USING COLLABORATIVE WRITING TO HELP ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS ACTUALIZE THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

By

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To our children and grandchildren

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The Common Core State Standards in writing call for higher levels of writing competencies in all genres for all students. The seismic shift in writing instruction caused by the adoption of the Common Core State Standards centers around how to improve student writing skills, as well as how students must be able to use writing to demonstrate their understanding of reading. This may be particularly challenging for English Language Learners who must concurrently improve English language acquisition while also working on how to use that new knowledge in writing. Literature indicates that the use of Collaborative Writing is a promising tool for promoting the language development and writing skills of English Language Learners.

The purpose of this study was to use practitioner research to develop and enact a small group writing intervention using Collaborative Writing to support second grade English Language Learners. Through the process of inquiry, I reflected upon my instruction and student learning to examine and note instructional shifts throughout the research project. The main sources of data in my inquiry were field notes taken during

the intervention sessions, reflective journal notes which were written immediately following each intervention session, and student artifacts.

As I analyzed the data, three distinct ways of enacting Collaborative Writing emerged: Teacher as Scribe, Pair and Share, and Collaborative Planning for Individual Writing. This study illustrates the ways in which these three modes of collaborative writing were used, the decisions I made as a teacher as I enacted each mode of instruction, and the resulting student responses. I conclude by sharing three pedagogical practices that cut across all modes of instruction, (rehearsal, immersion and experimentation, and learning in community) and the implications these pedagogical practices have for the field as the Common Core State Standards are implemented across the nation.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), is redefining and reshaping the landscape of American education. The organizations that led the creation of the Common Core assert that the standards "were developed . . . to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). With forty-five states and the District of Columbia already adopting the Common Core state standards, these new standards will shape the future of public education.

With so many states adopting the standards, it is not surprising that there are an increasing numbers of books, opinion pieces, journal articles, websites, and blogs about the Common Core (Owocki, 2013). Looking across these Common Core writings, it is fair to say that the CCSS themselves have evoked some controversy, with many educators debating the value and purpose of the Common Core State Standards.

Some educators question the research foundation of the Common Core. For example, in his commentary in the *Journal of Scholarship & Practice*, Tienken (2011) reviewed the references on the CCSS website and reported that only four of the citations were empirical studies and the rest were newspaper stories, articles, op-ed pieces, and notes from telephone interviews. Similarly, in their *Educational Researcher* article, "Upping the Ante of Text Complexity in the Common Core State Standards: Examining Its Potential Impact on Young Readers," Hiebert and Mesmer (2013) caution

educators to consider the lack of evidence concerning text complexity, (an important component of the Common Core reading standards), for elementary students. They point out that there is no evidence that accelerated text level targets in the primary grades will affect high school graduates toward reading the texts of college and careers (p.47).

Other educators argue that the implementation of Common Core Standards will stifle innovation and threaten local and state control of educational decision-making (Grennon Brooks & Dietz, 2013). For example, Diane Ravitch, a research professor, historian on education, and leading education policy analyst, shares in her online blog how she does not support the Common Core implementation because of how the standards were developed and the way in which they are being forced upon states (2013). Ravitch points out how the adoption of the standards ceased to be voluntary because states that would not adopt the standards could not be eligible for Race to the Top dollars ($4.35 billion), which can be viewed as federal over-reach. Furthermore, Gewertz (2012) states that the common curriculum and assessments that are a part of the Common Core State Standards, are in violation of the U.S. Constitution which preserves such measures for the state level.

Finally, some educators believe that the expectations of the Common Core are contrary to established learning theory, age appropriate learning, and brain development research (Tienken, 2012; Yatvin, 2013). Another concern is implementation which calls for a reworking of professional learning for teachers and methods for evaluating progress (Sloan, 2010).

Despite the Common Core State Standard concerns that abound in the literature, educational leaders such as Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth and Christopher Lehman (2012) advocate for gleaning what is good out of the CCSS and working to promote best teaching practices toward actuating those standards. Signatories of the Common Core, such as Calkins and her colleagues, abound and are quick to rebut the naysayers' concerns. While they often acknowledge the lack of empirical evidence supporting the implementation of CCSS, they remind educators that these are standards and not curriculum. They ask educators to recall that the old mission of American education does not meet the demands of global employment and participation in a wired world (Kist, 2013). They contrast the CCSS emphasis on higher-level comprehension with our nation's previous failed attempts to improve literacy with little to no attention on writing (Calkins, et al., 2012). Furthermore, defenders of CCSS tell educators that the standards were developed under the leadership of state governments with input from a diverse group of educators, parents, and business leaders with an emphasis on improving the content of instruction, and not as a "One Size Fits All" endeavor (Schmidt & Burroughs, 2013).

Although surrounded by controversy and varying opinions about the Common Core, teachers in the states in which the CCSS have been adopted are being expected to implement them. This is the case in my state, district, and school. As an elementary district literacy specialist for Title 1 schools and former reading/literacy coach for eleven years, it is not uncommon for me to overhear teachers' conversations about the Common Core at conferences, workshops, grade level, school-wide, and district

meetings. Many of the conversations at these venues focus on the demanding standards and what they mean for the teaching of writing in our schools.

The student writing samples provided in Appendix C of the standards display the high expectations that writers are expected to produce at all grade levels from Kindergarten through 12th grade (Calkins, et al., 2012). The annotations after each writing exemplar provide insight into the objectives of the standards with regard to what is considered proficient in the three writing genres of explanatory, narrative, and argumentative (Wiggs, 2011). An important component of the seismic shift in writing instruction as detailed in the new Common Core State Standards centers around the development of writing skills of students, as well as how they will use writing to share their understanding of reading and higher order thinking. Appendix B indicates that the standards emphasize what students must be able to produce, but does not delineate specific practices teachers should use to produce those results in their writers. That is left up to the districts and teachers with the clear expectation that all children are presumed to become authors, even beginning in Kindergarten (Sturm, 2012).

Related to teachers deciding how to actualize the Common Core State Standards in their teaching practice, in the writing section of the CCSS, under the heading of Key Design Consideration, it states that the standards for K-5

> set grade-specific standards but do not define the intervention methods or materials necessary to support students who are well below or well above grade-level expectations….It is also beyond the scope of the Standards to define the full range of supports appropriate for English language learners and for students with special needs (2013).

Hence, as teachers implement the Common Core State Standards, particular attention must be given to students in need of intervention support. In my context, a

specific group of learners that needed particular attention and support were English Language Learners (ELLs).

Concurrently with the adoption of CCSS, the population of students in US classrooms has increasingly changed. ELL enrollment doubled in schools in the United States between 1990 and 2004 with three fourths of the ELLs coming from homes in which Spanish is the primary language (Cardenas-Hagan, Carlson & Pollard-Durodola, 2007). Reflecting national trends, as a literacy coach for 11 years, I worked in a particular Title 1 school which served 751 students in pre-K through 6th grade. The student body was 97% economically needy, 77% spoke languages other than English at home (primarily Spanish and Creole), and 44% of the families were migrant workers. While these students have performed relatively well on the state test, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), it has been increasingly difficult for students to earn a “proficient” score on the FCAT in writing.

At the beginning of the school year I worked in this one particular school as the literacy coach. However, beginning in November, I accepted the position of district literacy specialist serving Title 1 schools. In this capacity I continued to work in this school and four others helping literacy coaches and teachers by supporting their efforts to improve instruction to accelerate student learning. These schools were all in the same small community so I was usually in every school several times a week. As the district literacy specialist, literacy coach, and teacher I was concerned that I was not meeting the needs of English Language Learners in relationship to writing instruction in all of the schools in which I worked. Meeting the needs of this population of students becomes increasingly important as we implement the Common Core State Standards in

these schools and prepare for the new Common Core writing assessments. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to develop and enact a small-group writing intervention (in the school where I first began my work during the 2013-2014 academic year) to support English Language Learners towards actualization of the Common Core State Standards in writing. By developing, implementing, and studying a small group writing intervention in one of the schools I served, insights would be gained that would inform my new school contexts as well.

Intervention and Research Questions

While educators begin to implement the CCSS in writing, it is important to not abandon research and evidence-based practices that we already know are effective (Calkins, et al., 2012). One research-based practice in the teaching of writing that has shown to be effective is Writer's Workshop. Writer's Workshop, which emphasizes the recursive work of rehearsing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing, promotes a focus on students as authors and increases writing achievement for all learners when employed with fidelity and consistency (Calkins, 1994; Calkins, Hartman, & White, 2005; Graves, 1994; Routman, 2005). Writing students need explicit instruction that helps them progress along the learning continuum due, in part, to the critical feedback and support which may be provided within Writer's Workshop (Calkins, 2013).

A second research-based practice in the teaching of writing that has shown to be effective is collaborative writing. Collaborative writing is defined as a dynamic literacy event in which students actively compose together and develop as writers due to the use of powerful demonstrations, timely instruction, and support (McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 2000). Collaborative writing helps provide the rich oral language modeling that

builds from students' interests and promotes literacy development (Routman, 2005) and language acquisition (Gibbons, 2009).

While Writer's Workshop is used by teachers in our schools, most teachers spend the majority of Writer's Workshop time conferencing one on one with students to assist them through the writing process to publication, with little attention given to collaborative writing activities. Yet, collaborative writing, with extensive teacher modeling, holds great promise to support the writing of ELLs (Calkins, Hartman, & White, 2005; Routman, 2005; Sousa, 2011). As a district literacy specialist and teacher, I developed and enacted small group support for ELLs during Writer's Workshop. I was intrigued by the use of collaborative writing as a part of Writer's Workshop and interested in learning more about how this method might work for ELLs. As I implemented collaborative writing as a part of Writer's Workshop with a small group of ELLs, the research questions that guided my study were:

- What is the relationship between ELLs' engagement in collaborative writing and their development as writers as the CCSS are implemented in my district?
- What types of teaching moves support the development of ELLs during collaborative writing?

Methodology

To gain insight into the use of small group collaborative writing as a part of Writer's Workshop for ELLs, I used practitioner research to examine my practice and reflect on my instruction and teaching moves. Practitioner research is the systematic, intentional study of one's own practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009). According to York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere & Montie (2006), significant learning for teachers involves the process of constructing knowledge from experience and other sources, making sense of new ways of thinking, and employing application in

the context of practice (2006). It was my intention to work with a small group of English Language Learners in a second grade classroom to construct knowledge about effective small group writing instruction for that particular group of students. I worked two to three times a week for a total of twenty sessions with a group of six ELL students. The intervention sessions followed the initial whole group instruction that occurred as a part of Writer's Workshop with their homeroom teacher. The data I collected included researcher field notes (RFN), researcher journal reflections (RJ), and student writing artifacts (SA).

Significance of Study

During this study, I focused on developing intervention writing lessons for English Language Learners as we implemented the Common Core State Standards in my district.

I implemented instructional practices while intentionally collecting and analyzing data and reflecting on the work through writing. The benefits of this type of reflective work included improving upon my professional practice, increasing my personal capacity for learning, restoring balance and perspective, renewing clarity of personal and professional purpose, and enhancing student learning (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2006). My students' learning had the potential to be increased because the instructional moves I made were based upon the needs of the students as determined through daily reflections on data.

This work impacted others as I had the opportunity to share my intervention work with the coaches in the Title I schools I serve, as well as with teachers during planning times and monthly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. I shared the

progress and results with the classroom teacher and resource teachers in the school in which I enacted this research.

In addition, as a district literacy specialist serving Title 1 schools, I met with my coaching peers monthly at the district level. Therefore, my work was shared with the larger community of elementary coaches in my district, as well as with a fellow district literacy specialist. Others may choose to enact small group writing interventions, and we may all benefit from the potential of our collective resources with regard to experiences and expertise, diversity of teaching experiences and contexts, and shared sense of purpose in implementing the new Common Core State Standards while meeting the needs of all learners in our district.

As previously mentioned, there are a host of opinion pieces, books, and guides about the CCSS flooding the market. However, the research is limited (Tienken, 2012), especially in how to assist English Language Learners in meeting the writing standards. Grethchen Owocki reminds us that the CCSS are an opportunity to focus on improving teaching (2013) as we strive to help all our students meet this new set of standards (Sturm, 2012). This study provides insights into how to improve teaching with a specific population that the CCSS does not delineate and generates knowledge for practice from practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). This work was a practitioner research study and what was learned provides insights into the controversy and uncertainty that surrounds the CCSS and contributes to the professional conversation concerning instruction to meet the Common Core State Standards in writing.

In fact, it should be noted that during my study, due to political considerations and the controversy that surround the Common Core, the state of Florida made minor

modifications to the Common Core State Standards which eventually became the Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS). This change had no impact on my study because the wording of the 2nd grade Writing Standards as LAFS was exactly the same as when they were called the Common Core State Standards. Therefore, I will continue to reference all standards as the Common Core State Standards throughout this dissertation.

There are seven writing standards for 2nd grade. Five of them did not apply to my work as they are focused on narrative writing, opinion writing, utilization of technology, and research projects. The standards that were applicable to my study were LAFS.2.W.1.2 which focuses on the genre of explanatory writing and LAFS.2.W.2.5 which references strengthening writing through revision and editing.

Summary

I presented the current state of implementation of CCSS in Chapter 1, explained the need for improved writing instruction due to the demands of the CCSS, and shared how, for a particular group of students (ELLs), intervention support in writing may prove beneficial. In addition, I provided a brief overview of the practitioner research I conducted as I provided intervention support for a small group of ELLs within my district. I will share research that is related to this study in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to develop and enact a small-group writing intervention to support English Language Learners towards actualization of the Common Core State Standards in writing. As discussed in Chapter 1, as educators begin to implement the CCSS in writing, it is important to not abandon research and evidence-based practices that we already know are effective (Calkins, et al., 2012). Two research-based writing practices that will frame the intervention developed and implemented for ELLs in this study are Writer's Workshop and collaborative writing. Hence, in Chapter 2, I review the literature on these pedagogical practices, focusing first on Writer's Workshop and then on collaborative writing. Within each section, I first provide a definition and description of the practice, followed by a discussion of research on the topic. I end each section by connecting Writer's Workshop and collaborative writing to what we know about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and English Language Learners (ELLs).

Writer's Workshop

Definition and Description

Writer's Workshop is advocated by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA). It is a collaborative approach to teaching writing that includes rehearsal or gathering of ideas, drafting and revision, and editing of work. Writer's Workshop, which focuses on the writing process, is heralded by many as an effective means to promote a collaborative community of writers while advancing the writing skills of all students (Atwell, 2002; Calkins, 1994;

Cunningham & Allington, 2003; Graves, 1994; Routman, 2005; Sturm, 2012). It is based on the belief that the act of writing is a social communication action that is fostered through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1986). Regie Routman (2005) defines Writer's Workshop as: sustained, daily writing across the curriculum of mostly self-chosen topics, writing for purposes and various audiences, exploring and playing with language, conferring with students in response to their writing in such a way as to celebrate what they have done while teaching the next steps, and publishing for real audiences.

In a traditional Writer's Workshop, students participate daily in authentic instruction in which they develop writing skills within a nonthreatening writing environment. The predictable format of the Writer's Workshop includes a mini-lesson, writing process with independent writing time, conferencing time, and sharing. A general guideline for Writer's Workshop in the primary grades would include: mini-lesson for ten to fifteen minutes, independent writing for twenty-five to thirty minutes, and sharing time for ten to fifteen minutes.

Mini-lessons in writing are intentional, explicit teaching (Boone, 1996; Routman, 2005). Writing instruction begins with mini-lessons where the teacher models a writing concept or skill through "think-alouds" with continual contribution by the students through discussion (Routman, 2005; Sturm, 2012). The short mini-lesson portion of the instruction is teacher-directed and most often based upon the needs of the writers. Mini-lessons, or explicit teaching, can be presented to students in whole group, small group, or even in pairs or individuals. These lessons are centered on what students are ready to learn to enhance their writing skills. Mini-lessons can be content or convention

oriented. Some examples of mini-lesson topics that are content focused include: narrowing the topic, organizing writing into a logical sequence, adding information to help the reader, crafting a “grabber” beginning and/or an effective ending, or elaborating. Some examples of convention focused mini-lessons include: using beginning or ending sounds to figure out how to spell words, correctly spelling frequently used words by using Word Walls or Personal Word Lists, editing for capitalization, punctuation, or spacing between words. The teacher can also introduce mentor text during this time (Flethcher & Portalupi, 1998; Routman, 2005; Spandel & Stiggins, 1990).

Mentor texts are books and texts that are well-loved by teachers and students which are revisited for a variety of purposes. These texts are introduced as read-alouds and examined for examples of powerful language, predictable patterns, use of imagery, and repetition. Teachers and students can get ideas from the mentor texts and authors to create their own innovations of the text or lift a type of language or pattern to employ into their own writing from the text. In this way, students can imitate mentor texts as they reinvent themselves as writers (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2007). Another form of mentor texts could be texts written by the teacher for the purpose of modeling particular skills or writing crafts.

Following mini-lessons, the students are given the opportunity to utilize the new writing skill(s) in their own writing. It is during this extended independent writing time that the teacher either circulates, provides one-on-one conferencing with writers, pulls small groups to work on a particular skill or writing device, or writes alongside her students. Writing conferences are meetings in which student work is discussed, with

the structure of the conference centered on discussing what the child is doing and how the child can become a better writer (Routman, 2005). Types of conferences include whole class, one-on-one, small group, or peer. The purposes of the conferences include: listening, affirming, reinforcing, assessing, teaching what the writer should do to move forward, scaffolding the writer as she tries out the new learning, and setting goals (Calkins, Hartman, & White, 2005; Routman, 2005).

Sharing with the larger class community constitutes the conclusion of the daily Writer's Workshop. During whole-class share a student sits in a designated "author chair" while reading her writing aloud to listeners. The listeners are expected to provide specific feedback that includes celebrations reinforcing what the writer has done well, and helpful responses that encourage the writer to make revisions to improve his/her writing.

Research on Writer's Workshop

My review of the research on Writer's Workshop provided insights into three different components of Writer's Workshop: (1) mini-lessons, (2) the use of mentor texts, and (3) the effects of time spent on writing.

Mini-Lessons

Mini-lessons provide the explicit instruction in the steps of the writing process as supported by a nationwide survey of primary grade teachers' instructional adaptations for struggling writers (Graham, Harris, Fink-Chorzempa, & MacArthur, 2003). To help teachers understand best practices in the teaching of mini-lessons, Warren Combs (2012) reviewed studies of the brain by David Sousa to explain research-based practices for mini-lessons. Combs advises setting time limits for the student work sessions, quantifying the expectations for each work session, along with the use of

frequent student self-assessments and the use of concrete prewriting strategies and specific writing strategies. These findings were incorporated in the planning of mini-lessons as a part of Writer's Workshop in this study.

Mentor Texts

During the teaching of mini-lessons, teachers often incorporate mentor texts. Roy Corden (2007) explored the impact of mini-lessons with mentor texts on the quality of children's writing in his study of eighteen classrooms from nine schools in the United Kingdom. The study centered on the improvement of literary devices when teachers incorporated mentor texts. The schools represented a variety of socio-economic and cultural contexts and the teachers were experienced practitioners. The teachers selected mentor texts based upon their appropriateness for their students' ages, and their applicability to the specific genres being taught. Evidence from this study supports the idea that evaluation of literature and examination of literary devices used in mentor texts does help children become more thoughtful writers who are better able to deliberate about their own writing. They "were able to integrate the stylistic and organizational features of mentor texts into their personal repertoires and use them successfully in their own writing" (p. 285). It is interesting to note that students' progress was tracked for one semester after the study. Steady progress was maintained in those classrooms where teachers continued to use mentor texts in their mini-lessons. The quality of the students' writing deteriorated, however, in classrooms where teachers ceased using mentor texts.

In another study of the use of mentor texts, Peter J. Lancia (1997) coined the term "literary borrowing" to explain what happens when mentor texts are incorporated into writing instruction. In his study of predominantly low-income, suburban second

grade students, Lancia found that when mentored texts were incorporated into writing instruction, children borrowed ideas from literature in a variety of ways. He found that in three percent of the literary borrowing, the students borrowed an entire plot and their writing was a form of retelling. In thirty-two percent of literary borrowing, the young writers used a book's character and invented a new plot. At other times the students borrowed plot devices like setting, conflict, specific vocabulary, or structural devices. Plot devices were the most frequently used at forty-three percent of the borrowed ideas. Students borrowed elements from a particular genre nine percent of the time, and thirteen percent of borrowed ideas were from information read in books. In his study it was discovered that students also borrowed from classmates with whom they did not typically socialize. This suggests that the writing community respected the classroom writers and used the literature of peers to inspire and improve their own writing.

The research completed by both Corden (2007) and Lancia (1997) indicate the value of incorporating mentor texts into mini-lessons during Writer's Workshop. The use of mentor texts with mini-lessons was incorporated into my teaching in this study.

Time Spent Writing

A basic tenant of Writer's Workshop is that in order for student writing to improve, they must spend time writing independently using self-selected writing topics (Atwell, 2002; Calkins et al., 2012; Routman, 2005; Sturm, 2012). Regie Routman (2005) notes that students need sustained time to independently write to maintain the flow of writing to improve fluency. Teachers must provide time and purposes for a variety of writing experiences (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1994).

Yet, research indicates that enough time is not being devoted to writing. In their random sample of primary grade teachers, Laura Cutler and Steve Graham (2008)

found that teachers not only have an eclectic approach to writing instruction, but their findings also showed that primary teachers are not spending enough time teaching writing. The median time revealed in their study was about twenty minutes a day. This is even less than what was revealed in the study by Graham, Harris, Fink-Chorzempa and MacArther (2003), which discovered the median time of writing in primary classrooms was thirty minutes per day. These findings support the recommendations from the National Commission on Writing which advocates increasing the amount of writing students do within and outside of school (2003). The writing time of my group of ELL students, within and outside of school, was increased as our work often extended beyond the designated class writing time.

Non-linguistic Representations

Often during planning for writing, teachers help students prepare for writing by using sketching and/or graphic organizers as a means of stimulating and organizing thinking. It has been known for some time the human brain processes information linguistically and non-linguistically (Paivio, 1990). Non-linguistic processing includes images, smells, tastes, and kinesthetic sensations (Marzano, 2010).

Hay-stead & Marzano (2009) reported that across 129 studies in which teachers employed nonlinguistic strategies like sketching and using graphic organizers, the average effect was a 17 percentile point gain in student achievement over classes that did not employ those strategies. These authors state that it is critical that the non-linguistic representation identify crucial information and students should be called upon to explain their non-linguistic representations. The act of creating the non-linguistic representation helps students deepen their understanding because they must think

about the content in a new way. When students are asked to explain their sketches or graphic organizers it promotes even greater understanding (Hoover, 2006; Marzano, 2010). Discussion often allows learners the opportunity to see errors or missing elements and necessitates revision and editing. This diverse manner of processing information allows ELLs to work on the content or concept.

Adoniou's study on drawing to support writing development in English Language Learners (2013) demonstrates how drawing is an effective strategy for teaching writing based on the idea that drawing and writing are comparable semiotic systems and learning is more powerful when these systems work in concert. This study of ten students in her class, aged eight or nine year old, took place in Australia in a government Introductory English Centre. The students were divided into two groups. Group A was the control group, and Group B was the treatment group. The groups were formed using group-matching principles based upon the characteristics of length of time in the Introductory English Centre, gender, cultural background and English language proficiency. Both groups experienced the same shared experience. Afterwards, one group followed the standard classroom routine of silent reading while the other group was given the opportunity to draw about the experience for up to fifteen minutes. Then both groups were brought together and asked to write about the procedure of the experience during their standard classroom writing time. The author used analytic and trait-based scoring methods to assess the writing. This was repeated for another genre (explanatory writing). The results showed that drawing before writing had a positive impact upon the students' procedure and explanatory writing experiences. The treatment group wrote more (length) and of a higher quality than the group that did not

draw. A closer analysis of the writing also showed that the group that drew was significantly better at text and sentence levels. Likewise the writing of the students who drew contained more details which appears to confirm Wright's idea that drawings are effective memory prompts (2007) and that drawing helps students elaborate on knowledge (Hill & Flynn, 2006). I employed the use of sketching and graphic organizers as supportive writing strategies during planning work with my students.

Writer's Workshop and the Common Core State Standards

Increasing the amount of time students spend writing is important to actualizing the Common Core State Standards. The Anchor Standard 10, in the CCSS, calls for students to "write routinely over extended time frames" (p.18). The use of Writer's Workshop is consonant with Anchor Standard 10 as Writer's Workshop time is designated for writing every day. This is just one way Writer's Workshop aligns with the expectations of the Common Core. Writer's Workshop's use of mini-lessons and independent writing times provide the literacy scaffolds (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008) that offer the built-in support that permits students to fully participate at a level that would not be possible without assistance.

The CCSS also delineate the expectations with regard to volume of writing. For example, a fourth grader is expected to produce a minimum of one typed page in a single sitting (Calkins, et al., 2012). Consistent use of Writer's Workshop can provide the structure for students to produce the volume of writing suggested by the standards.

Furthermore, Common Core Standard 4 states that development, organization, and style of student writing must be "appropriate to task, purpose, and audience." Writer's Workshop allows for mini-lessons to address these ideas, followed by practice time and conferencing, so the teacher can scaffold the learners as they work. Writer's

Workshop allocates time for observing and conferring with students to determine their stage of learning, scaffolding of the next appropriate challenge and skill to lift the level of writing (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 2012), while demonstrating the recursive processes of writing (Sousa, 2011).

In sum, as indicated above, using Writer's Workshop as a pedagogical approach to the teaching of writing aligns well with the expectations of the Common Core. Writer's Workshop is also well suited to meet the needs of English Language Learners.

Writer's Workshop and English Language Learners

One way the use of Writer's Workshop is well suited to meet the needs of ELLs is the time designated for conferencing as a part of the Writer's Workshop process. Conferences are used to instruct and motivate (Routman, 2005; Troia, Shankland, & Heintz, 2010). A one-on-one writing conference is simply a meeting with a writer and either a teacher or peer to discuss the writer's work. During these conferences, the student has the teacher's undivided attention as they are sitting side-by-side and the class is not privy to the conversation. This is especially important for English Language Learners who are often "trying out" their use of English for the first time. Conferencing with ELLs slows down the discourse, allowing the students to think before responding in a non-threatening space (Gibbons, 2009), as well as provides the space for oral proficiency practice with English (Brock, Lapp, Salas, & Townsend, 2009). In one-on-one conferencing all praise and teaching is done privately which reduces stress for ELLs. These conferences can occur for a variety of purposes, such as to celebrate, assist, motivate, teach, assess, or even to set new writing goals.

Another manner in which Writer's Workshop is particularly well-suited for ELLs is the teaching and learning cycle which includes building the field, modeling the genre,

constructing together, and independent writing (Gibbons, 2009). This allows students to write all of the genres delineated in the standards while integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing during the Writer's Workshop time. The integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing can help ELLs acquire language. James Paul Gee (1992) in *The Social Mind: Language, Ideology, and Social Practice,* discusses acquisition as acquiring something subconsciously or by exposure to models, a process of trial and error and practice within social groups. Writer's Workshop provides the environment for language acquisition.

Finally, in their book *Between Worlds-Access to Second Language Acquisition,* David and Yvonne Freeman (2001) discuss "self-concepting", in which learners must be able to conceive themselves actually doing the activity (p.39). Writer's Workshop can provide that safe place where ELLs can receive demonstration and are supported in taking risks in a collaborative fashion, so they can conceive of themselves as writers. In a classroom with ELLs, it is important that students receive demonstrations in English that encourage oral and written use of English so learners can progress in their learning by actively participating in a collaborative fashion.

Collaborative Writing

Definition and Description

Collaborative writing is a type of cooperative learning in which students work together to create pieces of writing. Groups are designed to give students a support system as they learn and practice complicated processes, such as the writing process (Marzano, Norford, Paynter, Pickering & Gaddy, 2001). Collaborative tasks require that learners work together to produce one jointly written text. This type of work pushes learners to reflect on language, discuss the language they are using, and problem solve

together to complete the writing (Dobao, 2012). Two types of collaborative writing used in elementary schools are Shared Writing and Interactive Writing.

In Shared Writing, the teacher expands on the students' ideas, helps with paraphrasing, and demonstrates what cohesive writing looks like through modeling. Shared Writing taps into students' interests in a safe context where attempts are valued (Routman, 2005). According to Regie Routman, in her book, *Writing Essentials* (2005), a concise framework for Shared Writing includes: choosing a meaningful topic with the students, discussing the audience, brainstorming content, writing a title, saying the words as they are written, shaping student language at point-of-need, moving quickly to enhance student engagement, focusing on meaningful language and logical organization, and rereading to make changes to strengthen the text.

In Interactive Writing, the teacher and students share the pen. The students write what they can and the teacher writes the rest. These short lessons help students acquire problem solving strategies to advance their learning of how to communicate a message in written form (Dorn, French & Jones, 1998).

Research on Collaborative Writing

In their study of 14 seven to nine year old children, Daiture and Dalton (1993) examined the effects of individual versus collaborative writing. Analysis of the 7,512 talk turns in the collaborative composing sessions revealed that 95% of the story elements were added after group work had been the focus of the children's talk as they wrote together. This clearly demonstrates that young writers can expand their discourse knowledge by writing together.

A specific process identified in the research of collaborative writing is called *playing*. When children write together, they *play* with language, concepts, and each

other. This expands their thinking (Daiute, 1989; Dyson, 1989). Collaborative writing provides the framework for cognitive playing, increases discourse knowledge, and promotes language acquisition.

More recently conducted research on collaborative writing suggests that texts written by small groups yield higher language-related episodes (LREs) with higher accuracy than texts written by pairs or individuals (Dobao, 2012). Language-related episodes occur when students discuss the language they are producing, question their language use, and when they correct themselves or others on grammatical or lexical issues.

In sum, research on collaborative writing indicates the value the process holds for learning to write especially for striving English Language Learners. Collaborative writing framed the intervention work I did with a group of second grade English Language Learners in this study to support them in actualizing the Common Core State Standards in writing.

Collaborative Writing and the Common Core State Standards

There are a number of writing skills students must master as a part of the Common Core. For example, according the Common Core State Standards, second-graders should be able to “recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, and provide a sense of closure” (W.2.3). The CCSS also call for second-graders to “use temporal words to signal event order” (W.2.3). In addition, students are also expected to write with voice and mood. Collaborative writing experiences allow students to try out these new writing moves in a supportive environment. Collaborative writing experiences are particularly

well-suited to meet the shifting needs of ELLs because the work is practiced in a supportive social setting.

Collaborative Writing and English Language Learners

Theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) are based on research from different fields including psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, and sociolinguistics. Research can be either theoretical or applied with theoretical research adding to our collective knowledge and applied research answering practical problems (Freeman & Freeman, 2001). Gee (1992), a leading researcher on SLA, advances the idea that language acquisition is a process of subconsciously acquiring something by exposure to modeling, the use of trial and error, and practice in social groups in natural settings through social interactions. English Language Learners learn by action in social contexts. Social interaction is especially important for ELLs as they learn to use language appropriate to a variety of situations and try out their new learning in a supportive environment. Group work assists ELLs because interaction and contextualization of knowledge is greater. Academic language and content knowledge are reinforced when students work in small groups (Tate, 2010). Group work and discussion allows ELLs access to support they need to make their language more complete and explicit (Gibbons, 2009). It is during these discussions within the Writer's Workshop framework that students, through interaction with the teacher and peers, have the opportunity to make ideas or information precise through oral language experiences and eventually, in written language. A final step in the learning process is integration which involves adding new knowledge to what we already know (Freeman & Freeman, 2001). Collaborative writing makes sense as an instructional choice for

teaching writing to English Language Learners because of the social nature of language acquisition which allows writers to integrate their new knowledge about writing.

Summary

To review, the purpose of this study was to develop and enact a small group writing intervention to support English Language Learners towards actualization of the Common Core State Standards in writing. The small group intervention occurred within Writer's Workshop and employed collaborative writing techniques. To contextualize this study, I reviewed the literature on Writer's Workshop and collaborative writing as they relate to the Common Core State Standards and instruction for English Language Learners in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I will describe the methodology of this study, including data collection, data analysis, and a description of my background as a practitioner researcher.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As I developed and enacted a small-group writing intervention using collaborative writing within Writer's Workshop to support English Language Learners towards actualization of the Common Core State Standards in writing, I engaged in practitioner research to better understand and meet the learning needs of my ELL students. Practitioner research is defined as systematic, intentional study of one's own teaching practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009). This study documents the teaching moves and student responses that occurred through my work as a practitioner researcher. In Chapter 3, I will define practitioner research as the method for my study. I will describe the context within which this study took place and provide a description of the intervention itself, as well as the ways I collected and analyzed data. Finally, I end Chapter 3 with a statement of my background, biases, values and experiences as a professional so as to position myself in this research study.

Practitioner Research

According to John Loughran in *Learning from Teacher Research* (2002), "teacher researchers can be characterized as those practitioners who attempt to better understand their practice, and its impact on their students, by researching the relationship between teaching and learning in their world of work" (p.3). This type of educational research is driven by a personal imperative to find ways to make a difference for students. Practitioner research informs classroom work and can address the theory-practice gap that is often cited as an impediment to progress in teaching and

learning (Loughran, Mitchell & Mitchell, eds, 2002). The desire to research classroom work as a vehicle for advancing the writing skills of my English Language Learners is why I selected teacher research as the methodology for my study. Teacher research as my methodology of study allowed an examination of practice in the context of classroom work that enabled me to build practice and knowledge simultaneously. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009) explain the dialectic between research and practice in this manner:

> With practitioner research, the borders between inquiry and practice are crossed, and the boundaries between being a researcher and being a practitioner are blurred. Instead of being regarded as oppositional constructs, then, inquiry and practice are assumed to be related to each other in terms of productive and generative tensions. From this perspective, inquiry and practice are understood to have a reciprocal, recursive, and symbiotic relationship (p 94-95).

With the recent implementation of Common Core State Standards in writing, teachers are striving to find effective ways to help their students meet the rigorous standards (Calkins, et al., 2012). There is little research related to implementation of practices for actualizing the standards, so teachers are reading literature and studying their own teaching as they search for effective practices. The standards are so new there are no definitive experts or ways of implementing the standards for teachers to access (Dana, Burns & Wolkenhauer, 2013). Practitioner research has the potential to help teachers examine their classroom work in order to transform their instruction so as to increase student learning in writing. It was my intention to watch and examine student behaviors and my own teaching moves as critical incidents for constructing knowledge about my writing instruction.

Practitioner research is unique in how the researcher is situated within the study. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009) advance the notion that teacher researchers become co-

constructors of knowledge and creators of curriculum (p.84). In this way, teachers are not passively teaching from curriculum guides or teacher manuals. Rather, teachers are critically examining their practice by addressing complexities and uncertainties as a way to improve instruction in response to the challenges of meeting current standards. Practitioner researchers are working from within, which allows them to be collaborators in the process and therefore, more likely to enact change based on the knowledge they create (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003). With practitioner research, teachers address the issues or concerns in their particular practice. In this way educators become autonomous change agents who actively direct their own pedagogical development (Caro-Bruce, Flessner, Klehr, & Zeichner, 2007). This study emerged from my own sense of urgency to find ways to accelerate the writing skills of students for whom English is not their heritage language.

Practitioner research is a public process which includes identifying a dilemma or wondering related to a problem of practice and creating an open-ended research question (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009). It is a part of the daily work of teachers as they work through the continual cycle of questioning; observing; gathering and analyzing data; and, acting on the new knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009). This study in the use of collaborative writing within a Writer's Workshop provided insight into my instructional moves and the learning of ELL students in a particular second grade classroom in one of the Title 1 schools I serve.

Context for Study and Description of Intervention

As a district literacy specialist for Title 1 schools, I am responsible for working alongside the school literacy coaches and classroom teachers in five Title 1 schools

which are currently in various stages of Differentiated Accountability from the state due to “D” and “F” school grades. As a result of their Differentiated Accountability standings, the schools also receive support from the district administration, as well as visits from state leaders who offer suggestions, review implementation of suggested changes, and monitor student progress through data analysis. One area of focus for two of the schools was with regard to writing instruction. One classroom teacher and her literacy coach were particularly concerned with meeting the needs of English Language Learners as our district implemented the Common Core State Standards. Because of this interest, I approached them to see if I might work alongside them on a consistent basis to better understand and meet the writing needs of ELLs in the classroom.

As the district literacy specialist serving Title 1 schools, I selected this particular school and classroom as I had worked in this school as a classroom teacher, intervention reading teacher, or literacy coach for twenty six years. I was extremely cognizant of the operation of the school community, and had a comfortable working relationship with the students, families, and faculty. I had worked with the second grade classroom teacher who expressed interest in participating in this study in varying ways throughout the years and we shared a strong collegial relationship. I was comfortable in her classroom.

This teacher operated in a traditional manner during the literacy block, delivering full group Core reading instruction, conducting daily guided reading lessons, and by utilizing Writer’s Workshop for writing instruction. She employed teacher modeling with think-alouds in both reading and writing and frequently conferred with students throughout the day. I knew this way of operating in the classroom would make the

collaborative writing and conferencing work of this intervention comfortable for the students. Also, in the past I worked with this teacher though a 60 day coaching cycle and have maintained a positive collegial relationship with her. I had also previously worked in this classroom with the students delivering whole group writing and reading lessons, so all of the students were familiar with me as a teacher in their classroom.

This classroom had a high number of ELLs as the policy at the school was to cluster ELLs for language support. Six of the fifteen students in this class were ELLs with home languages of Spanish (4 students) and Haitian Creole (2 students). I began working in this classroom at the end of October during the Informative/Explanatory genre writing unit. I implemented the collaborative writing intervention with a group of ELL students two or three times a week during the middle portion of their Writer's Workshop time, which always took place during the last hour of the instructional day.

The classroom teacher delivered the initial whole group instruction that occurs at the start of Writer's Workshop and during the independent writing time, while she conferred with students, I worked with the ELL students at a kidney-shaped table in the back of the room. Each intervention session followed the focus of the daily whole group instruction and employed collaborative writing (including shared writing and interactive writing centered on students' readiness) for about twenty minutes. I was also given the flexibility to provide my own mini-lessons following the needs of the students.

As I began each day's intervention session I asked the students what they recalled from the previous session, as there were sometimes several days between sessions. The students could refer to their notes if they needed but usually, with a little prompting, they could recall our focus and discuss what had happened during the

previous session. If a student had been absent, we took a moment for the group members to share our work and to state the important learning. Throughout all sessions I referred to the students as “Writers” and continually used, “Good writers…” or “We’ve learned that good writers….” as sentence stems to foster their foundational understanding of what constitutes the thinking and action of writing, as well as to increase their belief in themselves as writers. Following the review of previous learning, I introduced the target learning or practice for the day and employed collaborative writing in various ways.

At the completion of the intervention session, the students shared within our small group and returned to the whole group for the last part of Writer’s Workshop, which was a review of that day’s focus and students’ sharing of writing. The intervention took place over a period of nine weeks for a total of twenty sessions.

Intervention Group Members. The six students who participated in the intervention group were identified based upon their fall Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment (CELLA) scores and SAT 10 scores from end of year first grade. In addition, I conferred with the classroom teacher to determine which six students might best benefit from intervention support in writing. The group consisted of six second graders, four males and two females. Three of the boys were Hispanic and one Haitian. One girl was Hispanic and one was Haitian. They were of varying language abilities. All students spoke a language other than English at home. When I began the intervention work with the students at the end of October of 2013, they ranged in age from six years-five months old to nine years–zero months old, with one of the students having been previously retained in second grade.

According to their most recent (CELLA) testing, the students ranged from the Beginning level in Listening/Speaking to High Intermediate level. There was a similar range in the students' CELLA Writing Assessment, with scores ranging from the Beginning level to High Intermediate level. In a similar manner their reading comprehension scores from the end of first grade ranged from the 15th percentile to the 88th percentile on the SAT 10 Assessment. In this dissertation, I will refer to the students by gender and number as delineated in the chart below.

Table 3-1. Participants' assessment data.

Student	CELLA writing proficiency	CELLA listening/ speaking proficiency	SAT 10 reading comprehension
Boy 1	Beginning	High Intermediate	32
Boy 2	Beginning	Low Intermediate	55
Boy 3	Beginning	High Intermediate	38
Boy 4	Low Intermediate	High Intermediate	70
Girl 1	High Intermediate	Beginning	15
Girl 2	Low Intermediate	High Intermediate	88

Data Collection

One way in which practitioner inquiry is distinguished from other forms of research is that not only do you document classroom practice and student learning, but you also document the inside perspective of the researcher. This calls for broader notions of what counts as data (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). As I enacted my small group intervention with the ELLs during Writer's Workshop, I collected data to gain insights into my research questions in three ways: (1) taking field notes, (2) collecting student work, and (3) keeping a teacher researcher journal.

Field notes are a way to record information about the action occurring in the classroom. Field notes may include diagramming the classroom, noting what students say and do, recording conversations or scripting without commenting on or judging what

is occurring (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Creswell, 2013). I had my notebook at each session. Each session was dated and I jotted notes during the sessions. I captured the students' behaviors and statements as well as my own. An example of field notes appears in Figure 3-1.

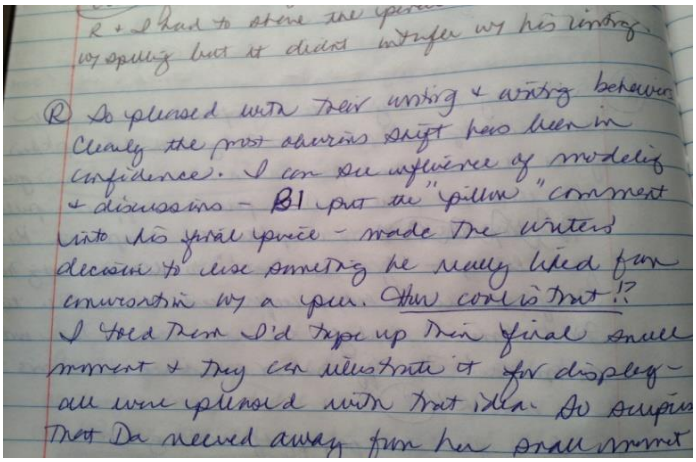


Figure 3-1. Researcher field notes, day 20 (Photo courtesy of author)

Student work and artifacts were also gathered every day as a natural and normal part of Writer's Workshop. I systematically collected, dated, and analyzed the documents generated by the group and individuals each day. Systematically looking within and across the documents allowed me to see the student work in various ways (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009). These documents were naturally occurring forms of data that were systematically analyzed to reveal shifts in student learning that influenced my instructional moves. These artifacts also revealed ways in which collaborative writing influenced student growth. Figure 3-2 is one example of the many student work artifacts that were generated during the small group intervention sessions and collected as data for this study.

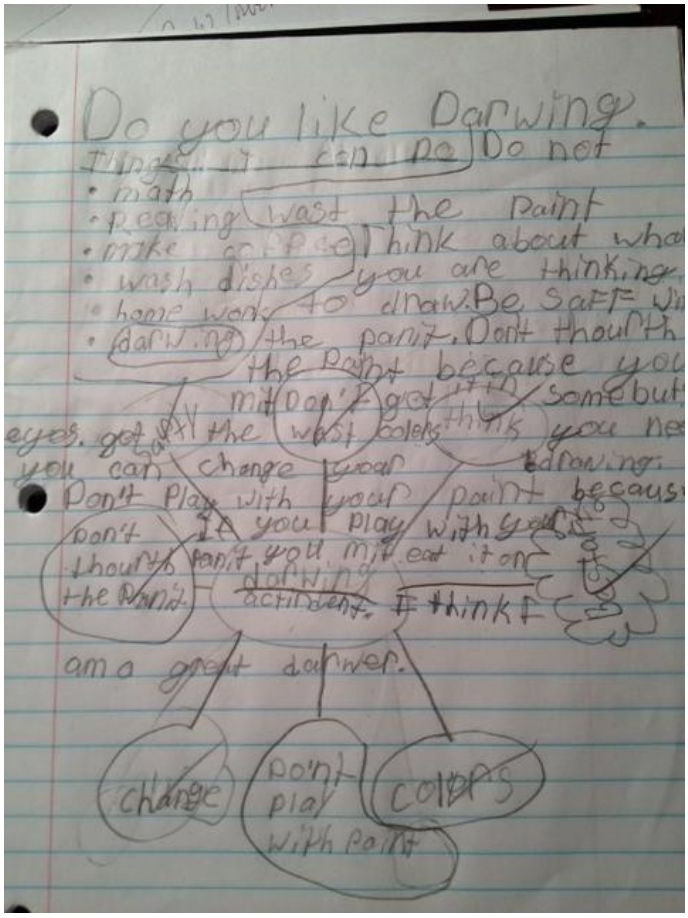
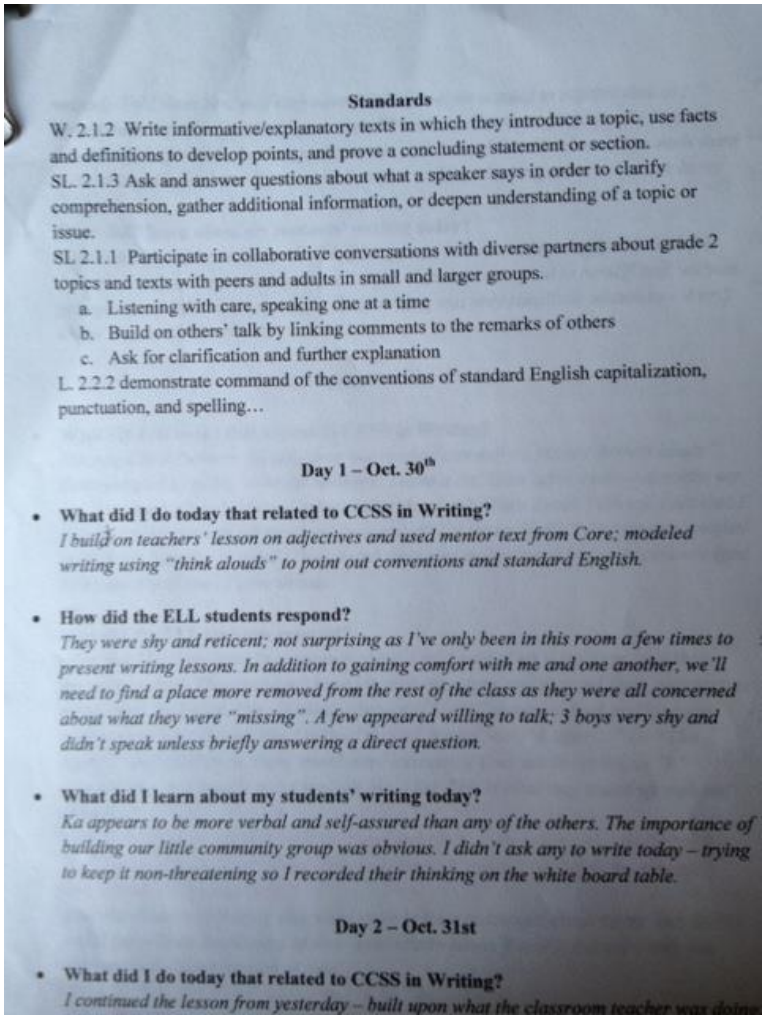


Figure 3-2. Student artifact of planning web (Photo courtesy of author)

The third type of data I collected was in the form of a teacher researcher's journal. After each teaching session, while the students returned to the whole class wrap up of shared writing, I retired to my office where I wrote in my journal on the computer for ten minutes. I reflected on my teaching practice, the actions and words of the students, and the writing generated by the group. Each day I used the same three questions to guide my journal reflection and writing: (1) What did I do today that related to Common Core State Standards in writing?, (2) How did the ELL students respond?, and (3) What did I learn about my students' writing today? This purposeful routine allowed me to immediately reflect upon that day's work and document successes and

needs while capturing my thoughts about next steps in instruction. Figure 3-3 illustrates one page from my journal.



Standards

W. 2.1.2 Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and prove a concluding statement or section.
SL. 2.1.3 Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.
SL 2.1.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
a. Listening with care, speaking one at a time
b. Build on others' talk by linking comments to the remarks of others
c. Ask for clarification and further explanation
L. 2.2.2 demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling…

Day 1 – Oct. 30th

- **What did I do today that related to CCSS in Writing?**
  I build on teachers' lesson on adjectives and used mentor text from Core; modeled writing using "think alouds" to point out conventions and standard English.
- **How did the ELL students respond?**
  They were shy and reticent; not surprising as I've only been in this room a few times to present writing lessons. In addition to gaining comfort with me and one another, we'll need to find a place more removed from the rest of the class as they were all concerned about what they were "missing". A few appeared willing to talk; 3 boys very shy and didn't speak unless briefly answering a direct question.
- **What did I learn about my students' writing today?**
  Ka appears to be more verbal and self-assured than any of the others. The importance of building our little community group was obvious. I didn't ask any to write today – trying to keep it non-threatening so I recorded their thinking on the white board table.

Day 2 – Oct. 31st

- **What did I do today that related to CCSS in Writing?**
  I continued the lesson from yesterday – built upon what the classroom teacher was doing

Figure 3-3. Printed teacher researcher journal, day 1 (Photo courtesy of author)

One way a teacher researcher can ensure the credibility of her work is through triangulation. Triangulation refers to collecting multiple sources of data and comparing and contrasting what are gleaned from the different data sources as one way to provide validity to the research findings (Creswell, 2013). The three different data sources just described (field notes, student work artifacts, teacher researcher journal) were employed to triangulate my findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was both formative and summative. Formative data analysis occurred after each teaching session, as I reflected in my journal about my field notes and any student work generated during the teaching session. What I learned from reflecting daily on these data informed my instructional decision-making for the next teaching session.

Summative data analysis occurred after all data were collected. In order to gain insight from the entire data sets, I gathered all data generated throughout the study in one place and read straight through all data several times as this provided me with a sense of the whole before breaking it into parts (Agar, 1980). I then went through the data and engaged in the process of memoing to describe, classify, and interpret the data (Creswell, 2013). I was cognizant of code labels related to three things: (1) information I expected to find before the study; (2) surprising information I did not anticipate; or (3) information that was conceptually interesting or unusual (Creswell, 2013). From engaging in the process of coding, three distinctive ways of enacting the collaborative writing intervention emerged. In Chapter 4, I name and report these three particular ways of collaborative writing work with ELLs. The report of my findings in Chapter 4 was also informed by the questions outlined in Dana & Yendol-Hoppey's book, *The Reflective Educator's Guide to Classroom Research* (2009) to reflect on one's data in the interpretive phase of data analysis:

- What have I learned about myself as a teacher?
- What have I learned about children?
- What have I learned about the larger context of schools and schooling?
- What are the implications of what I have learned on my teaching?
- What changes might I make in my practice?
- What new wonderings do I have?

Researcher Background, Biases, Values, and Experiences

As I collected and analyzed data and wrote up the results of this practitioner research study, it was important to be cognizant of my own background, biases, values, and experiences and what I brought to this study. According to John W. Creswell in his book, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* (2013), qualitative researchers need to "position" themselves in their writings in such a way as to show awareness of biases, values and experiences that might influence the study. Hence, in this section, I provide an overview of my professional background experiences that relate to the topic of this study.

I have been a teacher for thirty-five years, eleven of which were as a literacy coach and the year this study was conducted was my first year in the district literacy specialist role. For thirty years my career, by choice, has been in Title 1 schools. I have a personal commitment to working with children of poverty in a culturally responsive manner. Critical to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) is the importance of trusting and caring teacher-student relationships, high expectations, and working within a climate of collaboration and mutual respect (Powell & Rightmyer, 2011). Over the years I have worked with numerous teachers and students with reading intervention and the tenets of intervention as a means to accelerate learning by building upon what the students "can do" is at the heart of my belief system. I brought this asset-view of English Language Learners to my study.

I was the first person in my extended family to graduate college. In many ways this was totally unexpected as from the very beginning I was never a strong student. I did not learn to read at all until third grade, well behind my peers. I never distinguished

myself academically and throughout high school only one teacher ever encouraged me to consider college. College was an unknown for my parents so learning the application process was new for all of us. It was a family celebration when I earned a Bachelors of Science degree in Elementary Education from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in 1979. During my student teaching I petitioned to work in an inner city Black school in Hamilton, Ohio. This was my first experience with teaching children of color and poverty.

Upon graduation I began teaching third and second grade in a small, rural farm town in Ohio. I moved to Florida and purposefully sought a teaching position in a Title 1 school with children of color and poverty who were primarily English Language Learners and from migrant families. I have taught in this community for thirty years as either a fifth or third grade classroom teacher, a reading resource teacher, a Teacher on Special Assignment, or as a reading/literacy coach. I was recently hired as a district literacy specialist for Title 1 Schools and remained working in the same community with all five elementary schools. During the past thirty years I acquired my Masters degree from the University of South Florida and my Specialist degree from the University of Florida. My advanced degrees centered on Curriculum & Instruction and Teacher Leadership.

My passion is literacy instruction and in finding ways to make learning accessible for all children. My personal experiences as a striving student influences how I work each day. My attraction to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) is in how it considers the language, experiences, and cultural resources of students as “funds of knowledge” (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), while honoring what the students and their families bring to the learning. I also believe in the power of learning to read and write. For me,

literacy acquisition is a social justice issue and a way to close the achievement gap. I am inspired by Freire (1970) when he talks about education as liberating instead of alienating and empowering instead of oppressive.

I have worked with colleagues with inquiry research for the past seven years and am invigorated by collegial work. I have also participated in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and a Critical Friends Group (CFG), all of which have advanced my learning as a professional educator. I envisioned this study as a way to extend my work in literacy instruction in an inquiring, collaborative manner. I recognized how I was positioned within this work.

Conclusion

Engagement in practitioner research to contribute to the knowledge base for teaching is critical for the work that lies before teachers. With increasing numbers of English Language Learners and the implementation of the rigorous literacy standards, teachers must find effective ways to accelerate the literacy skills of students if those students are ever to reach the high standards of Common Core work. Practitioner research allows teachers to produce change in practice for teachers and students within the contexts of their classrooms. In Chapter 3, I described the ways I employed practitioner research to gain insights into the writing development of ELLs as the CCSS were implemented in my district. In Chapter 4, I present the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 4
ACTUALIZING WRITING INTERVENTION FOR ELLS IN PRACTICE

Introduction

I will focus on describing and analyzing the approach I took to enacting a small-group writing intervention to support ELLs toward actualization of the Common Core State Standards in writing in Chapter 4. As a reminder, the two standards I focused my teaching of writing on were the standards about writing informative/explanatory texts and the one focused on the strengthening of writing through revising and editing. My focus on these two standards will be apparent through my description of each way I enacted collaborative writing within the Writer's Workshop. The intent of this study was to examine the teaching moves and student responses that resulted from enacting collaborative writing within a Writer's Workshop. Analysis of the data revealed that the collaborative writing intervention coalesced into three particular ways of working and I have labeled these as: Teacher as Scribe, Pair and Share, and Collaboration Planning for Independent Writing. I will share how each of these patterns of action were employed throughout the study as I responded to learners' needs and the demands of the CCSS in Writing in Chapter 4. I will share the richness of the intervention, my teaching moves within each way of working, and describe particular teaching episodes.

Before describing each individual way collaborative writing work occurred, it is important to note that an analysis of the collective data revealed that the three different ways collaborative writing was enacted were related to one another. For instance, on Day 1, Teacher as Scribe was used and this was followed on Day 2 with Pair and Share, and Day 3 was Collaborative Planning for Individual Writing. These strategies often all occurred on the same day, but the data show how one strategy was dominate.

Therefore, I focused on what the primary strategy was for each day. The chart below demonstrates how each individual form of collaborative writing related to one another and reveals a usage pattern over time.

Table 4-1. Occurrence of collaborative writing actualization over 20 days of intervention

Teacher as scribe	1					6	7				11	12								
Pair and share		2		4				8					13	14	15				18	
Collaborative planning for independent writing			3		5				9	10						16	17			19 20

From the display of the table it is evident that as we progressed through the intervention sessions, the students required less work in the Teacher as Scribe manner as the collaborative writing occurred more through Pair and Share and Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing. The chart also shows how, overall, more time was spent in Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing as the students gained in their writing experiences and stamina.

Having established the frequency and ordering of each individual form of collaborative writing work as it occurred across the 20 intervention sessions, in the next section of Chapter 4, I focus on defining and describing Teacher as Scribe, Pair and Share, and Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing

Teacher as Scribe

The data reveal that Collaborative Writing in the form of Teacher as Scribe was employed at the beginning of new learning experiences or when students encountered difficulties. Teacher as Scribe was when I took on all or most of the responsibility of writing, whether on the white board, white table, chart paper, or notebook paper. During

Teacher as Scribe, the students discussed ideas, offered suggestions, and provided reflective feedback but were not responsible for the actual writing of the text. The data reveal that twenty-five percent of the intervention time I employed Teacher as Scribe experiences and these occurred on days 1, 6, 7, 11 and 12.

As discussed in Chapter 2, writing is a social process (Dorn & Soffos, 2001; Peregoy & Boyle, 2008; Routman, 2005). Children come to understand how to communicate through writing via meaningful interactions with more knowledgeable people (Dorn & Soffos, 2001). This was demonstrated in my study when I employed teacher modeling as Scribe and employed a gradual release of the responsibility of writing. At times this occurred as a natural beginning for new learning (Days 1, 6 and 12). At other times I needed to act as Scribe to build students' confidence (Days 7 and 11) due to issues that arose.

When scribing for students I either gathered them on the carpet in front of chart paper or gathered them around the white table. For both settings the students could all freely watch my writing as I spoke and wrote simultaneously. I used various colored markers on the white board or chart paper to emphasize the new learning or draw attention to particular aspects of writing. As I scribed I kept a running dialogue in which I shared aloud all of my thinking as I wrote, reread what I wrote, and/or made changes. This type of writing is powerful for building the writing community and for promoting a positive stance about writing through authentic composition (Routman, 2005; Spandel, 2001).

An example of collaborative writing with Teacher as Scribe occurred on part of Day 5 and on Day 6. In my researcher journal I noted on Day 5 how we had focused on

the step of revision as a means to improve writing. At this point in the intervention students were helping me finish my model piece on the topic of being a cat owner (Figure 4-1). The students were asking probing questions. We discussed how questions give writers ideas to consider as they continue to revise. It was my intention to demonstrate for my students the idea of adding on new information, which developmentally is one of the first revision tasks young writers employ (Graves, 1994). The students also heard me think aloud as I considered which transitions I might use. I tried out various transitions orally, deliberately letting them hear when a transition "didn't sound right" or "did sound right".

I then gave the students time to work on their own writing pieces, and observed each, looking for instances where students added on more information or inserted transition words. My field notes showed that only one student (B3), actually incorporated transition words of "*first,* and *last*" in his own composition while most added at least one idea to their writing (RFN, Day 5). This was consistent with my observations of B3 as he appeared to be more verbal, using descriptive adjectives and temporal transitions in his speech.

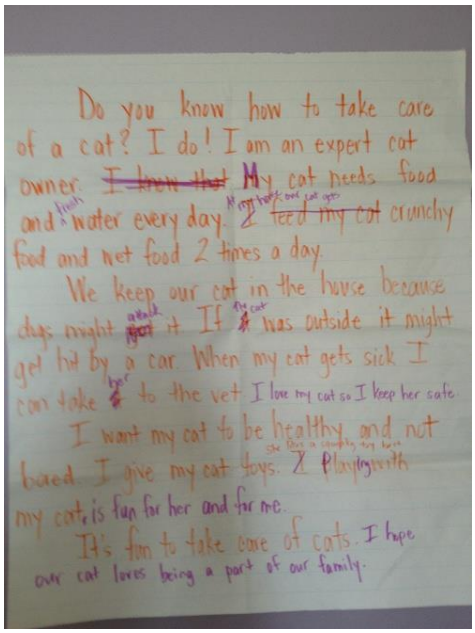
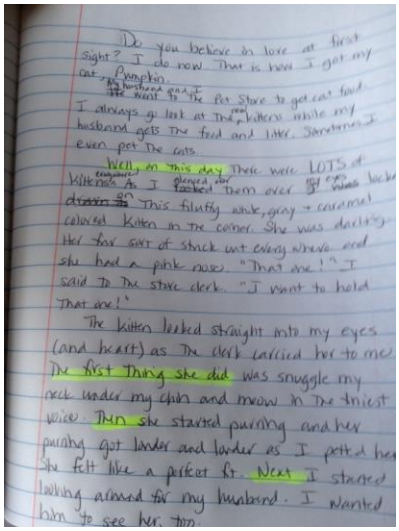


Figure 4-1. Photo of teacher as scribe chart with revisions (Photo courtesy of author)

On Day 6 the students had difficulty naming or describing the previous day's learning. This was a bit distressing for me as I thought they had a grasp on the work and was planning on addressing logical endings, which is Common Core Writing standard W.2.1.2. I had to refocus my attention for the day's intervention work since I noted that "even B3 couldn't restate the transitional words he used the day before" (RFN, Day 6). I quickly reviewed our generated list of transition words and phrases from the day before. I demonstrated how to use transition words by bringing their attention to my writing on the topic of my cat in my journal, highlighting each transition word or phrase in yellow (Figure 4-2). In this manner I was demonstrating rehearsal as a way to make choices as a writer. We discussed the use of temporal transitional words and phrases and how they helped the reader better understand what was happening and when it was happening. One child, G1, stated how it helped her better visualize what was happening in my story and the others nodded in agreement. After a review of

transitional phrases and brief discussion on revising with details, I felt confident the students could employ one or both in their own writing.


Do you believe in love at first sight? I do now. That is how I got my cat, Pumpkin. My husband and I went to the Pet Store to get cat food. I always go look at the kittens while my husband gets the food and litter. Sometimes I even pet the cats.

Well, on this day there were LOTS of kittens. As I glanced over my eyes locked on this fluffy white, gray + caramel colored kitten in the corner. She was darling. Her fur sort of stuck out everywhere and she had a pink nose. "That one!" I said to the store clerk. "I want to hold that one!"

The kitten looked straight into my eyes (and heart) as the clerk carried her to me. The first thing she did was snuggle my neck under my chin and meow in the tiniest voice. Then she started purring and her purring got louder and louder as I petted her. She felt like a perfect fit. Next I started talking excited to my husband. I wanted him to see her too.

Figure 4-2. Photo of teacher/student use of revision (Photo courtesy of author)

I then set the students off to work independently on their individual pieces. During this time I used drop-in conferencing to monitor how they were doing. When I saw that the first three students with whom I conferred were still not using transitions at all, I stopped the group and brought them back to a different collaborative writing piece. This shared writing was on the topic of their homeroom teacher. I then asked them to help me add more transitions throughout the rest of our shared paper. We orally tried out various transition words at different places throughout the text and the group decided which words I should insert into the writing piece. They all watched as I wrote the words they gave me. I purposefully added these transition words in another color of marker so they would be readily visible. In my researcher journal I noted,

> It really hit home today about the importance of a) modeling and b) their ability to see themselves as writers using particular skills/crafts. Reminded me of someone's research – who is that? - about "self-concepting" – I need to continue to be cognizant of creating that safe environment so they can actually feel confident about approaching the task and seeing themselves as writers" (RL, Day 6).

My notes and analyzing of created text revealed that the Shared Writing in which I acted as Scribe produced more challenging text than when the students wrote independently. In this way I was using collaborative writing with Teacher as Scribe to work toward the rigorous Common Core State Standards in Writing. On page 19 of the Common Core State Standards, it is stated that second graders are to "write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section" (2010). I continually referred back to the standard as I reflected on daily lessons and planned for the next day's work. Eventually, our shared writing on the topic of their homeroom teacher included elaboration of ideas, explanations and examples, and voice. In this way, our collaborative writing product became an exemplar for the students, created by the students with me acting as scribe.

Another use of Teacher as Scribe occurred on Days 11 and 12 in which collaborative writing with Teacher as Scribe was used to foster the Writer's confidence and risk-taking. At this point in the intervention the students were each writing about something they were good at doing. My modeled example was a continuation on caring for cats. The students had created a list of possible topics and then each selected and discussed the one they chose as their topic. B1 was going to write about using an x-box; B2 was writing about computer games; B3's topic was drawing; B4 was on skateboarding; G1 was on drawing and G2 was writing about babysitting. They paired and discussed their topics and then each created a written web as a planning page (Figure 4-3). During this planning time I scribed for those who asked for assistance while others took on the writing independently. The following student planning page

reveals how the student chose to use a graphic organizer (non-linguistic representation) along with words and phrases (linguistic representation) as preparation for writing.

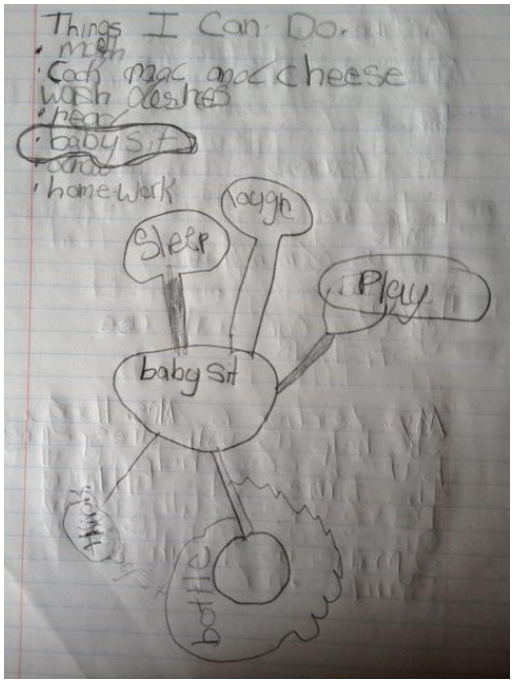


Figure 4-3. Student's writing notebook (Photo courtesy of author)

They were beginning their writing with a quick review of Effective Leads or Grabbers. This harkened back to a whole class lesson I had delivered in their class months ago. With prompting and support they collectively remembered how they could choose to begin their writing with either: a question, a startling statement, or a list. I modeled each type of lead aloud with my topic, jotting each sentence down on the white table. When writing on the white table I wrote upside down so the students were reading it correctly from their side of the table. The students watched and listened as I said each lead sentence aloud as I wrote it. We then reread each again and students shared which one they liked the best. They unanimously agreed that I should revise my lead where I had originally begun with a question and change it to beginning with a list. I composed the following: "Cat toys, food, fresh water and lots of patience for petting –

these are the things you need if you want to be a good cat owner" (RFN, Day 11*).* The students enthusiastically agreed that this revised lead was better. They then paired and orally tried out all three possible leads with their own topics. They finally each decided which lead they would use and began writing.

This work was done at the kidney shaped table in the back of the room. I could lean in to hear each writer and whisper encouragements or suggestions. In my field notes I wrote:

> I was thrilled that B2 finally whispered to himself, "I'll spell it the best I can" and kept on writing! Finally! How critical it is that they all realize that it's their thinking that makes their writing so great and spelling is an easy fix later. I need to remember to talk to Kinder and 1st grade teachers about their WW (Writer's Workshop), especially with regard to conferencing so misconceptions don't occur. So difficult to unlearn something! We are on a roll! (RFN, Day 11).

In my researcher's journal I wrote,

> I feel like we turned a corner. Looking back a bit I realize we are only on Day 11 together and that taking 11 days to get them to being excited about writing, being able to NOT fixate on spelling, and the amount of writing stamina they demonstrated today is a reasonable improvement. I have a sense of urgency because it's November; but it has only been 11 days together. I'm truly pleased with their progress and realize how much they have absorbed and grown in confidence in a little over two weeks of mini-lessons. Powerful! (RJ, Day 11).

The students' confidence continued to grow as we moved on to Day 12. On this day I was introducing memoir as a kind of explanatory writing. I shared a portion of a Core reading story as the mentor text. We uncovered how the author used descriptive writing using the senses. In my notes I stated how all of the students willingly participated in coming up with adjectives and adverbs, noting that:

> I really saw progress today. Even B2 and B3 shared the pen with lots of talking and laughing as we generated ideas about senses. We discussed how we don't have to use all of our senses to describe something, just some to pull in the reader (RFN, Day 12).

In my researcher's journal I wrote, "They all liked that and nodded their heads, smiled and agreed. I truly get a sense they all see themselves as writers" (RJ, Day 12).

Routman reminds teachers that when they demonstrate writing as a scribe the teacher is acting as expert for her apprentices, guiding and negotiating the creation of meaningful texts which fosters students' enjoyment, confidence and competence (Routman, 2005). During this type of writing the Teacher as Scribe shows students what is possible and scaffolds their attempts at using the new language, skill or craft. It is in this safe context of shared collaborative writing that English Language Learners hear rich oral language and try it out in their own writing within a supportive environment. It is in this collaborative writing experience that striving writers have purposeful conversations, are given the opportunity to work with experts, have their ideas and experiences honored, and participate in complex tasks and share ideas (Routman, 2005).

In her book, *A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop*, Lucy Calkins (2013) discusses how children need explicit goals and frequent feedback that shows how their writing is improving and what their next steps might be. When using the gradual release of Teacher as Scribe with a shared writing, my students received explicit examples and discussed ways to improve their collective writing piece. This fostered the students' confidence and enthusiasm for writing. This was clearly reflected in the data related to Days 11 and 12 of my intervention work. In my field notes on Day 12, I wrote: "Really seeing progress today. Even when B2 and B3 shared the pen there was lots of talking and laughing. They were "relaxed and engaged in the writing" (RFN, Day 12).

In addition, when reviewing the data, it became apparent that on days following me acting as Scribe the students were very positive and on task. When I took on the writing to record our collective thinking, it appeared to lessen any stress or uncertainties the students were experiencing. I needed to keenly observe and consider what obstacles were occurring and then I used my work as Scribe to model the problem solving and successful writing they needed as an exemplar. It was after such a modeling that B2 had his breakthrough moment about spelling. I had purposefully talked aloud about how to attack spelling difficult words as I was scribing because I often saw the students stopping writing and spending too much time fixated on correct spelling. When scribing I purposefully said things like, “Hmmm, let’s see, if I stretch this word I’ll hear the sounds and then I can spell it the best I can for now” or “Well, that looks about right. I’ll keep writing.” In this manner my scribing was an opportunity to demonstrate the behaviors the writers needed to take on as they wrote increasingly more complex sentences with harder words. Teacher as Scribe provided the modeling opportunities and the supportive environment my students needed to scaffold them as writers. They also benefitted from opportunities to pair and share their learning and attempts toward new practices in writing.

Pair and Share

Teacher as Scribe was not the only manner in which collaborative writing transpired. The data reveal that collaborative writing in the form of Pair and Share was utilized prior to Collaborative Planning for Individual Writing. Pair and Share was when students talked in pairs, rather than as a whole group, to discuss and/or write. Sometimes these interactions occurred naturally with the child sitting next to them and, at other times, I directed the pairing and discussions. The data reveal that collaborative

writing in the manner of Pair and Share transpired thirty-five percent of the time, occurring seven times throughout the intervention on Days 2, 4, 8, 13, 14, 15, and 18. During Pair and Share there were times when the students were writing together and then there were times when there was only a paired discussion as a means of rehearsal before writing or before revising. It is noteworthy that my reflective journaling and field notes all show that Pair and Share sessions were positive, productive days for the students, even if there were stumbling blocks or confusion in their learning.

As discussed in Chapter 2, what we eventually learn to do by ourselves, we first learned to do socially interacting with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Pair and Share was a structure that allowed for social interaction with others as a scaffold toward independence. Pair and Share worked in a two-part manner. During the Pair portion, the students worked together in pairs on each other's pieces of writing. They shifted back and forth between their two separate writing pieces with no direction from me. It was as if it was a natural dialogue with the students working on one person's writing for awhile and then shifting to the other partner's writing. My notes revealed that at times the Pair work was through discussion only. A student would rehearse aloud what he was considering as a means to bounce the idea off his classmate. In this manner the partners were acting as critical friends, helping support the writer as he made writing decisions.

The pairings usually occurred naturally by aligning up with the person seated next to them. At no time throughout the intervention weeks did I ever observe a student seek out a particular friend for Pair and Share. They were all quite comfortable working with whom-ever was seated nearby. The pairs naturally lowered their voices for the

intimate conversation in an effort to not disturb those sitting nearby. They worked “hip to hip” and “head to head” with eyes on the text being discussed.

An example of Pair and Share was on Day 13. In my daily researcher journal I most often took notes about this shared work under the reflection question, “How did the ELL students respond?” A reflection of Pair and Share work was captured in my researcher journal on Day 13:

> I introduced the idea of writing about a small moment. I talked through a small moment in my life. We began talking about one particular small moment in each of their lives (full group). We started the discussion as a whole group but the students quickly moved to pairing up. G1 and G2 happened to be sitting next to each other and they appeared to grasp the concept immediately. They were all much more interested in talking about their own small moments than in mine–a very good sign. I think I’ll have them pair up tomorrow with someone else and talk through their small moments again as they all appeared to have lots to say” (RJ, Day 13).

It is interesting to note that on the next day the students began with a Pair and Share, discussing aloud their own small moments. However, when they began writing, they stalled. No one got very far and I was left pondering what went wrong and what my next teaching move should be. My researcher journal reveals how I came upon a different form of sharing to help my writers:

> Once again I was taken aback by the stumbling blocks. They seemed so ready. So we ended quickly; I talked/shared mine again and had the students ask me questions to help me as a writer. I just wanted to end the session on a better note. I need to think about what to do tomorrow… thinking about reading intervention and how when things start to break down you drop back and firm up what they know; sense I need to do something like that here… I reread the standards searching for an idea of how to proceed. Didn’t really get any insights there. I kept thinking about how to get them to focus on that one small moment and not the whole story. I kept thinking that we want to help the reader visualize/feel it and then it hit me to try drawing! (RJ, Day 14).

The use of sketching as a way to Pair and Share was very fruitful for all of the students. They eagerly approached and completed the task, talking aloud at

times as they wrote. When finished sketching they paired with the student next to them and shared their small moment by talking about the picture they had drawn (Figure 4-4).

Figure 4-4. Photo of student's small moment sketch (Photo courtesy of author)

I wrote the following in my journal:

> Oh my gosh! Why haven't I been doing this all along?! I gave them each a small index card and talked briefly about what a sketch is and sketched my small moment as I talked about it. They were totally locked in. Then I gave them their cards and invited them to do the same. They ALL got right to it. As they drew they'd voluntarily talk aloud to the person sitting next to them and point out particular things in their sketches (RJ, Day 15).

Figure 4-5 is from a student's writing journal. Upon examination I could see where, following the Pair and Share sketch and accompanying conversations, she made revisions to her plan. She inserted "back to this" with an arrow in two places, which reveals how after Pair and Share she revised her thinking and writing plan to include those two ideas which she previously marked with "skip". This was consistent with research on the comparable systems of drawing and writing and how powerful these can be for improving writing.

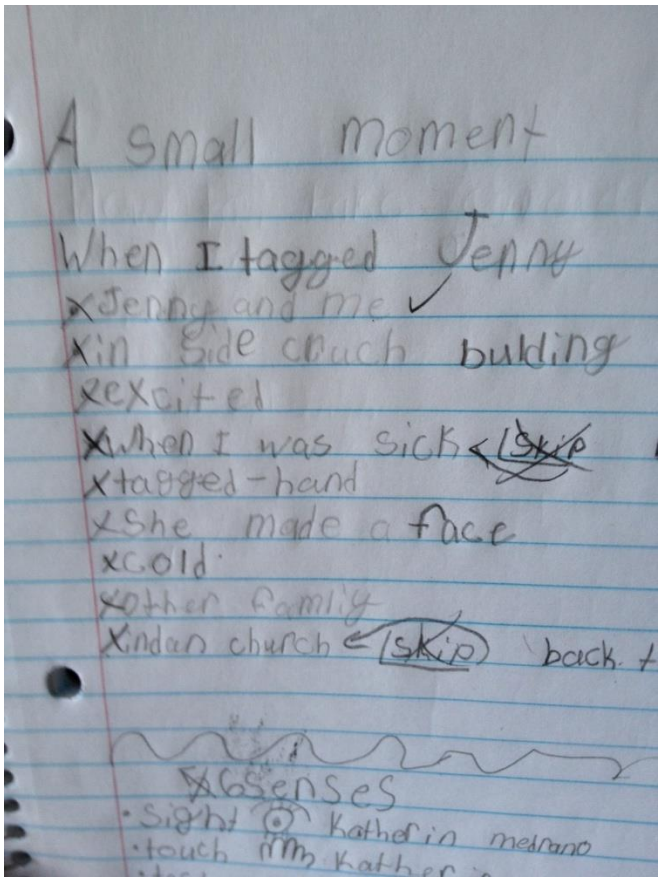


Figure 4-5. Student's revision work in writing journal (Photo courtesy of author)

I believe this type of collaborative writing exemplified what Krashen, in his book *Inquiries and Insights* (1985), means when he states, "We acquire when we obtain comprehensible input in a low-anxiety situation, when we are presented with interesting messages, and when we understand these messages" (p.10). The writers needed to rehearse their language aloud with a friend to determine what was appropriate for their task. They also found the sketching and connected discussions as a risk-free activity which fostered enthusiasm for their topics as well as confidence to begin writing. This way of enacting collaborative writing reminded me of Gee's ideas on the critical importance of trial and error and practice in social groups for English Language Learners (1992). Reviewing the data I determined that, even during the times when I

suggested the “turn and talk” of Pair and Share, the students self-selected what to share and controlled the flow of the conversations.

Just as in Teacher as Scribe, rehearsal appeared to be critical to how the collaborative writing of Pair and Share contributed to students’ confidence and writing abilities. The other part of Pair and Share was the sharing portion and this is another place rehearsal appeared. This occurred in various ways. The sharing of ideas through language was always done orally first. The students would rehearse their ideas with a partner as a form of sharing and, at times, also shared with the larger group. At times I would even hear one student offer a way to complete the sentence or phrase when her partner paused and was searching for the words. One student (G1) was the most verbal of all the group and she would offer her support and ideas to each classmate with whom she was paired. One student (B4), in particular, capitalized upon this activity by incorporating it into how he thought and behaved as a writer, even when not working with others collaboratively. He would rehearse his answers silently, moving his lips till he felt comfortable with what he wanted to share, or he would sub-vocalize as he wrote. This behavior continued throughout all twenty sessions.

Another example of Pair and Share demonstrates how the students actually rehearsed their answers to discussion questions prior to sharing aloud with others. They used our group as a place to try out a phrase or sentence before deciding whether to use certain wording. During these rehearsals it was critical for me to observe student behavior, such as when B2 kept trying to echo my demonstration of proper grammar in my speech. In my field notes I recorded how he “kept tilting his head to the side trying to hear it” (RFN – Day 3). At other times I noticed how they used language as they

discussed their writing in Pair and Share pairs or triads. The following reflection in my Researcher Journal reflects my observation of student behavior as they rehearsed what they might write:

> I gave them the option of sitting on the sofa, rug, their own desk or our table for the writing portion of today's lesson. Interestingly, they all stayed at our table. Did our sense of "community" evolve so quickly or was it a confidence issue? I modeled how to ask one question of their partner with G1 as she appears to be most fluent in English. After our modeling of asking and answering a question, the pair work went much better. I need to continually take the time to do this; I see what happens if I go too fast" (RFN – Day 4).

It is interesting to note that only once, in all of the sessions, did a student not want to share aloud with the group. This was G2 on the final writing piece. I invited her to read her piece aloud to the group and she said she did not want to do so. I moved on to another student and after three others shared their writing, she indicated she wanted to share her writing with the group. The share portion of the work appeared to give her the confidence to share her writing.

An additional example of Pair and Share was on Day 8 and this transpired alongside Teacher as Scribe. The topic was "recess", and I scribed as the students shared what they had done at recess that day. They gave words like *fun, play, swings, slide, spinner, merry-go-round* and *monkey bars*. When I asked for specific details, they naturally paired up with the person next to them and discussed their ideas. The more they talked, the louder and more enthusiastic they got. At the height of their paired discussions, I took them to the rug and asked them to tell me what to write. I wrote on chart paper quickly as they shared amongst themselves the best ways to communicate their ideas. If one student offered an idea, another would extend the thought to the affirmations of the group. They were all quite pleased with the collective piece of writing

they dictated to me. They insisted on reading it over several times with the girls reading the piece aloud once, followed by the boys chorally reading, and then all reading it aloud together. This choral reading was totally controlled by the students. After the choral readings, I pointed out to the students how their sentences began in various ways and how pleasing that was for the reader. They also discussed how and where to place the exclamation marks. This is the collaborative writing that resulted from their Pair and Share discussions (Day 8, SA):

> Recess is awesome! I like to play on the spinner. It makes me dizzy. Some kids call it the Throw-Upper! We can swing on the swings. You swing your legs to go higher. I was scared when I went too high. My favorite is the slide. We have four slides on our playground. I wish I lived on the playground!

In this manner, the use of Pair and Share resulted in a completed piece of writing the students deemed successful. Their oral negotiation of how to express their ideas and emotions about the topic helped them become more conscious and thoughtful as writers. It also allowed the students the space for thoughtful dialogue about a shared topic, as well as rhetorical decision making. Working in this manner the collective group was operating as transitional writers. Transitional writers use good leads, strong nouns and verbs, descriptive language, revise word choice and can tie text together with an appropriate or creative ending (Dorn & Soffos, 2001). It is evident from their collaborative text that the group used their paired discussions to create a piece of writing with description (dizzy, scared, legs to go higher) as well as voice (Throw-Upper, I wish I lived on the playground!). Collaboratively they created sentences at a level more advanced than previously demonstrated in their individual writing.

Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing

The final way in which collaborative writing was manifested in our sessions was in what I labeled Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing. Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing was when the students planned either with the whole group or in pairs, but then moved to individual composition instead of dictated work (as in Teacher as Scribe) or working in pairs (as in Pair and Share). During Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing, the students were together for the oral discussion and even during writing planning, but then physically separated themselves for the individual writing time. The data indicate that Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing was employed forty percent of the time and occurred eight times on Days 3, 5, 9, 10, 16, 17, 19, and 20. It is also of note that Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing always followed Pair and Share days.

As discussed in Chapter 2, in the book *Between Worlds: Access to Second Language Acquisition* (2001), Freeman & Freeman state that "Teachers who mediate learning provide a 'way' or medium that helps students gain new understandings" (p.48). I believe it is critical to note that at times a student would take on the role of teacher, helping a friend mediate what the student wanted to communicate. In this way the "teacher's" use of academic language was a tool for the less language proficient learner, who readily accepted the correction and incorporated it into his/her speech and, ultimately, into his/her writing. When collaboration works well, students assume roles naturally. These roles reflect their interests and strengths (Freeman & Freeman, 2001). In a traditional classroom writing lesson, it is not likely that this type of supportive interaction would have occurred, as the students are usually set off to write individually following the teacher led mini lesson. Our small-group writing intervention work provided

the physical and emotional environment for the collaborative planning discussions which impacted the students' individual writing and promoted these types of language-related episodes.

An example of Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing early in the intervention study occurred on Day 5. During this intervention session the focus was on adding details to their writing. During this session I modeled how to add details based upon questions asked of me by the students. They each had an opportunity to share their own topic and the group members asked probing questions so each writer could elaborate on their topic. My field notes reveal how B4 was encouraged to name who went to the restaurant with him and B3 described the new clothes he got while shopping. B2 was corrected by G1 when he said he "play tag at the party". She quietly offered, "play**ed** tag" and he corrected his speech and said, "I played tag at the party." These rehearsal language-related episodes enabled the writers to go off to their individual writing armed with ideas, words, and phrases to incorporate into their writing. This reminded me of Krashen's (1985) distinction between acquiring a language and learning a new language. For student B2, English was a new language and this intervention session allowed him the opportunity to learn about "past tense" in his journey toward academic proficiency.

Another example of Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing occurred on Day 9. The focus of this day's intervention lesson was on idea generation. When planning for this lesson I had reread a section of Regie Routman's *Writing Essentials* (2005), in which she stated that English Language Learners, like all students, do best with high expectations, interesting and challenging work, an interactive teaching style,

and lots of opportunities for conversation (p. 276). The principles Routman endorsed included making learning relevant, explaining why, providing demonstrations and guided practice, promoting scaffolded conversation and lots of time to practice communicating through writing. I focused on the idea of using scaffolded conversations to support my writers, so I began the lesson with a demonstrated "think aloud" as I wrote my planning web. Then I allowed the students to pair up to talk about their topics. Throughout their paired discussions I would drop-in listen and occasionally I would stop the group to share what a particular pair had said, complimenting them on their thinking work and even using sentence stems that emerged from the pairs' conversations. I reminded them that, "Writing is thinking written down", reinforcing the concept that they were to use what they thought and discussed with their partners as they began their individual plans for writing. In my reflection notes I recorded that "it was evident that their confidence was there due to the topic being of their own choosing, a major component of Writer's Workshop, and due to time spent talking and sharing before even beginning to write" (RJ, Day 9). It was noted in my research journal that Day 10 was highly successful, especially with regard to writing stamina. It appeared that the time spent on discussion prior to writing enabled the students to write more over a longer period of time.

Another use of Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing occurred on Days 17 and 19, which were connected to their final individual writing of a small moment. On Day 16 the students had shared their Small Moment sketches in pairs. Recall how effective the use of sketching was for the writers. They were given time to add to their sketches and then shared them with their partner and then with the whole group. They

pointed out details in their sketches, naming people and important information to their partners. I dropped in to listen to the pairs and I wrote in my field notes how I was particularly awed by how revelatory this time was for me as their teacher. In my field notes I wrote:

> (It) really hit me when I saw them explaining their cards/sketches and heard them talking about them–for G2 it wasn't about the shopping but about being with her family. For B2, with his sketch and talk about his sketch, it was clearly very important to him that at that particular moment HE was the center of attention with the piñata – he even showed movement with arrows (Figure 4-6) (RFN, Day 16).

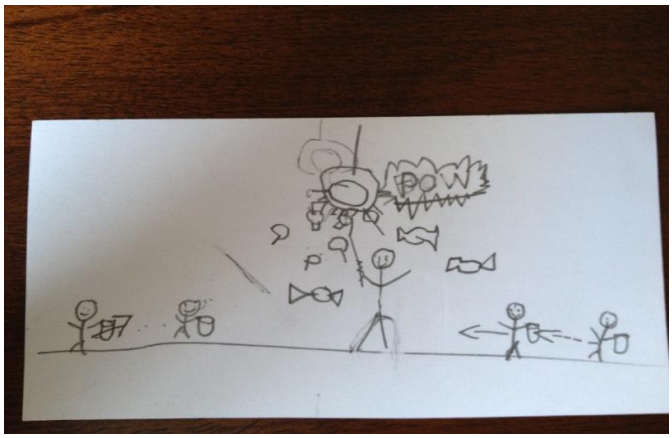


Figure 4-6. Student sketch of small moment (Photo courtesy of author)

> In my reflective notes my pondering continued,
>
> Once again it was evident how deeply they can think about something even if they don't have the (English) language for it- drawing gave us that! We all learned so much about each other's small moment by looking at the sketches. (RJ, Day 16).

The revelation of how effective sketching can be caused a shift in my understanding of how to scaffold striving writers. In my Researcher Journal I wrote:

> It took the entire time but it was time well spent. I think I learned more about me than the kiddos today. Why didn't I do this before? I knew better but had rushed right on without thinking about how they were supported in writing in their first grade classrooms. I know they use sketching all the time. I know now in a searing image sort of way how this is all a process and writers move back and forth on the continuum depending upon the genre, skills required, etc. Whenever we try a new genre I will now

> remember to try out the sketching piece as it seems to be incredibly powerful. (RJ, Day 16).

Sketching as a way of planning for individual writing correlated to other reading and writing work. Throughout full class instruction and during these intervention sessions, I often had students close their eyes and listen to something I wrote. Then they would open their eyes and discuss it to see if I had “painted the picture enough” for them. When there was confusion, I discussed how I needed to do a more precise job of describing and I would revise my text so the images they created were what I wanted them to “see”. I reminded the students that the goal of visualizing is not to create their own movie in their head, but rather to see the images created with the words. We discussed how visualizing helps the reader gain a better understanding of the text so we, as writers, must be considerate of our audience when writing and paint the picture with our words. The Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing almost always centered on how to write so others could correctly visualize our writing; thereby, empowering the ELLs to build writing skills and confidence.

Summary

In sum, an analysis of the data revealed that collaborative writing was enacted in three different ways for distinct purposes with regard to fostering the learning of writing skills for English Language Learners when writing explanatory pieces. During the nine weeks and twenty intervention sessions, I enacted small-group writing intervention sessions with the intent of examining my teaching moves and students responses that resulted from using collaborative writing within a Writer’s Workshop. Being able to name and discuss three distinct ways our collaborative writing intervention sessions were enacted made particular pedagogical approaches to instruction that were effective

for ELLs more visible and in turn, I was more cognizant of when and how to incorporate these strategies in the best interest of the students with whom I worked. In Chapter 5 of this dissertation, I name and discuss these pedagogical practices and discuss their implications.

CHAPTER 5
IMPLICATIONS

I focused on the context and enactment of my study pertaining to collaborative writing and English Language Learners in Chapter 4. As a result of my data analysis, there were three distinct ways I enacted the collaborative writing intervention: Teacher as Scribe, Pair and Share, and Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing. In Chapter 4, I described each of these approaches to enacting collaborative writing in detail, noting the moves I made as a teacher in response to the students. An examination of Chapter 4 reveals repeated use of particular pedagogical practices that were present across all three approaches to collaborative writing that hold implications for the teaching of writing to English Language Learners. In Chapter 5, I name and define each of these pedagogical practices, illustrate the practice as it played out in all three approaches to enacting collaborative writing by referring back to Chapter 4, and finally share implications this practice holds for myself and for actualizing the Common Core State Standards with ELLs. I end with an overarching reflection on what this capstone project has meant to me.

Rehearsal

The first pedagogical practice that was present across all three ways collaborative writing was enacted with ELLs in this study was rehearsal. Rehearsal can be defined as the trial and error of oral and written language that often calls for listening, repeating, and self-correcting. I noted the crucial importance of rehearsal for the ELL writers. I recognized how time spent on oral rehearsal prior to writing appeared to foster students' writing skills and their confidence about approaching the task at hand. It also appeared to scaffold the learners from observing, to participating, to working

independently. I stated in my field notes how I wanted to continue to “watch for moments of rehearsal to see how often it occurred and when” (RFN, Day 6).

An example of rehearsal that occurred during Teacher as Scribe as reported in Chapter 4 occurred when, on Day 5, I focused the day’s learning on revision with added elaboration through the use of rehearsal. Recall when the students rehearsed the oral language of questioning as they led me to revise my writing on the topic of being a cat owner. The students were progressing developmentally with most writing at the intermediate level as evidenced by writing several sentences, using some level of sequencing, having minor grammatical errors, and employing a few types of sentence patterns. However, to meet the rigorous CCSS, they needed to expand their sentence patterns and revise by adding more information to their writings. This required time devoted to rehearsing for oral language acquisition.

Every time I scribed for the students I was cognizant of where they were as writers and where they needed to go next. I used scribing to assist them as they orally rehearsed what they wanted to write, often assisting them in using different sentence patterns and expanding their sentences. Other rehearsals were related to their language acquisition as they had to rehearse to utilize correct grammar. Scribing to support these two types of rehearsal occurred whole group, in pairs, and individually. It was obvious when I had to refine my instruction based upon their particular language attempts and the errors exhibited by the students. For instance,

> It seemed like a lot of today was about oral language practice. Despite me modeling the act of revising with our shared writing with explicit “Think Alouds” by me, B3 was the only one who used temporal transitions in his writing (and he only used “first” and “last”). Obviously this is an area of need. I need to find a good mentor text but I think I also need to provide

> lots of talk time using transitions. It's not in their language so I can't expect it in their writing." (RFN – Day 5).

This reflection reveals how rehearsal became a critical tool for me to use to foster the learning of particular writing craft and the students' oral and written language when I employed the collaborative writing format during Teacher as Scribe.

An example of rehearsal that occurred during Pair and Share, as reported in Chapter 4, occurred when the students worked on composing their small moment pieces. Recall when I introduced the concept of writing a small moment piece. The discussion began as a whole group but the students shifted to pairs in a natural move to delve deeper into their own pieces. This allowed a closer space for rehearsal as each talked aloud about their small moment, identifying the important facts and details. This level of reflection and expression did not occur in whole group. On Day 13, the students rehearsed in pairs. They devoted the practice time to naming and elaborating on their own small moment topics. The Pair and Share structure allowed for necessary social interaction as a form or rehearsal with a partner. The two part manner of Pair and Share naturally shifted back and forth as the two side-by-side writers discussed each other's writing piece.

In a similar fashion, an example of rehearsal that occurred during Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing, as reported in Chapter 4, occurred when I referenced Day 9 planning work. Recall how the students paired up to talk aloud their self-selected individual writing topics. This partner work allowed them time and space with an audience of one to try out their story as they rehearsed aloud what all they wanted to include in their writing. In my notes it was interesting to observe how effective this time was, because the next day, (Day 10), the students exhibited increased writing stamina

when they wrote over an extended period of time. In this instance rehearsal was the precursor to independent writing which proved successful for all of the writers.

I have come to better understand the depth and breadth of support that rehearsal allows for striving writers, especially for those who are English language learners. For ELLs, the demands of coordinating efforts required to produce a piece of writing that conveys exactly what they want to say can be daunting and frustrating. The pedagogical practice of rehearsal allows a time for practicing aloud or in written form, so students can hear or read aloud what they wrote to determine if it "sounds right" or "makes sense". English Language Learners must be afforded this type of scaffolded instructional time and practice that continuously moves them toward competency to reach the rigorous explanatory writing standards detailed in the Common Core State Standards. Other teachers in Title 1 schools and/or teachers of ELLs would benefit from making rehearsal a ready tool of instructional practice. Rehearsal allows striving writers, of all ages and at all stages, the opportunity to participate in the performance of an activity to the degree he or she is capable (Strickland, Ganske, & Monroe, 2002).

I am confident that I will define, describe, and promote the use of rehearsal during Writer's Workshop and, when given the opportunity, continue to explore the effects of rehearsal in my role as a district literacy specialist working with coaches and teachers in Title 1 schools. I will advocate for time to be devoted to oral rehearsal whether it is when the teacher is scribing or when students work in pairs. Future research may explore how often rehearsal is needed for a skill or craft to become internalized and easily used. Further study on rehearsal as a scaffolding tool for ELLs could provide insight into how long and in what situations rehearsal is best employed.

Role of Immersion and Experimentation

The second pedagogical practice that was present across all three ways collaborative writing was enacted with ELLs in this study was immersion and experimentation. Immersion and experimentation, in this study, was a two part phenomenon. Immersion can be defined as the way the students were exposed to the writing under study as they listened and responded to examples. During immersion the learners were usually exposed to the genre/form of writing by my use of "think alouds". This was done to generate key ideas and deepen their understanding of the writing process, explanatory genre, and/or writing crafts (Strickland, Ganske, & Monroe, 2001). For the intervention students, the immersion phase was critical as it gave us the opportunity to slow down learning, verbalize ideas, and spend larger amounts of time with the writing process.

In this study, experimentation began when I modeled the form of writing through "think-aloud" demonstrations (Strickland, et al., 2002). This type of modeling of academic speech is critical for English Language Learners. The learning continued during experimentation as the students were exposed to watching and participating in naming and employing various writing crafts in their own collaborative writing pieces. They experienced extended dialogue *about* the writing as they noticed patterns, similarities, and differences in writing (Strickland, et al., 2002). Providing time and space for experimentation, as the writers discussed their own writing and the writing of their peers, fostered their ability to assume the task of writing and provided them the opportunity to behave like writers in an authentic way in a supportive venue.

An example of immersion and experimentation that occurred during Teacher as Scribe as reported in Chapter 4 occurred when, at the end of Day 5 and the beginning

of Day 6, the students were working on temporal transitions. Recall how they were immersed in the practice of identifying transition words and phrases in my writing on the topic of being a cat owner. The students identified all transitional phrases or words in my text and I recorded the words as a list on the whiteboard. Then we reread my writing and the students indicated the transitional words and phrases for me to highlight with a yellow marker. This extended practice with transitions in my writing and then practice in speech allowed the ELLs the opportunity to follow the model to produce something beyond where they previously were as English speakers and writers.

An example of immersion and experimentation that occurred during Pair and Share was when we worked on sketching on Day 14. The students were engrossed in the activity of sketching and talking about their sketches as a precursor to writing about their own small moments. Recall how productive the sketching experience was for the students as they worked to add more and more details to their sketches. The time devoted to sketching details carried over into how the students wrote about their small moments with precise details. The sketch below shows the beginning idea of the moment the student fell and cut his hand.

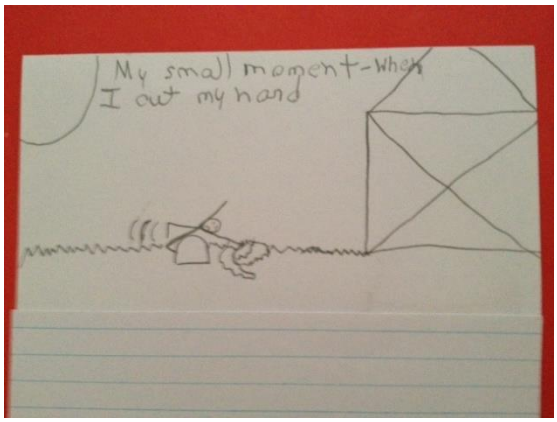


Figure 5-1. Student's sketch for small moment writing (Photo courtesy of author)

Compare that preliminary sketch with the student's final piece below. The added details resulted after time spent sketching and talking about his sketch. The student added further ideas including those about the street, his cat, the trash can, and the rock which caused him to trip. In his writing he added details about how bloody his hand became, how he was about to cry, and a description about the piece of glass. Pair and Share was a fruitful activity that fostered this learner toward a longer (seven sentences) small moment writing piece. Immersion and experimentation lifted this student's level of writing to include a variety of sentences including the use of a transitional word, "then" and the temporal use of "last year". He also used adjectives to describe the glass which only surfaced after a partner asked him about the glass during Pair and Share. It is also of interest that he inserted a question in the middle of his writing. This use of questioning the audience demonstrates more sophistication as a writer.

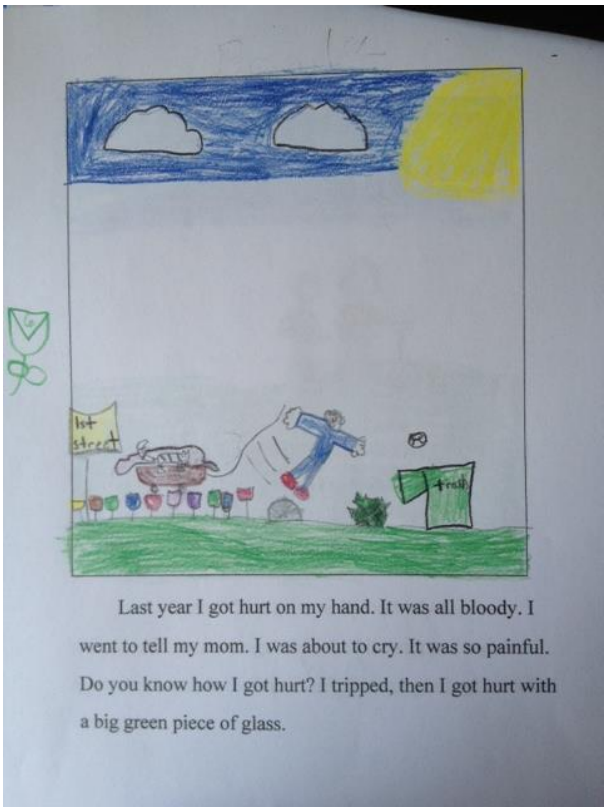


Figure 5-2. Final small moment writing and illustration (Photo courtesy of author)

An example of immersion and experimentation that occurred during Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing was on Day 5 when the students participated in the practice of questioning. Recall how the students practiced asking probing questions to push the writer, which initially was me, for more elaboration. They read my revised piece and deemed it better due to the added details. Then the students collaboratively planned their own writing with a partner. Each partner listened and asked probing questions, which the writer answered aloud as a way to consider whether or not to add that information onto their planning sheets. In this manner the collaborative work supported the writers as they moved toward independent writing.

I have come to better understand the importance of immersion and experimentation for ELLs as they acquire oral language and as preparation for writing. The pedagogical practice of immersion and experimentation allows ELLS the safe place for extended practice with new learning. The practice is a temporary scaffold that provides a model, offered by the teacher or by peers, that assists the students toward meaningful communication by speech or writing. Other students in Title 1 schools could benefit from the gift of time spent in immersion and experimentation as these pedagogical practices appear to foster fluency and confidence. Immersion and experimentation allows striving writers at various stages of development the opportunity to see examples and discuss the writing skill or craft as they consider how writers do what they do. The exploration through immersion helps the learners crystallize the ideas and the experimentation moves the writers toward independent writing (Strickland et al., 2002).

I am confident that I will promote the use of immersion and experimentation when I present professional development on Writer's Workshop. In my work as a district literacy specialist working in Title 1 schools, I will model this practice whenever possible because I want teachers to see firsthand the effect of allowing time for this pedagogical practice. Also in my role I am often asked to facilitate Lesson Study with teams. I believe we can learn much and improve our lessons if we focus on incorporating immersion and experimentation into Lesson Study work on writing. Future research on immersion and experimentation could focus on how it affects learners at various language levels. Future study might also explore the use of graphic organizers or note-taking as a way to capture the new concept for the writers. Future studies might also look at the particulars of sketching and how much time should be devoted to sketching and/or graphic organizers to be productive. I also wonder if the student had the graphic organizers or notes on hand if that might help them move more efficiently from writing together to writing alone. I will work with literacy coaches and teachers advocating them to "follow their writers" based upon careful observations and analysis of data.

Role of Learning in Community

The third pedagogical practice that was present across all three ways collaborative writing was enacted with ELLs in this study was the role of learning in community. Learning in community, in this study, refers to the social, emotional, and educational components of the learning environment. Students who struggle need more time on task than others, but they also need the opportunities for independent application to occur in a community that builds confidence (Strickland et al., 2002). Research reminds us that successful writers must have purposeful literacy activities that enhance their intrinsic motivation to write (Graves, 1994; Routman, 2005). I recognized

how the opportunity to learn in community was critical for promoting a risk-free environment for collaborative and independent writing experiences for this group of striving writers.

An example of learning in community that occurred during Teacher as Scribe as reported in Chapter 4 was when our focus was on a collective writing piece on the topic of revision. Recall how, when the students stalled during independent writing, I brought them back together to try out the transition words in my writing. They needed to return to our small group community to learn again about transitional words and phrases. In my researcher log for that day I mentioned how I needed to be aware of the emotional and social environment so the students could confidently attack the writing task. I noted how critical it was for them to "see themselves as writers" (RJ, Day 6). It was our safe, small group work that afforded them the opportunity to keep moving along with their writing. If left alone, they would have stalled in their progress due to misunderstandings or insecurities.

An example of learning in community that occurred during Pair and Share as reported in Chapter 4 was when we were working on the collaborative playground writing piece. I had scribed the ideas on our table and released the students to discuss them as they wished. The students paired up with the person next to them and began to discuss ideas. I noted how loud and enthusiastic they all got, often finishing each other's sentences or extending one another's ideas. I scribed and, upon finishing the piece, the students decided they wanted to read and reread the text several times. In our small community they took on the ownership of practicing for fluency and expression as they read our piece over and over. Afterwards, recall how they even directed me as to where

to put exclamation points. Research offers that the most important affective variables are a low-anxiety learning environment, student motivation to learn the language, self-confidence, and self-esteem (Peregoy & Boyle, 2008). Our small group intervention sessions with opportunities to Pair and Share helped create the low-anxiety learning environment which the students found engaging and motivating.

An example of learning in community that occurred during Collaborative Planning for Independent Writing as reported in Chapter 4 happened on Day 10, when the students demonstrated extended writing stamina. Recall how on Day 9 I had allowed the student to pair up and discuss their own topics for writing. I had drop-in listened to pairs reminding them that "writing is thinking written down" and complimented them all on their thinking. In my researcher journal I commented that the time spent talking and sharing before writing enabled the students to write more over a longer period of sustained writing. The students became absorbed in the task, in part because the topics were of their own choosing and interest; but, also because the conversations with peers served as a "jump start" for their writing work. My researcher journal notes on Day 11 stated how the students "had grown in confidence in a little over two weeks" (RJ, Day 11). This confidence was essential and facilitated their move to independent writing. At the nexus of their ability to participate is the students' emotional support and confidence. This is why learning in a supportive environment makes the acquisition of writing crafts accessible.

As a result of this capstone project, I will emphasize community building practices in trainings in my district. I have experienced first-hand the way a low-risk, engaging environment fosters writing with ELLs. The process of growth is not easy as it

begins with some understanding of goals and an awareness of the discrepancy between where we are and where we want to be. I have experienced how critical a supportive environment is for striving writers, especially for those who are tentatively trying out their English skills. I have also experienced how powerful it is for students to write about what they want.

While I believe learning in community was powerful for the ELLs in this study, I think this research project fell short of capitalizing upon students' issues, concerns, and interests. Building upon student interest, I am attracted to the idea of using collaborative writing with action-oriented experiences that center on students' lives. I believe this gives voice to students' concerns, injustices and/or pride of their heritages. I believe this type of writing can be transformative, and I want to create the emotional and social environment where students can make sense of the world, while sharing from their own perspective.

I foresee using the knowledge I gained of practice in practice affecting my work moving forward. I work alongside another elementary district literacy specialist and the ELL literacy specialist in writing curriculum and planning and delivering professional learning for literacy coaches. I am confident that the knowledge I gained concerning collaborative writing and the three pedagogical practices of rehearsal, immersion and experimentation, and learning in community will be a part of future professional learning and conversations about writing instruction.

Conclusions

This practitioner research experience afforded me the opportunity to explore the use of collaborative writing as a way to help striving second grade English Language Learners actualize the Common Core State Standards in Writing. As detailed in Chapter

3, I used practitioner research to systematically examine my teaching and how it impacted the students. I studied my work and reflected during and after each lesson. Through this work, I came to know myself better as a teacher of writing, as a teacher of English Language Learners, and as a practitioner researcher. This work demonstrates how teacher reflection and decision-making about instructional moves can impact striving writers. I now better understand three ways in which collaborative writing can be employed, and how the pedagogical practices of rehearsal, immersion and experimentation, and learning in community, affect learners.

I see the need for continued research in writing intervention for the acceleration of writing for English Language Learners. The high expectations of the CCSS in writing necessitate a shift in writing instruction. The benefits of this work included improving my own professional practice and increasing my capacity as a teacher of writing. While gaining insights into how to improve the teaching of writing, it was my intention to generate knowledge for practice from practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The use of practitioner research allowed me to examine my practice, and support with evidence the instructional decisions I made (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009), while also leading me to new wonderings which will inform my practice in writing instruction moving forward.

We are called to educate a citizenry in which all may fully participate and in which all voices are heard. This task can be daunting as teachers strive to help increasing numbers of English Language Learners meet the rigorous standards of the Common Core. This study shared three ways of utilizing collaborative writing to accelerate ELLs' writing development. The use of Teacher as Scribe, Pair and Share, and Collaborative

Planning for Independent Writing all proved advantageous for the striving second grade students in this study. This study provides insights and contributes to the professional conversation concerning how to improve writing instruction with the three pedagogical practices of rehearsal, immersion and experimentation and learning in community.

Moving forward there is still much work to be done. Based on this study, I would be interested in studying the effects of collaborative writing and writing in response to content learning. I am interested in using more mentor books during collaborative writing with a critical eye focused on book choice. The books we use and the types of writing experiences we promote say much about what we value, whose stories are told, and who is valued. I look forward to engaging a group of teachers of ELLs in inquiry work about writing in response to Social Studies learning. English Language Learners are too often marginalized, and a writing environment that allows for expression of ideas and an honoring of heritage creates that space for exploring, analyzing, and questioning.

Teaching children to write is a social justice endeavor for me. When you empower children to write, it affords them the opportunity to fully participate as they share their stories, ideas, opinions, and desires. I will continue to use, and advocate that others use, collaborative writing as an intervention support for striving English Language Learners to accelerate the students' writing competency and confidence, giving them the skills that help them actualize the Common Core State Standards in writing.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kathy I. Christensen graduated from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in 1979 with her Bachelor's of Science degree in Elementary Education. She earned her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of South Florida in 1993. Kathy received her Specialist's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Florida in 2008. She earned her Doctorate of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Florida in 2014.

Kathy began her teaching career in South Charleston, Ohio where she taught 2nd and 3rd grade for four years before moving to Florida. She has spent her career teaching in Title 1 schools in Immokalee, Florida working as a 3rd or 5th classroom teacher, as a reading resource teacher, and as a school literacy coach. Her current position as an elementary district literacy specialist allows her to work with students, teachers, and administrators in Title 1 schools throughout Collier County. She and her husband raised six children, all of whom are college graduates. Her interests are in literacy instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and teacher inquiry as a form of job-embedded professional learning. Kathy resides in Estero, Florida where she lives with her husband and continues working as an elementary district literacy specialist for Collier County Schools and adjunct professor at Florida Gulf Coast University.