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Writing, the process approach: A directed search from prewriting to publication

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Writing, the process approach: A directed search from prewriting to publication

Abstract

This study was designed to determine what the writing process, if implemented (sic) properly could do to cultivate written expression of children. Specifically, the study hoped to answer the following questions. 1. What method is most productive in teaching young children to write? 2. How is it implemented in the classroom? 3. How does research provide guidance for the classroom teacher? This will be the basis of the research done on the process of writing. The literature will be synthesized to draw conclusions that will provide guidance to the classroom teacher.

WRITING, THE PROCESS APPROACH: A DIRECTED SEARCH
FROM PREWRITING TO PUBLICATION

A Research Paper
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by
Diane D. Barkema
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction to the Problem

Indispensable in many ways to modern society is the world-wide awakening to the importance of writing. It is perceived to be central to the school learning process, and also to be significant in the social and personal life of the individual. (Walshe, 1982).

In the past few years we have seen an enormous increase in the attention given to writing instruction in schools. The timing of shifts of emphasis is such that teachers, administrators, and parents cannot afford to wait. It is important to try now to understand how children learn to write and ask how we can most effectively support that learning.

During research from the 1920's through the 1980's it was reconfirmed that teaching static

features of language and mechanical correctness could very likely stifle students desire to express themselves and could result in inhibited writing growth. Students learn what they are taught. If the student is taught that the most important part of writing is to be exact, then exactness becomes paramount. This may develop a person that is dull, perhaps afraid, and non-experimental in writing. None of these activities teaches composing and none teaches fluency. (Duncan, 1982).

All children deserve a chance to learn to write. This leads to a feeling of power, both as students and as citizens, to control the ability to use the medium of written language. The activity of writing, then, provides the discovery of satisfaction that an individual is capable of achieving.

The assumption that younger children cannot learn to manage the composing process is a mistaken notion according to Donald Graves, a researcher who has conducted extensive studies of children's composing practices. Graves believes that educators have seriously underestimated the

potential writing ability of elementary school children. (Gundlach, 1982).

Observation in the elementary classrooms confirms that transcription (spelling, handwriting, grammar and punctuation) receive predominant attention in writing programs. (Dyson, 1981). These are regarded as the basics in the minds of parents, taxpayers, and publishers of standardized achievement tests concur.

Equating writing to grammar is also a predominate notion found in language arts textbooks. Graves (1977) criticized these books for virtually ignoring the fact that writing is a process. "The entire process is left untouched by these texts. Neither prewriting, composing, or postcomposing activities are suggested with strength or substance in either teacher or student texts." (Shaw, 1985).

Recently, the naturalistic approach to writing has been advocated by many educators. They claim that children should write only in response to specific needs and with specific audiences in mind. The instructional focus should not be on writing itself, but on writing for accomplishing a

specific and real task, one in which the child has an interest. (Edelsky & Smith, 1984).

According to Vygotsky (1978), every child has the capabilities to write from infancy. Essential elements of language can be observed early in the actions of children, their questions, speech, play, and eventually drawing, all of which are forms of symbolic representation. When children begin to write, letters and words grow out of thinking and, consequently, have personal meaning to the individual. (Chomsky, 1981). The premise is then that children learn to use language by actively generating language.

The research of Marie Clay, Glenda Bissex, Donald Graves, and many others leave no doubt that the traditional emphasis on imitation needs to give way to emphasis on discovery. It is important to let students write and engage in a great deal of 'self-directed activity' which includes invented spelling and writing on self-chosen topics. (Walshe, 1982).

The process, itself, is equally important. Students learn to write through the re-writing process. The ability to manipulate written

language, then, is developed through practice and readiness.

In a typical composition textbook, the writer is expected to divide work into stages, first making a plan, then writing a rough draft, and then revising the draft. Basically, this is how professional writers lay out materials. Children can, if given the opportunity, replicate what writers do: they can set a purpose for writing, gather their thoughts on the subject, draft, and revise, then await the reactions of readers. By drawing on experience and learning, materials are created that make what is said distinctive and worthwhile to be heard.

"A writer is a person whose best is released in the accomplishment of writing." (Williams, 1974). Writing is a struggle. It is the blank page and blank mind attempting to proceed. The desire to bring a shadowy picture into clear focus through expressive writing keeps the challenge and struggle alive.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study was designed to determine what the writing process, if implemented properly could do to cultivate written expression of children. Specifically, the study hoped to answer the following questions.

1. What method is most productive in teaching young children to write?
2. How is it implemented in the classroom?
3. How does research provide guidance for the classroom teacher?

This will be the basis of the research done on the process of writing. The literature will be synthesized to draw conclusions that will provide guidance to the classroom teacher.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

"Writing is extolled, worried over, cited as a national priority, but seldom practiced. The problem with writing is not poor spelling, punctuation, grammar, and handwriting. The problem with writing is not writing." (Graves, 1978). Not only is writing not practiced, but thinking and judgement skills are neglected as a part of the process.

As Petrosky said recently in English Education (Feb., 1982), "We have been very successful teaching students to do quick, easy answer type tasks that are ultimately assessed through multiple choice questions and have, on the other hand, failed dismally to teach our students to form opinions, interpretations, and judgments." This type of teaching then leaves a void. A writer must not only withdraw from the immediate social environment to compose a message, but must make personal language understood as well.

The writing process begins to evolve with this premise. Writing is a process in the sense that it involves thinking, feeling, talking, reading,

and recording. It is the effort to make a message clear. A writer needs time and the opportunity to ponder what is to be written, to make decisions about the product before, during, and after drafting, and then to revise effectively so that the piece can be meaningfully presented to the intended audience in hopes of clear communication. (Turnbill, 1983).

Donald Murray states, "The new interest in the process of writing, rather than the product of writing, opens the door for important and interesting research which can employ all of the tools of intelligent investigation." It is a job which needs to be done. The process of writing--of using language to discover meaning and communicate it--is a significant human act. The better the processes of thinking and writing are understood, the better we may be able to write and to teach writing. (Duncan, 1982).

Writing, therefore, is not just putting words down on paper to fulfill an assignment. It is looking within ourselves, awakening the senses, stimulating thought, and giving expression to everyday perceptions in written language.

This writing process evolves through stages that begin with prewriting activities and culminate with a finished product presented to an audience.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

Introduction to the Literature Review

The process of writing will be divided into four stages, one overlapping into another. Each step will build toward a finished product. Discovering ideas, putting them down on paper, polishing the results, and presenting them to an audience will be covered. Through this procedure, children become not only better writers, but better learners as well.

In the following review each stage will be covered in depth and discussed relative to its strengths and weaknesses. Concern will also focus on the writing process itself as it contributes to development of the young writer.

Prewriting Stage

It has been said that language is more learned than taught. While some things need to be taught, many more need to be learned through discovery,

frequent use, and a range of situations that are meaningful to the learner. (Walshe, 1982).

Building Upon Personal Experience

Kenneth Reeder in English Education, (Feb., 1982) proposed a principle and a procedure for improving student writing. The principle was that experience should precede language. The seeds of written composition, then, will evolve from the events, objects, and situations that students have observed, perceived, and touched within their own lives. The fact that children learn language through concrete experiences in functional, ongoing language settings is a powerful instructional imperative that must also be utilized within the classroom. (DeFord, 1981).

Creating the Environment

An ideal environment for the developing writer, then, is one which will provide stimulation not only to write, but to speak, read, and listen as well. Motivation stimulates the creative writer. In Language and Thinking in School, Smith, Goodman, and Meredith, (1978), explain that the

failure of some students to write well may be the lack of a realization toward the need to write. Students see themselves as living in a "here and now world without a need for a language to communicate over time and place." (Smith, 1983). If this is true, then the first step to productive writing is to establish an environment that creates a need for written communication.

A young writer must also be provided with opportunities to experience success. Both Mina Shaughnessy in Errors and Expectations (1977) and Frank Smith in Writing and the Writer (1982), have explained that unless developing writers feel there is a chance for success, an unwillingness to proceed is noted. Students are unwilling to commit the time and energy needed to successfully complete the writing act. Realistic goals, then, must be set to create an effective environment for the developing writer. (Smith, 1983).

According to Sara Lundsteen in Help for the Teacher of Written Composition, (1977), "the outstanding research conclusion of the last half century and the knowledge of the outstanding leaders in the language arts indicate that such an

environment should be varied enough to create many kinds of creative responses." This statement implies a wide range of stimuli for different writers.

Such an atmosphere would imply a warm, accepting, learning environment. It is in this supportive milieu that one can afford to take a risk, experiment with ideas and materials and even risk making a mistake. It is this same supportive atmosphere which fosters a positive self concept in students, a quality which Purkey (1970) and Combs (1972) contend to be vital to learning. (Lickteig, 1981).

Within such learning, research by Graves (1975) indicates that the informal classroom environment gives children greater choices in themes. In an informal setting children produce more writing and also compose in greater length than when a specific assignment is given. Graves believes that children do not need external motivation in order to write. He felt that by assigning topics, students were inhibited in range, content, and the amount of writing that they were willing to complete. (Lickteig, 1981).

"If given the chance to write, they will," Graves has stated. This statement has several important implications for developing good writing. The first involves the classroom in which students produce writing consistently and frequently as one of their main tasks. The second point involves guidance by the teacher to establish procedures for students to follow. Children are allowed, indeed encouraged. The third step is to encourage students to make decisions for themselves. In the final step, children have the final determination as to topics. Graves believes that it is in making decisions about which topics to write about that children first learn the basic principles of revision. (Gundlach, 1982).

Creating a Desire to Write

To write, a child must draw on many resources. This includes knowledge of the spoken language and an ability to use language in various situations. Through experience based writing a child learns to draw on those experiences to become a better reader. A child must hear written language read

aloud as well as make sense of the printed page. Another valuable element of a child's experience toward writing is observation of parents, siblings, and others as they read and write. (Gundlach, 1982).

From this, the child develops a sense of ownership and can draw on what is known to choose a topic and stimulate thinking. A sense of pride and ownership evolves as the child strives toward a goal.

Moffit and Wagner (1976) describe the relationship between experience and writing as follows: experience is first and forms the foundation of all the rest. If the theory is applied, it suggests providing experiences, real and vicarious, accompanied by discussion. Shared experiences, ideas, feelings, and attitudes are an important aspect of the prewriting activities. (Lickteig, 1981).

Along with attitudes, deeper behaviors emerge which are commonly present when the child moves towards writing about experiences. Thinking, of course, must come first. In Rohman's words, "The thinking that precedes writing is that activity of

mind which brings forth and develops ideas, plans, and designs." Writers must have time to think. Children begin to learn that 'worrying a problem' is really 'putting it in order' for creative flash. The next form of behavior that is usually evidenced is talking. During the prewriting stage, most children will talk to grasp the dimensions of a problem, to gain insight into it and connect some of the ideas that still may not be clear. Proceeding into the next stage dealing with 'experience' writing will reflect back on the literature the children have read from class and school libraries. (Walshe, 1982).

After problems have been examined and thinking put in order, the decision to write still must be made. A writer then begins to think about what to write and how to start. It may seem an easy task to this moment, but in practice, this decision might follow a long period of indecision which is an integral part of the entire process. Rohman calls this thinking "the imposition of pattern upon experience." In other words, a shaping in the mind of the version of what has happened to me, real or imagined. (Walshe, 1982).

Selecting Topics

Children should be encouraged to generate many ideas, emphasizing the fact that writing is, to a large extent, a matter of making choices from many possibilities. Before students can write something worthwhile, they must be helped to realize that they already know and have experienced many things worth writing about. By drawing on these experiences, imagination and stronger writing skills can be encouraged. Along with creative writing, students may need to deal with compositions and other activities involving writing.

Students may gather information in ways other than personal experience such as reading about a subject, observing an activity, place, or thing and taking notes, interviewing people, or listening to an oral presentation. Another way might be through peer conferences. Even very young students can interview one another in pairs or small groups. Prepared questions can be formulated dealing with who, what, when, how to, and how many. These then could be specific to a writing task, (New York State Ed. Dept., 1983).

Initiating a Writing Project

After information is gathered, whether the topic was derived from personal experience or noteworthy facts, the selection of content information is followed by reflection, selection, and organization prior to beginning the first draft. "The quality of what is expressed in writing depends upon the quality of thinking that undergirds it." (Strickland, 1972).

When the child writes about something that has been experienced, things that are important and meaningful, then the responsibility or 'ownership' for the writing remains with the young writer, and a distinctive voice is woven through the writing. (Turnbill, 1983).

Children need to know certain information in order to write effectively on a topic. They need to recall, ask for, or seek out information. In order to deal with the content the student must first limit the topic. One method might be to discuss it with a partner or small group to share ideas. Such input may help to gather and clarify new approaches. The first effort could be read about and then brainstormed taking notes on

suggestions from others. At this point the reader needs to be considered. Such an effort serves to increase understanding and clarify thoughts. A checklist of questions can be developed suggesting what that author may need to answer. (Turnbill, 1983).

Organizing Writing

Students must be taught that the success of their writing greatly depends on the quality of organization of ideas which support that purpose. The organization of ideas may be listed in many ways. Events may be listed in chronological sequence, in order of importance; placed in columns showing comparison and contrast; prewriting notes framed in columns for beginning, middle and end; or diagrams of main ideas and details constructed. Younger students may even make a drawing to help them organize their ideas. (New York State Ed. Dept., 1983).

There are many methods that help to organize prewriting. One of these is webbing. This is a way to organize content around a theme or topic. As Fox and Allen (1983) have stated, "A web can

grow from children's concerns and interests. Some individuals call a web 'a plan of possibilities.' Because new areas or concepts may be added by drawing lines from the center, the plan never becomes static." (Staab, 1985).

Another procedure could be to include free writing. This involves writing without a plan in mind. The goal is to set on paper whatever comes to mind on the topic of interest. This cues the recollection of information and the possibility of other ideas coming to mind is heightened. (Haley-James, 1982).

In collecting ideas of what is known and showing the relationship of one concept to another, the semantic maps or networks may be used. These are graphic representations of related words and ideas. This promotes thinking and increases novel approaches. Fact storming can be done alone but is more often a group activity. This procedure calls for recollecting and listing facts remembered from interviews, field trips, or other experiences. These can then be drawn upon when starting the prewriting process. (Haley-James, 1982).

Britton, Barnes, Medway, Torbe, and others have suggested a need for encouraging language by jotting things down, mulling them over, talking them out, and thinking them through. This becomes a major part of the process by which many of us get from information "out there" to our own understanding and appreciation. (Fillion, 1983).

Writing for an Audience

Once the topic has been decided and material has been gathered, the next task is to consider the audience. Students must become keenly aware of, and know how to write to different audiences. It is important to be aware of the intended readers or listeners; what will interest them; and what form of publication will attract them. (Turnbill, 1982).

The student must work diligently to express the experience and will consequently travel through a process that is both exciting and frustrating.

Three steps are essential to the prewriting process. In the first, most of our writing comes as a response to someone or something. Our experiences compel us to communicate, whether this

is in spoken language or in written language. The second step comes from a need to respond. A topic is chosen and an audience is clearly identified. The third and final step of prewriting ends when it is determined what form the writing is to take and what manner or organization is best suited to the topic and audience. (Koch, 1978).

As one progresses through the grades, the prewriting needs change only in degree of sophistication and not in degree of importance to the writing act itself. (Klein, 1981). Process, then, becomes a whole series of thoughts and actions that finally produce a polished piece of writing. It begins when a decision is made to write about something of personal interest.

Writing Stage

Drafting

Actual writing begins with the next step, drafting. Concern centers on a flow of ideas not correctness or neatness. This could appropriately be called a discovery draft as children decide

what they want to say and how it will be expressed.

Students may employ a variety of systems. There will be many different styles of moving through the draft. At one end, there may be splungers and at the other agonisers. The first are writers who 'hit the page' confidently and keep going until the end. The second start, have doubts, try other beginnings, then edge forward with sections crossed out. (Walshe, 1982).

Students learn to write by writing. This principle has been corroborated by a great deal of recent research, especially by psycholinguists such as Kenneth Goodman. The approach was later refined by Donald M. Murray when he stated "... we teach our students to write by allowing them to experience the process of writing." (Walshe, 1982).

Every child is capable of creativity. Through original expression, impressions and ideas that have not come together before are formed. One of the great virtues of writing, among all the human arts, is that it is available to every person at

any moment. The child is capable of expressing great creativity through writing.

In school, many children are reluctant to experiment with writing. They sense a correct way to write and depend on teachers or adults to direct them. Some educators believe that children make faster progress when they develop their own strategies for generating language, even if the child has not yet mastered all of the strategies of the mature writers. (Gundlach, 1982).

Through writing children gain a sense of control and choice in their writing. A child becomes aware of what is being learned and of what is effective and what is not. It is soon discovered that there is no one right or final format and 'mistakes' can be valuable for getting closer to the desired goal. Time also is needed to generate excitement about what the student is accomplishing. (Newkirk, 1982).

Expressive writing is basic to total intellectual development. It enables students to use language to discover, experience, and control their own sense of the world. Children are able to make sense of what they have seen, read, done,

or talked about by composing in their own words.
(Smith, 1983).

First Compositions

The value for the young children is in the representation of their attempts to organize and reflect on either the realities or the possibilities of experience. At the same time they are trying out linguistic and rhetorical techniques as they put together the text.
(Gundlach, 1982).

In first stories that beginners write, they often incorporate the stylized phrases for beginning and ending a tale such as "once upon a time" and "the end." It is important to be aware of and recognize the value of telling stories. In using writing to tell a story, often dictating to an adult scribe can help the child develop as a writer. This enables students to be free from the difficult task of writing out personal messages. Also a good listener can add support if needed. At this point, most children produce longer and more complex narratives than they could if they were expected to write on their own. Teachers and

other adults need to model good language patterns to simply show how much language they already command. They need to help students learn more about forming and structuring their ideas into written form. (Walshe, 1982).

Learning to write doesn't occur rapidly. Children learn both the uses and the forms of writing gradually. In the early writing stages, partial learning or learning-in-progress is evident. It says something to the reader or listener.

Writing Systems

In early studies, Graves visited several second grade classrooms virtually every day for five months. As soon as his pre-selected subjects began to do anything associated with writing, he observed and recorded their actions in detail. On the basis of this observation, he reported the children followed a systematic composing process. He termed the stages prewriting, composing, and postwriting. During this time, most of the children used some sort of drawing, painting, or coloring in the prewriting stage. The children

appeared to fall into one of two categories, the reactive writer, who was less well organized, and the reflective writer, who was more structured. (Blake, 1983).

This form, or structure, then must become a major concern. It is at this time that writing becomes a process. The problem is recognized and ideas and mental pictures begin to emerge. The problem may be discussed at length until the student is ready to write. The draft is started, but it is usually patchy, and polishing will be needed. This, with infinite variations, suggest the nature of "process."

To carry out this process successfully, research confirms that the act of first-draft writing should occur under conditions that provide great freedom. This means that one should be able to go about the process in one's own way. The child should feel free to proceed in an unintended direction, to stop, discard, and possibly start over. This also means the freedom to concentrate on ideas without having to be concerned with handwriting, neatness, spelling, punctuation, grammar or any other 'correctness' factor.

Conditions should encourage the birth of essential ideas and novel approaches. (Walshe, 1982).

This process requires the writer to cope with a number of variables: method of development, tone, form, purpose and the possible audience. This, of course, will take time. Children should not be pushed into 'instant writing.' Presently writing is viewed as a multi-stage process, 'cycle of craft,' or 'sequence of composing behaviors.' A writer needs the time and opportunity to rehearse a topic in his or her mind. Then it is drafted on paper, revised until the meaning is clear, and then written for dispatch to the intended reader. The process enables children to learn what they didn't know they knew. All writers, regardless of age or experience, must wrestle with similar questions and decisions. What do I really want to say? How can I best say it so others will hear? (Newkirk, 1982).

All of this takes time, time to let the creative tension build, and to struggle for the solutions to self-set problems. Through writing, children discover and solve their own problems. They become aware of their own control and

decision-making power. They become aware of different possibilities and are encouraged to explore. Children become more confident learners and dare to ask their own questions to plan their own strategies. (Newkirk, 1982).

When planning strategies and shaping a paper, young writers tend to give only cursory attention to setting. In developing descriptive writing, the ability to visualize settings is often found in reading selections. This will greatly enhance understanding. These can then be developed by writing descriptive paragraphs about real settings, rather than imaginary ones. (Coon, 1984). As children learn to manage the writing process, they also become increasingly able to use writing as a learning process. Writing responds to a specific purpose and accomplishes a task with a real purpose. (Staab, 1985).

Writing About Familiar Themes

A good piece of writing is composed partly through plan and partly by accident. It involves both discipline and freedom for the writer and the reader. The first requirements for good writing are a connection between the things written about,

the words used in the writing, and the author's real experiences. (New York State Ed. Dept., 1983).

Many famous writers have advised younger writers to try hard for truths. This makes an astounding difference in writing. Sentences become stronger. Truth-telling is killed in the public schools by 1) the errors approach 2) grading and 3) giving too many instructions about how a piece of writing should be put together. (Turnbill, 1983). This is apparent when people try to write truths rather than show off. Their memories begin to work so well that they become immersed in the facts they are relating and can hardly keep up with the flow of words. They are not hunting for things to say, so they don't repeat words. (Turnbill, 1983).

Writing then needs a self-expressive element. It should include the 'voice' of the writer, a distinctive though not obtrusive element of self-awareness and expression. Exercises need to be given with this specific purpose for challenging the appropriate methods to achieve the final result.

Purposeful Writing

Any piece of writing needs a point. To construct a good piece of writing, the student must have a goal in mind. Whatever the type of writing, it must contain surprises and questions. It needs a pattern. As a writer, a form is needed to force the person into invention. (New York State Ed. Dept., 1983).

Form may take many shapes or purposes such as: to tell, to persuade, or to entertain. The literature may be in the form of stories, poems, essays, journals, notes, letters, reports, or scripts for plays. The form is determined to some extent by the purpose for the writing. (Klein, 1981).

Children should realize that though form and purpose are closely related, imaginative use of form can be especially effective in achieving important goals. To encourage the goals, children can write from their own points of view. This provides focus to their writing.

As noted by Martin and others (1976), when students write for specific purposes, the thinking within their writing is also that by which they

become emersed in their project. They generate a commitment to their topic and their writing. (Haley-James, 1982).

"When children are senders of information as well as receivers of it," says Donald Graves, director of the study on children's writing, "there is a new kind of energy, a new kind of involvement." Writing becomes meaningful and purposeful. To be real, writing must have a motivating purpose, a shaping of meaning, and a final written form. To produce this, the student must be allowed to choose his or her own topic. (Dyson, 1981).

Children will write well only when they speak in their own voices about their own concerns. The subjects must be something they know and care about. They will learn to appreciate words when they write something of personal significance. (Calkins, 1978). Real writing takes place within a context, a writing situation where a need is felt. The writer is drawn not only by the writing but also by the many factors surrounding it, especially the needs of the readers. (Walshe, 1982).

Sensitivity to the audience, or social awareness, is crucial in any form of communication, oral or written. It requires not only the capacity to appreciate another person's point of view, but also an understanding of the particular kind of experience that has led to that point of view.

The writer writes for different audiences--self, the known or familiar you, and the unknown you. Since each bring different backgrounds and contexts, the demands on the writing will differ. The greater the "psychological distance" between the writer and the audience, the more detail and structure that is needed in the written product. (Klein, 1981). The writer must be able to adjust and become sensitive to these different senses of audience. He or she must be able to accomodate the unique demands of each.

A successful method to introduce children to writing is a workshop environment. Here they should write daily, each at his or her own pace and level and choose his or her own topic, style, or mode. It is also important to feel comfortable

in sharing first drafts with each other. Responses should be constructive. After drafts are made, each worker should be able to revise and polish with attention to purpose, and then to publish in a form attractive to readers. (Turnbill, 1983).

Students should be mainly concerned with developing the content for the particular purpose and audience. Through writing then, learning is encouraged because it focuses thought. "To write, one must have something to say." It makes thought available for inspection. Until a composition is in writing, it is very difficult to know where it is incomplete and incoherent. By recording and evaluating though, writers can reconsider, reorganize, and revise content. This then leads to more complete thought. (Haley-James, 1982).

Writing is intended to inform, or possibly to persuade others. If unsuccessful, thoughts have not been carefully considered, have been organized poorly, or the audience and background have been disregarded.

Writing then, serves many different functions--information gathering, self-expression,

and cognitive growth. Often writing is regarded as simply communicating with one another. It also is an important means of self-expression. Writing is an emotional and aesthetic outlet as well. It serves to promote the development of thinking and learning generally. James Britton expressed the process as follows: "We learn by writing, and we learn to write by writing." (Klein, 1981).

Indeed, it is possible that many students have failed to discover that writing is a valuable tool for communication as well as for self-discovery. (Forbes, 1976). Writing brings order, understanding, and meaning to one's thoughts and experiences. The written form preserves them for the writer and others. Children can reflect on their writing and begin to develop a stronger sense of self worth and gain confidence in their achievements. Most important, students who are able to organize their thinking on paper are in a better position to understand another writer's ideas. (Turnbill, 1983).

It enables the writer to reflect carefully. Children learn to think in this unaccustomed way through years of practice and writing. They have

to discover how to generate, gather, and smoothly connect relevant ideas. (Walshe, 1982).

Too often writing instruction is based on the assumption that once children have the "skills," the intentions and meanings will exist, waiting to be expressed. They will not. Real writing is a struggle to build meaning with the tools of the written language. The mechanical skills then serve in the construction of the idea. (Dyson, 1981).

Conferences

Writing is thought-provoking, tiring, and provides an emotional insight into personal character. The conference is the key to better writing and improved attitudes toward writing. Teaching, listening, responding, sharing, reacting, and reflecting are of major importance.

When children write they often have a need for immediate feedback. This is especially true when children write at school. The lack of adult reaction lead to motivational problems for developing writers in the schools. Teachers have now realized that the old way of teaching writing,

sometimes termed "current-traditional" does not produce either good writing or willing writers. (Turnbill, 1983).

Conferences need to be an accepting experience in which the child and his or her work is viewed as something valuable, represents great effort, and is something worth attention. This feedback is an extremely important part of the writing process. Students are able to direct their learning activities more effectively if efforts are reinforced along with constructive criticism. (Vockell, 1983).

All the writing of a student does not need to be read and marked. The child's interests and strengths need to be noted. There are many types of conferences, but the four most common are the roving conference, the sharing conference, the group conference, and the publications conference. At the core of the conference is a teacher asking a child to teach her about a subject. The aim is to foster enthusiasm in the child as the work is explained. (Turnbill, 1983).

Peter Elbow explains the function of group dynamics in Writing Without Teachers (1973) in the

essay, "Well, What Do You Like About My Paper?" He proposes a three-step response to writing by both teachers and students, in which the audience praises, then questions, and then makes suggestions to the writer. (Duncan, 1982).

Students become important audiences for classmates. By responding to others, students learn to be more thorough critics of their own work. Writing enables children to assume more responsibility for their own learning. They can discuss possible options and seek advice from one another.

Writing conferences deal with reading, attending to questions, explaining decisions, and passing critical judgments. It also involves listening and speaking. It promotes intellectual collaboration in the classroom. The teacher and other students ask questions and model procedures that promote introspection. The student learns to examine and analyze his or her own work.

Revisions

"Writing only truly becomes writing in revision. A professional's first draft is often

not much better than anyone else's. It is chiefly in revision that the professional's experience and draftsmanship show." This quote from Donald H. Graves clearly states his regard for the importance of revision. It is imperative to show children that the first draft by anyone is usually unsatisfactory. The basic ideas might be there, but the form is in need of work. The piece will only become satisfactory after careful revision. Writers must add, delete, change or rearrange words and parts of the writing, correct omissions, spelling errors, and punctuation. (Turnbill, 1983).

Children need to understand that the purpose of a draft is to enable one to record ideas. The revision stage enables one to make improvements relative to the purpose and for the readers.

Donald Graves has stated that the developmental order in which young children learn to revise can be classified into the add, cut, and reorder stages. This includes 1) Revising as seeing-it-again or taking a second critical look. 2) Rehearsing meaning, what the writer does in the mind or on paper to prepare to write.

3) In-process, revising to alter during the draft.

4) Self-editing to alter after the draft. 5)

Editing is carried out on the child's writing by

peers or adults. 6) Rewriting is the final

writing. 7) Proofreading is the final check of
the rewritten draft before presentation to readers.

(Walshe, 1982). This is a way of taking a fresh

new look at the paper and its content. As a

person examines the paper, the written word should
express what the writer intended to communicate.

The writer takes an objective look at his product

to see if it really speaks to the audience and

covers the intended purpose. The work should also

be checked for correct tone and rhetorical

structure. Sentences should be smooth, precise,

and there should be no major problems with the

flow of ideas. (Walshe, 1982).

Students are unaccustomed to this process

because they read literature in its final form

only. They are not aware of the long hours and

tedious routine an author must devote to the work.

They do not view writing as a process so they

believe that when they complete the first draft of

a poem, story, or report, their job should be

finished. Students must realize what writing involves and that it is a process. Revision is essential. (New York State Ed. Dept., 1983).

Editing enables the audience to react to the completed piece so the student can revise. Affectively, it is the most critical phase in the process and instructionally it is the phase where most writing skills are taught. The goal is to have students become independent evaluators of their own writing. (Gaskins, 1982).

It is important to remember that students often feel defensive about rewriting, thinking they are doing it again because they did not do well the first time. Rewriting is not just recopying neatly, minus a few punctuation errors. It is not just "fixing" what was wrong. Rewriting is finding the best way to communicate ideas to others. (Schwartz, 1977). A classroom in which children are encouraged to revise will be one in which they will learn to improve their own work.

Rewriting, then, becomes the difference between the dilettante and the artist, the amateur and the professional, the published and the unpublished.

Donald Murray in Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery (1968) states: "Writing is rewriting. Most writers accept rewriting as a condition of their job or business. It is not however seen as a burden but as an opportunity by many writers." Neil Simon also points out, "Rewriting is when playwriting really gets to be fun...In baseball you only get three swings and you're out. In rewriting, you get almost as many swings as you want and you know, sooner or later, you hit the ball." (Duncan, 1982).

The first step even with professionals is to realize that it is all right to "mess up" a first draft, to switch things around within the content, and learn that words may be crossed out or sentences rewritten. (New York State Ed. Dept., 1983). When children no longer erase, but cross out, draw lines and arrows for new information and worry less about handwriting, they develop a changed attitude toward words. Words are malleable, or claylike, and can be changed until they convey the desired meaning.

In revision, start to build on the essentials; create something lively that will capture readers

or listeners. It is important for students to reread their own papers before applying a checklist to see what improvements need to be made. When the story is read aloud, many problems, previously unnoticed, can be noted. The student must read papers exactly as they are written. They are then able to recognize errors within the text. They can make sure the message is clear. There should be enough information in the article and it should have purpose. This is most easily done in small groups, students can develop proficiency and appreciate the stages of the composing process. (Smith, 1983).

They will recognize that effective writing is always adjusted to the needs and interests of the audience. Usually pieces that are ample, vivid, and contain details prove most interesting to readers.

The process of revising is, then, as important as the writing process. It is the ability to re-vision personal work that enables the student to exercise control over what is presented and how it is delivered. This helps to clarify the meaning for the reader and ensures that it is

understood. This process will make the student feel more confident when sharing writing with peers or with an audience other than the teacher.

Publishing

The principal purpose underlying the writing process is to publish a finished product for readers. The purpose is not to produce writing, but to produce reading. Writing does not end when the paper is finished or handed in. There still remains the process of arranging the format, the delivery to the audience or reader, and finally the response from the reader. Publication is essentially finding readers who will be responsive, helpful with comments, and broadly encouraging. (Walshe, 1982).

An important consideration underlying the writing process is that students write to be read. The process stresses student awareness of a purpose and an audience for writing. Without publication of the finished product, the cycle is incomplete. Students may lose interest and the desire to improve their writing. The recognition and self-satisfaction that students derive from

having their written work read by others are important. (New York State Ed. Dept., 1983).

Getting the writing to readers in a form that will attract them is a challenge to the child. The most popular form at this time is "the book." Other ideas might be a journal or reading the story onto tape, making slide-sound sets, or other classroom activities. These methods elicit responses from others. This is part of the writing process and results in spoken or written comments made to the writer during, or soon after, the piece is shared. (Walshe, 1982).

Response then reflects interest in a writer's work. Readers are needed not as mere 'communication terminals,' but to provide feedback to the writer. Responses are the final part of the writing process. (Walshe, 1982).

As Frank Smith explains in Comprehension and Learning, "achievement of a skill is adequate reinforcement for learning the skill." (Smith, 1983). In both reading and writing, feedback becomes reinforcement for learning and indicates a level of success. The student will be satisfied with having reached a goal.

As young writers learn to address real readers, writing becomes an important medium of communication. When added to the two other functions of school writing, a medium of self-expression and a learning tool 'process' and 'publication to real readers' ends the practice of artificial writing. (Walshe, 1982).

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

This topic, the writing process, has commanded much attention and it was difficult to limit the literature review. It was decided to confine the project to the elementary grades including writing programs and the process approach. In order to obtain the necessary information an informs search was done through the AEA in Mason City. Extensive use was made of the Educational Resources Information Center's (E.R.I.C.) documents and the Current Index to Journals in Education (C.I.J.E.). Information was gathered for review in the following areas: the process of writing, stages of development, and methods most successful in presenting writing.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

According to Britton (1970): "The writing process is basically one of self-discovery, in which the writer first discovers, by verbalizing thoughts and feelings, what meaning he has constructed for himself. Then his focus can expand to include communication of that meaning to others." The young child, only over time, develops the ability to see his writing from an audience perspective and write from and for that purpose. Only then, does public writing truly begin. (Duncan, 1982).

By encouraging students to talk, write, and question students can generate topics of interest and improve thinking. They gain insight into their own experiences. (Fillion, 1983).

Current theory and research suggest that all children can learn to write. They develop strategies that are used in learning to speak into those used in learning to write. Research does not maintain that children need several years of drill in the mechanics of writing before they are

able to use written language for their own benefit. There is reason to believe that the child's discovery of the value of writing motivates him or her to continue to write. This may well be a strong motivation for learning to write well. (Gundlach, 1982).

Katherine Paterson, the 1981 Newbery Award winner stated:

On the good days, you're totally lost (in the story). Those are the days you love. The days when somebody has to wake you up and tell you where you are. But there are a lot of days when you're just slogging along. And you're very conscious of your stuff and the typewriter is a machine and the paper is blank. You've got to be willing to put in those days in order to get the days when it's flowing like magic. (Newkirk, 1982).

Through the writing process children learn to think and become more introspective. They also become more perceptive of others as they write for audiences. As others respond to their writing

efforts, students gain confidence and their self concept is improved.

Teachers should teach students to brainstorm and share ideas. Then they should guide children through a writing process which includes a first draft, revisions and editing, and rewriting resulting in a polished product.

Writing is an important curricular component in many subject areas. The process needs to be taught and interest nurtured.

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