Word study and its importance to reading and writing in the primary classroom

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Word study and its importance to reading and writing in the primary classroom

Abstract
The Words Their Way Spelling program was used to evaluate student progress in spelling with direct instruction versus traditional spelling programs. Teachers were asked to volunteer to take the Words Their Way Course, implement the Words Their Way Spelling Program in their classrooms, and allow their data to be used in the decision making process for the district curriculum office. Students began spelling more words correctly in their independent writing, and were therefore able to use what they knew about words to spell unknown words with similar spelling patterns.

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Word Study and its Importance to Reading and Writing in the Primary Classroom

A Graduate Research Paper

Submitted to the
Division of Literacy Education
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In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
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by
Korie Frazier
February 2016
Word Study

This Research Paper submitted by Korie Frazier

Titled: Word Study and its Importance to Reading and Writing in the Primary Classroom

Has been approved as meeting the department requirement for the

Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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Word Study

Abstract

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Introduction

Currently I am teaching Sixth Grade Literacy in a Midwestern Middle School. During the research project, I was in my second year of teaching First Grade. Prior to teaching First grade, I spent 5 years teaching Fifth grade. While teaching my first year of First grade, an opportunity was presented to take a class on explicit spelling instruction using Words Their Way. I noticed while teaching Fifth grade that my students struggled with reading, writing, and spelling and wanted to know how explicit spelling instruction could help if caught early during their emergent reading phase. So with this curiosity I began my journey.

Literacy is not just a term. It describes one’s abilities in reference to reading and writing. Reading and writing are reciprocal skills that should be learned together. One of the main facets of writing is spelling. One cannot become a good writer without being able to spell words correctly; one cannot learn to spell if they cannot match letters with their corresponding sounds. And with these abilities, becoming a good reader and a fully literate person comes to be. One of the best ways to become a great speller is with explicit spelling instruction. This instruction aids a student with phonics and phonemic awareness needed to decode words with speed and automaticity as well as using what they know about words to decode unfamiliar words.

Review of Literature

Becoming fully literate is absolutely dependent on fast, accurate recognition of words and their meanings in texts, and fast, accurate production of words in writing so that readers and writers can focus their attention on meaning making (Bear, Invernizzi,...
Word Study

Templeton, & Johnston, 2008). Being able to identify words and know their meaning with automaticity is an integral part of becoming an effective reader and writer. Word study is defined by Williams, C., Phillips-Birdsong, C., Hufnagel, K., Hungler, D., & Lundstrom, R.P. (2009) as "an approach to spelling instruction that moves away from a focus on memorization but reflects on the alphabetic, pattern, and meaning making layers of English orthography." Invernizzi, Abouzeid, and Bloodgood (1997) define word study as involving students grouping words into categories of similarities and differences; and Bloodgood and Pacifici (2004) define upper level word study (for grades 3-12) as word study that focuses on the structure and meaning of words by drawing students’ attention to spelling patterns and word roots. No matter what the definition, students must learn how to use words effectively and efficiently in order to become good readers and writers.

In order for word study to be useful for our students it must be differentiated based upon students’ demonstrated levels of awareness (Invernizzi, et al., 1997; Williams, et al., 2009; Bear, et. al., 2008). Before a word study program can be created the students’ knowledge of words and spelling patterns (orthography) must be assessed. This can best be done by administering a phonics assessment, spelling inventory, or by looking at the students’ own writing. By using students’ invented spellings as a guide, teachers can differentiate efficient, effective instruction in phonics, spelling, and vocabulary (Bear, et, al., 2008). Once the students’ knowledge of orthography has been established a well rounded word study program must be designed based upon the three layers of English orthography (alphabet, pattern, & meaning) as described by Bear, et. al., (2008). The alphabet layer is the first layer of English orthography that focuses on the
relationship between letters and sounds; the second layer, the pattern layer, focus on the patterns used to spell words; and the third layer, the meaning layer, is the knowledge that groups of letters directly represent meaning. These layers build upon one another and the history of the English language itself. The purpose of word study is to teach students to successfully navigate through all three layers of orthography while reading and writing through purposeful and meaningful instruction at their instructional level or as Vygotsky termed it, their zone of proximal development. The most effective instruction in phonics, spelling, and vocabulary links word study to the texts being read, provides a systematic scope and sequence of word-level skills, and provides multiple opportunities for hands-on practice and application (Bear, et. al., 2008).

**Phonics and Phonemic Awareness**

Phonics refers to the various approaches designed to teach children about the orthographic code of the language and the relationships of spelling patterns to sound patterns (Stahl, 1992). Regardless of the type of instruction students receive in learning to read, phonics and phonemic awareness are one of the first skills students learn along with the alphabetic principle layer of orthography. Students cannot learn to read until they recognize the relationship between letters and sound. There are three stages to phonemic awareness, logographic (where words are learned as whole units), alphabetic, and orthographic (students begin to see patterns in words) (Stahl, 1992). Children go through these stages as they learn the various concepts of print. Phonics and phonemic awareness cannot be taught in isolation but must be taught in the context of print with opportunities for authentic writing experiences. Letter-sound instruction makes no sense
Word Study

to a child who does not have an overall conception of what reading is about, how print functions, what stories are and so on (Stahl, 1992).

Spelling

Spelling is more than memorizing a list of words, writing words correctly on a piece of paper and receiving a grade. It is the understanding of how words are spelled and leads to more efficient and proficient reading and writing (Bear & Templeton, 1998). But how do students come to this understanding of words? The answer is simple, students come to this understanding through writing and reading in meaningful contexts. Written word knowledge is developmental and advances progressively and in synchrony in relation to cognitive development, exposure to print, and instruction (Bear, et. al., 2008). Through word study students are able to learn and navigate through the three layers of English orthography and use them successfully when reading and writing independently. There are five stages of spelling development: emergent, letter name-alphabetic, within word patter, syllables & affixes, and derivational relations (Bear, et. al., 2008). These stages of spelling are directly connected to students' stages in reading and vocabulary; thus, fully encompassing all aspects of word study. In word study and spelling instruction, students examine shades of sound, structure and meaning (Bear & Templeton, 1998). Students use invented spellings to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of words and their spelling patterns. Students write words as they sound, most times leaving out the vowels and writing only with consonants. Children seem to assume that the vowels are incorporated into the consonants and therefore do not include them (Bear & Templeton, 1998).
Word Study

The use of invented spelling allows students to see the relationship of letters and sounds in their reading and writing. Invented spelling thus assists in the development of reading, and is one powerful component of reciprocal gains afforded by the connections between reading and writing (Sipe, 2001). The more students know and understand about words and their relationship with sounds the better their writing and their reading becomes. Thus, orthographic or spelling knowledge is the engine that drives efficient reading as well as efficient writing (Templeton & Morris, 1999).

Vocabulary

Being able to spell words correctly, understand their letter and sound relationships, and the ability to read them fluently and efficiently are useless without the ability to know the meaning of words. Louisa Cook Moats labeled confusion over word meanings and general gaps in vocabulary knowledge as a state of “word poverty” (Juel & Deffes, 2004). It is vitally important that students understand the meaning of words and how to use them. Possessing a large vocabulary affords students the flexibility of understanding a wealth of literature not only available in printed books. In the 21st century, students need to be able to read texts on the internet, understand the subtle meanings of television commercials and song lyrics. This cannot be done without a rich vocabulary to unlock the mysteries of word usage. Knowledge of a word includes how it sounds, how it is written, and how it is uses as a part of speech (Juel & Deffes, 2004). Vocabulary development does not happen overnight, it is a continuous cycle of learning that continues until we cease to exist. This development does not only occur at school or in the formal setting, it occurs during every aspect of our lives. The continuous
development and refinement of language ability provides the foundation for vocabulary growth, and it is the learner's day-to-day encounters with people, places, objects, and events that nurture and develop language capabilities (Rupley & Nichols, 2005). A student's background knowledge and personal experiences are crucial to their development of vocabulary. Children's knowledge of vocabulary closely reflects their breadth and depth of their real world and vicarious experiences as well as their communicative interactions with parents and other adults (Rupley & Nichols, 2005). A child's daily experiences directly affect their vocabulary development. Our student populations are so diverse that students come to school with varying levels of vocabulary development and background experiences, explicit vocabulary instruction at their zone of proximal development or instructional level are needed to make up for their lack of experiences and vocabulary. Robustness for a word's meaning is dependent upon the richness of the learner's experiences and associations of those experiences with that word (Rupley & Nichols, 2005). After all you cannot get blood from a turnip. Explicit instructional strategies for struggling readers provide more of the assistance they need to develop their vocabulary and increase their ability to comprehend text (Rupley & Nichols, 2005).

Conclusion

In order for students to be able to become efficient effective readers and writers they must obtain explicit word study instruction. This instruction is not a means to merely learn words but through developmentally appropriate phonics, spelling, and vocabulary instruction, students learn the meaning of words as a set of cultural tools that
Word Study

can used to mediate both during reading, spelling and extended writing events (Williams & Lundstrom, 2007).
Word Study

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect the Words Their Way spelling program had on first and second grade student spelling and writing samples with consistent instruction for two years. Following a district wide pilot program with a small cohort of teachers, I became interested in Words Their Way. The teachers in the district who participated in this course earned graduate credit and also used the Words Their Way program in their classrooms. This helped the district decide whether or not to initiate the Words Their Way program district wide the following academic year. Prior to this pilot program, the district had prescribed spelling lists for each grade level with no differentiation for students with special needs. Modifications were initiated and noted by individual classroom teachers.

Research Questions

After taking this class, I wanted to know how my students’ spelling and writing had improved or not improved as compared with other students in the same grade who did not have word study instruction. In response to this curiosity, the research questions were:

1. How has Working with Words changed student spelling accuracy in their writing?

2. Do students use their knowledge of words and word patterns in their independent writing?
Word Study

Students were observed during regular school hours (8:50 am-3:35 pm) daily in the general classroom setting. Each student participated in small group reading instruction, literacy centers (which included word study), and large group reading instruction, along with small and large group spelling instruction. Their spelling groups and lists were based upon their scores on the Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory (Bear, D.R., Invernizzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F., 2008) and were used in conjunction with their word study for each week.

Participants

The elementary school chosen for this study was located in an urban neighborhood drawing students from multiple backgrounds. Students in this school represented middle and low income families with one and two parent homes. The school has about 402 students enrolled from Kindergarten through Fifth grade. Of these students, 63% are Caucasian, 32% are African American, 2% are Asian, 2% are Native American, and 1% are Multi-Racial. Approximately 84.9% of the students receive Free or Reduced Lunch. The mobility rate for this school is 17.63%.

The regular education classroom had 20 students enrolled. Of the 20 students taught using the Words Their Way instructional model in first grade, four second grade students; Shannon, Diane, Darrin, and Juan (2 female, 2 male) “pseudonyms used throughout,” from this class were chosen to participate in this study. Of these four students, one received English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction along with intervention from a speech therapist; one student had an Individual Education Plan (IEP)
in reading, writing and math; one student participated in the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program; and one student received Reading Recovery and Title One Reading interventions.

Shannon is an African American female who is an above average reader and average writer who participates in the Expanded Learning Program twice a week. Although she read at a 3rd grade level, she had a hard time spelling words correctly in her writing. However, she has a modified spelling list to include more challenging words.

Diane is an African American female with an Individual Learning Plan in reading, writing and math. She is a below average reader and writer. She is a below average speller and has a modified spelling list.

Juan is a Latino American male who is an average reader and writer but an above average speller. He had a modified spelling list to include more challenging words. He loved to write, especially about cars.

Darrin is a Biracial (African American and Caucasian) male who is a below average reader and writer. He hated to write because it was very difficult for him and is a below average speller. He is a very hard worker and becomes easily frustrated when his handwriting cannot be read easily or when he cannot spell a word correctly.

Tools for Data Collection

The Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory and Feature Guide (Appendices A and B), from Bear, et. al. (2008) were used to assess students' spelling
levels. Their spelling groups and spelling lists were formed using the Classroom Composite component from the same program (Bear, et.al., 2008). A total of 3 spelling inventories were administered and assessed during the 2010-2011 academic school year. However, spelling lists were pre and post tested weekly.

The Waterloo Community School District Elementary Writing Rubric for Grades 1-5, adapted from the Bella Criare Scriveneri Narrative Scoring Guides (2008) and the Grades 2-3 Writing Assessment Classroom Profile and Writing Prompts taken from the Iowa Department of Education (2008) were used to assess student writing during the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 academic school years. Unaided writing samples were administered and assessed 5 times a year. This data was used to frame writing instruction using the Great Habits, Good Readers reading and writing curriculum and materials (Pearson Learning Group, 2007).
Results and Discussion

The primary tools used to analyze the students' spelling and writing progress were the Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory and Feature Guide, from Bear, et. al., (2008); the Waterloo Community School District Elementary Writing Rubric for Grades 1-5, adapted from the Bella Criare Scriveti Narrative Scoring Guides (2008) and the Grades 2-3 Writing Assessment Classroom Profile and Writing Prompts taken from the Iowa Department of Education (2008). Students were given the Words Their Way Spelling Inventory three times per year. Student writing was assessed with a thirty minute unaided writing sample administered five times per year. These assessments were administered and graded by the classroom teacher and discussed at grade level data team meetings. The results for the Spelling Inventory can be seen in Tables 1-3. Although Table 1 only shows their scores from the spelling inventory, groupings for spelling instruction were made by analyzing the students' scores and spelling stages. Tables 4-11 show the results of the students' unaided writing samples from their First and second grade academic years. Although the rubrics for these writing samples differ they clearly show a correlation between spelling instruction and independent writing. For the first

Tables 1-3 show the student’s progress in spelling instruction during their first grade academic year as they became more comfortable with the spelling features in words and applying them during their spelling assessments. Juan and Sharon made accelerated growth during the year and as shown in these assessments. Although Darrin struggled the most with writing he continued to improve during his spelling instruction.
Word Study

Darrin’s improvement continued to increase steadily during the year while Diane’s progress was slow and steady but did not hamper her writing ability.

**Progress on Spelling Inventories Year 1**

When analyzing and graphing student achievement and progress, data was organized by the number of words spelled correctly, number of feature points received, and the total score (the combination of words spelled correctly and feature points).

![Graph showing progress on spelling inventories](image)

**Table 1**

*Words Spelled Correctly*

Table 1 shows the number of words spelled correctly on the Words Their Way Elementary Spelling Inventory administered in August, December, and May of the 2009-2010 academic year. At the beginning of the year, the students scored relatively low on the assessment but made great progress over the course of the year. Sharon entered the
year able to spell the most words correctly and continued this trend throughout the year. She began the year able to spell six of eleven words correctly but by the end of the year was able to spell nineteen of twenty-six words correctly. Darrin was not able to spell any words correctly on the first assessment but was able to spell seven words correctly by the end of the year. Diane entered into First grade relatively low spelling only one word correctly in August but made steady progress in spelling known words correctly on the assessment as well as in her writing. In May she was able to spell four words correctly and write in complete sentences. Juan made the most notable progress in spelling skills both on the assessment and in writing. He began the year as one of the lowest spellers but by the end of the year was able to become one of the highest spellers. He made the most progress between December and May, improving from spelling only two of eleven words correctly to fifteen of twenty-six words correctly.

Table 2
Word Study

Feature Points

Table 2 shows the number of feature points the students received. These feature points refer to specific spelling features in a word or set of words. For example, beginning, middle, and ending sounds; the use of digraphs (sh, ch, th, wh); double vowels; double consonant; and consonant-vowel-consonant words used in writing. This portion of the assessment shows if the child uses but confuses the rules when writing words using these features or understands how they are used and uses them correctly. Although the student did not spell the word correctly, if they used the feature correctly they were given the points for that portion of the assessment. This is the portion of the assessment where my students had the most success. During the first assessment, my students struggled with even the simple beginning, middle, and ending sounds of words when writing. But by the end of the year, they were able to work with most digraphs, some blends, and some vowel patterns.
Word Study

Table 3

Total Points

Table 3 shows the total amount of points available on the assessment combining the number of feature points with the number of points for words spelled correctly. Darrin was not able to spell any words correctly on the first assessment. However, after instruction, he was able to increase his scoring in total points, as well as, on number of words spelled correctly and feature points. He went from scoring two total points in August to scoring forty-four total points in May.

Tables 4-11 show the students' writing progress during their first and second grade academic years with specific focus on word choice and spelling to monitor the transfer from spelling instruction to implementation in their independent writing.

![Juan's First Grade Unaided Writing Samples](image1)

![Juan's Second Grade Unaided Writing Samples](image2)

Table 4  Table 5

Juan's First Grade Unaided Writing Sample  Juan's Second Grade Unaided Writing Sample
Word Study

Progress on Unaided Writing Samples Years 1 and 2

Tables 4 and 5 show the scores for Juan’s Unaided Writing Samples from First and Second grades. Although the rubrics are different you can still see the change over time in his word choice, number of words used, and number of words spelled correctly. In First grade, Juan’s word choice was very limited to words he felt comfortable reading and writing. The words used most frequently were high frequency words he encountered during reading. He did not stray far from his comfort zone. Most of his writing revolved around his love of cars. However, during his Second grade year he began to take more risks in his writing. He began writing more text, increased the number of vocabulary words he used that were not found in typical text, and began spelling more words correctly. Juan also kept his writing organized and focused on one “Big Idea” or Theme.

Table 6
Diane’s First Grade Unaided Writing Sample

Table 7
Diane’s Second Grade Unaided Writing Sample
Word Study

Tables 6 and 7 show the scores for Diane’s Unaided Writing Samples. Diane has an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for Math, Reading, and Writing. At the beginning of her first grade year, she was unable to write complete sentences that made sense or were legible. However, by the end of her first grade academic year she was able write complete sentences on one subject or theme, and spell most of the words correctly. Although her word choice was limited to high frequency words with which she is comfortable, she is able to use them correctly as well as spell them correctly. During her second grade academic year Diane increases the number of words she uses in text that are not limited to high frequency words. Although these words are not always spelled correctly, she uses what she knows about words to make sensible estimations.

Darrin’s progress (tables 8-9) between first and second grades is also very pronounced. In first grade, Darrin struggled greatly with his letter formation, size, and legibility of his handwriting. He despised writing and hated spelling even more. He felt as though he would always be unsuccessful, until he began working with words in small groups. He began first grade unable to write a sentence or spell simple words with the
Word Study

Consonant-Vowel-Consonant (cvc) word pattern. But by the end of the year he could complete a message that was legible and made sense. He was able to write words with the cvc pattern as well as consonant-vowel-consonant silent e patterns. This also helped him improve in his reading. He found out he could be successful and was able to take this confidence to second grade where by the end of the year, he increased the number and complexity of words in his writing. Most of these words were spelled correctly and accurately described his interests in books and hobbies. He was able to write a message that reflected the writing prompt and answered the question correctly.

Table 10
Sharon’s First Grade Unaided Writing Sample

Sharon’s Second Grade Unaided Writing Sample

Sharon’s writing (tables 10-11) stayed the most consistant during the two academic years studied. Her word choices and spelling accuracy consistantly increased throughout the study. Reading at an accelerated level gave her access to vocabulary that was higher than that of her peers. Although this was not evident at the beginning of her first grade year, it became apparent during her second grade year. Sharon was able to use
words in her writing that indicated a higher level of processing allowing her to express
herself in a more mature manner.

Conclusion

Being able to see the patterns in words, recognizing their similarities and
differences, and being able to spell them correctly increases a child’s success in reading
and writing. Having the skills to recognize and read words with automaticity while
understanding its meaning in the text is the basis of reading comprehension. And, as
reading and writing are reciprocal skills, word study and sorting words increases a child’s
chance in becoming a successful reader and writer. Moreover, knowing how to spell
words correctly increases a student’s chances of reading those words correctly when
reading text.

Themes and Trends

Word Usage and Spelling Improvement. As students mastered spelling new
words correctly and using what they already knew about words and spelling patterns, the
number of words used and spelled correctly in their independent writing increased.
During her first grade year Diane was only able to spell 28 words correctly. Whereas,
during her second grade year she was able to spell 119 words correctly. Darrin went from
spelling 15 words correctly in first grade to spelling 49 words correctly in second grade.
Darrin and Diane made the greatest progress while Juane and Sharron made a steady
improvement in the number of words used in their writing and the mastering of spelling
new words correctly.
**Independent Writing Length and Diversity of Subjects.** The students also increased the length of their independent writing as they mastered more new words as well. The more words they knew and became more comfortable using, the more text they were willing to write. The subjects of their writing also became more diverse. As students read more books on different subjects, they expanded to using this new found knowledge in their writing, along with the vocabulary describing those subjects. In doing this, students were able to communicate more efficiently and their ideas became easier to understand. During their first grade year, the students scored ones, and twos on their conventions, sentence structure and variety. But during their second grade year the students increased the number of sentences. Juan’s writing during first grade was very limited to 3-4 sentences. But he increased the length of his writing to between 19-28 sentences by the end of his second grade year.

**Spelling Instruction and Progress.** As each student received spelling instruction, steady progression was made through the spelling stages. From August 2009 to May 2010 Juan moved from an Early Emergent spelling stage to the Late Within Word Pattern stage of spelling. In doing this, Juan began spelling at a Kindergarten level and progressed to spelling at a Third grade level. Although Sharon was spelling at a second grade level beginning at a Late Within Word Pattern stage to spelling at a fifth grade level in the Early Syllables and Affixes stage.
Word Study

Limitations

This study was conducted over a two year period with a limited sample and does not address the progress gained by a classroom or district of diverse students. The students only received two years of direct spelling instruction. No longitudinal study has been conducted in this district with the results being collected and analyzed.

Recommendations

This research should be continued for further understanding of the word study and writing processes. The purpose of word study is to examine words in order to reveal the logic and consistencies within our written language system and to help students achieve mastery in recognizing, spelling, and defining specific words (Bear, 2008). Continuing explicit spelling instruction into middle and high schools will enable students to improve their reading and writing abilities.
References


Sipe, L. R. (2001). Invention, convention, and intervention: Invented spelling and the
Word Study


### Appendix A

**Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory Feature Guide**

### Appendix B

**Spelling-by-Stage Classroom Organization Chart**

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<table>
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<th>Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory Feature Guide</th>
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### Appendix C

**Scored Primary Spelling Inventory Feature Guide**

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Elementary Writing Rubric

| WCED Elementary Writing Rubric for Grades 1–5
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<td>Present main ideas clearly. Focus on a single concept and follow through logically.*</td>
<td>Present some main ideas clearly. Focuses on a single concept, but more work is needed to follow through logically.</td>
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<td>Elaborate supportive details and examples to help the reader understand the main ideas.</td>
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<td><strong>Rating</strong></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Stronger than Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning of Year</strong></td>
<td>24–26</td>
<td>20–24</td>
<td>16–18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End of Year</strong></td>
<td>30–35</td>
<td>25–30</td>
<td>20–25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix E**

Elementary Writing Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>4: Strong</th>
<th>3: Stronger than Fair</th>
<th>2: Fair</th>
<th>1: Weak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Present main ideas clearly. Focus on a single concept and follow through logically.*</td>
<td>Present some main ideas clearly. Focuses on a single concept, but more work is needed to follow through logically.</td>
<td>Random ideas with no focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Elaborate supportive details and examples to help the reader understand the main ideas.</td>
<td>Elaborate supportive details and examples to help the reader understand the main ideas.</td>
<td>Elaborate supportive details and examples to help the reader understand the main ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Use variety of sentence types, sentence structure, and vocabulary to add interest and create a natural flow.</td>
<td>Use variety of sentence types, sentence structure, and vocabulary to add interest and create a natural flow.</td>
<td>Limited vocabulary and interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Use correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</td>
<td>Use correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</td>
<td>Few spelling, capitalization, and punctuation errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rating</strong></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Stronger than Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning of Year</strong></td>
<td>24–26</td>
<td>20–24</td>
<td>16–18</td>
<td>11–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End of Year</strong></td>
<td>30–35</td>
<td>25–30</td>
<td>20–25</td>
<td>15–20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>