IS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WRITING STRATEGIES HAVING A POSITIVE AFFECT ON STUDENT WRITING SCORES?

by

Lindsay Myers

Submitted to
The Educational Leadership Faculty
Northwest Missouri State University Missouri
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education and Human Services
Maryville, MO 64468

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Introduction

Background and Significance

Research shows that as students leave the high school classrooms and enter post-secondary institutions they are spending and taxpayers are paying in billions annually for students to enroll in remedial courses because they have not had adequate writing instruction or have not practiced writing development enough to create a quality-writing piece. Does earning a diploma guarantee that a high school graduate is ready for work and college? It should, for very practical reasons. Entrance requirements for colleges have increased. Employers expect more. Students must be able to communicate effectively, think critically, analyze and interpret data, and evaluate a variety of materials. Sixty-seven percent of new jobs in the market today require some postsecondary education.

Concern has been mounting over the past several years as students are leaving the high school sectors and moving onto post secondary institutions with less than adequate skills. This is causing such unrest amongst educators that legislators have stepped in placing high school reform at the top of their lists of educational policies to be enacted. With this increased discrepancy and the widespread concern regarding the lack of what students know when leaving high school, many are now questioning the high schools rigor, and many states feel the need to take this into their own hands and address this with more legislation such as No Child Left
Behind and the new Common Core Standards that will be soon infiltrating as the guidebook for all schools across the nation.

The need for professional development of staff and then implementation of instructional writing strategies that have been introduced into the classroom to increase the quality of students writing is at the forefront of what we are trying to do as educators. Students who directly enter the workforce have to have basic communication both verbal and nonverbal skills to succeed in public sectors. Without these skills students will never be able to overcome the poverty levels that are provided to them with no furthering education and the desire instilled in them to become lifelong learners. One thing that educators today have to do to instill this in students is to be active, life-long learners themselves and model these practices before their students. They have to want to write, be proficient at writing and then enhance their lesson and instruction with writing strategies that enable students not only to perform efficiently, but to also find pleasure in the act of writing itself.

Conceptual/Theoretical Underpinnings

There are many factors that contribute to student’s inability to be adequately prepared for workforce of post-secondary education from the writing perspective. Students or teachers at the high school level many times feel that they are successful or that they are prepared for life after
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high school. Often it may be a combination of factors that lead to this lack of preparation, it could be the students own lack of motivation, could be the teachers lack of preparation, or it could be something as simple as a discrepancy between high school and college programs as to what is most and least important.

When ACT published their Policy Report, entitled “Courses Count: Preparing Students for Postsecondary Success, they found when surveying both college and high school faculty that they were in agreement on some topics in terms of what they felt students needed to know to be successful and as prepared as they need to be, however, there were also drastic discrepancies in what they felt were necessary skills for students to have.

While in the writing sector they were able to agree on the top purpose for student writing, “To develop logical arguments and support them with valid evidence (ACT Policy Report, 2005, 2).” When ranking the most necessary types of writing skills students should have there are discrepancies amongst educators both secondary and post-secondary as to what students must know and be able to articulate. Writing skills were also an area surveyed. Discrepancies were found in what was valued by college and high school educators. College instructors ranked grammar and usage skills as a student’s most necessary writing skill to have when entering life (post-secondary or workforce development), while high school instructors...
ranked that as the sixth most important skill. What college professors deemed to be the most necessary skill for their students to have while high school instructors who develop students writing at such a pivotal time, deem it to be almost the least necessary (ACT Policy Report, 2005).

Statement of the problem

In this study we are measuring the effect of the introduction of writing strategies on student writing scores on common benchmark assessments, standardized testing, graduates placed in remedial writing college courses, and writing prompts that have been given in the past few years. The district has shown a decline in the scores and therefore the need for remediation. Students who were considered decent or even good writers in high school are placed in remedial English Composition courses in college costing the students and the taxpayers billions annually (Writing Program Administration-Journal of the College of Writing Program, 2010). The district knows that the writing scores are declining and that they need to identify instructional writing strategies, a common scoring rubric, and cohesive teacher collaboration on grading to consistently increase the students writing scores.
**Purpose of the study**

The district needs to understand the reasons for the low writing scores, but also needs to be able to distinguish between which instructional strategies seem to be positively impacting scores and what are not. The purpose of this study is to determine if the use of instructional strategies with all 6-12 students is having a positive impact on increasing their writing scores, and therefore their need for remedial writing courses in post-secondary educational institutions.

**Research Questions:**

**Q1:** Has the use of the instructional writing strategies with all 6-12 students made a difference in their quality of writing?

**Q2:** Does the increase in professional development provided to teachers increase their knowledge and confidence in teaching writing?

**Definition of terms:**

**Remedial:** deficit based courses reviewing basic knowledge that students should have before entering a required course

**Writing Strategies:** activities used to help students focus on the development of their writing skills

**Prewriting:** writing that is done before creating the final piece of work
Graphic Organizer: a tool used to assist students with organizing their writing could include thesis, paragraph breakdown, concluding thoughts, and evaluation.

Self-evaluation: when a student evaluates their own work for inaccuracies and inconsistencies

Peer evaluation: when student classmates or peers evaluate one another’s work for inaccuracies and inconsistencies

Literature Review

Students are more likely to drop out of college if they are required to take remedial instruction courses for several reasons, but mainly because of the increased expense to students. This remediation is costing this county an annual price tag of at least $3.6 billion, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education, a national advocacy organization in Washington. It is also one of the leading reasons college students’ drop out in frustration.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2008, “44 percent of students at community colleges and 27 percent at four-year institutions had to take at least one remedial course (Long, 2009).” However, schools vary widely in their policies for offering and/or requiring remediation. There is constant discussion around whether remedial courses can even be considered effective, as well as when and where the courses should be offered, and who should pay the bill (Long, 2009). This influx of students
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who are unprepared for college coursework has led most post-secondary institutions to create and offer remedial courses which offer a boost in student’s skills, to better prepare them for the entry-level college coursework enabling them to complete degree requirements. These remedial courses are demanding immense amounts of money from students, their families, and the governments. Several independent studies have shown that students who have to take remedial coursework when compared to their peers who enter immediately into college level courses are at a significantly reduced rate for earning their college diploma.

“The proportion of society’s resources going to fund post-secondary education has tripled over the past half-century. Furthermore, at least 40% of full-time students entering four-year programs fail to have their degree in six years, and the dropout rate is climbing (Weber, 2012).” Tripled in the past fifty years, there are an alarming number of students heading into post-secondary education that educators at the high school level have inadequately prepared. Students taking remedial courses are not only behind, but quickly are overwhelmed and overloaded by the intensity and increasing amount of coursework required. When this happens, they give up.

“Many students enter college in the United States without the basic academic skills needed to be successful in their coursework.” Thirty-two percent of high school graduates entering the college today are unprepared
for the coursework, and minority numbers are lower with 20% of African-American students are adequately prepared for college, and only 16% of Hispanic students are prepared. This should be alarming to educators; It should be alarming to educators that this is the number of students who will require additional remediation before being allowed to take the entry-level college classes.

This is not just something that is affecting these students and their families with the heavy financial burden that is placed upon them, many of the states in this nation are reviewing their states portion of the $3.6 billion industry remedial coursework has become. Many states are taking a stand and starting to phase out their funding for remedial courses. These cuts may lead to a decline in the number of students who are able to attend college and decrease the number of course offerings available at the collegiate level. The state of Ohio for example states, “In a largely overlooked but precedent-setting move, cash-strapped Ohio has said it’ll soon stop footing the bill for remedial courses. The state’s 2007 budget quietly mandated that the government phase out money for remediation at four-year universities beginning in the 2014-15 academic year, and eliminate such funding altogether by 2020 (Grace, 2012,15).”

With the increasing number of students requiring remediation and the states cutting their funding for those programs, what can secondary school
educators do about this epidemic? One of the courses that require a great deal of remediation in today’s world is writing. This research paper focuses on the effects and implementation of writing strategies to students, and writing training through professional development given to educators (Warren, 2010).

There is a large discrepancy between the writing level college professors would like entering freshmen to have and the level at which many students are actually able to write following high school completion (Warren, 2010). The AP exam each year stirs controversy as students who were considered decent or even good writers in high school are placed in remedial English Composition courses in college costing the students and the taxpayers billions annually. In the study it identified ways in which high school students would be assisted and score higher on the AP exam, with the addition of several things being included to the current curriculum (Warren, 2010).

When students graduate from high school teachers have prepared students with the writing skills they believe will prepare students to enter college. There has been in recent years a growing gap between the skills high school graduates have upon receiving their diplomas and those that college professors require. This has led to new legislation inciting that increases the number and intensity of core classes for high school
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Many states and educational facilities are trying to alleviate this discrepancy between the writing skills accepted for high school graduation and those required for success at the collegiate level. In doing so they first have to identify what are hindrances as seen by junior high and high school educators. Middle school science and language teachers were asked to create a list of common problems that consistently arise when incorporating writing into their classrooms (Baker, et al., 2008). Writing is known to promote cognition and understanding conceptually; so many teachers embrace writing-to-learn strategies and their incorporation into their classrooms.

Common issues identified include: scheduling and time constraints, teacher and student attitudes about writing, and evaluation and feedback. When looking at the first issue, scheduling and time constraints, there were many teacher concerns with having enough planning time regarding adding writing to their already overcrowded schedules. After implemented, however, it was found that it actually took less time to teach the embedded inquiry activities that included writing because students had become so accustomed to doing it. Secondly, the teacher and student attitudes about writing factoring into their success, when teachers bought into the addition
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of writing as their content philosophy and started working on projects together, they found that they provided students with more effective problem solving skills and were able to better develop new lessons and activities. The third factor, evaluation and feedback, was the most serious problem thought to be included with teaching the writing-to-learn philosophy by the teachers. However, when teachers used written reviews, peer-response sessions, individual face-to-face conferences and large-group discussions to sample student work, and then students received meaningful feedback regarding revisions and their rationale of the writing process and science itself, they found greater success. Portfolio or research notebooks were also created to collect student’s individual works allowing teachers, students, parents and administration to see the progress on both student writing skills and their processing of scientific concepts (Baker, et al, 2008).

Taxpayers and policy makers are focusing on performance indicators and accountability so educators find themselves tasked with improving the relationship of curricula between K-12 and post-secondary institutions. In one initiative an ePortfolio was created to show students on both sides of the coin what good writing looks like at levels K-16. A joint consortium was created of ELA (English language arts) alignment and success of students in post-secondary institutions. The research team made up of over sixty people worked through seven goals of the project and then accountability features for both students and instructors. At the end of the initial initiative, student
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writing had improved, but it was found that the influential factor was the feedback that students received (Acker and Halasek, 2008).

Jayne Marlink, (2010) walked through the currently accepted writing process for California public school districts, from the start to where they are currently in developing knowledge about teaching and assessing students’ for improvement. This includes identifying a problem seen across the board with California students entering post-secondary education. There was an immense need for student writing to develop as demonstrated by their testing placement on the Subject A Examination into remedial coursework. Through a trial and error process and the collaborative efforts amongst colleagues from varying backgrounds and current teaching institutions the development of a collaborative team culture was developed to determine what is needed for and from students. This team developed scoring guides and rubrics for students who are currently in high school to assist them in being better prepared for higher education. This did not just include the development of programs or initiatives, but also led educators to look inwardly as they spent a great deal of time themselves writing, critiquing, editing and developing their own skills with their collaborative teams. These teachers have not only fought through the stereotypes and blame placement for the faltering writing scores of their students as a whole but they have successfully developed in students what they set out to do. They did so as, “An independent group of readers evaluated students’
improvement across ISAW’s eighteen dimensions of writing and found that students in ISAW classrooms outpace their comparison counterparts in all eighteen dimensions (Marlink, 2010).”

One of the ways that progress is being seen in student writing is through peer response groups. “The collaborative, social and cognitive dimensions of peer group response draw on pedagogical process approach theories recognizing that when writing is responded to, it can be revisited, evaluated and ultimately revised to enhance the message (Dix and Cawkwell, 2011).” One of the ways that progress is being seen in student writing is through peer response groups. It is being found that not only are students succeeding in increased writing skills, but the collaboration, social impacts and cognitive awareness of peer group response. Immediate feedback draws on these same theories that show when writing receives it, it can then be discussed with the students, evaluated in groups, and then revised to make the message as clear as possible. Peer response groups are groups of students or educators, working collaboratively to assist in providing quality feedback to writers enabling them to better process and revise their writings. This process, developed in the US as a part of the National Writing Project (NWP), uses social interaction amongst peers to develop a greater sense of writing accomplishment and direction amongst students.
The entire premise is for students to individually create their own personal writing pieces and then come before the group for constructive feedback. Members sat in a circle; the writer read their information aloud with no additional comments. The first round of comments is all-positive. The second round members offer suggestions and the writing of the piece following their materials reading offers no additional verbal cues or responses, but just processes as feedback is given.

This peer group model has met with some hesitation from teachers, as they are afraid their students won’t be mature enough to handle critiquing their peers, or mature enough to handle the criticism that will be given about their own writing materials. For two years a select random sampling of instructors in New Zealand were followed monitoring the writing progress they themselves made and that in which their students made. It was found however, that by using effective teacher modeling and practice even students as young as six years old, were able to effectively participate in peer group response and assist their fellow students in the creation of great writing skills and material.

**Summary**

Students scored well on standardized testing except for on the writing sections when they were required. The district has decided to focus on increasing student-writing scores. There will be professional development
days set aside for staff to be educated on varying writing strategies as well as on how to perform the role of being a writing coach. The district has an initial benchmark test take place to set student baselines and will then introduce a pre-writing strategy; from there we will work with that strategy across the board for two weeks and then test the students again on a common assessment. We will then introduce students to a writing strategy that works with their voice in writing and will work two weeks again and then reassess. Finally we will introduce a strategy that encourages peer editing and walks students through what that looks like followed by a final assessment. After each writing assessment student work will be collaboratively scored using a six traits, four point common scoring rubric.

Once all the benchmarks are graded all staff will meet to discuss each student and then writing coaches will meet with students individually to walk through their benchmarks (classes will not be held that afternoon to allow time for this to happen during the day).

**Research Design**

This qualitative study is a reflection of the introduction of writing instructional strategies into the classroom and into the professional development used with staff to strengthen their personal writing abilities and also increase the amount of time devoted in their classes and assignments that reflected writing. The sample included junior high and high school
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students at Union Star R-II, which includes 76 total students, with a breakdown of the student population being represented as 96% Caucasian students and 4% African-American students and 37% female and 63% male.

Student scores were collected on an initial writing assessment this data became the baseline. Students then received a writing prompt. in the prompt they were asked to create a persuasive essay regarding a given topic and provided with the six traits, a four point scoring rubric that has been collaboratively created by the high school teaching staff at Union Star. Students were given three hours to complete the essay and had computers available to each of them with internet connections. They developed their essay, edited and printed the essays. Student ID numbers were used in place of names, to provide anonymity to each essay as they were collaboratively graded.

Following the student’s completion of the initial, high school teachers collaboratively scored baselines writing prompt, their essays, during daily TEAM time. Once they are scored by teaching staff the scores are brought together and the assigned teachers compare scores until a unanimous decision as to the score the student deserves is agreed upon. The student score then recorded.

Before the second student-writing sample was taken, there was a full day of professional development. The Northwest Regional Professional
Development center staff worked with the teaching staff to develop their personal writing skills, teaching them to use strategies initially for prewriting or organization. This training included an introduction of the material, individual and group projects to be incorporated into the new strategies, teaching and implementation including activities that teachers could include and grading student writing collaboratively. Samples of advanced, proficient, basic and below basic student writing were included.

Following the training, staff will have two weeks to implement the new prewriting strategy before students were tested again using a common benchmark writing assessment. Students received a prompt and created a persuasive essay. The essays were collaboratively graded and scores recorded. These scores were compared to baseline scores to determine if using the pre-writing graphic organizer assisted students in their organization of thoughts before beginning the writing of their essay.

The next PD day, led by the North West RPDC focused on teaching students to generate ideas for the students to writing. Following the PD day, teachers incorporated the new strategies with students. Following a two week time frame students completed a third writing prompt. The essays will be collected, collaboratively scored by the teaching staff and recorded.

The last day of teacher training focused student self and peer assessment and the utilization of constructive criticism in student writing.
The staff took the information back to their classrooms and developed classroom activities utilizing self/peer reflection. Following this time of engagement and incorporation, students were given a fourth and final writing prompt for this research. Again adequate time and access to computers, and the Internet were provided. Students created their persuasive writing pieces, and then staff collected them. The following morning students were divided into groups and given evaluations, which they completed anonymously on other student’s writings. That afternoon students were presented with their original writing pieces, as well as the peer feedback on their writing. Students had plenty of time to then make changes or corrections to their original writing before the high school staff collaboratively scored the writing.

A qualitative mini-study was conducted via survey of the teaching staff to evaluate their overall personal writing comfort levels and their levels of comfort with teaching writing both before and after the professional development was received (see Appendix G). The effectiveness of the professional development was also evaluated. Surveys were created using survey monkey so they could be electronically distributed, data collected, and analysis immediately available. An electronic medium was also chosen because this allowed for staff to anonymously respond to the survey with their accurate thoughts.
The data collected was designed to demonstrate any qualitative shift in students writing abilities following the incorporation of various writing strategies as well as any effect of professional development on staff, and their perceived levels of adequacy in their own writing and their abilities to teach writing.

Executive Summary

Below are the graphs reflecting the organization and writing scores of the students throughout the test period. This shows their baseline scores, as well as the scores in both areas for each of the three following prompts. The information demonstrates the increase in student’s scores as they were exposed to more writing as well as exposed to effective writing strategies throughout their various classes.
Figure 1: Student Writing Scores on Organization

Figure 2: Student Writing Scores on Ideas
Figure 1 indicates the students work improves greatly throughout this project, as the development of organization of their information was presented to the students. When students were initially presented with the first prompt they were unsure of how to even fully develop a persuasive essay. The staff was tasked with cooperatively and collaboratively grading these papers. To help alleviate some of the staff tension, practice sessions were held using student works falling into each of the categories, organization and ideas from the RPDC. These were then scored by the staff and collaboratively discussed before an agreement was reached amongst the entire group.

Figure 2 represents the data from the writing prompts relating to the generation of ideas both relating to the prompts and following through with the ideas throughout the completion of the essay.

For the baseline prompt, there were nineteen students who received a score below basic in organization and twenty-three scored below basic in ideas. This means that their writing was hard to follow and lacked focus and details to support their persuasive arguments. Forty-six students received a basic score in organization and thirty-nine were basic for ideas, meaning there was evidence that they were beginning to form some organization to their thoughts, there was some direction and generalities made that address
their topic, but there were still several inconsistencies. Eight students received a proficient score in organization and eleven students in ideas on the baseline-writing prompt. These students had controlling ideas, addressed the topics and provided a clear beginning, middle and end with an effective introduction and conclusion. No students received an advanced score at this time.

After the second prompts was completed, students showed drastic improvement in that sixteen were below basic for both ideas and organization, which showed that three were able to better organize and seven provided improvement in their ideas. Students scoring basic improved in organization from forty-six in the initial prompt to thirty-nine on the second prompt, and ideas improved from thirty-nine to twenty-nine. This shows that students are developing a stronger, controlling idea and are better able to clarify their beginning, middle and end, showing effective introductions and conclusions in their arguments. Improvement in the proficiency scores increased as well from eight to seventeen in organization and from eleven to twenty-three in ideas. Those scoring at the advanced level also improved drastically as no students scored advanced in the baseline in either organization or ideas and after the second prompt one student was there with their organization and five with ideas.
Students are not only developing their controlling ideas and effectively organizing their writing, but they are doing so with compelling arguments and engaging introductions which was a breath of fresh air from the writing we had been previously seeing. These changes were not just happening in their writing for the prompts however, across the board teachers were seeing drastic improvements not only in the quality but the quantity of writing they were receiving from students.

After students completed the final writing assessment, teachers collaboratively scored the essays and were pleased with the drastic increase in student scores. The number of students previously scoring below basic in organization dropped from sixteen to seven and those scoring below basic in ideas dropped from sixteen students to nine. The number scoring at the basic level dropped as well, in organization from thirty-nine to thirty-two and on ideas from twenty-nine to twenty-six. There were also great strides made in the number of students scoring at the proficient level as scores in organization went from seventeen to twenty-six and scores in ideas increased from twenty-three to twenty-six. The highest increases, however, were found in the advanced category as scores jumped by seven students in organization, going from one student to eight, and ideas jumping from five students to twelve.
There were many students who were getting very excited about their writing improvements and the improvements of their peers as students were trading papers to read each other’s work and to talk about ways they could improve which led to the third intervention strategy teachers implemented, that of self-review and reflection and peer review and editing.

The NW RPDC came in to work with teachers on self-reflection as we worked to reflect and edit our own individual works just as we often ask students to do. We then came together to trade our work and start peer editing one another work, something profound was discovered while working together however, we tended to do our best work when we knew others were going to be looking over it. Some however, found they were overwhelmed by the fact that another person was going to be looking over their work and were unable to focus on what they were supposed to be writing. We worked through a reflection piece with a peers work and the graphic editorial piece. This found lots of discussion ensuing internally with silence being the music of choice during this time.

Following the final student assessment, scores rose in the below basic arena with the number of students scoring below basic for organization increasing from seven to fourteen and on ideas from nine to twelve, however the other three segments showed students making great strides. The number of students who scored basic in organization decreased from thirty-
two to eighteen and on ideas from twenty-six to nineteen. Those scoring proficient made small strides but strides none-the-less as the number scoring proficient in organization increased from twenty-six to twenty-seven and those scoring proficient in ideas increasing from twenty-six to twenty-nine. Those scoring in the advanced realm increased from eight to fourteen in organization and twelve to thirteen in ideas.

After students received their initial scores on the fourth prompt, the papers were handed out randomly to students anonymously of course, and they used the graphic organizers to peer edit one another’s work. Following peer edits, students again completed their writing corrections, and they were able to make changes and corrections. These were the same four students and it’s believed that they chose not to make changes after their works were corrected. Students scoring basic in organization decreased from eighteen to twelve in organization and from nineteen to fourteen in ideas. Those scoring proficient in organization increased from twenty-seven to thirty-nine and ideas increased from twenty-nine to thirty-eight. Advanced earners increased as well from fourteen to eighteen in organization and from thirteen to seventeen in ideas.

Surveys were electronically distributed to high school and junior high classroom teachers regarding the professional development that was received throughout this adventure. Nine staff members responded and their answers were as follows: five of the teachers were core classroom teachers,
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while four were “special” teachers (specials include library, music, art, pe, business and counseling). Before starting the PD 33.3% or 3 staff members were very insecure in their writing abilities, 44.4% or 4 were insecure and 22.2% or 2 were secure. The staff were more insecure regarding their abilities before the PD to effectively teach writing to their students however, the survey found that 55.5% or 5 were very insecure in their abilities to teach writing, 22.2% or 2 were insecure and 22.2% or 2 were secure in their abilities to teach the writing effectively.

Following the PD the survey results jumped heavily as only one staff member still felt insecure in their ability both the write and to teach writing. 6 or 66.7% of the educators felt secure in their writing, and 22.2% or 2 felt very secure in their ability to write. In terms of transferring that to teaching students and incorporating the writing into their content areas, 22.2% or 2 were secure, and 55.6% or 5 were very secure in their abilities to translate their skills into their content area and teaching their students. The other piece of information they were asked, dealt with the effectiveness of the PD we received, 77.8% found it helpful or very helpful, while two staff members found it not helpful. This would also probably translate into those who improved as well.

All this demonstrated to both staff and students the great wealth of knowledge and aptitude we each have for writing. While it isn’t something born in everyone it can be taught and can be taught across the board. Self-
reflection and peer review are also amazing tools that will enrich both the writing and the reviewer.

Given the results that have been demonstrated thus far the district plans to continue working with the NWRPDC to introduce and work with educators to incorporate writing strategies into their classrooms. They will also continue to incorporate additional pieces of the six traits writing strategy adding one per year and continuing to evaluate, provide feedback and monitor their scores. With all the progress that has been made, we will not stop working to continue to develop these skills in students.

**References**

http://ezproxy.nwmissouri.edu:2063/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=51bc18e5-6f2c-4067-afb4-759be20d8994%40sessionmgr15&vid=1&hid=10#


## Appendix A

### Student writing scores

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Appendix B

Graphic Organizer: Organizing your writing

PERSUASIVE WRITING PLAN

Essay Topic

What is your opinion on this topic?

Reason 1:

Why? Support your reason.

Reason 2:

Why? Support your reason.

Reason 3:

Why? Support your reason.
Appendix C

Graphic Organizer: Adding voice to persuasive writing

Paragraph #1
Sometimes called the Introduction Paragraph
- Catch readers’ attention
- Give reasons or facts that support argument

Paragraph #2 - The Body
- Strongest argument
- Most significant example
- Leads to second argument

Paragraph #3 - The Body
- Next strongest argument
- Next most significant example
- Ties in directly to first argument
- Leads to third argument

Paragraph #4 - The Body
- Third most strongest argument
- Third most significant example
- Ties in directly to second argument
- Leads to conclusion or summary

Paragraph #5
Sometimes called the Conclusion Paragraph
- Summarize reasons or facts that support argument
- “Last chance” to convince reader
Appendix D

Graphic Organizer: Analyzing Persuasive Writing

1. Title of Document: ________________________________

2. Author: ________________________________

3. Date of publication: ________________________________

4. For what audience was the document written? __________________

5. What specific lines or phrases show how the author appealed to both the head (logic) and the heart (emotions) of the audience.

   Examples of Facts (appealing to logic) | Examples of Opinions (appealing to emotions)

   |                                |                                |
   |                                |                                |

6. List some strongly worded phrases the author uses:

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

7. In your own words, summarize the author’s viewpoint on his topic. What is he/she trying to persuade his/her readers to believe or agree with?

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

8. Based on what you’ve read, how would you rate the author’s success in persuading his/her audience to agree with his/her opinion? (Place an “x” on the line to show degree of success).

   unsuccessful | very successful

Explain your rating:

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
Appendix E

Writing Prompts – Students were given these options each time they were given a prompt, they were told to choose one of the four and write an expository, five-paragraph essay on their thoughts on the chosen prompt. Each time they wrote a prompt they had to choose a different topic. All prompts used were from Buckle Down Writing Prompts (Buckle Down, 2007).

1. The principal of your school has suggested that a course may be created that gives credit for volunteering in your community. Think about the importance of volunteering in your community as well as the costs. Now write to convince your principal whether a course that gives credit for volunteering in your community is a good idea.

2. Imagine that your local school board is deciding how best to spend money to improve your school. They’ve decided to get opinions from students about what kind of improvement they would most like to see in their school. Determine what improvements you think should be made, and write to persuade the school board to spend money on your ideas.

3. Your city is considering a curfew of 10 p.m. on weekdays and 11 p.m. on weekends for minors 16 years of age and younger. The curfew has been proposed for safety reasons as well as to cut down on juvenile crimes, most of which occur in the late evening and early morning hours. Write an essay to be ready by community leaders convincing them to support or object to the proposed curfew.

4. Write a persuasive essay, discussing one school rule (i.e., dress code, grading procedure, tardiness rule, etc.) that you think should be changed. Explain why this rule should be changed and what the new rule should be. Provide support for your suggestion.
Appendix F

Four points, six traits writing scoring guide that is used collaboratively throughout the building, there are only two traits displayed here as those were the only traits students were scored on for this research.

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<td><strong>4 – ADVANCED</strong></td>
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<td>___Strong controlling idea based on interesting and meaningful thesis narrows focus ___Clearly addresses topic and provides specific and relevant concrete details and/or reasons ___Show complexity and freshness of thought ___Effectively, insightful commentary connects concrete detail to thesis</td>
<td>___Effective beginning, middle, and end; engaging introduction; strong sense of closure ___A clear, strong thesis statement governs entire essay; the writer skillfully emphasizes important ideas ___Uses paragraphing effectively ___Uses effective cohesive devices (transitions, repetition, pronouns, parallel structure) between and within paragraphs ___Successfully follows assigned format</td>
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<td>___Controlling idea based on a meaningful thesis begins to narrow focus ___Addresses the topic using relevant details and/or reasons ___Shows some complexity and/or freshness of thought ___Strong commentary relates concrete detail to thesis</td>
<td>___Clear beginning, middle, and end; with an effective introduction and conclusion ___A clear thesis statement governs entire essay; important ideas stand out ___Use paragraphing appropriately ___Generally progresses in a logical order ___Uses effective cohesive device between and within paragraphs ___Accurately follows assigned format</td>
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<td>___Contains some sense of direction, but may lack focus ___Addresses the topic, but relies on generalities (lists) rather than specifics (development) ___Limited complexity and/or freshness of thought ___Weak Commentary</td>
<td>___Evidence of a beginning, middle, and end ___Thesis statement attempted, but may not govern the entire essay; important ideas begin to surface ___Shows evidence of paragraphing ___Inconsistency in logical order ___Inconsistent use of cohesive devices ___Attempts assigned format</td>
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<td>___Is difficult to follow and lacks focus ___May address the topic, but lacks details ___Lacks complexity and freshness of thought ___Attempts commentary unsuccessfully</td>
<td>___Little or no evidence of a beginning, middle and/or end ___Thesis statement unclear ___Little or no evidence of paragraphing ___Does not progress in logical order and may digress to unrelated topics ___Lacks cohesion ___No evidence of format</td>
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Appendix G

This is the survey that was given to staff members electronically through Survey Monkey, the survey itself was very short but we were measuring only their level of comfort and effectiveness of the information that was presented to them.

Please take a quick minute to answer the following questions to assist Lindsay Myers in tabulating the data in evaluating the effectiveness of the professional development provided to the staff during our writing campaign. We are evaluating the overall opinion of staff in their knowledge and confidence in their personal writing ability and their ability to incorporate writing into their content area.

1. Please choose your class type.
   - Core Class
   - Special

2. Before we started our writing focus, how secure were you in your personal writing abilities?
   - Very Insecure
   - Insecure
   - Neutral
   - Secure
   - Very Secure

3. Before we started our writing focus, how secure were you in your ability to teach writing content to students?
   - Very Insecure
   - Insecure
   - Neutral
   - Secure
   - Very Secure

4. How helpful did you feel the PD we received was in the development of your writing abilities?
   - Not Very Helpful
   - Not Helpful
   - Neutral
   - Helpful
   - Very Helpful

5. Now that our PD is complete how secure do you feel in your personal writing abilities?
   - Very Insecure
   - Insecure
   - Neutral
   - Secure
• Very Secure
6. Following our PD, how secure do you feel in your ability to incorporate teaching writing into your content area?
  • Very Insecure
  • Insecure
  • Neutral
  • Secure
  • Very Secure