment is guided by the intended communication and representation of the student author.

The elements of a story provide one way to guide the instruction and assessment of writing. Story elements provide cues for students to recognize and recall important events in reading (Baumann & Bergeron, 1993) and can also serve as a guide for students to identify important elements of a story and incorporate them in their writing (Simmons, Kameenui, Dickson, Chard, Gunn, & Baker, 1994). These elements may serve as cues to enable oral language, pictures, and written text to be linked with the student author's intended meaning and move students towards a more conventional and accurate communication and representation of intended meaning. However, little research supports this notion, particularly with young children.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this multi-case study was to examine the change in complexity of writing ideas after implementing story element writing instruction. Writing samples were

collected from six kindergarten students of differing ability levels over the course of six weeks to examine the inclusion of story elements and how this inclusion changed the complexity of the represented ideas. Samples of students' oral language, pictures, and written text were all included to provide students with developmentally appropriate means to represent their intended messages and to account for all means of communication.

Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How does participation in guided writing instruction and assessment focused on story elements change the complexity of a kindergartner's writing ideas?
2. What role does each of the different texts (i.e., oral language, pictures, and written text) play in representing the complexity of children's thinking?

Limitations

One limitation of this study is related to the normal development of kindergarten-aged students, that is that emergent writers would generally increase in their abilities over time due to the course of normal development and regardless of instruction. A second limitation of this study was the fact that the teacher was the researcher. Personal bias or the possible conflict between placing teaching responsibilities above researcher responsibilities might have been influenced by the dual role. A third limitation was the fact that written artifacts of pictures and written text are naturally occurring in the guided writing context while oral language is present but not generally represented. The tape recording of oral language interactions does not usually occur in a classroom. Students may have altered some of their actions and interactions because of the presence of the recording device. A final limitation was the fact that the review instruction and the data

collection occurred over a short period of time making it difficult to see patterns and changes in a limited amount of time.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and their definitions represent key ideas that are pertinent to the understanding of this study. The descriptions provided for each term are to clarify how the terms were used throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the study.

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is interaction, instruction, and assessment that facilitate the development and learning of young children (Bredkamp & Copple, 1997). When implementing developmentally appropriate instruction, knowledge of the individual child's strengths, interests, needs, and contexts are considered to make informed decisions regarding optimal learning and development.

Conventional writing is writing that is versatile and sophisticated (Richgels, 2003). It employs the conventions of written language and includes such things as concepts of print, spelling, and punctuation. Richgels (2003) explains that conventional writers are able to plan and execute their writing independently by using specific goals and strategies (e.g. concepts of print, spelling, punctuation). Most adults would refer to conventional writing as the writing they are familiar with or "really writing" (p. 37). Writing is considered *non-conventional* when it does not demonstrate most of the acceptable rules and uses of writing to communicate or represent, such as invented spelling (IRA & NAEYC, 1998).

Emergent writing is the literate knowledge, processes, and actual written products of children from birth through kindergarten as they move from non-conventional to

conventional means of communication and representation (Yaden, Rowe, & MacGillivray, 2000).

Text refers to the representations that authors use to communicate and are influenced by the contexts of the author and the reader. Gee (2001) states that “reading and writing cannot be separated from speaking and listening and interacting on the one hand, or using language to think about and act on the world on the other” (p. 714). For this study, text included the child’s oral language, pictures, and conventionally written products.

Process writing is a writing instruction approach that involves procedural knowledge of the writing process and strategies to facilitate more effective and complex writing (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006). Writing is viewed as an ongoing process where students follow a set of procedures that usually include: planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

Guided writing is an instructional writing context that teaches the writing process through modeling, support, and practice (Tyner, 2004). Students learn the writing process as teachers implement a gradual release of control and support leading to students’ independent work. For this study, guided writing included six steps that served as procedural guidelines (see Instruction Section and Appendix A).

Complexity of ideas refers to the degree to which the intended meaning or meanings of the student authors are represented in their texts. It also includes the degree that the conventions of writing are represented. For this study, the complexity of ideas was assessed using two analytic rubrics. The patterns that emerged from students’ texts were also examined to determine complexity.

Elements of a story are the essential parts of a narrative story that serve as cues to enhance comprehension. For this study, these included: characters, setting, problem, and solution.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literacy, or the process of becoming literate, is more clearly understood when it is viewed in a context of life-long development. Literacy has traditionally been viewed as a developmental sequence that is limited to the early years of life (Alexander, 2004). The joint position statement of the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1988) explains that literacy development should be viewed in terms of a continuum that includes general reading and writing development and a range suitable for individual variations within that development. Alexander (2004) adds, “A lifespan developmental perspective . . . would consider reading from womb to tomb; that is, for all populations and for all phases of reading growth” (p. 5). When becoming literate is seen as a process that continues throughout life, it gives added depth and meaning to its definition and the implementation of the process. This increased understanding also emphasizes the importance of early literacy and its role in the process of becoming literate.

Emergent Literacy

The life-long continuum of literacy begins very early in life before children begin formal schooling (Alexander, 2004; Clay, 2001). This notion of emergent literacy addresses the specific literacy needs and abilities of young children (Yaden, Rowe, & MacGillivray, 2000) and illustrates the beginning or emergence of the continual process of becoming literate (Richgels, 2003). Yaden, Rowe, and MacGillivray (2000) explain that emergent literacy includes two assumptions. First, emergent literacy refers to the literacy of students from birth through kindergarten. Second, it refers to the knowledge

and processes of these children as they move from unconventional to conventional means of communication and representation. The process of moving from non-conventional to conventional literacy must account for development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). However, development does not necessarily happen sequentially, and this often results in teachers being unsure of how and where to begin with instruction (Richgels, 2003).

The developmental and interactive nature of emergent literacy is complex, and therefore, difficult to teach and assess. Richgels (2003) states that literacy is “a complex unfolding of many kinds of knowing and many abilities such that no single snapshot of that process adequately capture the complexity” (p. 28). For this reason teachers are often unsure of how to teach emergent literacy, and this hesitancy often causes teachers to underestimate the abilities of their students (Clay, 2001). Clay (2001) explains that children come to school with their own individualized notions of literacy and literacy learning that usually contains only a small fraction of the complex whole. Teachers must build upon these and not hinder them through their own assumptions about what must generally happen for literacy learning to take place (Clay, 2001). The very complex nature of emergent literacy makes it difficult for some educators to decide what to teach and where to begin with instruction.

Emergent Writing

Reading, writing, and oral language should be used to examine literacy development. However, writing is unique in the permanence of representation and communication it creates (Calkins, 1994, IRA & NAEYC, 1998). This permanence is provided through text (Calkins, 1994) and provides a context to assess literacy ability

(Dahl & Farnan, 2002). Thus, writing is the more lasting and accessible means to successfully make sense of the communication and representation of young children.

The IRA and NAEYC (1998) joint position statement explains that an important aspect of emergent literacy is a teacher's demonstration of and students' active participation in the writing process. They also stress that writing instruction and assessment should account for "knowledge and processes of reading and writing and knowledge of child development and learning" (p. 210). An understanding of writing development, emergent writing instruction, and emergent writing assessment provides a foundation that fosters developmentally appropriate writing practice and learning.

Writing Development

Writing develops as children communicate and represent ideas through text. McCutchen (2006) describes writing as a communicative act. It is a social event as writers convey meaning to an audience through text, and it is a cognitive event because the writer plans, translates, and reviews information and knowledge to produce such text (McCutchen, 2006). Writing is a manifestation of children's abilities, experiences, knowledge, and contexts as they experiment with literacy (Dahl & Farnan, 2002).

According to Dyson (2002), writing development has traditionally been seen as the way in which a child encodes messages, moving linearly from "letter-like strings to orthographically sensible (if not conventionally spelled) words and sentences" (p. 126). Writing begins through scribbling or drawing that is initially random and gains motor and mental control to produce actual artwork (Gardner, 1980). Initially, children utilize pictures to convey their ideas. Next, they use symbols of some kind (e.g., images or strings of random letters) to represent their ideas. Finally, they learn that letters have

sounds and sounds make up words that are the actual language the child desires to convey and purposefully choose letters to represent sounds and words. Thus, writing becomes the visible language of the child as it is refined and progress takes place.

Writing develops through a series of steps or stages (Calkins, 1994; Clay, 1975; Gentry, 2005). However, there are differing views regarding these steps or stages. Clay (1975) describes this development in relation to three areas of the concepts of print: (a) language level, (b) message quality, and (c) directional principles. She sees young children continually learning within these areas and employing them more effectively in their writing as they develop. Another perspective includes the Gentry Writing Scale to explain the development of writing. The scale contains five stages classified by a child's knowledge of letters, sounds, and words and how the child uses that knowledge when writing (Gentry, 2005). Additionally, Calkins (1994) believes writing develops as the meaning of text is conveyed in more complex ways. It initially develops through pictures and eventually uses words (Calkins, 1994). The specific steps or stages may be disputed, but most agree the development as a process moving from the simple to the complex.

This progression from the simple to the complex is made apparent through a child written text. The written text a young child creates when writing is more than the final product as seen on the page. Dahl and Farnan (2002) describe the writing development of young children as playful experimentation where much happens that is not specifically on the page. Calkins (1994) explains that the meaning of the written communications or representations of very young children are primarily based within the picture and oral language produced, not the written words. This changes over time as children use written words to convey meaning and move away from the necessity of the picture.

Texts are the means that authors use to communicate and are influenced by the contexts of the author and reader. Alexander and Jetton (2000) state that texts are dual in nature because they are individual and social as well as permanent and dynamic. Text is created for authors to “convey their feelings and thoughts through language, printed or oral” (p. 289). Gee (2000) explains that meaning is incited by and constructed from experiences, language, and interaction. Writing develops as texts convey and bring about meaning in increasingly complex ways. Complexity may be apparent in the conventions of print, but it is primarily evident in the intended meaning an author attempts to communicate. Texts are representations of communication and can include any artifact, pictorial or written, and any oral language (speaking or listening).

Emergent Writing Instruction

Emergent writing instruction is often a combination in varying degrees of three focused approaches: (a) mechanics orientation, (b) human experience orientation, or (c) process orientation. Mechanics refers to the conventions of written text, and includes spelling, handwriting, and characteristics of print. Human experience describes the interaction between the student author and the reader as conveyed and understood through text. In process-orientated writing, the procedure of writing is focused upon more than the actual product that is created. While all three approaches address essential aspects of writing, teachers tend to select elements from each approach to implement in their writing instruction. This results in a different writing focus that can vary in appearance from one classroom to another.

Mechanics Orientation

Gentry (2000) and Clay (1975), as mentioned previously, tend to focus on the mechanics of writing. Gentry's Writing Scale (1982) includes five stages of invented spelling to illustrate how young children make sense of orthography and serve as a guide to the sequence of spelling development and behaviors. Inventive spelling is used within the classrooms of many teachers, and Gentry's initial model has been examined, added to, and used to produce similar methods for studying the spelling of young children. Instruction that is focused on invented spelling mechanics spends time examining student work for patterns and using the scale to support students in producing writing that resembles conventional writing.

Clay (1975) defined seven principles of emergent writing to produce an approach to writing that primarily focuses on the mechanics of print. She specifically addresses the ideas of language level, directionality, and message quality. Language level refers to the linguistic organization of the text and directionality refers to the logistical organization of the text. The message quality principle focuses on the consistent manner that a text conveys a specific message. Therefore, instruction focused on Clay's (1975) notions of writing address the concepts of print and text permanence.

Human Experience Orientation

Dyson (2002) focuses on a second approach to writing as the "symbolic tool that mediates human experience and interaction" (p. 126). She explains that writing is an inherently social process where children use oral language and written graphics to convey meaning and illustrate connections to experience and prior knowledge. Gee (2001) adds a sociocultural view by explaining that language is an essential aspect to consider in

regards to reading and writing. They cannot be separated from one another. Therefore, the social context of any author must be accounted for to provide further insight and meaning to the text that is produced.

Additionally, Calkins (1994) sees student authors as advocates for their own self-efficacy in writing. She explains that when children see themselves as real writers for real purposes and audiences, they will feel that they are capable and perform in a way that is equal to these beliefs. Writing instruction that implements this humanistic approach focuses on the students authors and their experiences to help them realize they have something valuable and important to contribute. It dwells on the feelings and emotions that students tie to writing. The mechanical and humanistic approach seem to be on opposite sides of the spectrum of the kindergarten writing experience, with neither one fully addressing the needs of emergent writers.

Process Orientation

The third approach of writing instruction is process writing where the process is the central focus of the instruction. Pritchard and Honeycutt (2006) define process writing as a pedagogical approach to teaching writing that involves procedural knowledge of the writing process and strategies to facilitate more effective and complex writing. They explain that writing instruction often teaches the writing processes while proceeding through four stages: (a) recalling the steps of the process, (b) producing a story, (c) sharing the story, and (d) receiving feedback. The processes of writing become more important than the representation or communication of the texts.

However, current beliefs stress that the process of writing is a series of problem-solving tasks that do not follow a fixed order (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006). Thus,

writing is a process that contains certain specific elements, and these elements are strategically used to best communicate thinking and represent intended meanings. The procedural elements and strategies can provide students with a framework that helps to guide and support students in the production of text that has meaning in both product and process (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006).

The writing approach referred to as *guided writing* is one way to teach process writing. Tyner (2004) refers to guided writing in her work with beginning reading instruction. She states that writing, like reading, develops over time and must be “modeled, supported, and practiced” (p.15). Students’ abilities improve as they have multiple opportunities to practice skills at their appropriate levels, and teachers implement a gradual release control and support for the learning that results in independent practice.

The guided writing model is often used with very young children because it is developmentally appropriate and students receive the modeling, support, and practice they need to successfully participate in the writing process. In the early grades, guided writing implements four stages of process writing in a more non-conventional way (Calkins, 1994). The first stage, recall, is usually implemented by the teacher through oral language and modeling. The second stage, story production, is a combination of prewriting through oral language and independent writing that include pictures and conventionally written text. Third, stories are shared as students conference one-on-one with the teacher about their specific stories and participate in class and partner sharing time. Finally, these conferences produce conversations and interactions that provide students with feedback. Therefore, guided writing uses a non-conventional process

approach that includes the three types of literacy (oral language, reading and writing) and incorporates these in the production of three different types of text (oral language, pictures, and written text).

Writing Instruction Based on Story Elements

One way to assist students in using guiding writing time to learn strategies for better, more complex writing, as well as the process of writing, is the use of story elements. Goldman and Rakestraw (2000) explain that meaning is derived from the structure of text, and this structure provides readers with cues that aid students in the attempts to derive meaning from text. Knowledge of story structure aids comprehension in reading, but can additionally aid student authors in their meaning making as they compose text.

The structural aspects of text are an important influence on the meaning making process (Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000). Good story structure allows readers to mark and later retrieve the information contained within text. Mandler and Johnson (1977) explain that story structure serves as a framework that helps students to (a) direct attention to important aspects of the text, (b) aid the listener in keeping track of events, and (c) identify when the parts of a story are complete. Additionally, story structure provides students with cues that can serve as possible processing instructions for constructing meaning, emphasize possible connections between concepts and improve the identification of main points (Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000).

Strategies and knowledge of story structure provide students with cues to attain the important ideas and components of a given story, see their relation to one another, and retell the story. Baumann and Bergeron (1993) found that teaching first graders about

story elements prepares them to recognize and recall a narrative story's important components. First graders were able to use story elements to enhance reading comprehension. Additionally, Simmons, Kameenui, Dickson, Chard, Gunn, and Baker (1994) used story grammar elements in a context of writing to assist middle-school students in developing the ideas and content of their own originally composed stories. Eight story grammar elements were taught through integrated reading and writing instruction to help students identify essential components of stories. These same elements were used as cues of what to develop to make the story ideas and content more complex. The interaction between the reading of story elements and using them to guide originally composed pieces resulted in greater overall growth in writing and more complex story ideas and content. Story elements serve as cues in the reading of young children and in the writing of adolescents. However, the use of story elements as writing cues for young children has yet to be addressed.

The purpose of this study was to investigate changes in children's writing complexity after implementing instruction based on four story elements. The kindergarteners' representation of their thinking was examined in regard to their use of the various types of text (i.e., oral language, pictures, written text). A guided writing context provided the children with an opportunity to learn about, experiment with, and demonstrate knowledge of the conventional aspects of writing. The oral language, pictures, and written text of six children from three ability levels was examined to answer the following questions:

1. How does participation in guided writing instruction and assessment focused on story elements change the complexity of a kindergartner's writing ideas?

2. What role does each of the different texts (i.e. oral language, pictures, and written text) play in representing the complexity of children's thinking?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research strategies are ways of logically collecting and analyzing empirical data. The case study is often referred to as a method that allows researchers to study while preserving a holistic nature that is applicable to authentic, real-life events (Yin, 1994). Case studies are generally used to meet three conditions: (a) when *how* or *why* questions are being asked, (b) when the researcher has a little control over the events taking place, and (c) when a contemporary phenomenon that has real-life context to some degree is being studied (Yin, 1994). This study meets these three conditions.

However, Stake (1994) describes case study as a choice of object to study, not method. He explains, “Case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used” (p. 236). He adds that case study is actually “the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning” (p. 237). Stake (1994) outlines six responsibilities of the case study researcher that include: (a) bounding the case, (b) selecting the phenomena, themes, or issues to emphasize, (c) looking for patterns in the data that are pertinent to the issues, (d) triangulating observations and interpretations, (e) choosing other interpretations to pursue, and (f) developing assertions or generalizations within or about the case. He further declares that an instrumental case study looks at a specific case to provide insight into a phenomena, or theory, and a collective case study uses a number of cases together as an attempt to understand a particular issue, population, or condition.

This study examined how the complexity of a kindergartener’s writing changed over time after experiencing story element instruction. An instrumental and collective

case study was appropriate for this situation because the study was used to examine emergent writing development in collective groups. The cases were bound by six individual students and were grouped by ability level for examination. Therefore, the cases were the objects used to study emergent writing and not the method of examination.

Classroom Context

This study took place in a morning (a.m.) half-day kindergarten classroom within a primarily middle-class suburban elementary school. Approximately 800 students attended the school with the majority of the student body being Caucasian (83%). The remainder of the students came from various ethnicities including: Hispanic (14%), Pacific Islander (2%), Asian (less than one percent), African American (less than one percent) and American Indian (less than one percent). Free and reduced lunch was provided for 16 percent of students, and 12 percent of students were English language learners. The school included grades kindergarten through six and ran on a modified-extended day schedule that consisted of two tracks.

The modified-extended day schedule was such that half of the students came at 8:00 a.m. and received small-group integrated instruction in literacy and content-areas using a balanced literacy framework including read alouds, shared reading guided reading, guided writing, literacy centers, and independent work. The a.m. small group worked for an hour and fifteen minutes. The second half of the students then joined them at 9:15 for various activities to reinforce the core curriculum. The whole class stayed together from 9:15-10:45 a.m., when the first half of students left and the remaining students stayed for their hour and fifteen minutes of small-group instruction until noon.

Literacy instruction emphasized developmentally appropriate experiences with reading, writing, listening and speaking. Knowledge of literacy learning and development were integrated in an attempt to provide concrete and authentic contexts for learning (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Literacy instruction was ongoing, and the teacher was the “decision maker” who assessed student knowledge and incorporated appropriate instruction (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 33). The teacher incorporated routines and experiences that allowed students to interact with texts and see their relationships with one another.

Participants

Six students from three different ability levels within the morning (a.m.) kindergarten class were selected for this study. The general ability level of the students was determined using the district kindergarten pre-assessment which I, the classroom teacher and researcher, administered during the first two weeks of school (August 2007). This pre-assessment included a variety of tasks to appraise abilities in literacy, mathematics, and other essential school areas. These included but were not limited to: name writing, letter and number recognition, counting, shape identification, and concepts of print.

Based on the district pre-assessment data (i.e., the overall pre-assessment score, the overall literacy score, and the specific writing score), students were grouped into three ability levels: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. Three students were purposively selected from the morning small group of students, one from each ability group, and the additional three students were selected from the late morning small group, one from each ability group. Students of similar performance on the pre-assessment were

selected within ability levels. I attempted to ensure that one student from each ability group was male and the other was female. However, this was not possible for each ability level because the priority was to find students within ability levels that had corresponding performance on the pre-assessment. Three male and three female students were selected—two advanced writers who were both boys, two intermediate writers who were one female and one male, and two beginning writers who were both girls.

Several considerations were implemented to protect the student participants and ensure anonymity. First, the study included the use of pseudonyms throughout the research process. Second, I attained approval from the Institutional Research Board of Brigham Young University prior to any data collection. Third, the parents of each of the children involved in the study signed a consent form, and students were also asked if they wished to participate.

Researcher Stance

Case study methodology is enhanced by the use of a theoretical framework that guides the collection and analysis of data (Yin, 1994). Researchers must be aware that their own experiences influence their perspectives and interactions, but this influence can possibly enhance the study by giving an authentic purpose and context.

I served the dual role of teacher and researcher for this study. This allowed me to conduct my research and teach simultaneously. I have taught kindergarten at the same school for seven years, and my teaching responsibilities include deciding upon and implementing instruction content and methods as well as determining assessment and interventions. I have been particularly interested in the independent writing of my students and have implemented a variety of strategies and designs to try to improve the

writing ability of the children. My interests and concerns regarding kindergarten writing influenced my actions as a researcher due to my involvement with instructional development and implementation, as well as data collection and analysis.

Being the teacher and researcher allowed me to couple my experience in teaching kindergarten with the early childhood perspective of educating young children. The NAEYC calls for developmentally appropriate practices in the education of young children. Developmentally appropriate practices are those that account for the development, learning, strengths, interests, and contexts of each individual child. All of these areas are factors in the overall development of a child and must be considered in curriculum and instruction. I see my role as an early childhood educator and a researcher of young children as being an advocate for appropriate practice while ensuring that the specific needs of students are met. I take into consideration the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of young children, and see a broader notion of text as a means to account for these developmentally appropriate goals.

Instruction

Instruction for this study began in August 2007 and continued twice a week through January 2008. The instruction included (a) modeling writing with a class journal (August–September 2007), (b) instruction regarding the guided writing process as outlined for this study (September–October 2007), (c) writing instruction based on story elements (October–December 2007), and (d) a review of the story element writing instruction (January–February 2008) (see Appendix A).

Modeling with a Class Journal

The class journal began on the second day of school and continued into early October 2007. The teacher thought of an experience that had been shared that day and illustrated the steps of the guided writing process (see the section below) as outlined for this study, while writing about that experience. Each of the daily class journal entries were compiled into a class book. Each following day, the student who was selected as the helper chose an experience that she/he wanted to include in the class journal. The teacher went through the steps of this study's guided writing process with the students about that particular event and talked the students through the process while she did the actual writing. Each journal page included a name, a date stamp, pictures, and written text, as well as the oral language of the teacher during the process and the interactions of the teacher and student that were a result of the modeling.

Instruction Regarding the Guided Writing Process

Steps of the guided writing process for this study were introduced over the course of a few lessons in mid October 2007. Once all of the steps were in place, guiding writing continued with the primary focus being that of familiarizing the students with the process for the remainder of the month. This guided writing steps for this study included (a) think of an idea, (b) tell your share buddy, (c) draw your quick picture, (d) write your story, (e) conference with the teacher, and (f) share your story (see Appendix A for the guided writing steps).

Think of an idea. Narrative texts are most familiar to young children, and students were instructed in personal narrative writing during guided writing time. Pappas (1993) explains that narrative stories tend to be the most familiar to young children because they

are the most readily and abundantly available. She explains that many people believe that they are most appropriate because they involve interpersonal understandings, and many also believe that children prefer them. Therefore, students learned about and wrote narrative stories about themselves. Students were encouraged to think of something that happened to them for a story idea.

Tell your share buddy. Students were taught to picture the story in their mind and then tell this story to the share buddy that had been previously assigned. Partnerships listened and asked questions to learn more about each other's stories. This oral language provided a way for students to make greater sense of what they intended to write as well as a way for students to plan how they would represent their message.

Draw a quick picture. After this, students went to their tables to write on their own. Students used blank white paper to draw a quick picture of their stories in one color crayon on the page. A template was introduced later in the study with a box for the picture and five lines for written text. The picture served as the story for some and as a placeholder of the story idea until written text was composed (Calkins, 1994).

Write your story. Students added the written text to the page and I came around during this time to conference with students individually. I asked those with whom I conferenced to share their stories with the whole class during the sharing time that followed.

Share your story. The selected students shared their stories with the whole class and the teacher asked one or two questions about the story to the listening students. Then, all students shared their completed work with their share buddy and quickly with the teacher before putting it away in their writing portfolios.

Writing Instruction Based on Story Elements

In November 2007, after students were familiar with the process of guided writing, instruction began using the mini-lessons focused on story elements. November's instruction focused on the character and setting within a story and December's instruction focused on problem and solution. The mini-lessons followed the outline of Guided Writing Mini-lessons and Objectives created for this study (see Appendix B for a full list). Each mini-lesson included the following sections: identifying the objective, modeling the objective, practicing the objective with support, conferencing (focused on the objective), and sharing (when the objective of various texts is discussed by the teacher and students).

Review of the Story Element Writing Instruction

Mini-lesson instruction in January 2008 reviewed character, setting, problem, and solution. Students were asked to incorporate and identify the elements in their own writing and in the writing of others. The process of guided writing at this time focused on these elements as well (see Appendix A). Telling story ideas included partners asking about the four elements. Picturing the story in one's mind included looking for the four elements. Pictures and written text were examined for the inclusion of or illusion to the four elements during conferencing. Sharing included seeking the four elements in the stories of others. It is during this time of review that data collection began for the six selected students. These data were collected during the review instruction in order to ensure that all of the story element instruction had been implemented before writing samples were taken.

Data Sources

Data sources for this study accounted for the aspects of the writing process and the different types of text. Specifically, I collected individually produced *artifacts of written text and pictures, tape recorded oral language, and a teacher/researcher journal*. The *artifacts of written text and pictures* included (a) a pre-assessment writing sample collected before the review instruction, (b) weekly writing samples and (c) a post-assessment writing sample collected at the end of the period of the study. *Tape recorded oral language* included (a) partner tell time conferences, (b) teacher/student conferences, and (c) whole group and small group sharing time. A *teacher/researcher journal* included notes about the lessons and interactions.

Artifacts of Written Text and Pictures

The artifacts of written text and pictures were independently created by the students and collected at the beginning of the study with the pre-assessment, weekly during the review instruction, and after six weeks of instruction as the post assessment. Each of the student's artifacts was examined using analytic rubrics and placed in the child's writing portfolio.

Pre-assessment writing sample collected before the review instruction. A pre-assessment writing sample was collected in December 2007 after the implementation of the story elements instruction and prior to the review in January. The sample included written and pictorial text as well as the oral language from the partner telling time, the teacher/student conference, and class sharing time. The pre-assessment served as the initial representation of each student's individual writing abilities.

Weekly writing samples. Writing samples and oral language were collected once each week during the guided writing time from each of the participants. Collection lasted for six weeks during January and February 2008. The samples were naturally occurring during the course of guided writing and included pictures and conventionally written text. Children were given blank pieces of paper during the writing time on which to compose their stories. A template was introduced towards the end of the study to be used instead of the blank paper. Each child knew to write her/his name on the paper and date stamp the work as part of the guided writing routine.

Oral language included transcriptions of conversations from telling time, conferences, and sharing time. While other children's talk was recorded, only the oral language of the participating students was transcribed. After the routines of sharing with the class and with a partner, students read the story to the teacher before filing them in their writing portfolios. These readings were also recorded. I transcribed the tape recorded oral language and added it to each child's portfolio along with the pre- and post-assessment samples in chronological order.

Post-assessment writing sample collected at the end of the study. The post-assessment was collected in mid February 2008 after the six weeks of instruction had been implemented. This writing sample also included pictorial, written text, coupled with the same oral language components of telling, conferencing, and sharing.

Tape Recorded Oral Language

Audio recordings of oral language were collected once a week during January and February 2008. Each transcribed recording was linked to the written text and/or pictures

they accompanied or represented. Oral language was collected in three different settings: partner telling time, teacher/student conferences, and sharing time.

Partner tell time conferences. Partner tell time consisted of asking the share buddy who is in the story, where and when it takes place, as well as if there was a problem and a solution. Small tape recorders with microphones were used during the process. One was given to each partnership to capture the interactions between the two students. The oral language concerning the student's story was collected and transcribed weekly for six weeks. After this, it was stored in the writing portfolio with the other artifacts of the same specific story.

Teacher/student conferences. Teacher/student conferences were held during the writing time in guided writing. The teacher met with many of the students in the class for a short, individual conference that lasted for a few minutes each. The conference was driven by the student's work and progress and guided by the elements of a story. Feedback and direction encouraged students to more fully include all four story elements in their pictorial and written texts. Mechanics were also discussed as needed. Like the partner tell time conferencing, the conversation of teacher/student conferences was recorded on a small tape recorder with a microphone that the teacher brought to the conference. Each of the tape recorded conferences of the six participants was transcribed and stored along with the story with which it coincided.

Whole group and small group share time. Sharing time took place after the writing time had concluded. Students who were selected for sharing with the class during conferencing shared their stories with the class. After these students shared, each child shared with her/his share buddy and then with the teacher before work was put away in

the portfolio file. The conversations between share buddies and the sharing between the teacher and participating student were both recorded and transcribed.

Teacher/Researcher Reflections

As the teacher/researcher of this study, I also collected my own data on the teaching that was done and the work of the students in a journal. I kept a journal each day that guided writing took place where I recorded details of the instruction given, the conversations in which I participated and/or heard, as well as any other interactions or thoughts concerning the writing instruction. I wrote each day about the mini-lesson and instruction, and then wrote about the specific students from whom I collected writing and with whom I conferenced that day. These data were used to triangulate the data of the written artifacts and tape recorded oral language.

Data Analysis

Data was collected and analyzed using a developmental perspective that integrated the use of analytic rubrics and the teacher/researcher journal to examine individual and group progress. The analysis of writing samples looked at each individual student and ability group in relation to writing development and the use of story elements while accounting for the different types of text.

Developmental Perspective

The nature of this study, the participants, and my experiences as an early childhood educator reflected a developmental perspective when forming and implementing my study as well as in data analysis. A developmental perspective accounts for what is developmentally appropriate for children and also includes the acceptance of

and expectation for students to make both physical and cognitive gains throughout the course of the study as they developed and matured regardless of instruction.

An Integrated Analysis

In this study it was important that written artifacts and tape recorded oral language were collected and examined together to ensure that the meaning the student author intended was fully represented. For this reason pictures, written text, and oral language were analyzed individually as well as together.

The tape recorded oral language text was transcribed and coded. The pictures and written text were studied for writing development and story elements using two analytic rubrics. All data were examined for reoccurring patterns using the constant comparative method (Bodgen & Biklin, 1998), and the categories of the rubrics served as *a priori* codes. The texts were examined according to their abilities to represent and convey writing development (see Appendix C) and story elements (see Appendix D). Writing development codes included (a) ideas, (b) linguistic organization, (c) message, (d) concepts of print, (e) spelling conventions, and (f) high frequency words. Story element codes included (a) characters, (b) setting, (c) problem, and (d) solution.

Additional codes were created for other categories that emerged from the data (see Appendix E for a full list of codes). These codes included (a) feelings-feelings students felt in their stories, (b) instruction-the writing instruction itself, (c) motivation-incentives or a lack thereof towards guided writing, (d) organization-how texts were organized to illustrate a child's thinking, (e) time-helps or hindrance of time on written products, and (f) teacher reflection-teacher thoughts or concerns. Bodgen and Biklin (1998) explain that the constant comparative method is a procedure of analyzing

collected data by examining the data for categories and emerging relationships. These themes served as a means to derive meaning from the data.

Analytic Rubrics

Two rubrics specifically created for this study were used to analyze these data. One rubric, the Writing Development Rubric (see Appendix C), examined the writing characteristics of the written text. The second rubric, the Story Element Rubric (see Appendix D), described the student author's use of the four story elements in the three types of text. Rubrics were developed through an examination of literature and the actual texts of kindergarteners. Clay's (1975) rating technique from her book *What Did I Write?*, Calkins (2005) Assessment Checklist from *The Nuts and Bolts of Writing*, Calkins (1994) book *The Art of Teaching Writing*, and Spandel's (2004) Continuum from *Creating Young Writers* informed the creation of the rubrics. Additionally, collected examples of kindergarten student writing of various ability levels were collected and examined to further guide the creation of the rubrics.

The rubrics were piloted in the summer and fall of 2007 with the teacher/researcher examining their effectiveness. A group of four first grade teachers assessed various writing samples to help with the piloting of the rubrics. The teachers gave feedback and helped to determine what additions or clarifications were needed. Another kindergarten teacher also examined the same texts using the rubrics to establish interrater reliability. The baseline, pre-assessment, post-assessment, and two other randomly selected writing samples from each of the six students for a total of 30 writing samples were scored using the rubrics. The scores were compared and an 88% reliability rate was found on the writing development rubric and an 83% reliability rate on the story

element rubric. A more complete idea of the student's abilities and intended meaning were represented when both rubrics were used together creating a picture of writing development and the inclusion of story elements in the different types of texts.

Writing development rubric. The writing development rubric looked at the writing development of the student. This examined the characteristics of the child's writing in relation to that of conventional writing. This rubric served as a more general assessment of the mechanics and methods used by the student.

Story element rubric. The second rubric focused on the elements of a story. The rubric described the degree to which each element is included in each of the three types of text. This was meant to describe and derive meaning from the text. It was not for means of comparing complexity one with another, but to describe and make sense of the child's writing.

Individual and Group Progress

In addition to the rubrics, the data were examined for individual and group patterns. The conventional nature of the text and the depth of ideas were examined using the rubrics. Individual patterns included trends that are specific to one particular piece of work or one particular student. Group patterns included possible trends found in one particular ability group (beginning, intermediate, advanced) or in individual student cases.

Teacher/Researcher Perspective

The teacher/researcher journal entries added more teacher perspective. Observations and reflections from the teacher journal entries were coded to give an added view to the collected student data. This data source provided a view of the instruction that

took place during the guided writing time. The journal also provided additional notes of interactions, thoughts, and observations. This gave an additional perception to the student texts and assisted in the process of making connections in the midst of, between, and across the data.

Limitations

This case study of emergent writers has limitations. First, emergent writers may increase in writing ability over time regardless of instruction. I accounted for this by creating and using two rubrics in my data analysis. One rubric addressed writing development and the other addressed the complexity specific to this study of story elements. Second, being both the teacher and the researcher may have affected the study due to possible personal bias or the possible conflicts between my responsibilities in each role. I accounted for the possibility of bias with intercoder reliability. I was the individual who collected, coded, and analyzed the data. I accounted for the possible conflicts between roles with the flexibility of the kindergarten guided writing schedule. The schedule allowed me to be flexible in my time and make changes as needed to fulfill my responsibilities as teacher first and researcher second.

Third, the period of data collection was relatively short, six weeks. However, guided writing took place throughout the kindergarten school year, and the story element instruction continued throughout this time as well. A final limitation of this study was the nature of the data sources. The written artifacts, pictures, and oral language were naturally occurring parts of the kindergarten guided writing process. However, the collection of the oral language through tape recording changed the context. Students are not normally recorded during their conversations. I addressed this in the instruction of the

guided writing process. Tape recording conversations during partner tell time, teacher/student conferences, and whole and small group share times were taught and used as part of the process from the beginning of the year to help children feel more comfortable with such practices.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the change in complexity of six kindergarten students' writing ideas after the implementation of writing instruction based on four story elements. Data analysis suggested that progress was made in both writing development and the use of story elements during the six weeks of review instruction. This chapter will discuss the results of the study by examining each of the three ability groups (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) as a collection of two cases. Each collection will include two kindergarten students, each as a case, to illustrate the major themes and patterns from the *a priori* categories of the two analytic rubrics (writing development and story elements) as well as the other categories (time, motivation, and feelings) that emerged from the data. Comparisons will be made between and among each of the cases within the three ability groups.

Writing Development

Over time, children's writing became more conventional, and they were able to more accurately convey their intended messages. Writing development gains were found using the analytic rubrics in the areas of (a) ideas, (b) linguistic organization, (c) message, (d) concepts of print, (e) spelling conventions, and (f) high frequency words.

Story Elements

The definitions and questions associated with each story element (provided during my instruction and prior to the data collection) served as a cue to the students in determining what the essential components of the story were and how best to include them within their independent writing. They additionally served as a guide to the teacher

in her review instruction and her conferencing with individual students. Children were able to more fully represent their ideas through the use of oral language, pictures, and written text. Gains in complexity related to story elements were found in all the areas (a) characters, (b) setting, (c) problem, and (d) solution.

Other Categories

Other categories not included in either of the analytic rubrics seemed to influence the writers of all ability levels. These categories included affective factors and were accounted for through observation and the teacher journal. Additional thoughts were included as they were written in on the rubrics and recognized during the coding of the writing samples. The additional categories that seemed to be influential included: (a) time, (b) motivation, and (c) feelings.

Beginning Writers: Mia and Lara

Mia is a six-year-old kindergartener who loved to talk, play, dance, and sing. She was outgoing and generally tries to be aware of what everyone is doing at any given time. In class, she could easily become distracted, and yet she loved school, particularly writing time. At the beginning of kindergarten, Mia came to school with limited literacy abilities. She wrote her name in all capital letters and tended to write from right to left despite the fact that she understood that text was read from left to right. Her independent writing included only pictures with oral language to accompany it, and her letter identification included 14 capital letters, 11 lowercase letters, and none of the corresponding letter sounds or high frequency words. Additionally, she had difficulty distinguishing between words and letters.

Mia's pre-assessment writing sample (see Figure 1) included the simple idea of going to Disneyland with her family. She expressed her idea through oral language and represented it with a picture and limited written text that appears to resemble a few basic sentences written as words groups and strings of letters with some letter-sound correspondence. The written text moved from left to right and also included the use of a few high frequency words. She easily included character in her story and discussed setting only in her oral language. At the time of the pre-assessment, Mia was able to identify the capital letters and most of the lowercase letters and the letter sounds. She had begun to read simple books with support that included easy patterns and picture cues. However, her independent writing was still limited in her spelling of new words and her use of high frequency words.

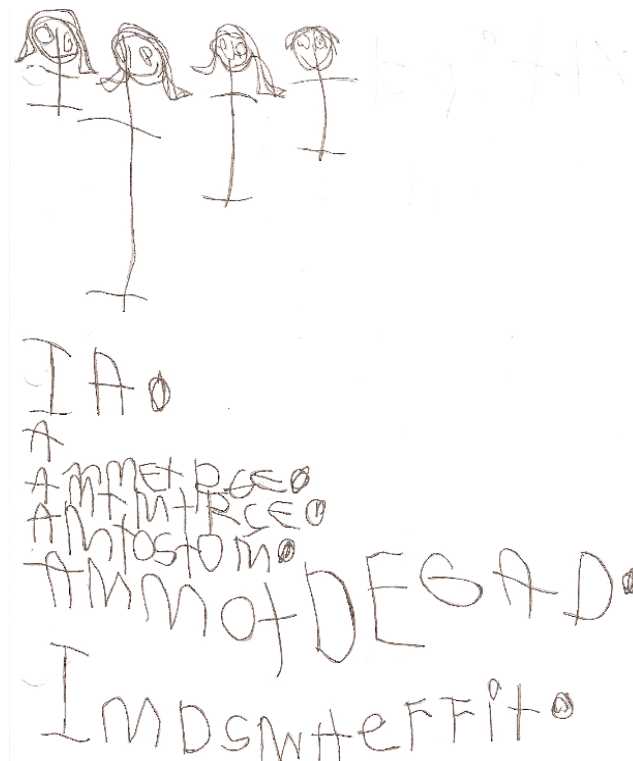


Figure 1. Mia's Pre-assessment (Dec. 2007)

Lara is a soft-spoken five-year-old who enjoys friends and school. She loves to dress up, dance, and color. At the beginning of kindergarten, Lara demonstrated a limited understanding of literacy concepts. She was unable to show where to begin reading and how to move across a line of text from left to right with a return sweep for the next line. She was able to identify only eight capital letters, five lowercase letters, and no letter sounds or high frequency words. Her name was written with only the first letter, and her independent writing included only pictures with oral language to accompany it.

Lara's pre-assessment writing sample (see Figure 2) included an oral story of one idea and a few details represented by a picture and the simple sentence, "IWETOTHeB" (Lara's pre-assessment, December 2007) for "I went to the beach." She wrote from left to right with a capital letter at the beginning of her sentence using beginning sounds and some middle sounds as well as a few high frequency words. The description of the characters and setting within her story were represented, in limited ways, through the use of all three types of text (in her oral language, pictures, and written text). For example, Lara represented "where" the story took place (the beach) in her oral language, picture, written text. However, she only represented "when" the story took place—the other component of setting—in her oral language. At this point in the school year, Lara also had begun reading the same simple books with support as Mia, and she was able to identify all the capital letters and most of the lowercase letters and sounds.



Figure 2. Lara's Pre-assessment (Dec. 2007)

Writing Development

Writing development included the use of and experimentation with writing to approach communication and representation in conventional ways. Development was evident in the students' abilities to (a) convey ideas with details, (b) use linguistic organization, (c) consistently match oral language, pictures, and written text, (d) use the concepts of print, (e) implement spelling strategies, and (f) include high frequency words. Table 1 summarizes the beginning writers' (Mia and Lara) writing ability at the end of the review instruction and data collection. The paragraphs that follow explain the similarities and differences between Mia and Lara in regard to writing development.

Table 1. *Beginning Writers' Writing Development*

Assessment	Mia		Lara	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Conveys ideas with details	Simple idea	Simple idea and 1 detail	Simple idea	Simple idea and details
Linguistic Organization	Word group with strings of random letters	Word groups with letters representing intended sounds	Simple sentence	Longer, more conventional sentence
Message match between ideas	Consistent match in oral story and pictures	Inconsistent match in retellings and sharings	Consistent message in all texts	Inconsistent message in sharing and retellings
Concepts of Print	Writes left to right	Writes left to right	Conventional directionality	Conventional directionality
	No spacing	Sporadic spacing	No spacing	Sporadic spacing
	Experiments with punctuation	No punctuation	No punctuation	Some punctuation
Spelling Strategies	Some letter-sound correspondence	Hears and writes some beginning and middle sounds	Hears and writes some beginning and middle sounds	Hears and writes sounds, but dwells on word or group of words
High frequency words	A few kindergarten high frequency words	A few kindergarten high frequency words	A few kindergarten high frequency words	A few kindergarten high frequency words

Mia and Lara both made progress towards more conventional writing throughout the course of the study. They both had no problem coming up with ideas to write about in their oral language, pictures, and written text. Mia and Lara were able to incorporate more detail as time went on. Their use of spelling strategies became more sophisticated and used more high frequency words. Despite these similarities, beginning writers differed in their abilities to convey consistent messages between the types of text used, in their understanding and use of the concepts of print, and in their implementation of spelling strategies. The following paragraphs explain the categories of writing development where similarities and differences manifested themselves and provided insight into the thinking and writing of the beginning writers.

Mia and Lara began kindergarten by using little or no written text (e.g., a label and/or a name). By the time of the pre-assessment, both girls were able to include more elaborate written text in their stories. For example, Mia used word groups with strings of random letters (see Figure 1) while Lara was able to write a simple sentence that incorporated beginning and some middle sounds (see Figure 2). Over the course of the study, Mia continued to include word groups accompanied by strings of letters that represented the intended sounds. For example the written text, “IMotBEMSA...” (Mia’s writing sample, week 1, January 2008) to represent the oral language “I went to Benny’s house” illustrates some congruencies in the letters written and the sounds that were heard. Even with this progress, Mia’s post-conference notes each week included the mention of the difficulties in deciphering her written text. Lara initially used simple sentences represented by groups of words and letters representing intended sounds. A writing sample from the beginning of the study included the text, “ijSUPsD” (Lara’s pre-

assessment, week 1, January 2008) for “I dressed up with my sisters.” This was a simple sentence. However, over the course of the study, her sentences became longer and looked more like conventional sentences at the end of the study (see Figure 3). This sample incorporates two sentences into the written text despite the missing period. Lara included the fact that she went to play in the snow and also that she was unable to find her sister. Both girls included written text in their writing samples, but Mia used word groups with random letters while Lara used simple sentences. In sum, beginning writers’ linguistic organization required support from the teacher and necessitated accounting for the all three types of text to enable students to more fully represent their thinking.

Both Lara and Mia were consistent in their message scores. Each of Lara’s writing samples had a picture and conventionally written text that consistently matched the oral story that she initially expressed. In one sample that was collected early in the study, her text read, “I HDBD De HCl,” (Lara’s Writing Sample, Week 2, January 2008) and her oral language stated, “I had a bad day at my house.” The message consistently matched with only a few minor discrepancies. Throughout the study, Mia’s writing samples contained pictures and limited written text that tended to be consistent with one another. However, her retellings and sharings included inconsistent messages. As illustrated in Figure 1, Mia’s writing sample about going on an airplane ride included five or six sentences, but when sharing the text (oral language), Mia said, “It was Hailey’s first ride and my mommy was watching” (Mia’s pre-assessment, December 2007). There is a discrepancy in each instance of oral language, and I think this may be attributed to Mia’s inability to decipher her own written text. Her recall and rereading often did not match the story that she had shared and written about earlier.

Mia and Lara both illustrated a knowledge of concepts of print through their writing samples. Both of them wrote from left to right and would frequently write with a return sweep. This was aided by the fact that a template was introduced that contained lines made for written text. The template and the modeling of using it guided and helped students in many of the concepts of print. It was particularly helpful for Mia who was writing from bottom to top on the writing samples prior to the introduction of the template. Mia would also often write her name from right to left, but the actual text would be written with the letters in the correct order.

Mia and Lara both experimented with spacing and punctuation. Mia would often use sporadic spacing or would not include it at all. The writing sample seen in Figure 4 contains spacing in the first line of text, but not in the remaining four lines. Lara's use of spaces seemed to be sporadic. For example, some of her writing samples contained no spacing (see Figure 3) while others contained spaces in some parts of the text and not others. Lara's sample about going to her cousin's soccer game was written as, "Iwet to GArrAKCCBLGMY" (Lara's Writing Sample, Week 4, February 2008). Her reading of the text stated, "I went to Garrack's soccerball game." Her spaces were used only around the word "to." Mia's experimentation with punctuation manifested itself in five different writing samples. These samples each included several lines of text and a period at the end of each line. Mia obviously understood that periods belong at the end of text, and she demonstrated this through her experimentation with periods at the end of a line instead of the end of a thought unit. Although the girls had different aspects of the concepts of print in which they were working in their writing, it is interesting to note that more than any other aspect of writing development, their performance in relation to the concepts of print

fluctuated a great deal from writing sample to writing sample. This may be due to the sheer number of concepts that were contained in this category in comparison to the others. It may also be due to the fact that the mini-lessons and conferences with these writers focused on spelling strategies.



Figure 3. Lara's Writing Sample, Week 4 (Feb. 2008)

Both beginning writers spent a lot of time and effort negotiating the spelling of new words. As stated earlier, the teacher was concerned with Mia's strings of letters, but then after more careful observation was able to see that she was in fact using letter-sound correspondence. One representative journal entry read

I purposely watched Mia write today to see her letter-sound correspondence at work. As I watched, I realized that she really was accounting for and writing down many of the sounds in the words she was composing. She was quite good at it actually. (Teacher Journal: January 31)

These observations allowed the teacher to see Mia's spelling conventions at work. She was attempting to spell new words and included many beginning, middle, and ending sounds. As I watched her, I could hear her say a word, say an individual sound in that word, and then write a letter down to correspond with that sound. As Mia carefully worked to spell words correctly she would, at times, write a letter that did not represent the correct sound or miss sounds within words. Like Mia, Lara also made attempts to write words or groups of words by hearing and recording individual sounds and corresponding letters. However, unlike Mia, Lara tended to dwell on the word and not move past it to the next word in the sentence. Thus, she would be hindered from finishing the written product so that it was consistent with all of her oral language and her picture. I noted this many times in my teacher journal. One illustrative entry read

Lara's trouble with hearing and writing the sounds tends to hinder her writing a bit. She got stuck in one place because she couldn't hear a sound. After I conferenced with her and helped her to slow down the sounds, she was easily able to hear and write them. (Teacher Journal: January 15)

The time and effort being spent on letter-sound correspondence was a definite pattern for Lara and Mia. The majority of the teacher journal entries about both girls centered on their spelling abilities. However, both girls did not get discouraged with attempting to spell new words despite their limited ability to do so. By the end of the study, both girls were attempting, with some success, to spell all words with beginning, ending, and some of the middle sounds. They progressed in their ability to represent new words by using more sounds and writing the sounds more quickly.

Story Elements

Four major story elements were introduced in the guided writing context. Beginning writers were able to incorporate all four story elements into their oral language and eventually into their written texts. However, the use of pictures to convey the story elements seemed to be a bit more difficult for beginning writers. Tables 2 and 3 summarize beginning writers' ability to include each of the story elements using the three different types of texts, and the following paragraphs explain the similarities and differences between and among the beginning writers.

Table 2. *Mia's Inclusion of Story Elements*

Story Element	Pre-assessment			Post-assessment		
	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text
Character	Included all	Included all	Included some	Included all	Included all	Included some
Setting	Included where	Not included	Not included	Included where	Not included	Not included
Problem	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included want or need	Not included	Included want or need
Solution	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included logical solution	Not included	Included logical solution

Table 3. *Lara's Inclusion of Story Elements*

Story Element	Pre-assessment			Post-assessment		
	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text
Character	Included one	Included one	Included one	Included all	Included all	Included all
Setting	Included where and when	Included where	Included where	Included where	Not included	Not included
Problem	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included event that went wrong	Included event that went wrong	Included event that went wrong
Solution	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included logical solution	Not included	Not included

Both beginning writers were easily able to incorporate characters into their stories and they were represented in the students' oral language, pictures and written text. However, it should also be noted that talking about and drawing the characters was easier than writing about them. There were also some discrepancies in both writers' consistent representation of characters across their oral language, pictures and written text. For example, the characters in Lara's pictures were sometimes inconsistent with the written text. I wrote in my teacher journal, "We did talk about how her [Lara] picture showed more characters than just herself and how the words did not. So, she added the other characters to her sentence" (Teacher Journal: January 08). Like Lara, Mia also struggled with consistency among the different types of text. However, Lara's inclination to alter her stories in her retellings and sharings also lead to inconsistencies in her representations

in characters. Many times her oral language and the text did not match up and during her sharing she added random characters. During one such incident, I asked Mia to share her story and she said, “I went to . . . I needed the scissors, but my mom didn’t let me. So, she did it for me. My brothers and sisters were there, and grandma and my dad” (Mia’s post-assessment, February 2008). Her picture included seven people and her sharing included approximately the same number of people. However, her written text was not specific enough to include all of the characters she represented in the picture and sharing (oral language). Additionally, Mia’s text was more difficult to decipher by looking solely on the written text, further illustrating the importance of all three types of text, particularly for students who struggle to record complex/elaborate ideas in written text (see Figure 4). Despite these seemingly small discrepancies, overall, the story element of character appeared to be an easy aspect of the story to include for these beginning writers.

The story element *setting* was defined as *where* and *when* a story took place. The *where* aspect seemed to be easier for the beginning writers to incorporate in their stories, while the *when* aspect tended to be more difficult. Only two of Lara’s writing samples throughout the entire study included both aspects of the setting in any capacity, and this inclusion was only in the oral language, not the pictures or written text. Mia had five samples that included setting in the oral language, but did not include it in either the pictures and/or the written text. The sample in Figure 3 illustrates Mia’s need to use the scissors, and her mother’s decision of not allowing her to do so. Neither the picture nor the written text shows “where” the story took place. It is only from the oral explanation during her teacher conference that she conveyed the *where* (“at my house”) and *when* (“today”) aspects of her story’s setting.

Both girls wrote about some aspect of setting in about 75 percent of their writing samples. However, only Mia wrote about both *where* and *when*. Lara only incorporated *where* the story took place each time she included the setting; however, the *when* aspect was not a part of any of her stories. Despite the greater difficulty to include *when* a story took place, Lara and Mia seemed to easily ask and tell others both *where* and *when* their stories took place. Their oral language always incorporated the setting in each writing sample while the setting seemed a bit more difficult for them to remember to include in their pictures and written text. This pattern was evident with all three ability groups, but actually including the setting in the written text proved to be the more difficult task for the beginning writers.

Beginning writers were able to understand that a *problem* in the story was what a character wanted/needed or something that happened and was unexpected in the story. This understanding allowed them to talk confidently about the problem in their oral language interactions. Both beginning writers were able to represent the problem in their written text. In fact, Mia actually wrote the words, “There was a problem” as part of her written story on two different occasions. Lara also wrote about specific problems (e.g., having a bad day, having to go to the bathroom, and being shy). Mia and Lara were able to incorporate problems into their written stories with relative ease.

On the other hand, incorporating the problem into the picture seemed difficult for the beginning writers. Mia did not include the problem in any of the pictures in her writing samples, and Lara only did so minimally in half of them. For example, Figure 4 shows the picture of Lara standing alone outside looking for her sister Helen. Another example shows Lara standing outside crying because she wants to play. These pictures

both illustrate the problem in a very simple manner. Representing a problem in a pictorial form often requires a series of events, and this is more difficult to represent in a single picture. This difficulty of being able to represent the problem through pictures tended to be seen with children of all ability groups, but was particularly prevalent with the beginning writers.

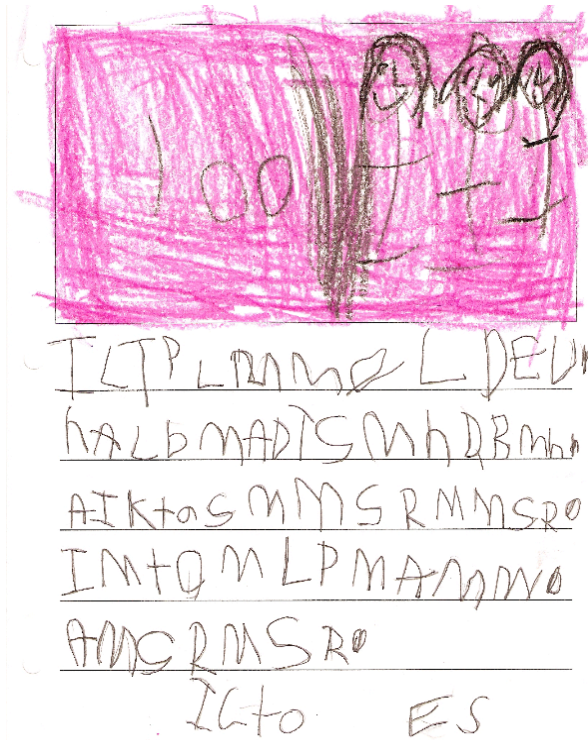


Figure 4. Mia's Post-assessment (Feb. 2008)

The *solution* or manner in which the problem was fixed was the most difficult story element for the beginning writers to incorporate into their stories. Both Mia and Lara were able to talk about the solution in the stories only part of the time and they typically were only able to elaborate on the solution in their oral language and were not able to represent their full complexity in the pictures and/or written text. For example,

entries in the teacher journal revealed that Lara often knew what the problem and solution were going to be, but did not always include them in her written text. One journal entry read

Lara already had the character and setting (*where*) part of her story when I conferenced with her. We talked about the problem and solution. She knew what they were going to be. She just hadn't written them yet. (Teacher Journal: February 13)

Nevertheless, there were some examples where both beginning writers exemplified a complex understanding of the problem/solution relationship in their oral language. For example, one of Mia's writing samples included the fact that she did not like that she and her mom were running late for the school program. Mia easily articulated in her oral language, "My mom was late and I didn't like it. And this is how I solved it, by deciding that I don't care if I'm late." Realizing that the decision to not be upset was a solution to the problem of being late was more complex because it involved the abstractness of feelings and emotions. Despite their abilities to represent their thinking in their oral language, beginning writers were unable to show their full complexity of thinking in their pictures and written text.

Other Categories

The categories of time and motivation became influencing factors throughout the course of the study. Beginning writers seemed to spend their time and effort on the actual process of distinguishing and representing sounds and words in written text. However, this extra time and effort did not seem to hinder their motivation to participate in guided writing or attempt to convey their stories.

These student authors tended to be hindered by time constraints during the guided writing process. Time and energy seemed to be focused on the actual process of

transcribing what they were trying to communicate, the letters and sounds they were trying to represent, leaving minimal time to include the full complexity of the ideas in written text. Lack of time was definitely a hindrance for Mia when it came to sharing. She would often speed up the process of sharing by talking very fast or refusing to read all of the text she had worked on in oral language, pictures, and written text. One example included her telling her story to me during reading as, “I went to Kiersten’s, and I don’t know the rest” (Mia’s Writing Sample, Week 3, January 2008). She did not even try to elaborate or explain anything more. She just moved to the next task at hand.

Every teacher journal entry regarding Lara focused on time and its effect on her finished product. The first two writing samples included comments like, “I spent time with Lara helping her to figure out letter sounds” (Teacher Journal: January 08) and “Lara’s trouble with hearing and writing the sounds tends to hinder her writing a bit. She got stuck in one place because she couldn’t hear a sound” (Teacher Journal: January 15). She was always really taking the time to hear and write the sounds that she heard in the stories she was writing. The time and effort spent on writing conventionally seemed to prevent the students from being able to fully represent the complexity of their ideas in their written text.

Mia and Lara both seemed unencumbered by the task of writing their own stories. There was never any hesitation for either of them to put their stories on paper or to attempt spelling new words. However, their motivation to write manifested itself in different ways throughout the course of the study. Lara wanted to get her story down on paper and share it. She would often stay an extra minute or two to finish while the other students were cleaning up. On the other hand, Mia’s motivation manifested itself during

sharing time. Often when she would share with her share buddy she would begin reading her story and then add, “I can’t remember” or “Blah blah..” Perhaps this was her way of reacting to the difficulty of reading her own text and remembering her oral story.

Therefore, the motivation became writing during the actual time to write, and the motivation shifted to being able to share the story as quickly as possible and move on to something else when it came time for the sharing aspect of guided writing.

Summary

Beginning writers were found to make gains in writing development and complexity of ideas when story elements were a focus on instruction and review. Writing development gains helped them to write more conventionally and to communicate their ideas more fully. Students represented their ideas more accurately, and this seemed enhanced by accounting for the different types of text. Beginning writers tended to have their performance on the rubrics hindered by time. They could articulate their stories in oral language and use a picture to convey the same story, but it took them longer than the writers from the other ability groups to write their intended messages. They were unable to write their written texts with the details and language of their oral language and pictures. However, the students’ attitudes towards writing and the guided writing time were not hindered the instruction or the guided writing process. The students were motivated to write and keep writing. They began to add in feelings their stories as part of their intended communication though this was not part of the instruction.

Intermediate Writers: Brynn and Sam

Brynn is a creative five-year-old female who loves coloring, making up stories, playing outside, playing with friends, and animals. Brynn’s performance on the district

kindergarten pre-assessment indicated fairly typical literacy abilities. She was able to identify 25 capital letters, 22 lowercase letters, six letter sounds, and one high frequency word. She understood the basic concepts of print and wrote her name in all capital letters. Additionally, her independent writing in August 2007 included a simple two word story idea illustrated with stick figures and the written letter *I* as the written text.

Brynn's pre-assessment writing sample included a simple idea represented by a picture and the text, "IPAT W mY BTH" (Brynn's pre-assessment, December 2007). This text was explained in her oral language as, "I painted with my brother" (Brynn's pre-assessment, December 2007). She wrote from left to right and used some spacing between words. Most of the beginning, middle, and ending sounds were written and few high frequency words were also included. The story included the characters in oral language, pictures, and written text while the setting was only discussed in the oral language. At the time of the pre-assessment, Brynn was able to identify all letters, sounds, and many of the high frequency words. She was able to demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts of print and had begun reading on or slightly above grade level texts for independent and small group reading. During independent writing she was able to think of an idea, compose a story, spell words using letter sounds, and write high frequency words.

Sam is an energetic five-year-old who loves soccer, playing outside, and Superman. When Sam came to kindergarten he was able to identify 24 capital letters, 19 lowercase letter, six sounds, and one high frequency word. He understood many basic concepts of print but was unsure of the directionality of reading from left to right with the return sweep. Additionally, Sam wrote his name correctly, but it was not perfect in its

shape or formation. His independent writing in August included a simple sentence told through oral language and illustrated with a picture and the letters “I k” for “I went camping” (Sam’s baseline, August 2007).

For Sam, the pre-assessment writing sample in December included a picture and simple sentence that consistently matched his oral language. The text moved from left to right, used some spacing between words, and included a few high frequency words. Additionally, Sam wrote most beginning, middle, and ending sounds as he attempted to spell new words. Sam’s story implemented the characters and the *where* aspect of the setting in his oral language, pictures, and written text. At the time of the pre-assessment Sam, like Brynn, was able to identify all letters, sounds, and high frequency words, as well as understand and demonstrate the concepts of print. He was reading on or above grade level and working on decoding new words in stories. His independent writing at this time included thinking of an idea, composing the sentence, writing the sentence with letter-sound correspondence, and incorporating high frequency words.

Writing Development

Intermediate writers’ used and experimented with writing to approach conventional ways of communication and representation. The same aspects of writing development were examined for the intermediate writers as the beginning writers (a) convey ideas with details, (b) use linguistic organization, (c) consistently match oral language, pictures, and written text, (d) use the concepts of print, (e) implement spelling strategies, and (f) include high frequency words. Table 4 illustrates the findings in regard to writing development and the following paragraphs explain the similarities and differences between Brynn and Sam in regard to writing development.

Table 4. *Intermediate Writers' Writing Development*

Assessment	Brynn		Sam	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Conveys ideas with details	Simple idea	Simple idea and details	Simple idea	Simple idea and details
Linguistic Organization	Word group with strings of random letters	Word groups with letters representing intended sounds	Simple sentence	Punctuated story (2 sentences or more)
Message match between ideas	Consistent match in oral story and pictures	Consistent message in all texts	Consistent message in all texts	Consistent message in all texts
Concepts of Print	Writes left to right	Conventional directionality	Conventional directionality	Conventional directionality
	Some spacing	Sporadic spacing	Some spacing	Sporadic spacing
	No punctuation	Some punctuation	No punctuation	Some punctuation
Spelling Strategies	Independent use of spelling strategies	Independent use of spelling strategies	Independent use of spelling strategies	Independent use of spelling strategies
High frequency words	A few kindergarten high frequency words	Kindergarten and other high frequency words	A few kindergarten high frequency words	Kindergarten and other high frequency words

Intermediate writers did not have trouble coming up with an idea to include in their stories. They composed full sentences throughout the course of the study and were able to do so earlier than the beginning writers. Thus, they created longer stories with more sentences, more words, and more details. Unlike the beginning writers, the inconsistencies in message were not an issue for the intermediate writers. Their conveyed messages were the same in oral language and written text, although there was not an exact match. They implemented the concepts of print and experimented with spelling strategies. High frequency words were included with ease.

Sam and Brynn actively experimented with and learned about the concepts of print during the course of the study. They wrote from left to right and experimented with directionality, spacing, and punctuation. The return sweep and top to bottom aspect of directionality proved to be more difficult for the students to comprehend than the left to right aspect. Brynn and Sam had no trouble writing left to right with a return sweep on the front of the page. However, when there was no longer any room and they had to flip the page over to write on the back, problems arose. Figure 5 is one of Sam's writing samples where he wrote, "I called my frien . . ." on the front of the page and "d at the hospital. He broke his arm" (Sam's Writing Sample, Week 1, January 2008) on the back of the page moving from left to right and bottom to top. Sam tended to do this more than Brynn. In fact, he continued doing this for five of the six weeks of instruction. It was not until a template was introduced during the guided writing time that included lines for writing that this was corrected. It is interesting to note that with the template Sam was able to change his directionality habit of writing from bottom to top on the back of the page, even though the back of the page was blank as was the back of his previous pages.

In another writing sample, Sam included correct directionality on the front. However, the text on the back moved from left to right and bottom to top. Three lines of text were written from bottom to top and three additional lines of text were written from bottom to top in-between the lines he had written previously. For Brynn, two of her writing samples included left to right and bottom to top directionality on the back of the page as well. It is interesting to note that in both of these writing samples all written text was on the back of the page with the picture on the front. When Brynn's text was on the front of the page or began on the front of the page, she was able to continue with left to right and top to bottom directionality on the back of the page.

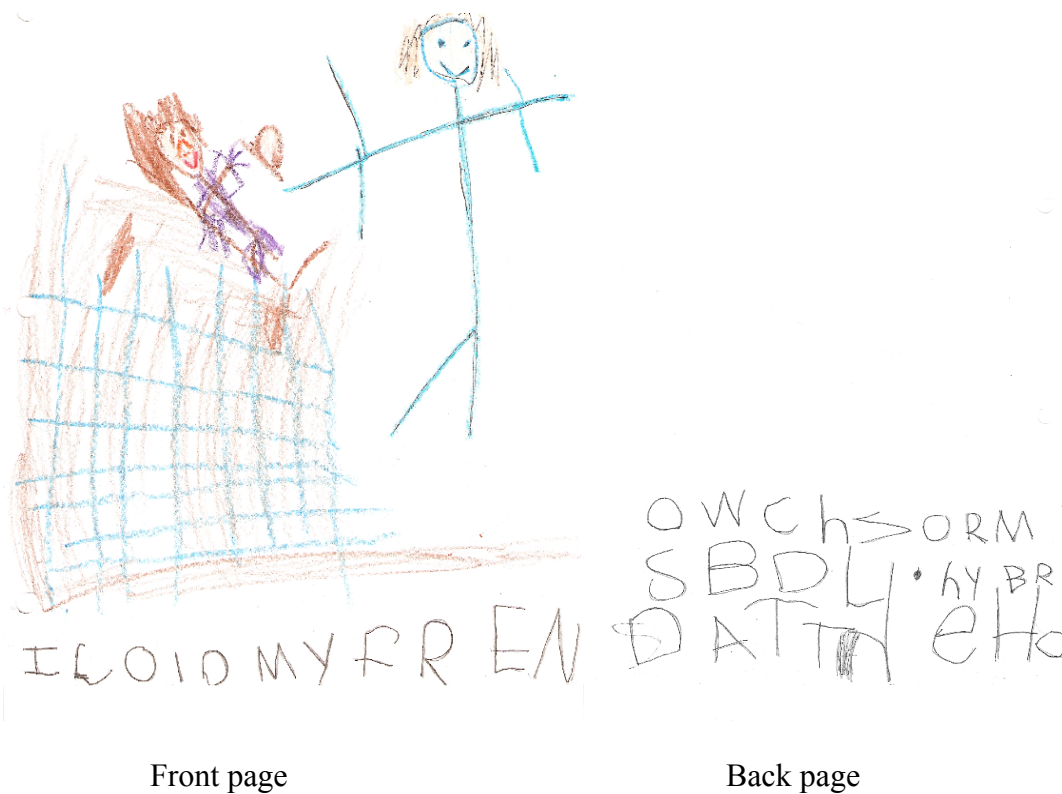


Figure 5. Sam's Writing Sample, Week 1 (Jan. 2008)

Spacing was another issue for these intermediate writers. Intermediate writers tended to include story elements independently that lead to conferences about different writing conventions. Sometimes they used spaces or punctuation and other times it was added in random places. Spacing was talked about frequently because of its effect on the readability of the stories. One teacher journal entry about Sam's explained it by stating,

I noticed that Sam's spacing was kind of interesting today. A few words were written correctly, but many had spaces between each letter. This was just something that made it more interesting and difficult to read. (Teacher Journal: February 13)

The intermediate writers active experimentation with the concepts of print provided insight to their literacy learning as they focused on directionality and spacing. However, Brynn and Sam used little or no punctuation within their stories. They tended to write in a more conventional manner in regard to all the concepts of print than the beginning writers who also experimented with these concepts, but not to the same extent.

Story Elements

Brynn and Sam used the four story elements of characters, setting, problem, and solution in their oral language and written texts. However, the use of pictures to convey the story elements seemed to be neglected as the majority of writing time and effort was spent on the written text. Tables 5 and 6 illustrate the inclusion of story elements by both intermediate writers, and the following paragraphs explain the similarities and differences of this inclusion.

Table 5. *Brynn's Inclusion of Story Elements*

Story Element	Pre-assessment			Post-assessment		
	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text
Character	Included all	Included all	Included all	Included all	Not included	Included some
Setting	Included where and when	Not included	Not included	Not included	Not included	Not included
Problem	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included event that went wrong	Not included	Included event that went wrong
Solution	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included logical solution	Not included	Included logical solution

Table 6. *Sam's Inclusion of Story Elements*

Story Element	Pre-assessment			Post-assessment		
	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text
Character	Included one	Included one	Included one	Included all	Included all	Included all
Setting	Included where and when	Included where	Included where	Included where	Not included	Not included
Problem	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included event that went wrong	Included event that went wrong	Included event that went wrong
Solution	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included logical solution	Not included	Not included

As with the beginning writers, intermediate writers effortlessly told who was in their stories. Brynn and Sam tended to incorporate all their characters in the pictures more consistently than the beginning writers, but including the characters in the written text proved to be difficult. Inconsistencies arose and were discussed a few times during the beginning of the study. Brynn conferenced with the teacher during the first two weeks about consistently matching the characters in her picture and the characters included in her written text. For example, in one instance the teacher said, “Now your picture shows you. Who is that with you?” (Brynn’s Writing Sample, Week 2, January 2008). Brynn answered that it was her mom, and a discussion followed concerning how she could incorporate her mother into her written story. She orally constructed the text, “I got my ears pierced at the mall and my mom took me” (Brynn’s Writing Sample, Week 2, January 2008). In all cases, when discrepancies in the representation of characters between texts were pointed out to the intermediate writers, they were able to make the necessary alterations to ensure consistency between their text and pictures.

The *where* aspect of the setting was easier for the students to incorporate than the *when* aspect. Students could easily tell where their stories took place, but as with beginners, adding it to pictures and written text was something that was more difficult and required support. Brynn’s conferences helped her to distinguish and include the locations for her stories including: the mall, a hotel, her house, and the store. Sam wrote about locations for settings that included: the eye doctor, the hospital, his grandma’s house, and his house. During conferencing, Sam and Brynn often had the location of their story represented in their oral language and even in their written text. However, the representation in their pictures was almost always missing. Many times these students

would just spend their time going straight from discussing their story to writing it without spending much time or effort on the pictures. Therefore, conferencing had to be a venue for checking that the oral language and written text were consistent with one another in regard to where a story took place.

The students incorporated the *when* aspect of the setting with less frequency than the *where* aspect. Brynn included when her story happened only once throughout the course of the entire study. She explained that she got a carebear and drew it with her in the picture (see Figure 6). When asked where the carebear was she pointed to the picture. The teacher then asked when she got it, and she said she got it “at Christmas.” The conferencing that followed focused on adding the words *at Christmas* to the end of the story, and Brynn wrote it in her final product. Sam, on the other hand, included some manifestations of when the stories took place in his writing samples. In one writing sample he wrote that the event happened “at 10:30” and then he drew a sun in his line of text. When he read his story to me he said, “I played with my family. There was a problem. I couldn’t play with them . . . at 10:30 daytime” (Sam’s Writing Sample, Week 3, January 2008). He pointed to the sun as he said the word “daytime.” It was clearly intended to represent when the story took place. He did this again a few weeks later. It is interesting to note that Sam was the only writer in the entire study to use both time and day as aspects of when a story took place by including the phrase, “yesterday at 10:30.” Whether the time and day were accurate is unclear, but Sam was able to understand and represent both components of the setting. His understanding of what setting included manifested itself in some unexpected ways.

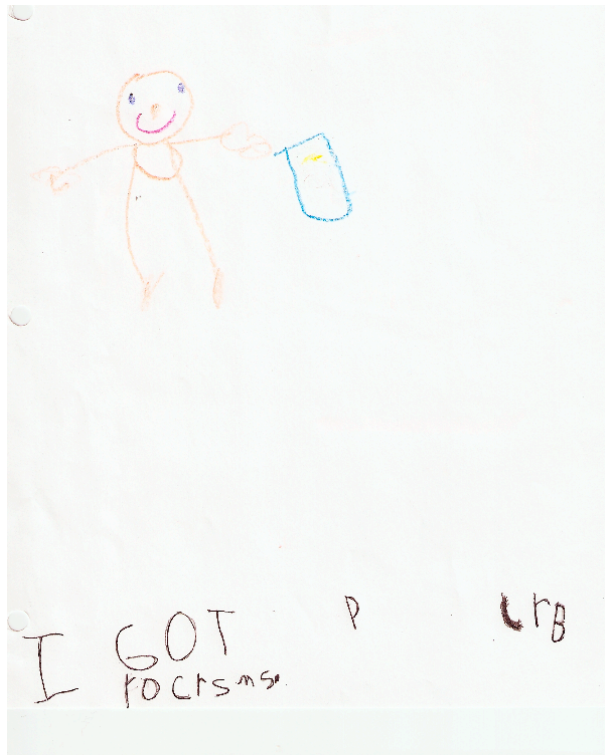


Figure 6. Brynn's Writing Sample, Week 1 (Jan. 2008)

Intermediate writers, just like beginning writers, incorporated the *where* aspect of the setting more easily than the *when* aspect and had more difficulty incorporating the setting into their pictures. However, Brynn and Sam both seemed to understand the idea of the *when* aspect of the setting to be more specific than the beginning writers did. For them, setting was a specific time, date, or when they were a certain age, not just “yesterday” or “today.”

The intermediate writers seemed to have a more complex understanding of the problem aspect of the story than the beginning students. They naturally incorporated it into their writing earlier than the beginning writers. During the third and fourth week of instruction and the study, Brynn was able to independently come up with and add

problems to her stories after conferencing. Sam began adding a problem to his story during the first week of the study. He often added it to his oral language and picture, but did not include it in the written text. The teacher journal explained our conference on that date:

When we conference I asked him if there was a problem in his story. He looked at me like it was a ridiculous question and answered, “Well, he broke his arm.” I encouraged him to add that to the story. He said he could make his story 2 sentences and add that in—and he did. (Teacher Journal: January 8)

By the second week he wrote the phrase, “TEWOzP” or “There was a problem.” The use of this phrase made its way into the writing of most of the students, but Sam implemented it first.

Despite the fact that the problem was easily included into oral language, the intermediate writers, just like the beginning writers, had more difficulty including it in the picture and written text. Each intermediate student only had one writing sample that illustrated the problem in the picture. Brynn’s picture showed the hotel room they stayed in with a broken dishwasher and television, and Sam’s sample (see Figure 5) showed his friend with a broken arm. In most cases their other samples included written text that stated the problem, suggesting that it was easier for the students to write about the problem than to draw it.

The problems that both Brynn and Sam wrote about tended to be about either a want/need or something that unexpectedly happened. The problems were real problems that made sense and even illustrated a complex understanding of wants and needs and unexpected events. However, the intermediate writers only used both aspects of problem together in the same story once. In Figure 7, Brynn told about unexpectedly running out of frosting for her valentine cookies and the want and need to get more, and this instance

could possibly be described as either one of the aspects but not both. Intermediate writers, like beginning writers, could easily incorporate problem into oral language and written text, but it was more difficult to represent it within pictures. Brynn and Sam made the story element of problem more prevalent in their writing than the beginning writers and were even able to use both aspects of problem (want/need and unexpected event) together.

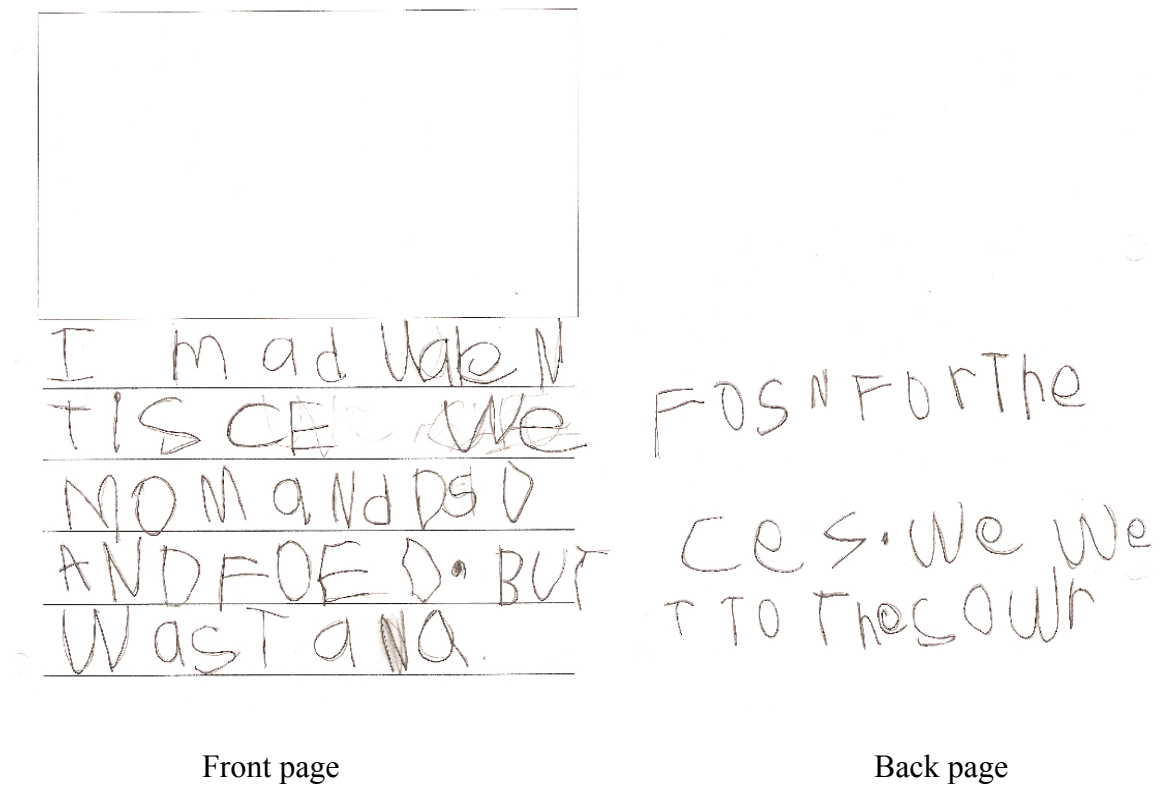


Figure 7. Brynn's Writing Sample, Week 6 (Feb. 2008)

The solution story element, or fixing the problem, was easily understood by the intermediate writers, but did take some effort and practice to implement in oral language, pictures, and written text. Brynn and Sam never included illogical solutions in their writing, but coming up with a solution to both a want/need and an unexpected event only

happened once. Most of the solutions were directly correlated to the problems determined as either a want/need or something that unexpectedly happened.

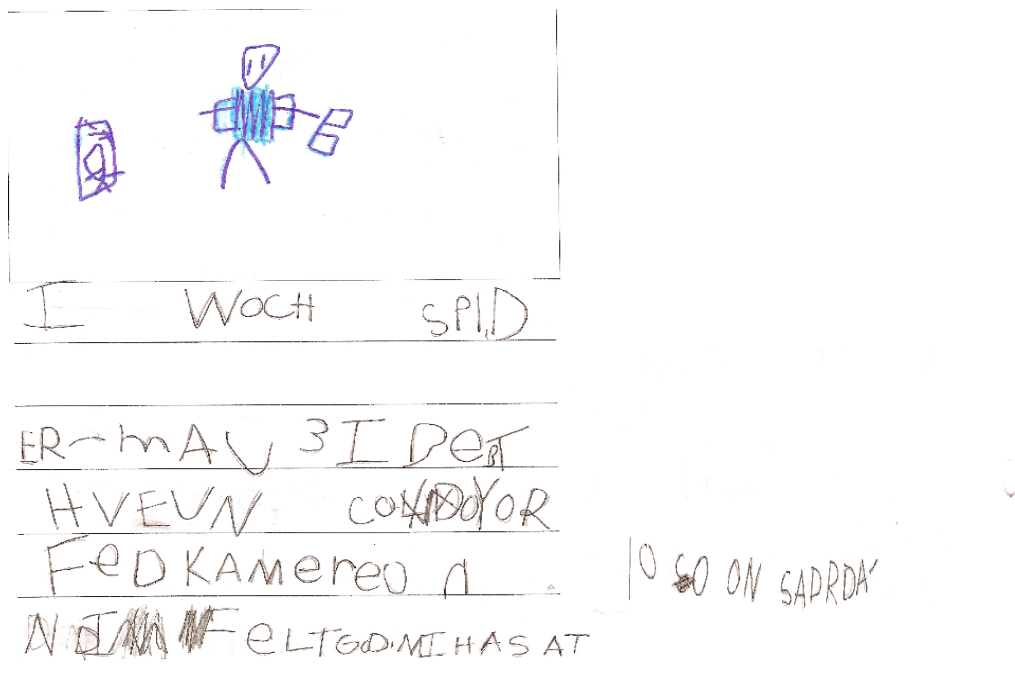
As with story problems, Brynn and Sam could easily come up with the solutions of their stories in oral language and seemed to be able to represent these in written text most of the time. However, illustrating the solution in the picture proved to be the most difficult task. Brynn was unable to use the picture to represent the solution in any of her writing samples, and Sam only did so in his final two samples. The picture in Figure 8 contains Sam holding the phone in his hand to call his friend. His oral language included the solution to his problem of not having fun while watching *Spiderman 3*. An additional sample shows Sam standing by the computer that his sister was using. His solution to wanting to play on the computer was to wait for a turn until she was done. The pictures generally needed one or two additions to help them contain the problem and solution, but the intermediate writers seemed more concerned with writing text than in adding to the pictures. Solutions were easily articulated in oral language and written texts by the intermediate writers. Just as with the beginning writers, the use of pictures to represent solutions seemed more difficult. However, intermediate writers noticed and attempted to include solutions more consistently than beginning writers.

Other Categories

The category of time affected intermediate students in the guided writing context because they seemed to spend their time and effort on the written text and would often neglect to finish or even create a picture.

A common theme that repeatedly surfaced in the data was the effect of time constraints on writing performance. This was evident, as described above, in the instance

of Brynn knowing the solution she wanted to include but not being able to do so because of the limited instructional time frame. However, the most compelling illustrations of this surfaced from the actual pictures in each of the writing samples. As apparent in Figure 7, Brynn had two writing samples that did not contain a picture at all. She moved straight from her oral language to writing the text. She also had another writing sample that included an unfinished picture of five circles with dots inside that were assumed to be the characters in her story. Additionally, Sam's last few writing samples included pictures that seemed to be drawn quickly and could even be considered unfinished (see Figure 8). The intermediate writers tended to focus their time, attention, and effort on the written text more than the pictures. They were not hindered by the conventions of writing and seemed to prefer communicating in written text.



Front page

Back page

Figure 8. Sam's Post-assessment (Feb. 2008)

Summary

Intermediate writers' writing development moved towards conventionality at a more rapid rate than the beginning writers. They had issues with directionality and spacing as part of their experimentation with the writing process, but this led to marked improvements in their abilities to write conventionally. Their use of story elements made their stories more complex and allowed for more accurate representations of the messages they were trying to communicate. Oral language and written text were the primary means of incorporating story elements, and this resulted in unfinished or nonexistent pictures. Time was a big factor in the products they created, but students were motivated to write and did not seem hindered by their abilities to write in the guided writing context. Intermediate writers' more advanced abilities to write conventionally and to incorporate story elements in written text resulted in stories that were longer and used more story elements. However, they did not rely on their pictures as much as the beginning writers. The intermediate writers primarily focused on the written text.

Advanced Writers: Henry and Chad

Henry was a six-year-old kindergartener who loves riding bikes, swimming, and books. He tended to get a lot of extra attention because he is the youngest child in a family and where most of his older siblings are either teenagers or in their early twenties. This attention helped Henry learn to read at an early age. His district kindergarten pre-assessment performance in August indicated that Henry came to kindergarten being able to read simple texts and write simple sentences using invented spelling. He understood concepts of print and identified all his letter names, letter sounds, and most of the

kindergarten high frequency words. Henry's first independent writing sample in August included a simple picture with the text, "ISWien" for "I went swimming."

Henry's pre-assessment writing sample in December included a simple sentence about going to the Christmas Sing at school. He wrote from left to right with a return sweep, used a capital letter at the beginning of the sentence, and implemented correct spacing between words. He was able to write most beginning, middle, and ending sounds of words, and drew a picture to accompany his written text. His oral language consistently matched his pictures and written text, and he incorporated a few of the kindergarten high frequency words in his story. Henry's pre-assessment story portrayed him as the only character in his oral language, picture, and written text, and the setting was only present in the picture. At the time of the pre-assessment, Henry was reading trade books and was working with his teacher on basic comprehension strategies. He loved to read but did not seem to be particularly excited about guided writing, only doing the minimal amount of work during independent writing.

Chad was an enthusiastic five-year-old who loves dinosaurs, the solar system, drawing, and reading. He came to kindergarten with the ability to read just about any books, notes, or written text put before him. Chad's ability to read and write helped him to understand and implement the majority of concepts of print and identify all the letter names, letter sounds, and high frequency words at the beginning of kindergarten. His name included the correct letters, but the letters were without perfect shape, spacing or alignment. Chad's first independent writing sample in kindergarten in August included the text "I wettothe Acwream with my famale" (Chad's baseline, August 2007) for what he shared in his oral language as "I went to the aquarium with my family." He was able

to represent his idea, and his spelling, although not conventional, represented nearly all of the sounds in each of the words.

Chad's pre-assessment writing sample in December included one elaborate sentence of an idea and some details with text moving from left to right with a return sweep. The text took up half of the page, used spaces, and incorporated most of the beginning, middle, and ending sounds. He attempted spelling new words and used many of the kindergarten high frequency words in his text as well. The story included characters in the oral language, pictures, and partially in the written text. The setting was included in the oral language and the written text, but not in the picture. At the time of the pre-assessment, Chad was reading simple chapter books and longer trade books, and reading instruction focused on comprehension strategies to deepen his understanding of text. Chad loved reading and learning, but he especially enjoyed and anticipated guided writing time. In fact, he and his sister who is a year older than him would play "writing time" at home.

Writing Development

Writing development was examined as with the other ability groups as a student author's ability to (a) convey ideas with details, (b) use linguistic organization, (c) consistently match oral language, pictures, and written text, (d) use the concepts of print, (e) implement spelling strategies, and (f) include high frequency words. The independent writing of Henry and Chad seemed especially conventional from the outset of the study, but both of these advanced writers were able to make progress over time. Table 7 illustrates the writing development of the advanced writers and the following paragraphs report the similarities and differences between both students.

Both of the advanced writers began the study with the ability to write simple sentences, but they were able to think of and represent longer and more complex ideas in their written text as the study progressed. They used all three types of text to effectively convey their intended messages. However, the problems of consistently conveying the same message in oral language, pictures, and written text of the beginning and the intermediate writers were rarely apparent. Henry and Chad were confident in their attempts to spell familiar and unfamiliar words and incorporated the kindergarten sight words and additional sight words with ease from the initial onset of the study. However, the advanced writers implementation and use of the concepts of print were different than those of writers from the other ability groups.

An interesting addition came about in regards to writing ideas with the advanced writers. Towards the end of the study, Chad had a conversation with his teacher about how ideas can change and how this could be accounted for in writing, rather advanced thinking for a five-year-old. The teacher journal stated, “The complexity was there in our conversation as we talked about ideas changing and how to account for that. It really got at the heart of the problem and solution relationship” (Teacher Journal: February 15). Both advanced students were able to compose more complex ideas and details to accompany these ideas as a natural part of their guided writing experience than both the beginning and intermediate writers. However, Chad understood that writing ideas represented thinking and that thinking could change the ideas themselves.

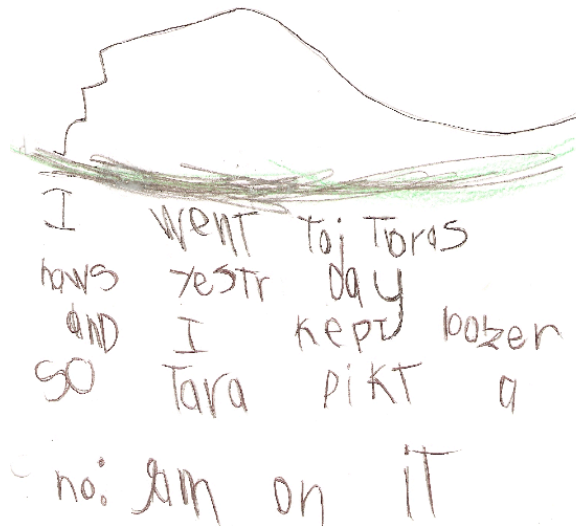
Due to their more highly developed reading abilities, advanced writers’ effort, time, and ability to use and understand the concepts of print were different than those of the beginning and the intermediate writers. Henry and Chad easily used conventional

directionality and spacing the majority of the time. Thus, the focus of the teacher's support regarding the concepts of print became punctuation and beginning sentences with a capital letter.

Table 7. *Advanced Writers' Writing Development*

Assessment	Henry		Chad	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Conveys ideas with details	Simple idea	Simple idea and details	Simple idea	Simple idea and details
Linguistic Organization	Simple sentence	Punctuated story (2 sentences or more)	Simple sentence	Punctuated story (2 sentences or more)
Message match between ideas	Consistent match in oral story and pictures	Consistent message in all texts	Consistent message in all texts	Consistent message in all texts
Concepts of Print	Conventional directionality	Conventional directionality	Conventional directionality	Conventional directionality
	Correct spacing	Correct spacing	Some spacing	Sporadic spacing
	Some punctuation	Some punctuation	Some punctuation	Some punctuation
Spelling Strategies	Independent use of spelling strategies	Independent use of spelling strategies	Independent use of spelling strategies	Independent use of spelling strategies
High frequency words	A few kindergarten high frequency words	Kindergarten and other high frequency words	Many kindergarten high frequency words	Kindergarten and other high frequency words

Many of the advanced students' conferences included some type of discussion on punctuation. Henry's experimentation included the use of a colon and periods in random places within the text. One sample (see Figure 9) included the written text, "I went to: Taras haws yestr day and I kept loosen so Tara pikt a no: gam on it" (Henry's Writing Sample, Week 4, February 2008) for "I went to Tara's house yesterday and I kept losing. So, Tara picked a new game." The colons seemed randomly placed, but careful examination revealed that the colons were purposely positioned in the text. They were not only used twice but were also left despite the process of several sharings with different people. Henry intended them to be there and made no attempts to change them.

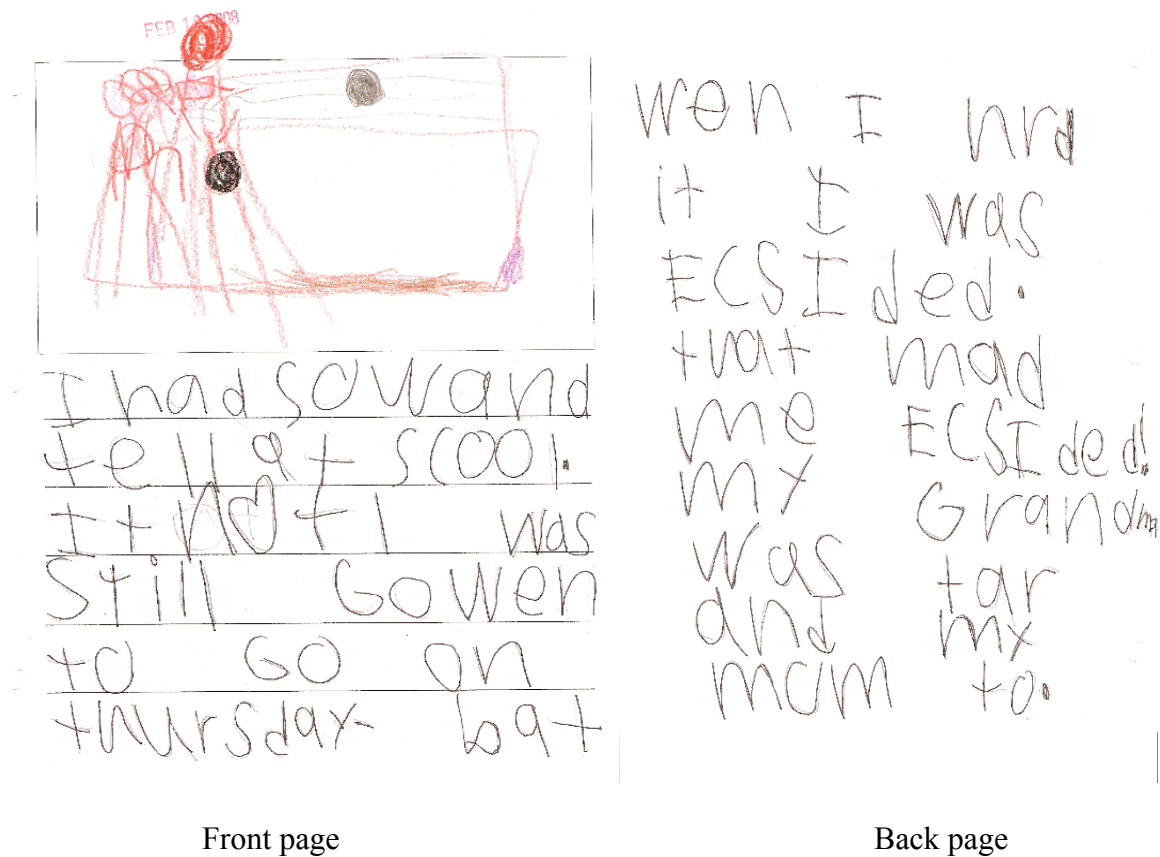


I WENT to: Taras
haws yestr day
and I kept loosen
so Tara pikt a
no: gam on it

Figure 9. Henry's Writing Sample, Week 4 (Feb. 2008)

Chad also experimented with punctuation, and included an exclamation point in one writing sample (see Figure 10). Another one of his writing samples included the term "Misis O's helper" for "Mrs. O's helper." Chad used the apostrophe to show that he was the helper of the classroom aid, Mrs. O. The apostrophe and the colon are both forms of

punctuation that are not usually discussed in great depth, if at all, in the kindergarten classroom. Henry and Chad experimented with them in their stories, illustrating sophistication in their understanding and use of the concepts of print. Advanced writers incorporated the common punctuation of periods and exclamation points in more conventional ways than the beginning and intermediate writers. They clearly had more experience with and a better understanding of the types of and purposes of punctuation than the other writers.



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Figure 10. Chad's Post-assessment (Feb. 2008)

Story Elements

Advanced writers usually incorporated the story elements of character, setting, problem and solution independently in their oral language and written texts. They also implemented pictures to communicate their intended messages in more advanced ways than the other writers. Tables 8 and 9 illustrate the inclusion of story elements in the writing of the advanced students and the following paragraphs explain the similarities and differences between Henry and Chad in this inclusion.

Table 8. *Henry's Inclusion of Story Elements*

Story Element	Pre-assessment			Post-assessment		
	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text
Character	Included one	Included one	Included one	Included all	Included all	Included all
Setting	Not included	Included where	Not included	Included where	Included where	Included where
Problem	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included event that went wrong	Not included	Included event that went wrong
Solution	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included logical solution	Not included	Included logical solution

Table 9. *Chad's Inclusion of Story Elements*

Story Element	Pre-assessment			Post-assessment		
	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text
Character	Included all	Included all	Included one	Included all	Included all	Included all
Setting	Included when	Not included	Included when	Included where and when	Included where	Included where and when
Problem	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included want or need	Not included	Included want or need
Solution	Not included	Not included	Not included	Included logical solution	Included logical solution	Included logical solution

Characters were easily incorporated into the stories of the advanced writers, just as with the beginning and intermediate writers. Henry and Chad effortlessly talked about who was in their story. The pictures and written text represented the characters with only one or two discrepancies for each of the writers. One of Chad's stories stated, "We had 100 day" in his oral language and written text, but his picture showed only him sitting at a table. Henry had one or two other discrepancies, but when they were pointed out to him, he corrected them. In one example his picture included him making a snowslide and his written text stated, "BUT THER wus intanuf sno so we weaDid The nex Day aT my Haws a KuPl Days a Go" (Henry's Writing Sample, Week 6, February 2008) for the oral language, "But there wasn't enough snow so we waited until the next day at my house a couple days ago" (see Figure 11). The teacher journal on this day state entry stated

We talked about the characters in his story. One part of the story said 'I' and the other part said 'we.' I asked him about it and we clarified things. He changed the 'we' to an 'I.' (Teacher Journal: February 13)

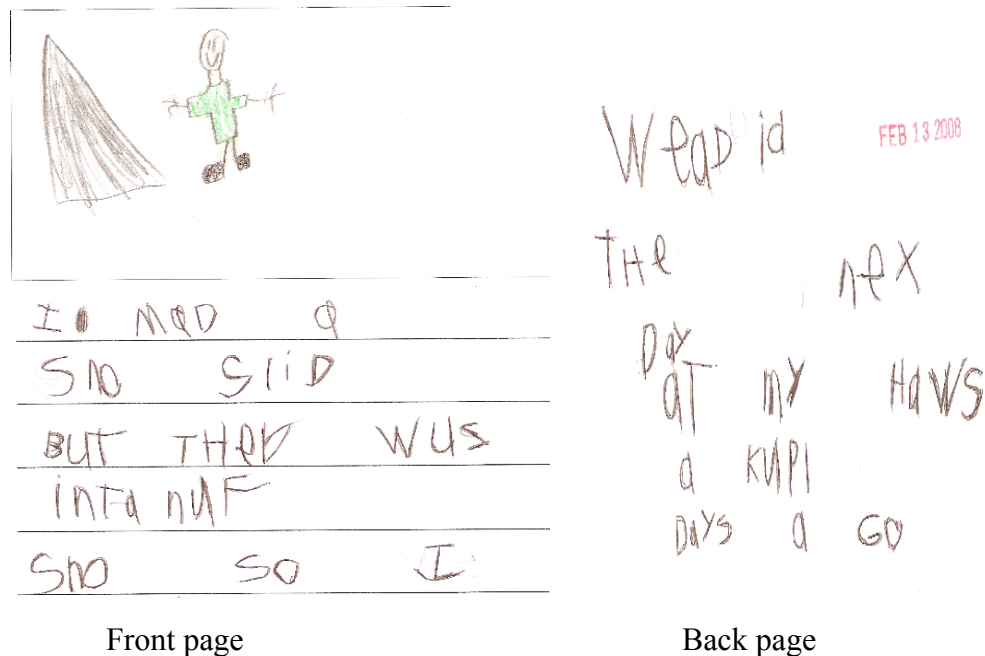


Figure 11. Henry's Writing Sample, Week 6 (Feb. 2008)

The few discrepancies between characters tended to be when the number of characters was implied, such as writing about something done as a class. Usually this incongruence was manifested in the pictures or the written text, not the oral language. Advanced writers, like beginning and intermediate writers, represented characters in oral language and written text. Their ability of to use written text with ease, enabled conferencing and sharing to focus on the consistent match between the number of characters in all three types of text.

Advanced writers, like beginning and intermediate writers, incorporated the *where* aspect of setting with more ease than the *when* aspect. They wrote about locations

more frequently than the other groups and included both aspects of setting together more frequently as well.

Henry's oral language included when and where a story happened during 75% of the writing samples. His pictures illustrated where a story happened the majority of the time and when a story occurred in only one sample throughout the course of the study. He drew pictures of the school gym, his front yard, his house, a friend's house, the dinner table, and his kindergarten classroom. However, it was only in one of his final writing samples that he showed himself standing by a snow slide that he made, and it may be debatable whether the picture fully communicated the notion of where and when. Written text included where a story took place five of the eight times and when the story took place with the same frequency. Henry could effortlessly talk, draw, and write about both aspects of the setting. It is only in drawing pictures of *when* the story occurred that he had trouble. Additionally, Henry's oral language, pictures, and written text all represented where a story took place in five of the eight writing samples, and all three types of text together did not represent when in any of the samples.

Despite the fact that Chad tended to be more verbal in his telling and sharing during guided writing, his oral language failed to include setting story elements as frequently as Henry's did. Henry tended to use the story elements as prompts for questioning, but Chad's ideas were often more developed and thus, people did not ask about each of the story elements. Chad talked about when a story took place only twice and yet, he discussed when it happened five of the eight times. Chad, like all the other writers, was able to portray *where* a story took place in pictures more easily than *when*. He drew pictures of: school, his kindergarten classroom, and his home to represent where

stories took place. However, the only picture that illustrated when a story took place was an illustration of the class Valentine's Day party, and with this example, the determination of when a story took place must be assumed. It is interesting to note that the Chad's written text included the *when* and *where* aspects of setting in congruence with his oral language. Written text included where a story took place two of the eight times and it included when a story took place five of the eight times. Additionally, Chad only used all three types of text together to represent the location of a story two of the eight times, and when a story took place twice.

Chad and Henry were able to represent setting as a whole more consistently in written text than the other writers. However, their use of oral language and picture was very similar. They were able to talk about setting with ease, particularly when prompted. They also tended to illustrate the *where* aspect of the setting with greater ease than the *when* aspect.

The advanced writers were able to talk about, incorporate, and represent problems in more complex ways than the other students. Chad began using problems in his stories early on in the study. His first writing sample included a problem in his oral language and written text. Chad's written text stated, "toomoro we are starte chants. And I don't teke I can do It. I wiL trI my best" (Chad's Writing Sample, Week 1, January 2008) for the oral language of "Tomorrow we are starting chance, and I don't think I can do it. I will try my best." The picture did not include the problem, but his oral language and written text emphasized his concern with being able to play the new game that was being introduced.

Henry, on the other hand, did not start including the aspects of problem into his stories until halfway through the study. His third writing sample included a problem in

his oral language and written text as well. His written text said, “I=wintSleDen Yestr Dae. WiTa MY Flamly anD Wee KooDint GitaWT-ov The snow” (Henry’s Writing Sample, Week 3, January 2008). His oral language stated, “I went sledding yesterday with my family and we couldn’t get out of the snow.” He initially thought that his story did not have a problem in it, but after conferencing he was able to remember something that happened unexpectedly. Problems seemed to be easy to talk about through oral language and to represent in written text, but they seemed more difficult to include in pictures. Additionally, using both types of problems, wants/needs and unexpected happenings, seemed more difficult to incorporate into one story.

Henry’s late onset of using problems may have been influenced by a conference with the teacher in regard to problems in his story. Previously, when asked if there was something he wanted or needed in his story or something that happened that he had not expected, he stated that there was not. On this particular occasion, he was reminded what a problem was and responded, “Oh no! We couldn’t get out of the snow. So, my sister and my sister’s friend had to push our car.” He then wrote about his problem and continued to do so for the rest of the study. Conferencing then focused on the fact that adding problems to stories makes them more interesting. The teacher journal stated

Henry and I had a big discussion about adding problems to our stories to make them more interesting. Henry seemed a bit unconvinced initially, but he added the problem and did a great job with it. I felt like he was able to grasp on, at least to an extent, to what this means. I could tell that he was more proud with his finished product after adding the problem to the story. (Teacher Journal: January 23)

Despite all this, Henry included problems in his oral language five of the eight times writing only about a want or a need, not an unexpected event. A problem was included within his written text five of the eight times with no inclusion of the

unexpected event aspect of the problem as well. He only included the problem in his picture once in an illustration of not having enough snow to make something.

As previously stated, Chad began including problems into his stories early on in the study. He was able to discuss and write about problems during the first week of review instruction. He included the problem in his oral language seven of the eight times with the want/need aspect in three samples and the unexpected event aspect in five samples. The pictures included problem in four of the eight samples, a want/need in three of those and an unexpected happening in two of them. One sample did include both aspects of problem represented in all three types of text and is explained below.

As with the beginning and intermediate writers, the idea of representing a problem with both prompts, a want/need and something that happened that you did not expect, in all three types of text was really difficult. Henry did it in one example where the picture representation is questionable as mentioned above, and Chad did it in one example that he identified himself. During a conference he told the teacher that he had thought of a problem that had both a want or a need and something that happened that he did not think was going to. He could tell that this was more complex and it was really exciting to him.

Henry and Chad did not have problems in determining solutions that made sense in resolving the problems in their stories. They were able to come up with and represent their solutions in their oral language and written text, but including it in the picture seemed to be a more difficult task. Henry did not include solution until he began including problem halfway through the study. His initial attempt at including the problem was only through oral language, but he eventually was able to include all three types of

text. Oral language was used to talk about the solutions in five of the eight writing samples with two of those talking about either the solution to one aspect of the problem, a want/need or event, and three samples discussing a solution to both aspects. There was only one writing sample that included a picture of the solution, and some might feel that his drawing of a snowslide that he was able to make after waiting for snow could debatably be an illustrated solution. His written text included solution in four samples with three samples explaining the solution to a want/need or an unexpected event, and one sample including the solution to both.

Chad talked about his solution in seven of the eight writing samples with six of them telling a solution to either the want/need or unexpected event, and only one of them telling the solution to both. His pictures included solution in five of the eight samples with only one addressing solutions to both types of problems. Chad's written text talked included solution in seven of the eight writing samples with only the same sample addressing all of the aspect of the solution. The writing sample that was able to fully represent both aspects of a solution in all three types of text read, "we had a valetIns daY party. I cold not fInd myn. So I WIll look It ovr at home. That mad me sad and happy." (see Figure 12). The oral language stated, "We had a valentine's party. I could not find mine. So, I will look it over at home. That made me sad and happy" (Chad's Writing Sample, Week 6, February 2008). The sample included two pictures with a line drawn down the middle to separate the two illustrations. The picture on the left included Chad not being able to find his valentine, and the picture on the right was an illustration of Chad looking for it at home. Not only did this exemplify the means whereby he was trying to negotiate the difference and the relationship between problem and solution. It

also addressed a solution that was yet to happen. The solution had not occurred yet. This complexity is something that could only be accounted for when all types of text are examined in their ability to represent intended communication.

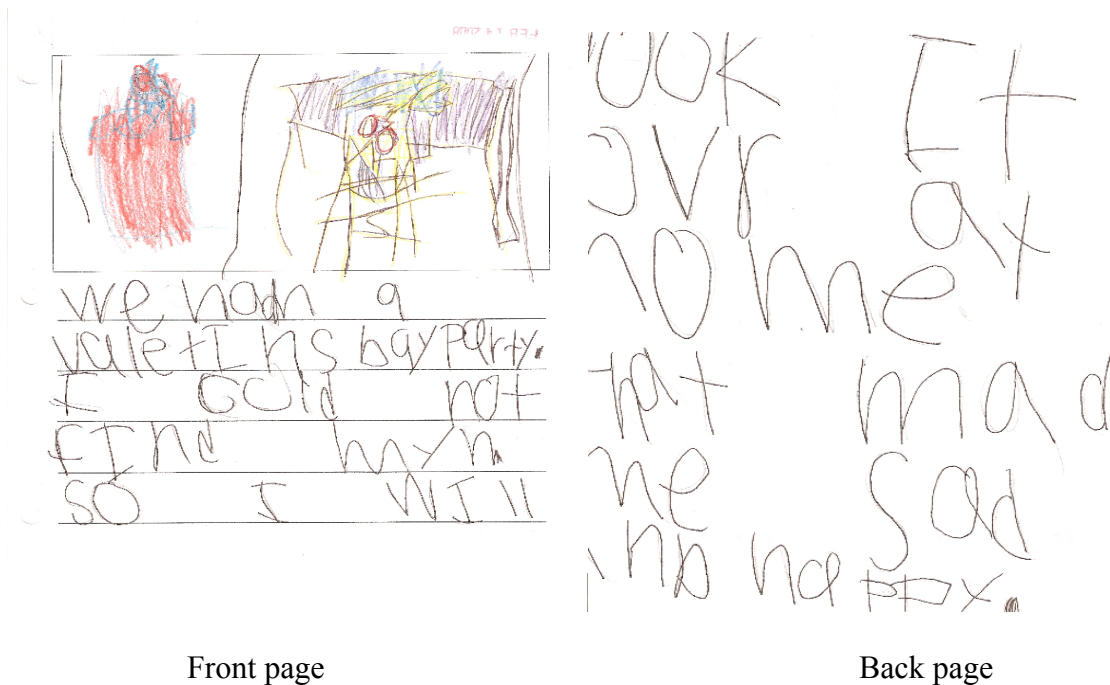


Figure 12. Chad's Writing Sample, Week 6 (Feb. 2008)

Examining the illustrations in Chad's writing samples brought insight to his understanding of problems and solutions. In addition to the illustration mentioned previously, Chad had another sample that included two pictures with arrows to show the movement from inside to outside was the solution to the problem of being cold. The teacher journal explained

We talked about ensuring that his solution was represented in his picture. When I asked him how he could do this, he talked about using the right side of his picture that was blank to draw the solution. The solution involved going inside from being outside. He said there was room there so he could add it. I thought that was a great idea, but when his share buddy talked about just adding arrows to his existing picture, he seemed more inclined to do that. He actually ended up doing both. (Teacher Journal: January 31)

In another example (see Figure 10) he drew a picture of sitting at the dinner table. This was puzzling because the story was about learning about the change in his Show and Tell date. When asked about his picture he said

I did . . . is I . . . me eating lunch because this happened when I was eating lunch . . . when my mom was reading the paper that had . . . that we were looking at . . . (inadudible). And my grandma was there so she also heard it. (Chad's post-assessment, February 2008)

He drew his picture of the instant that the solution presented itself to him. Chad's pictures added a depth to his communications and representations, a level of understanding to his stories that was more complex than if they were examined individually or if only the written text or oral language was accounted for. All three types of text illustrate the complexity of thought inherent in his stories.

Advanced writers used oral language, pictures, and written text to communicate their ideas regarding solutions with more accuracy. Like beginning and intermediate writers, they were able to easily use oral language and written text to represent solutions that made sense. It was the advanced writers' use of pictures that was different from the other writers. The pictures enhanced the representation of the solution by making the understanding of the problem/solution relationship more apparent.

The idea of incorporating the feelings that derived from a story was something that naturally manifested itself throughout the course of the study despite the fact that it was not prompted in the mini-lessons. Chad was the first student who came up with this concept as an additional detail or aspect of telling the story. He independently wrote about the feelings stories induced, and helped to illustrate them as the next logical step. One particular example mentioned previously discussed how he felt about having a valentine's party that made him sad. Another story (see Figure 10) discussed how the

new Show and Tell date made Chad “ECSIded” (Chad’s post-assessment, February 2008). He wrote that he felt excited twice in that writing sample and even included an exclamation point. Feelings emerged as the next natural step to the story elements of problem and solution. The students were excited to share the details of their stories and the feelings that a story induced.

Other Categories

Time and motivation manifested themselves in very different ways for the advanced writers than their other students. Advanced writers were able to write whatever they wished to convey easily. However, this ability seemed to influence their motivation to write and their need for support and encouragement.

Advanced writers tended to expend their time and effort in a different manner than the other writers. Henry and Chad would frequently compose stories that included all or most of the story elements before conferencing. They would get their initial writing on the page and then spend time coloring their pictures or adding more to their written text. They often began new stories when they felt they did not have anything further to add. In one instance, Henry did not add the setting to his written text after a conference focused on doing so. When questioned he said, “I didn’t have any more time.” However, it seemed that it was not due to time constraints, but was due to the fact that he did not want to add any more to his story and used time as an excuse. Advanced writers were able to get more done during the guided writing time because of their ability to represent their thinking and communication more efficiently. This necessitated more support to keep them on task or move them ahead and/or beyond the other writers.

Motivation became a trend that seemed to affect the advanced writers. Chad was motivated to write at the beginning of kindergarten, and that trend continued throughout the course of the school year and the study. When he heard it was time for writing he cheered and got very excited. He felt a great degree of success as a writer and that he could accurately communicate his intended message. Henry, on the other hand, initially seemed a bit more reluctant to write. The teacher journal about the instance of not having enough time read:

He tends to think of an idea, write it, and never revisit it. I will need to stress that more with him because he is capable. I noticed that he didn't add the things we had talked about during conference. Nothing changed from the beginning for the conference to the sharing other than his picture being colored in. (Teacher Journal: January 08)

Henry resisted going back to his writing to make changes or additions and was slower to get started or stay on task. His ability to easily attain success as a writer did not automatically result in his motivation to actively and whole-heartedly participate in guided writing. However, throughout the course of the study, his motivation to write did change as he got more feedback and support and felt more successful. He wrote more and stayed on task for the duration of guided writing. He was more willing and able to expend more effort, time, and attention on the task of writing. Advanced writers require attention and teacher support just as much as beginning or intermediate writers. They just require it in different areas and by different means.

Summary

Advanced writers began the school year with strong writing skills, but they still made progress throughout the course of this study. They wrote stories that included details and conventionally written text to accompany rich oral language and pictures. The

written text used proper directionality and spacing and included experimentation with punctuation and capitalization. It included high frequency words on and above grade level as well as attempts to represent any words that were composed in oral language. The advanced writers incorporated all four story elements independently, being able to easily include them in oral language, pictures, and written text. They understood the problem/solution relationship in complex and ways, and used pictures to better exemplify this understanding. Time was not really a factor in the quality of the product they were able to produce. However, motivational factors illustrated that despite ability they still needed feedback and support while writing. In addition, feelings emerged naturally as a part of their stories to add depth and meaning to the communications they attempted to represent through writing.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study emphasize the fact that the guided writing context is an appropriate and important venue to encourage, practice, and teach writing to young children. More specifically, the findings from this study suggest that kindergarteners' writing increases in complexity as they participate in guided writing lessons focused on story elements. Furthermore, the use of the different types of text allows students to more accurately represent their thinking.

Complexity of Ideas

This study supports the notion that when students are given the opportunity and guidance needed to write independently they will write more, write in more complex ways, and write with greater skill (Clay, 2001; Cunningham & Allington, 2003). All students in the study improved in their abilities to more accurately represent their thinking through text. These improvements appear to be related to three main factors: (a) the influence of writing development on the amount of written text children produced; (b) the use of story elements as cues for retellings and written text; and (c) the acknowledgment and use of each of the three types of text.

Writing development played a significant role in the amount of written text students were able to produce. Regardless of ability level, students were able to write longer stories throughout the course of the study as they developed basic writing conventions. As beginning writers' ability to write conventionally improved, their written texts became longer. This was also found to be true with the intermediate writers Brynn and Sam who became more comfortable in their abilities to represent their thinking and

thus, they spent their time and effort on representing that through written text, often leading to unfinished or nonexistent pictures. Advanced writers Henry and Chad also included more written text as they were able to understand and incorporate story elements into their writing and thus, had more to write about.

Students wrote in more complex ways as they used story elements as cues to incorporate detail into their writing. Baumann and Bergeron's (1993) study of first graders stressed the importance of story elements as cues in oral retellings. Students used various story elements in retellings to ensure that they included the main aspects of stories that were read to them with marked improvements. However, Baumann and Bergeron (1993) only used story elements in oral language through retellings. The study of adolescent writers by Simmons, Kameenui, Dickson, Chard, Gunn, and Baker (1994) found that writing improved with more clarity and detail by implementing writing instruction based on story elements. The current study extended the findings of both studies to kindergarteners by implementing story elements as prompts in a guided writing context. For example, Sam often wrote the phrase "there was a problem" in his stories, and other students used the same phrase. Other phrases included how the problem was solved or where or when the story took place. Students included the actual language used to introduce and discuss the prompts in their own written text and in their oral language.

Kindergarten students' independent writing became more complex throughout the course of the study. Improvements seem to be in relation to the influence of writing development on the amount of texts written as well as the use of story elements as cues for retelling and writing. Additionally, the acknowledgement of oral language, pictures, and written text allowed students to more fully communicate the complexity of their

thinking and representations. Students wrote and expressed more when given the appropriate support and guidance to convey their thinking through writing.

Types of Text

Acknowledging and using oral, written, and graphic types of text in each writing sample, provided a more accurate representation of the student authors' thinking. This is consistent with Gee's (2001) idea that text is any means used to communicate and is not limited to conventionally written text. It also supports Dyson's (2002) sentiments that text is a means of communication that captures the human experiences through a social process. Findings of this study further highlight the importance of oral language and the limitations of honoring only one type of text. In the context of this study, oral language was important in the development of stories for all students in the study. The partner sharing time was beneficial for and used by all students. Being able to articulate and question the story ideas and elements helped all students to better develop their stories. All students had oral language that contained more complexity than their written products. For example, Henry talked about elements of a story's problem and solution verbally but was not able to incorporate them into his story. He said this was due to time constraints. Similarly, Sam shared his story ideas with his partner and then asked if there were questions by prompting his partner on what to ask. Furthermore, Mia's disconnect between the oral language she used during sharing and conferencing and the written text she produced illustrated that she knew and understood the story elements but that she was unable to write them in a conventional way that was easily decipherable by others.

Pictures and written text also manifested their importance in this study. Pictures were very important to the beginning writers. They spent more time on their pictures than

any other students, and they relied on the pictures to help them remember and retell their stories. Intermediate writers often included unfinished or nonexistent pictures, probably due to their focus on the written text. Advanced writers drew quick pictures and went back after writing to add to the pictures. Additionally, advanced writers used pictures in more complex ways to represent their thinking about their stories. For example, when Chad drew a picture of when his feelings changed in relation to his story, not the actual event of the story, he demonstrated his awareness of when the actual problem was solved, and his picture illustrated that. Written text was easily used by the advanced writers to represent their thinking. Intermediate writers relied more on the written text to communicate than the pictures, and their finished products illustrated this. However, beginning writers did not include all of their story in their finished written products. Many of Mia's writing samples were difficult for her to decipher due to their lack of conventionality. Lara had problems getting all the written text that she wanted in her stories due to a lack of time and spending so much time and effort into actually writing the words. Findings such as these highlight the value of broadening our notion of what it means to create a text. Teachers need to allow young children to engage in the process of writing by engaging in the process of thinking (Cunningham & Allington, 2003) and communicating their thinking. This requires the use of pictures, oral language, and written text.

When only one type of text was honored as an author's intended message, a misrepresentation of thinking and communication often accompanied it. Gee (2001) explains that reading, writing, listening, and speaking are all connected. In this study, assessments of student performance based on one type of text were inaccurate due to the

fact that children's complexity of ideas or thinking manifested itself differently in the various types of text. For example, the written text of beginning writers often only included the characters and/or setting of the story. An examination of the oral language and pictures associated with the written text usually produced additional elements of problem, solution, and feelings. Intermediate writers often had correlation in the messages of their oral language and written text and had no pictures to accompany them. These students would be seen as having less writing skill than they actually did if only the pictures were accounted for. The advanced writers used all three types of text with skill and examining only one type would fail to recognize their advanced ability to use all three types to represent the same intended message.

Other Factors

Cunningham and Allington (2003) refer to writing as thinking and explain that this thinking requires a great deal of effort. They further emphasize that writing is, "complex, involving thinking about many things at the same time" (p. 96), and therefore, learning to write requires instruction, support, and guidance. When writing is seen as thinking, the importance of other factors that influence writing performance also become important. Time and affect surfaced as factors that also influenced the writing performance of the students of the different ability levels. The time allotted for writing in the context of guided writing was set by the teacher. This had different consequences for the differing ability groups. The advanced writers seemed to write with ease during the allotted time as they easily incorporated all or most of the story elements in all three types of text. This often resulted in extra time used for adding detail or talking with a partner. Intermediate writers' used their allotted time to quickly share their stories verbally and

therefore, spent the majority of their time on the written text. They neglected to draw pictures with any detail or even at all. Beginning writers primarily spent their time on composing their written text. They shared their stories and drew quick pictures, but ended up spending most of their time writing their one or two simple sentences. Writers gave time and effort to different aspects of the writing process and its products depending on their ability levels and skills.

Affective factors towards writing during the guided writing time manifested themselves in various forms for the different students. All students seemed confident in their abilities to write their intended messages. Beginning writers sometimes got stuck on a word or phrase and needed some support to write it, but they were not discouraged by this need for additional help. Intermediate and advanced writers were confident and had little hesitation as they attempted to write their intended messages, but they did and wrote more with teacher guidance. Despite the help of this guidance, the advanced writers each exemplified different motivations in their attitudes towards guided writing. Chad enjoyed guided writing. He cheered when it was time to write and often asked if it was a day to write. He was happy and excited to write. Henry, on the other hand, often shared his story, drew his picture, or wrote his written text minimally unless he received some type of support from the teacher. All students felt that they could write, but all students still required teacher support to keep them motivated and progressing.

Including feelings in the composed stories was an additional factor that presented itself for some of the writers during the course of the study. This was not a part of the instruction. However, some of the students began including these feelings as the next thing to include in their stories. Beginning writers did not include feelings very much in

their written texts, but they were present in their oral language. Intermediate writers tended to add their feelings towards the end of their stories if the four story elements were all included. Advanced writers talked about feelings as they became a natural prompt to include in their stories.

Implications

The findings of this study reaffirm that children of all ability levels should engage and be given support in developmentally appropriate writing experiences. Wilcox, Morrison, and Wilcox (in press) emphasize the fact that writing is not being given the time and attention it should in elementary classrooms. Early childhood classrooms require writing instruction and assessment. As early childhood educators teach and assess young children's writing, they must account for writing development, honor the different types of text, and provide support in increasing the complexity of young children's thinking.

Writing instruction should emphasize writing conventions and help children move from unconventional forms of writing to more conventional forms. The guided writing context provides an environment where children can receive appropriate modeling, support, and practice. Writing instruction should include time for students to think, draw, write, and share. Giving opportunities for students to think, share, and represent their ideas honors all the texts that students may employ in communicating their thinking. Thinking about an idea and sharing it was important and helpful for students of all ability levels. It provides students with a venue to receive feedback through conferencing and peer sharing. It particularly gave beginning writers a venue to more fully represent the thinking that they were unable to include in their written text.

Honoring the different types of text allows students to more fully represent their thinking. They have more opportunities to communicate the complexity of their thoughts and the increased number of opportunities leads to more accuracy. Emergent writing instruction should include time for oral language, pictures, and written text. It should also consist of modeling of all of these facets each time. Additionally, assessments of student work should account for all types of text and not just be limited to that which appears as conventional writing.

Additionally, students should be given instruction that provides them with cues to understanding and implementing the writing process and the conventions that are a part of it. Story elements served as an effective means to help students to mark and include the important aspects of a story to develop ideas in more complex ways. All students were able to implement story elements in their stories in their oral language and usually in their written texts. Guided writing gives students the instruction and experience to practice representing thinking in more complex in a supportive environment.

Recognizing the complexity of students' thinking in relation to emergent writing instruction begins with teacher expectations. Students should be encouraged and supported to meet their potential and early childhood educators must realize what this potential is. Students must be given instruction and opportunities that encourage and assist them in representing their thinking. If writing is thinking, students need the means to convey their thinking in more conventional ways that will allow others to understand their communication. Thus, instruction should focus the intended communication rather than just the process or the product. It must be seen as a means to problem solve (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006), to determine what needs to be said and how best to

represent that to a certain audience. Even young children can participate in this process and using cues for both process, the steps of writing, and content, such as story elements, is an effective way to do so.

Limitations

One limitation found at the conclusion of the study was the generalizability of the findings to other kindergarten children. The sample in this study was small making it more difficult to conjecture findings in relation to other students or ability groups. A second limitation was the fact that the study took place in a guided writing setting and this might not be representative of writing development in other settings. A final limitation included the fact that the story element rubric seemed limited in its ability to fully represent writing samples, particularly in the areas of problem and solution. The story element rubric described when the story elements of problem or solution were included, but it did not contain a measure to account for differing degrees of inclusion or variations in complexity.

Future Research

This study emphasizes the complexity of ideas and importance of text type for kindergarteners in their independent writing. However, this examination brings about many questions and ideas for future literacy research. This study emphasizes the need for increased writing instruction, assessment, and research, particularly in regards to early childhood classrooms. Writing is an important and essential aspect of literacy. Students must be given opportunities to write that are developmentally appropriate and give adequate support and instruction, and literacy research should further examine emergent writing development, instruction, and assessment.

Section 1.01 The reciprocal relationship between reading and writing brings about questions for young children in regards to comprehension. This idea of a reciprocal relationship is a notion that is supported by literacy research. However, the effect that this relationship has in regard to writing instruction on reading comprehension has not been examined. Questions arise concerning the ability of students who have been involved in writing instruction using story elements to comprehend stories and understand and apply the story elements.

Further exploration into the role of the different types of text is also warranted. This study clearly illustrates there are connections between all three types of text, but the exact nature of these connections remains unclear. More specifically, the role of oral language in writing development raises interesting questions related to the notion of idea development and communication without the constraints of writing conventions.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

GUIDED WRITING STEPS AND ICONS

<p>1. THINK</p>	<p>Article II. THINK of an idea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child closes eyes and thinks of an idea. When an idea is selected, the child puts her/his hand on top of her/his head. - Teacher counts backwards from 10 to 0 to tell the students when their time is coming to a close. (Teacher also reminds the students of how to come up with ideas if they are having trouble.)
<p>2. TELL</p>	<p>Section 2.01 TELL your idea to your share buddy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child turns to share buddy and tells her/his idea. - The buddy asks questions she/he may have about the story. - The buddy then shares her/his story and is asked questions. - Children review the stories in their minds by closing their eyes and then go to their tables to begin writing.
<p>3. DRAW</p>	<p>Section 2.02 DRAW a quick picture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draw a picture to help remember your story. This is a quick picture and is done in one color. - Papers are stamped with the date at this time by the students.
<p>4. WRITE</p>	<p>Section 2.03 WRITE the words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students write the words by representing the sounds that they hear. - The teacher comes around and does conferences with several children at this time. She selects some students to receive "share bears" indicating that the child will share during sharing time.
<p>5. SHARE</p>	<p>Section 2.04 SHARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students bring work to the carpet. Those with "share bears" sit in the chair and share their work. Students give applause and some positive feedback. - Students share with share buddies and put their work in their storage folders.

Appendix B

Guided Writing: Mini-lessons and Conference Objectives

CLASS JOURNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kindergarten journals and their purpose - Our class journal: Modeling the process
GUIDED WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The steps of guided writing - Story template – elements of a story
CHARACTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The character is WHO is in the story - Recognizing characters in my text and the text of others - Telling the character with ORAL LANGUAGE - Showing the characters in my PICTURE - Showing the characters in my WRITTEN TEXT
SETTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The setting is WHERE and WHEN the story takes place - WHERE is the place where the story happens - WHEN is the time (day, etc) that the story happens - Telling the setting with ORAL LANGUAGE - Showing the setting in my PICTURE - Showing the setting in my WRITTEN TEXT
PROBLEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The problem is the BUT... (what goes wrong) in the story - The problem can be something the character WANTS - Telling the problem with ORAL LANGUAGE - Showing the problem in my PICTURE - Showing the problem in my WRITTEN TEXT
SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The solution is how the problem is solved - The solution is the AND THEN... (what happens) in the story - Telling the solution with ORAL LANGUAGE - Showing the solution in my PICTURE - Showing the solution in my WRITTEN TEXT
REVIEW OF STORY ELEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to show the CHARACTER in my oral language, pictures, and written text - How to show the SETTING in my oral language, pictures, and written text - How to show the PROBLEM in my oral language, pictures, and written text - How to show the SOLUTION in my oral language, pictures, and written text

Appendix C

WRITING DEVELOPMENT RUBRIC

FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING RUBRIC BY CIRCLING ALL THE BULLETED POINTS THAT ARE PRESENT IN THE WRITING SAMPLE IN EACH CATEGORY (IDEAS, LINGUISTIC ORGANIZATION, MESSAGE, CONCEPTS OF PRINT, SPELLING CONVENTIONS, & HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS). THEN, EXAMINE THE CIRCLED POINTS IN EACH AREA AND GIVE THE BEST SCORE (1:BEGINNING; 2:INTERMEDIATE; 3:ADVANCED) TO DESCRIBE THAT CATEGORY IN THE BOX ON THE FAR LEFT. BE SURE TO FILL THE RUBRIC OUT COMPLETELY.

	Beginning (1)	Intermediate (2)	Advanced (3)
Ideas Level:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generates an original idea for writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generates an original idea with 1 detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generates an original idea with 2 or more details
Linguistic Organization Level:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alphabetic (letters only) - One Word used (labels) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Word groups (2 or more words together) - Word groups and strings of random letters - Word groups with letters representing intended sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple sentence - Punctuated story (2 or more sentences)
Message Level:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oral story (inconsistent from one time to another) - Picture of the message accompanied by oral story (inconsistent) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Picture and oral story (consistent match) - Picture and limited written text to accompany oral story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Picture and conventionally written text to accompany the oral story
Concepts of Print Level:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writes randomly on the page - Copies text from other sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writes left to right - Uses spaces between words some of the time - Experiments with punctuation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writes left to right and uses return sweep - Uses a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence - Uses spaces between words most of the time - Uses punctuation correctly at the end of a sentence
Spelling Conventions Level:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marks on the page - Letters - Some letter-sound correspondence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hears and writes some beginning sounds - Hears and writes some ending sounds - Hears and writes some middle sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hears and writes most beginning, middle, and ending sounds - Attempts the spelling of new words by representing letter sounds
High frequency words Level:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No use of high frequency words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of a few high frequency words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of many high frequency words

Watanabe 2007 (informed by: Calkins, 1994; Calkins, 2005; Clay, 1975; Spandel, 2004)

Appendix D

STORY ELEMENT RUBRIC

FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING RUBRIC FOR THE INDIVIDUAL WRITING SAMPLE. EVALUATE THE STORY ELEMENT IN EACH BOX BY EXAMINING THE ORAL LANGUAGE, PICTURES, AND WRITTEN TEXT AND CHOOSING THE SCORE (1, 2, OR 3) THAT BEST DESCRIBES THE SAMPLE IN THAT AREA. A SAMPLE CAN SCORE DIFFERENTLY FROM STORY ELEMENT TO STORY ELEMENT OR TEXT TO TEXT. (EXAMPLE: THE SAMPLE MAY HAVE A 1 IN ORAL LANGUAGE, A 3 IN PICTURES, AND A 2 IN WRITTEN TEXT.) BE SURE TO FILL OUT THE RUBRIC COMPLETELY. IF AN ELEMENT OR TYPE OF TEXT IS NOT IN THE STORY, JUST MARK N/A AS THE SCORE.

	Oral Language	Pictures	Written Text
Characters	1. Tells one character in the story 2. Tells some of the characters in the story 3. Tells all the characters in the story Comments: ORAL LANG SCORE:	1. Draws one character in the story 2. Draws some of the characters in the story 3. Draws all the characters in the story Comments: PICTURE SCORE:	1. Writes one character in the story 2. Writes some of characters in the story 3. Writes all the characters in the story Comments: WRITTEN TEXT SCORE:
Setting	1. Tells where the story takes place 2. Tells when the story takes place 3. Tells where and when the story takes place Comments: ORAL LANG SCORE:	1. Draws where the story takes place 2. Draws when the story takes place 3. Draws where and when the story takes place Comments: PICTURE SCORE:	1. Writes where the story takes place 2. Writes when the story takes place 3. Writes where and when the story takes place Comments: WRITTEN TEXT SCORE:
Problem	1. Tells what goes wrong in the story 2. Tells what a character wants in the story 3. Tells what goes wrong and what a character wants in the story Comments: ORAL LANG SCORE:	1. Draws what goes wrong in the story 2. Draws what a character wants in the story 3. Draws what goes wrong and what a character wants in the story Comments: PICTURE SCORE:	1. Writes what goes wrong in the story 2. Writes what a character wants in the story 3. Writes what goes wrong and what a character wants in the story Comments: WRITTEN TEXT SCORE:
Solution	1. Tells an illogical solution to the problem 2. Tells a solution to what went wrong or what a character wants 3. Tells a solution to what goes wrong and what a character wants Comments: ORAL LANG SCORE:	1. Draws an illogical solution to the problem 2. Draws a solution to what went wrong or what a character wants 3. Draws a solution to what goes wrong and what a character wants Comments: PICTURE SCORE:	1. Writes an illogical solution to the problem 2. Writes a solution to what went wrong or what a character wants 3. Writes a solution to what goes wrong and what a character wants Comments: WRITTEN TEXT SCORE:

Watanabe 2007 (informed by: Calkins, 1994; Calkins, 2005; Clay, 1975; Spandel, 2004)

Appendix E

CODES FOR ANALYSIS

Writing Development

IDEA: Ideas

LING: Linguistic Organization

MES: Message

CP: Concepts of Print

CONV: Conventions

HF: High frequency words

Story Elements

CHAR: Characters

SET: Setting

PROB: Problem

SOLN: Solution

Other

FEEL: Feelings

INSTR: Instruction

MOTIV: Motivation

ORG: Organization

TIME: Time

TR: Teacher Reflection