

Descriptive Writing

What can I see, feel, smell and taste?

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Title: Descriptive Writing

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Research Question: How can a multi-sensory approach elicit more complete descriptions in my third graders writing while learning the structure and formation of a paragraph using the formulaic writing program Step Up to Writing?

Research Activities:

Context: This study took place in a third grade Dual Immersion classroom, composed of a diverse group of students with a wide range of academic needs. Within the classroom, the study followed six students who represented a continuum of writing abilities: High, Medium, and Low. One of the six students was a Spanish Language Learner. Methods and Data: The intervention took place over the period of five weeks and took 15 sessions. It was implemented in order to determine if explicit lessons (vocabulary and grammar, teacher model, and graphic organizers from Step Up to Writing (Auman 2006), could allow my students to write a descriptive paragraph with correct structure and the use of different descriptive words. Student achievement is defined by two different methods. Method 1: increasing the total rubric score. Method two: Effective writing of correct paragraph structure (including indentation, topic sentence, details, and a conclusion). Collection of the data included writing in response to prompts, practice sheets, observational notes, and attitude surveys. Results: From preliminary/baseline to outcome data students showed growth. Improvements were seen both in rubric growth as well as in the writing structure. All the students showed improvement, although at different rates and levels. The beginning higher students grew less than the low beginning student. For all the students the inclusion of different descriptive words increased during the post-assessment. Overall student self-efficacy increased. Conclusion: Using a formulaic writing program as supplemental to your explicit instruction can improve student achievement. This intervention also demonstrates that if a high interest topic is used, better results are produced.

Grade Level: Third Grade

Data Collection Methods: Observational teacher notes, student work, attitude surveys

Project Descriptors: Elementary, Writing, Formulaic, Explicit Instruction

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Introduction:

Everyday at 8:30 in the morning when the bell announces the beginning of the day 18 dedicated, but half a sleep students form a swivel line outside the wall in room 10. As I look at the students, I can see their excitement as they greet their friends. Some look like they might want to be home sleeping for an extra hour or two.

The Students: The first student in line is always Jenny¹. As Jenny shakes my hand, she never fails to mention something that she did the night before. Jenny came from Mexico when she was only three. This is her first year in a Dual Immersion classroom.

As the students walk into the classroom Lilia, instead of sitting, as the rest of the class does, always approaches me and asks what the class is going to do for the day. She then follows her question by sitting next to Mary, instead of listening to the calendar leader, she begins talking to Mary about the night before and recess. When she is reminded to make a better choice she promptly begins participating in the calendar activity.

Towards the middle of the line you will always find Paco. Paco is always surrounded by a small group of girls and loves to be the center of attention at any time and place. Paco is a thin energetic boy of average size, who loves to joke with other students and relishes the opportunity to perform at any time and place. Towards the back of the line there is always a young rat-pack. Braulio, Isidro, and Josue, are bunched up sharing stories, desires for toys, and T.V. shows they saw the night before. Braulio is the alpha leader of the group; he sometimes makes wrong choices because he uses his superior size to dominate the other boys. Isidro is very quiet, but not shy. He is a smaller, thin boy who loves to beat the rest of the students in four square and

¹ All names are pseudonyms

basketball. His biggest interests are toy cars, and his bike. Recently he saved up money from his weekly allowance, and bought his own bicycle. The day after Braulio bought his bike, he brought it to show it to me. Later in class he wrote a three-page description of the bike outlining every key feature.

Josue is the smallest child in the class and maybe even in the entire third grade. Josue is also known as the funniest kid in room 10. When he shares, he has the attention of all the students. He is also a great storyteller; he can take a one-minute event and make it into an hour-long story.

After the last student from the rat-pack enters the classroom, the calendar leader promptly begins directing the class. As the students finish the update of the calendar they are called by the role leader and go to their seats. The classroom is arranged by groups. There are five groups. Each group has a group name and number. Group one are the "Talkers," group two are the "Cowboys," group three are the "Cheetahs," group four are the "Wild-Flowers," and group five are the "Penguins." The students in each group had the opportunity to vote on a name and illustrate it with a three dimensional design that hangs from the ceiling identifying their group. This group of eighteen students has incredibly different personalities, but they all have an evident desire to learn. They all work diligently and respectfully day in and day out. Their jokes, hard work, dedication, and affection, motivate me to work the long hours required to serve them to the best of my ability.

Study Overview:

This paper tells the story of my attempt to reach the district's goal of writing scores by implementing an intervention targeting my students' writing skills. It details how I explored this issue by implementing a structured writing program known as Step Up to Writing as well as the

explicit scaffolding lessons on vocabulary and grammar that I used. I gathered information for this intervention through students' work, surveys of students' impressions, and my own observation journals and notes. My goal was to bolster my students as emerging authors as well as to give my students the needed structure and new vocabulary to enrich their writing to demonstrate a higher level of thinking.

The Teacher: One of the strongest aspects that help me plan the lessons and understand the students is the fact that I came from the same community. Many of the other teachers at Watty Elementary had been there when I was a student; some were my teachers. Like many of my students, I too came from Mexico and had no English, and writing was the most difficult thing I had to do. Writing was a boring, intimidating task for me, like it is for my students. When I think back at my experience at Watty Elementary, I conclude that the structure of the school has changed in significant ways. Even though the task was intimidating, it also became enjoyable, and it didn't carry all the pressure that I feel my students have on them. The limited amount of time for other academic areas, besides the core areas, have made school less flexible and less entertaining. This is observable in my students, especially when we write.

The School: Watty Elementary has been in "transition" for the last couple of years. In the last six years Watty Elementary has served six different principles, all of which have had different ideals. That has caused the staff confusion as well as frustration. "We do not know what writing program we need to implement, so most teachers do their own thing," said Ms. Rotten, a third grade teacher, when asked about the schools' writing program. Understanding that

the school has no writing program and the volatile state of mind of the staff has complicated the task for the teacher of understanding the principles of writing that Watty Elementary stands for.

Every year at Watty Elementary the staff gets together for a daylong meeting where the administration outlines the goals for the year. For the school year 2006-2007 Watty Elementary's focus goal is increasing scores in writing, specifically with our EL students. Another important point that was outlined during this daylong meeting was the fact that the students in Dual Immersion are the ones labeled as "Below Basic" in Language Arts according to the CST test. This is difficult for me as a new teacher that has never been trained in any writing program, especially if there is no structured writing program implemented at the school. To reach the goal of the district, I need to find a way to teach writing effectively to my third graders. After much research, conversations with experienced teachers, and deliberation, I have decided that this task could be accomplished with a combination of implementing a structured writing program, to provide students with the structure, rules, and basic writing steps, as well as scaffolding and supplementing the writing tasks with explicit vocabulary and grammar lessons using physical objects.

Research Question: How can a multi-sensory approach elicit more complete descriptions in my third graders' writing while learning the structure and formation of a paragraph using the formulaic writing program "Step Up to Writing"?

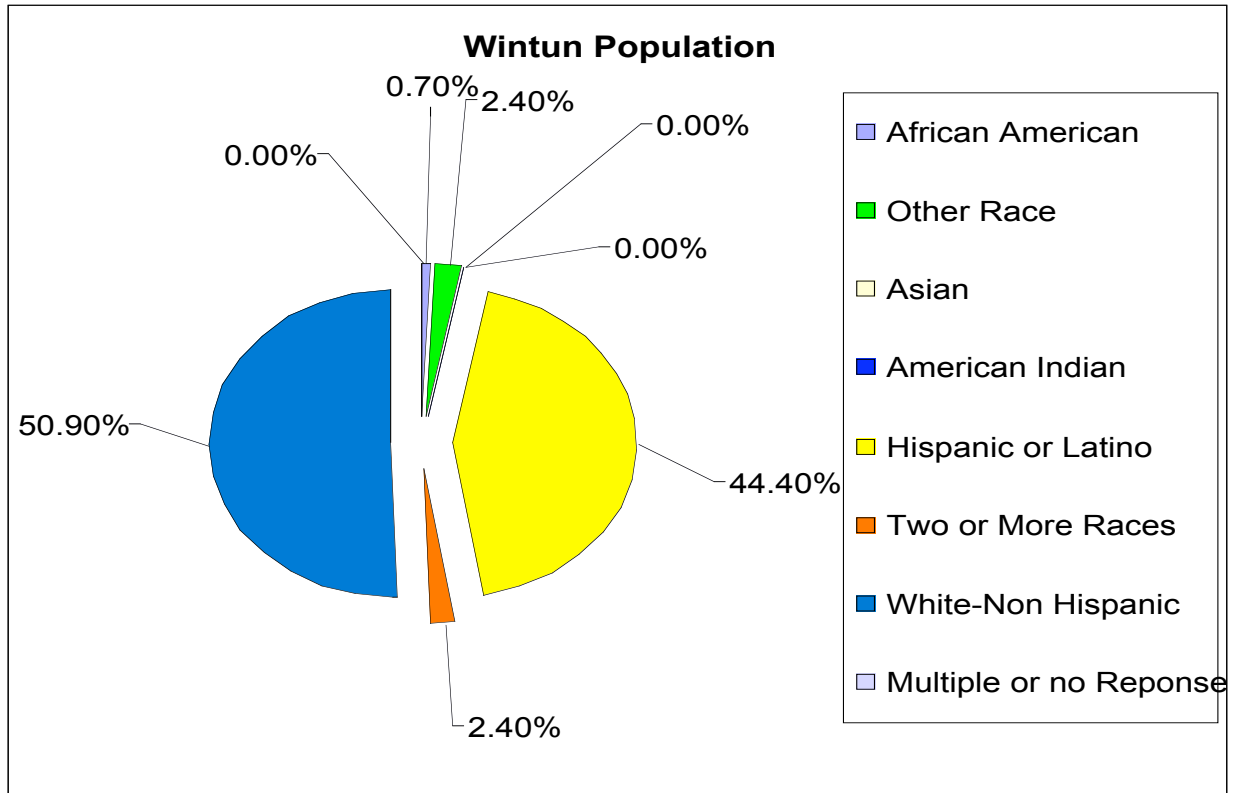
The Community:

The community that surrounds Watty Elementary is a distinguished and beautiful one. The houses that surround Watty Elementary are older homes from the 1960s and 1970s, but they are homes that have been maintained and updated, although there are evident signs of aging and

deterioration in most homes. As you drive up through Edwards St., you will see houses with brightly decorated gardens, beautiful white picket fences, and many cars parked outside on the streets. The cars parked outside on the streets resemble the low income residents of Wintun town.

According to the census Wintun was estimated to be at 6,125 residences in the year 2000. There are 1,907 households out of which 48.9% have children under the age of 18 living with them. Wintun is not a very diverse town. The predominant races are White Non-Hispanic and Hispanic. Figure 1 represents the different races in Wintun. Wintun flourishes from a walnut sorting plant that sits in the middle of the town. Most of the workers of the nut sorting plant are residents of Wintun. There are very little job opportunities that are not related to agriculture. Most of the residents from Wintun must travel outside of Wintun to get to work. The atmosphere of Wintun is one that provides safety and security to its residents. The common feeling of the residents is one of a small town with the common slogan of “Everyone knows everyone” used constantly. When driving through the streets of Wintun you can see residents walking their dogs, exercising or playing with their kids. This shows the community feeling that the residents live by at Wintun Town. In Wintun there are a total of five locations where people go to practice their beliefs. There is one Catholic Church, a Baptist Church, a Four Corner Square Church, a Mormon, and a New Family Life Christian Center. Only a couple of blocks separate all of these locations. The religious locations often unite to do events for the community. The events happen during Christmas time, Easter, and one time during the summer.

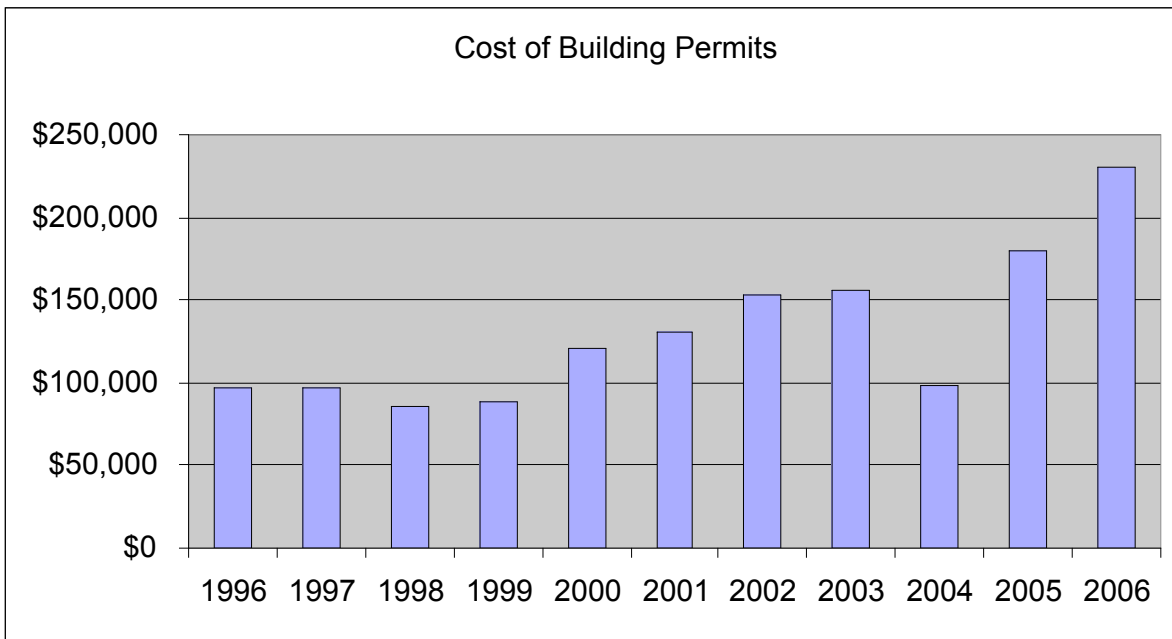
Figure 1-Wintun Population



Wintun town is a small rural town in between San Francisco and Sacramento. It is a small point in the map recognized by people as the stop before going to the lake or the casino. Because it is in between two larger cities, many of the newer residents of Wintun are people that work in

these larger cities. Since Wintun is an agricultural community, it is between desired destinations, and close to larger cities; most new residents are people that are able to afford bigger, more expensive houses causing the cost of homes to rise. It has always been my understanding that economics, specifically the cost of real estate, is an indicator of the type of people that live there. The cost of homes in Wintun, like in the rest of the country, have risen to tremendous rates the last couple of years. Averages of what house permits cost are listed below to give a better indication of the residential growth Wintun has experienced. These are only permit costs, not house costs, those are much higher. It should be noted that the rates are currently about 10-15 % higher than what is shown (figure 2).

Figure 2- Wintun Cost of Building Permits



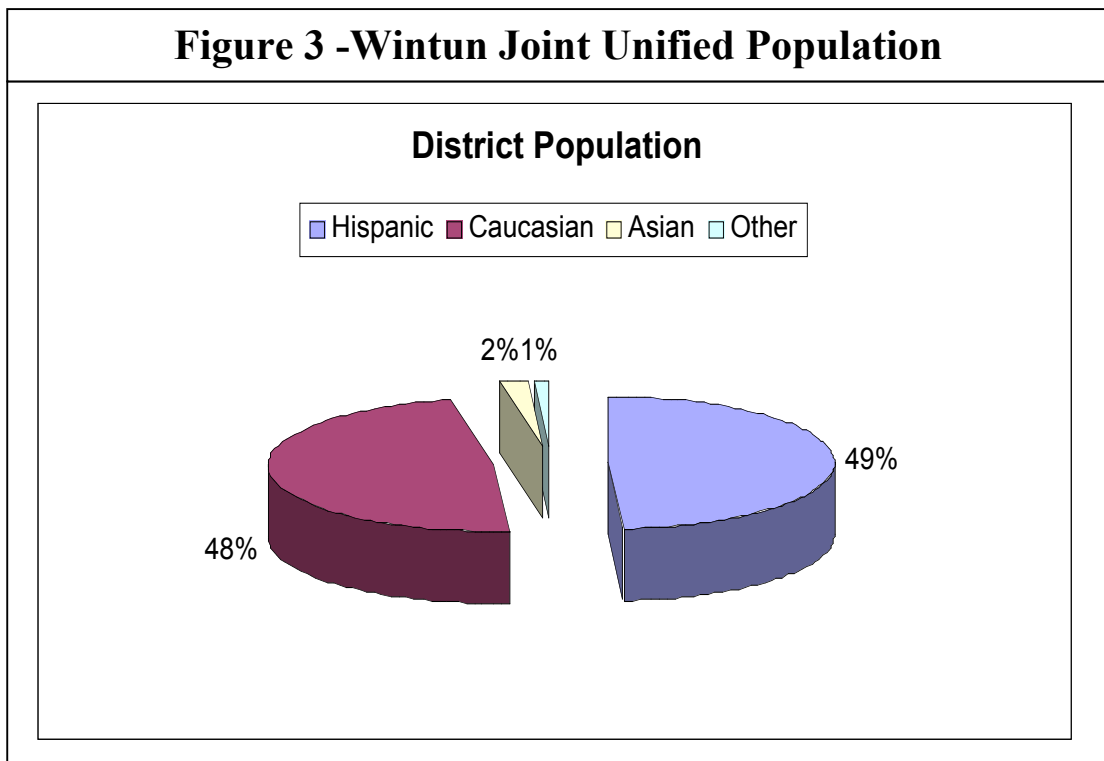
School District:

Watty Elementary is part of the Wintun Joint Unified School District. The Wintun Joint Unified School District serves just over 2,000 students within the city of Wintun and surrounding unincorporated areas of Margarita and San Alfonso counties. The District is comprised of Watty Elementary (grades K-3), Susan Intermediate School (grades 4-5), Wintun Middle School (grades 6-8), Wintun High School (grades 9-12), and Woodrow Continuation High School. This is the first year in which Kindergarten has been placed in the same school site as Watty Elementary. In years past Kindergarten was its own school and Watty was a 1-3 school. The reason that Kindergarten migrated to the Watty Elementary campus is due to the lack of funds and declined enrollment. This is the fourth year in a row that Wintun Joint Unified suffers from declined enrollment.

As indicated on the California Department of Education's (CDE) website, the Wintun district Academic Performance Index (API) for 2006 is 700, which is a growth of 0 points from the previous year. For the 2005-2006 school year the district did not meet the Academic Yearly Progress (AYP).

The District employs approximately 125 certificated staff, 12 Pupil Services, 9 administrators, 100 classified staff, a superintendent, a chief business officer, and 11 supervisory/confidential employees. Using the interest-based approach, employee groups and the District have a positive working relationship. The District student population is approximately 49% Hispanic, 48% Caucasian, 2% Asian, and 1% other (Figure 3). Students have access to

excellent core academic programs which are complemented by strong curricular and extra-curricular activities, including visual/performing arts, advanced placement courses, student leadership, and athletics.



According to the district's webpage, the district's mission vision and mission statements are the following:

The mission of the Wintun Joint Unified School District is to provide a quality education to all of our students, insuring that all students and the entire educational community actively participate and are valuable contributors to our changing society.

We will accomplish this through the development of skills, concepts and processes that build knowledge, foster critical thinking, and enhance positive social interaction in a supportive, safe environment that fosters the uniqueness and diversity of the individual learner.

Each student in the Wintun Joint Unified School District is of extreme value and will be provided every opportunity to develop to his or her fullest potential. In reaching his/her full potential, each student will achieve academic success, while developing a positive self-concept.

Students educated in the Wintun Schools will be self-motivated, responsible, communicative, cooperative, involved citizens of the future. We see our students as having an awareness of other people, freedom, justice and an appreciation of other cultures and environments so they live intelligently and productively in a highly democratic and ever increasing technological society.

We will accomplish this by providing a process of learning that emphasizes a balance between the basics and fundamentals in the areas of literacy and mathematics, while continuing to stress the importance of critical thinking and exploring new ideas.

A variety of resources are available to support staff in providing a quality education to the students. The District receives State and Federal funding for programs, including Title I, School Improvement Programs, Gifted and Talented Education, Migrant Education, as well as

participating in the BTSA New Teacher Program through a consortium with surrounding school districts and Universities.

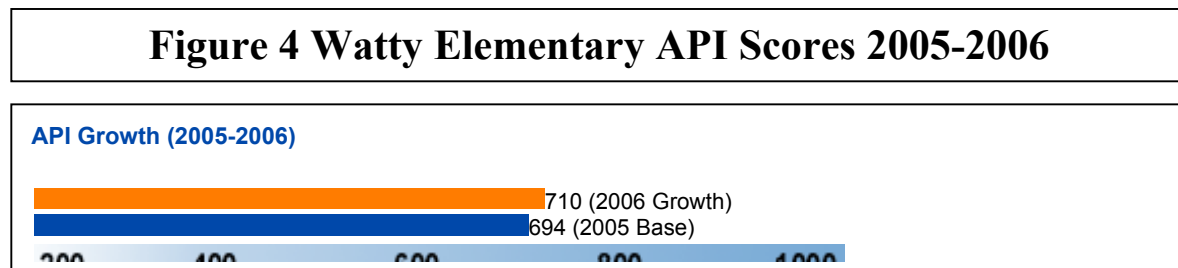
The school:

Watty Elementary is located in the southwest side of town amidst residential streets. The school is surrounded by houses on three out of four sides. As you walk the school vertically, going north, to your right you will see a wired fence separating the school from the homes of residents. Towards the front of the school, only a street separates the school from more resident homes. The back of the school faces the most used street in Wintun; as you cross the street you can also encounter more homes. The south-west side facing the school is a big open lot that has not had any use for the last couple of years. It has been determined as the next site of the new Catholic Church, construction beginning in 2007.

Watty elementary has a strong, standard-based mainstream program. The newest program to the school is a Dual Immersion Spanish/English program in grades K-3. There are two strands of Dual Immersion in each grade. Watty Elementary School believes in the positive growth and development for all students. At Watty Elementary there is a diverse student body with approximately one-third of the students speaking Spanish as their first language. Watty Elementary offers many programs for the students such as Los Danzantes, Conflict Managers, Student Council, Nature Bowl, Star Parties, Drama Club, and Pioneer Days. Monthly assemblies give students and teachers an opportunity to share their learning and build a sense of community. Watty Elementary has a very supportive community with an active PTA, Site Council and Learning Environment Committee.

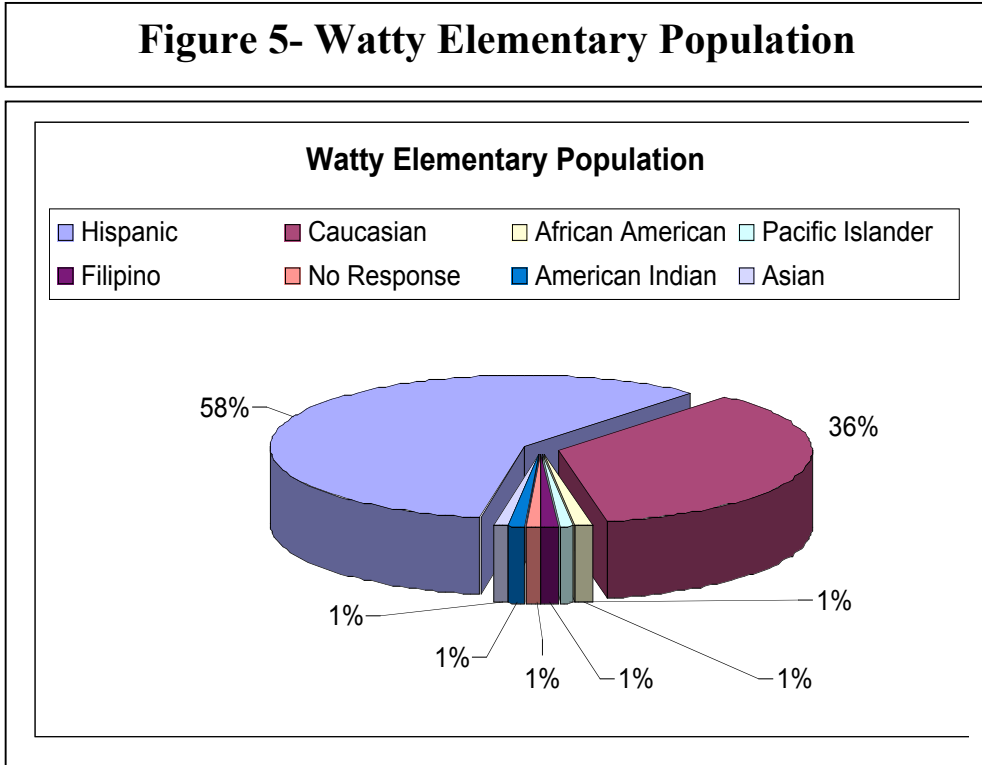
Watty Elementary is considered a low performance school based on the NCLB Act. According to the CDE, the API base score for Watty Elementary for the school year 2005 was 694 with a comparable API score of 3. A school's API score is only one measure of its performance under NCLB. An API score is a one-number summary of scores on state-required standardized tests. For the school year 2005-2006, Watty Elementary API improved to 710, 16 points higher than the previous year (Figure 5). The school's AYP was met in mathematics but not in Language Arts.

The comparable API score is a score given to a school, comparing it to schools with similar characteristics. Schools with similar characteristics (such as number of students, pupil mobility, similar ethnicities, socioeconomic status, number of credentialed teachers, number of English language learners, average class size) have API scores ranging from a low 615 and a high 835. The comparable API scores go from a scale of 1-10; 10 is the highest score that a school can receive. For the school year 2005-2006 Watty Elementary received an API score of 710, making the comparable API score of 3 (See Figure 4 below).



The student body at Watty Elementary consists largely of low income families. Watty Elementary has 85% of its students on free or reduced lunch, which is higher than the state average of 49%. 47% of the students from Watty Elementary are English Language Learners and for most, if not all, Spanish is the primary language. Like Wintun town, Watty Elementary's

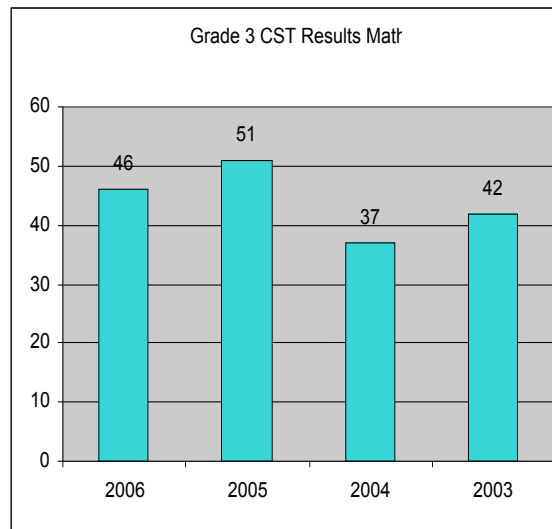
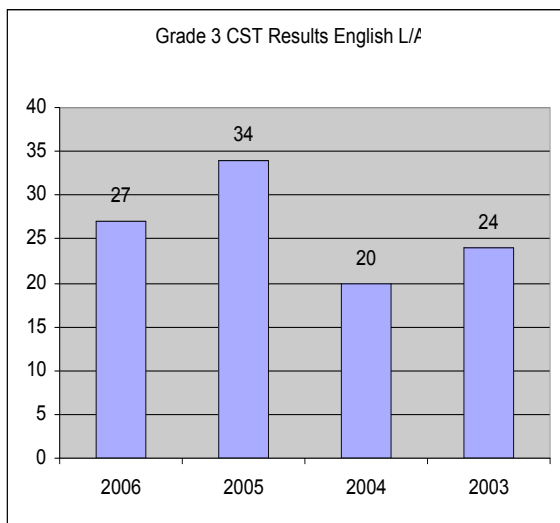
population is mainly Hispanic/Latinos and or Caucasian- Non Hispanic. At Watty 58% of the students are Hispanic, 36% are Caucasian, 1% are Asian, 1% African American, 1% African American, 1% Filipino, and 1% Pacific Islander (Figure 5).



The curriculum used at Watty Elementary is district-adopted and standards-based. This year there has been an added emphasis implementing a universal writing program at the school site. Most teachers have already been registered to attend Step Up to Writing training at some point during the year. The goal, outlined by the district superintendent, was to get students who are classified, according to CST scores (Figure 6), as “far below basic” and get them to “basic,” while monitoring students who are “below basic” to make sure that they don’t fall to “far below basic.” During the year a big change occurred that caused many teachers to panic and look for time to teach writing and other subject areas. The administration decided that this year we would implement the new “Intervention for all” program ExCEL, Excellence, A Commitment to Every

Learner. This took place because Watty has been identified as a Title 1 Low Performing School that is in its third year of program improvement. This new “Intervention for all” program is supposed to make us the better school that we are supposed to be. This meant that everyday we would have to take an hour away from our day to teach reading comprehension to a classified group of students dependent on their reading level. In our school we use the RESULTS reading passage to determine what level the students are. Each day the teachers of each level need to plan lessons depending on the level that the students are. This has caused a stir of confusion and doubt, as well as tons of extra work. There are no handbooks nor is a model lesson, it’s subjective to what the teacher decides is best for the students. The students would be getting the comprehension skills through the use of the core curriculum Houghton Mifflin. Two and a half hours also need to be allotted to teach language arts in the classroom. For the English immersion teacher this includes the hour of ExCEL, but for Dual Immersion teachers that means that we have to teach the one hour of ExCEL in English to the selected group that we have, plus the two and a half hours to our homeroom students in Spanish. That leaves very little time for all other academic areas, even writing.

Figure 6-3rd Grade CST Results L/A and Math



The Class:

The Dual Immersion class in this inquiry is composed of 18 third grade students. The instructional model for the Dual Immersion class is a 60/40 model. Sixty percent of the time, academic instruction is taught in Spanish and forty percent of the time academic instruction is taught in English. This year the implementation of a new intervention program has forcefully changed the percentages to be more of a 50/50 instructional model. This is the first year that Watty Elementary implements the intervention for all programs called ExCEL. ExCEL is an acronym for: Excellence: A Commitment to Every Learner. This intervention model began in Hysperia School District in southern California. The guiding principle of this intervention model is that every student gets instruction to his or her level, therefore the needs of every student are met. At the beginning of the year all the teachers at Watty Elementary met in grade level groups to discuss the appropriate instructional levels. The third grade teachers came up with six levels; this was decided upon because of the outcome reading scores of the students using RESULTS. The levels for the third grade teachers are; High, Medium-High, Medium, Medium-Low, Low, Far-Below. The teacher in this study is responsible for teaching the Medium-Low group. During this instructional time all the students go to their ExCEL teacher and receive reading intervention in English. This intervention time is for an hour each day. It was decided by administration at Watty Elementary that this intervention time would take the place of the ELD time. This one hour of intervention has forced the third grade Dual Immersion teachers to teach in a more 50/50 instructional model instead of the district adopted 60/40 model. The new intervention model, new to Watty Elementary, is comprised of fifteen of the students considered to be English

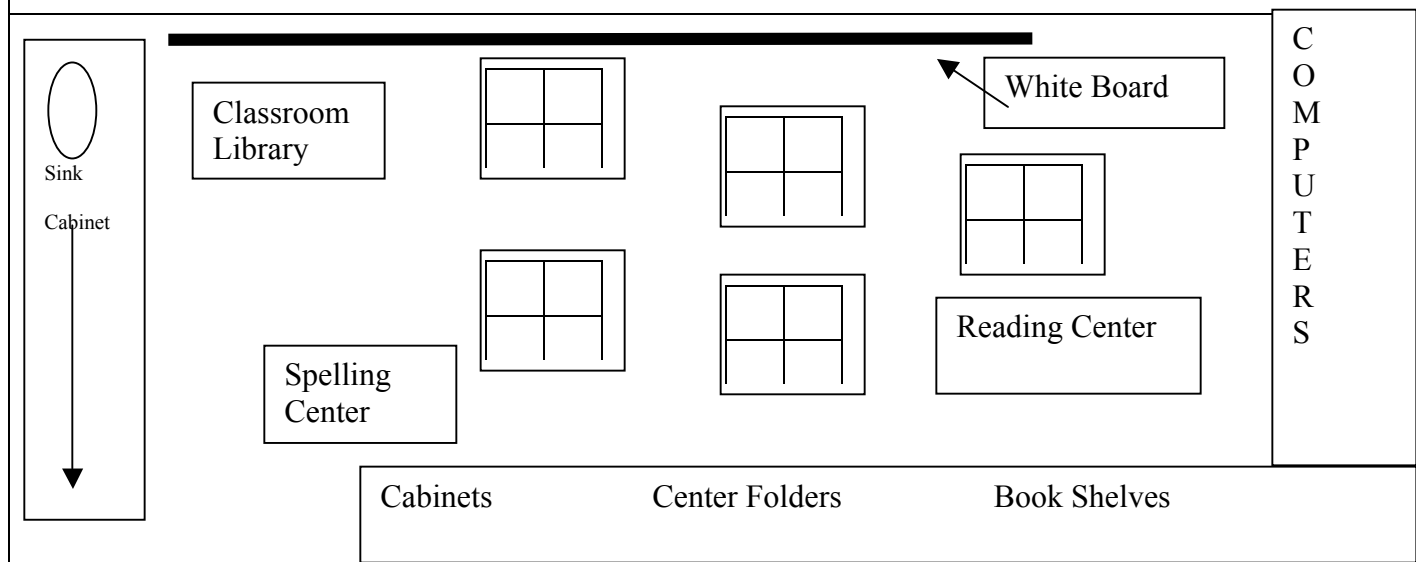
language learners. Eleven out of those fifteen students are Migrant Education students. There is one student that is under an IEP for reading and writing. During second grade his goals were outlined and planned. The other three students are native English speakers. Our learning begins each morning at 8:30.

Every morning the class begins by doing the opening. The opening includes: Calendar, thermometer, money problem, and student jobs. This usually takes the class about fifteen minutes. The class then moves on to do our English grammar warm-up. The students have a packet in their desk and each day, as a class, the sentences are corrected. After the class finishes the warm-up, the class does a phonics lesson (still in English). The phonics lesson comes from the program SIPPS program created by John Shefelbine and Katherine K. Newman. This lesson usually takes the class about 15 to 20 minutes. These are the routines that do not change. After the phonics lesson the class switches from thinking and speaking in English to doing the work in Spanish. To get the students to think in Spanish, the teacher utilizes a strategy that includes an invisible Spanish hat. When it is Spanish time the students are asked to put their magic Spanish hat on. This facilitates the understanding of language switches. The class continues with Spanish until it is time for math. On Monday's and Wednesdays the focus of the class is on completing the work from the Houghton Mifflin anthologies and workbooks. On Mondays the class reads the story and works on the comprehension strategy and the focus skill, also from Houghton Mifflin. At Watty Elementary School there is a pacing guide with specific times allotted for every story. Tuesdays and Thursday are days in which the class works in centers. In the classroom there are five different centers. One of the centers is always leveled reading. The teacher always guides this center; six students go to this center. Each rotation is for half an hour. Another center that always exists is spelling/vocabulary/dictionary. In this center some weeks the

students must work on spelling, other times on the use of a dictionary, and also on vocabulary. In this center there are 6 students at a time. Partners, only two students at the center at a time, do the other three centers. These centers vary from week to week, but there is always some sort of art and writing involved, as well as math. The focus of the work in the class is basically on math, language arts, and writing. There is very little opportunity to work on science and social studies and physical education, although the teacher fits it in through small projects and homework assignments.

The students' desks are arranged in groups of three or four. Each cooperative learning group has at least one Spanish Learner and two or three English Learners. Seating is also alternated between boy and girl. Seating priority was given to students that have a special need, vision, hearing, behavioral and are directly facing the instructional area. (See Figure 7 for a full Sketch of the classroom).

Figure 7: Classroom Sketch



Preliminary Data and Analysis:

During the beginning of the school year, I implemented many shared writing activities. We spent the first month writing informally to friends in the classroom and to the teacher. I decided to do this because I thought it would be a powerful way to create a cooperative, understanding environment for the students and the teacher. None of this writing was corrected nor were the students given guidance on how to write it. For example, one time we wrote a descriptive paragraph on the adventures we would have if we were Mulan; we had a fun time completing this activity. Students, for the most part, showed powerful ideas, but their writing often lacked structure and cohesion.

Since the beginning of the school year, I have assessed my students formally and informally in both English and Spanish. Working in a variety of subject areas, I noticed that there was an extreme range of academic abilities in my class. There are some high achieving students, average students, and students that struggle in every subject area. Prior to selecting a research topic I reflected on the range of academic abilities and wondered if this were normal or had I just received a special class. Through staff meetings, extensive conversations with experienced teachers, and the analysis of state scores, as well as district goals, it became apparent that the area of focus for this intervention would be writing. For example, I began to notice that the majority of the students in the class had little desire to write. For the students in room 10, writing was a difficult chore indeed. Writing became a daunting task because the students became absorbed by the spelling instead of concentrating on writing a powerful message. “How do you spell “también”?” became the theme in my classroom. As I heard this more and more I began

telling my students to use the sound phonics rules that they know. I later thought about this and came to the conclusion that I was doing my students a disservice because my students are learning two languages that have different sounds for most of the letters.

On November 21st the school district gave its first of three writing samples. Since my class is a Dual Immersion classroom, the writing sample the students wrote was in Spanish. To score these samples, we used a rubric based on the California State Standards, The rubric targeted six areas: Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions. The passing score was a total score of 18/30. See Appendix A for complete Rubric. The students' writing samples were also compared and analyzed to students' work from the previous year. Anchor papers from the previous year determined what constituted a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 (See Appendix B-D for Anchor Papers).

The directions for the writing sample were to write a descriptive paragraph. The writing prompt was,

“Escribe un párrafo describiendo tu osito favorito de peluche, animalito de peluche, mascota de casa. Debes incluir detalles específicos, usando palabras precisas que describen. Piensa en lo siguiente: ¿Como se siente tenerlo en tus manos o brazos?, ¿Como es el tamaño y forma?, ¿Como huele y que es su significado? (Write a paragraph in which you describe your favorite pet or stuffed animal. Think of the following: How does it feel having it in your arms? What is the size or shape? What is its significance?)”

The data were first analyzed by the panel of third grade teachers based upon set criteria. Since the Dual Immersion students wrote in Spanish, only two teachers (Mrs. Gari and I were

capable of grading the Spanish writing). The criterion that was our primary focus was state standard 1 in third grade writing, “Students write clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea. Their writing shows they consider the audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing.

Organization and Focus

1.1 Create a single paragraph: Develop a topic sentence. Include simple supporting facts and details,” (CDE, 2007).

The scoring protocol follows:

1. Each teacher reads the writing sample silently and assigns a numerical grade to each category.
2. The teacher then moves on and reads another paper.
3. After the teachers finished grading their set of samples, the graded samples were exchanged with the other teachers.
4. If the teachers disagreed, a short discussion would follow.
5. A paper could still receive two different scores and the average of those two scores would act as the final score. For the purposes of comparison two sample papers follow. One is an anchor paper from last year and the other is a scored sample from this year. (Figure 8)

Figure 8: Sample paper from 2005 determined to be a (14) anchor paper and student work from 2006 determined to be a (14).

<p style="text-align: center;">Muestra de Escritura de la Primavera – Tercer Grado</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Descripción Expositiva</p> <p>Escribe un párrafo describiendo tu favorito oso de peluche, animalito de peluche, mascota de casa. Debes incluir detalles específicos, usando palabras precisas que describen. Piensa en lo siguiente: ¿cómo se siente tenerlo en tus manos o brazos?, ¿cómo es el tamaño y forma?, ¿cómo huele y qué es su significado?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Isidro</p> <p>Ellos se miran como un peluche pero son de verdad. Uno de ellos es cafe el otro es blanco. También yo y mi hermano asustamos a los dos grandes pero a uno chiquito no porque nos gusta jugar con él. El nombre del blanco es bom-</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3rd Grade Writing Prompt</p> <p>Writing Situation: Escribe un párrafo que describe tu favorito oso de peluche, animal de peluche, o mascota de casa. Ten cuidado en incluir detalles específicos, usando palabras exactas. Piensa en lo siguiente: ¿cómo te sientes cuando lo tienes en tus manos, como es la textura, qué color es, que es el tamaño y forma, tiene un olor, y que sentimiento tiene para ti?</p> <p>Am, me gusta mi osito de peluche. Mi peluche es suave y suena diferente y ese no dice nada norlas scilrie pero no habla y es café y es frío y se ote como maraca: y huele a perfume. cuando juego con él y chias</p>
<p>Isidros' Paper</p>	<p>Anchor Paper (2006)</p>
<p>Translation: They look like a stuffed animal but are real. One of them is brown the other is white. Also me and my brother scared the big ones but a little one no because we like playing with him. The name of the white one is bom-.</p>	<p>Translation: I like my stuffed animal. My stuffed animal is soft and sound different and that thing doesn't say anything only smiles but does not talk and is brown and is cold and sounds like maracas and smells like perfume when I play with him.</p>

After listening to an experienced teacher grade these written pieces and doing this for the first time in my professional career I decided that I would leave my students' scores as they were. I did, however, want to compare my students' scores. I went back to the class and analyzed my students' writing. I wanted to know how my students were performing and what really looks like a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. While doing this I thought of something my principal had told me during my first post observation discussion, "Assessment should not only be to measure what students

have mastered and have not mastered, but should be used to direct instruction.” I wanted to use this information so that I can direct my instruction to my students’ needs. Table 1 below shows the scores of all the students in the class broken out by each category, along with the averages for each section.

Student	ideas	organization	voice	word choice	sentence fluency	conventions	Total Score
1	3	2	3	3	2	3	16
Braulio	2	2	3	3	2	3	15
3	2	2	3	3	1	2	13
Jenny	3	2	3	3	2	2	15
5	3	2	2	3	2	3	15
6	3	2	2.5	3	2	3	15.5
Josue	2	2	3	4	3	3	17
8	3	2	4	3	2	3	17
9	2.5	2	4	3	3	3	17.5
10	3	2	3	3	2	3	16
11	2	2	2	2	1	1	10
12	3	2	3	3	2	3	16
Paco	3	2.5	3	3	3	3	17.5
Isidro	1.5	2	3	3	2	3	14.5
15	3.5	3	3	3	2.5	3	18
16	4	3	3	2	2	3	17
17	3	2.5	3	3	2	3	16.5
Lilia	3	2	3	2	2	3	15
Average Scores	2.75	2.17	2.97	2.89	2.08	2.78	15.64

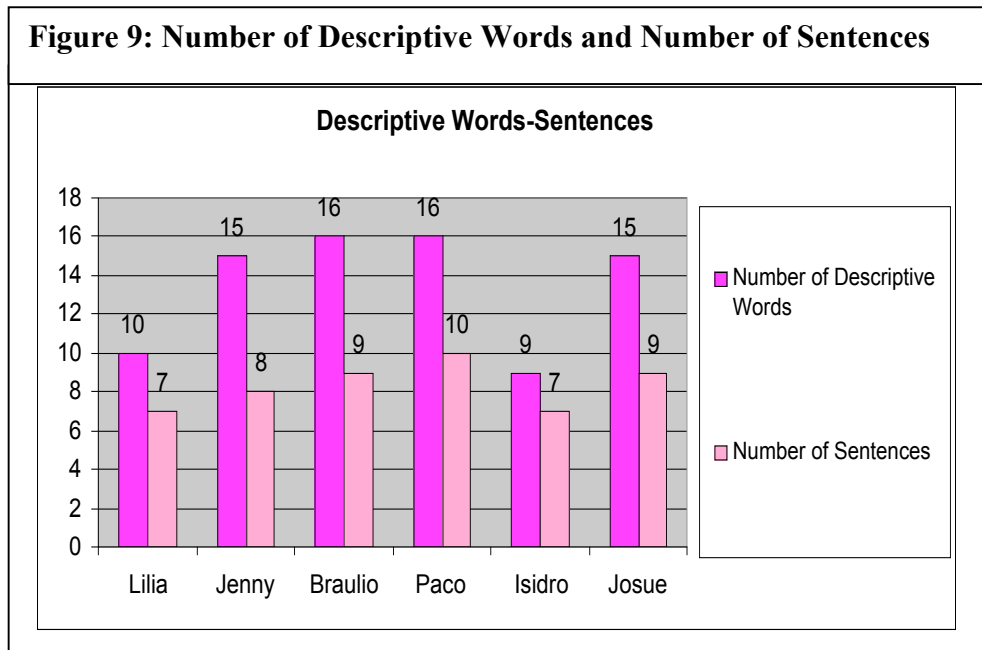
Analyzing the data allowed me to see that all my students have a need in two particular areas: Organization and Sentence Fluency. The section on Organization received an average score of 2.17 while the section on Sentence Fluency averaged a score of 2.08. There were also some individual needs shown through these scores. After we imputed all the scores into the

system Mrs. Gari and I got together and talked about the major needs we saw in our classes. Mrs. Gari is the other third grade Dual Immersion teacher. She has been teaching for five years in Watty Elementary, in a third grade Dual Immersion class. During our conversation Mrs. Gari noted, “Our students have great ideas, but they just don’t have the organization and the sentence fluency. The students use the details, but to describe they use the same descriptive words over and over,” (November 24, 2006).

The students also do not seem to have a clear idea of what a paragraph is. Most students did not have a topic sentence or a conclusion. Paco was the only student, from the focus students, to have a topic sentence. Pacos’ topic sentence was, “Mi mascota es un pescado muy pequeño. (My pet is a very small fish).” Below on Table 2 are the number of topic sentences and conclusions that my students wrote during the districts writing sample. First it is broken down to represent each focus students and then it shows the entire class (for the purpose of this study, every time it says entire class it includes the focus student’s performance score). Mrs. Gari continued to say, “It is something that we need to teach explicitly in different ways to reach all of our students.”

Table 2: Baseline Topic Sentence and Conclusion Sentence			
Student	Topic Sentences-Baseline	Student	Conclusion -Baseline
Lilia		Lilia	
Jenny		Jenny	X
Braulio		Braulio	
Paco	X	Paco	X
Isidro		Isidro	
Josue		Josue	
Entire Class	4		6

During the reanalysis of the students' writing sample, I noticed that most students relied on the same descriptive words. The small amount of descriptive words used in their writing limited their ability to write fluently, limiting their ability to demonstrate their voice and power of their message. I felt that it was a result of limited vocabulary and understanding who their audience was. Figure 9 represents the number of sentences and the number of different descriptive words the students use.



It is clear from the analysis that, while each student has specific needs, there are certain needs that all of the students have. One of the most evident needs is the use of different descriptive words. Out of the six focus students only one, Lilia had the most descriptive words, but did not vary much on the use of sentence starters. Isidro is the opposite; he has very little descriptive words, but has the ability to begin his sentences in different ways. In both written pieces neither student included a topic sentence or a conclusion, which are important components of a paragraph. It is important to focus the intervention in assisting the students in these areas.

The teacher can compare these data analysis and samples collected of future work throughout the research process to determine the growth in the particular areas the intervention is focused at reaching. From this analysis I concluded to formulate lessons and activities that will “engage” each student as well as assist them in improving those areas of need. Thomas Prieto (2006), a fellow teacher researcher wrote, “They needed prompts that would engage them in their writing.”

In addition to studying the writing samples I also administered a survey targeting attitudes towards writing and patterns of writing use for the entire class. For the focus student I administered the survey as an informal interview. The purpose of the survey was to determine how the students feel about their writing capabilities as well as how and when they use writing. Since my intent is to help the students improve their writing, it is important to understand the interest of the students to give the teacher a starting point. Sample items from the survey follow. For complete samples of the survey, look at Appendix F. Below is a student sketch of my five focus students with highlights of some of the answers they had to the questions during the informal interview.

Focus Students:

Jenny. Jenny is a bright –eyed, eight year old female student with a smile the size of a banana. She has light brown hair and her smile never stops. Jenny is the youngest of three, with two older brothers. Jenny and her family migrated from a rural town in the state of Guanajuato in Mexico, when she was only three. She has been a student at Watty Elementary since Kindergarten. This year Jenny’s mom decided that she wanted her daughter to maintain her native language and moved her from her mainstream classroom into a Dual Immersion

classroom. The change occurred before the academic school year began. Last year on the STAR test Jenny scored 335 on English Language Arts that put her at a basic level. On math she scored at 348, which put her two points from being at the proficient level. Jenny participates in an after school reading program. The reading program is on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 45 minutes, provided by her teacher. If you want to learn about the popular Mexican “Novela” Rebelde, Jenny would be your choice. One of Jenny’s favorite things to learn about is the natural environment; often you will find her reading about birds, penguins, and forests. From the survey one of the most interesting answers that came from Jenny involved her ability to write. The question asked if she thought she was a good writer, why or why not. Jenny answered, “*Not a good writer because I don’t know how to grasp the pencil good.*” This opened a window into Jenny’s thoughts and how much of a detail person she is.

Lilia. Lilia is an eight year old female student. Lilia is blonde and has a light skin complexion. Lilia is the youngest of three. She has two older sisters. Both of her sisters have been in Dual Immersion. The language at Lilia’s home is English, although Spanish is understood by the siblings. Lilia’s first language is English. Last year on the STAR test Lilia scored a 320 on English Language Arts, that’s Basic. Lilia scored a 360 on Math, that score put her at a Proficient level. Lilia has been in the Dual Immersion program since kindergarten. Lilia struggles with Spanish vocabulary and reading fluency. One of the things that Lilia mentioned when asked what she wanted to be very good at was, “I want to know more Spanish to write better.” Lilia has many friends. During recess she spends most of her time playing four squares or eating her snack. Mary loves to play soccer and dance ballet. This year is going to be the first year that she is allowed to play soccer all year long. She just finished one league and soon will begin another one. Lilia made me smile through out the survey. The last question on the survey

asked the students to explain how people learn to write. Lilia said that, “*They practice, write words down and mom corrects them,*” thank you Lilia’s mom for your help. I also found it very interesting that Lilia had no explanation of why people write (no sense of an audience or a purpose).

Paco. Paco is an eight-year-old, full of fun and energy, male Hispanic student. Paco has only one younger brother at home. Paco is slim and average size. The home language at Paco’s home is Spanish. Mom and dad have very limited English. Overall, Paco is an average student; his major struggle is with the organization of his thoughts while writing. Paco and his younger brother can always be found in the soccer field playing wrestling or soccer. In the state test for the 2005-2006 school year, Paco scored a level of Basic in language arts. He scored a level of advanced in math. Paco is a seemingly good-natured student. He often wants to stay inside during recess to tell jokes or read stories to the teacher. Paco participates in the after school reading program only on days that the reading material is in English. Paco is the only student from my focus group, and only one out of three in the class, that said that they thought they were okay writers. Paco was also one of a couple of students that had a more clear sense of the purpose of writing. When asked if writing was important to him, Paco answered, “*Yes, to talk to people without talking.*”

Braulio. Braulio is an eight-year-old male student. He has attended Watty Elementary since kindergarten. He is below grade level in reading comprehension and writing. Braulio’s home language is Spanish. On last year’s state test, Braulio scored a level of Below Basic in Language Arts and a level of Proficient in Math. Braulio also participates in the after school reading club. Whenever there is a writing activity, Braulio is the student that writes the most,

although his thoughts are all over the place. Braulio enjoys playing all the games that involve competition. During P.E. he is often the one keeping score and trying the hardest to get the other team members out, this causes Braulio to say things out loud to other team members that he does not mean and creates problems for him. Overall Braulio is a positive, energetic student that tries hard to do everything correct, although that competitive spirit of his causes him to rush his work. It should be mentioned that Braulio is the speed writer in the class. He always wants to be the one that writes the most, and the fastest. Like the majority of students in the class, Braulio did not know why people write. He also thought that he wasn't a good writer, his reason was because of his sloppiness (maybe due to the fact that he speeds through it). When asked what makes a good writer, Braulio answered, "*My cousins, because one time he did his homework and showed it too me and it wasn't all sloppy.*" From his answers I have come to the conclusion that Braulio understands that writing is important, but he does not understand that there is an audience and a purpose for it.

Isidro. Isidro is an eight-year-old male. The home language spoken at his home is Spanish. Isidro's mom and dad do not speak English at all. Last year, Isidro scored a level of Below Basic in Language Arts and of Basic in Math. Isidro is a very hard working student. One of the things that describe Isidro is the fact that he is always playing with something in his hands. When the teacher is giving instructions, Isidro has something in his hands, when Isidro is working on math, he still has something in his hands that's not math related. Isidro is not shy, but is quiet. He is part of the rat-pack. This year Isidro has not been in trouble at all. Isidro was very honest to all his answers in the survey, like most of the students. Isidro said that he is "so, so" in his writing ability and explained that the reason is because he does not "*like that much writing.*" Once again, like the majority of students in the class, Isidro did not know what makes a good

writer, but said that people write to learn more. He was the only student in the class that connected writing to learning.

Josue: Josue is an eight-year-old male. His home language is Spanish. Josue's dad is fluent in English; his mom can only speak it a bit. Josue is the cutest student you can ever meet. He loves to please his friends as well as his teachers. He is constantly reading through books just to find jokes that he can tell everyone. Last year he scored a level of Below Basic in Language Arts, and a level of Proficient in Math. Josue has a low confidence level in any academic work done in English, besides math. Josue is the smallest student in the class, but loves to be part of everything. Recently Josue broke into tears because he was going on vacation and couldn't join his classmates. That touched the teacher's heart and made him shed a tear or two. Josue is such an orthodox personality that makes every day an adventure of all sorts. During the survey Josue was the only student from the focus group asking why I was writing what he was saying on paper. When Josue was asked why you think people write, he answered, "*To thank, like in Thanksgiving, like a letter, to write stories and letters.*" This immediately made me think of him and Paco because they had similar responses. These two students were the only two students in the class that were able to make me believe that they understood there was a purpose and an audience for their writing. Coincidentally, Paco and Josue received two of the higher scores in their writing samples.

Overview- Preliminary Data:

After administering the interview, I had a good feeling about my class; most of my students answered as a beginning third grader would. I liked the fact that all the students said that writing is important. To me, as a student and teacher, understanding that something is important directs me to doing it more often and trying my best at it. From the survey 13 out of the 18

students had no clear understanding that there is a purpose for writing, this shows that the sense that there is an audience is missing. Also only 3 out of the 18 have a high enough confidence level in their writing to be able to express to their teacher that they consider themselves okay or good writers. Only one student, Lilia, mentioned that there was a language problem. I came to the conclusion that these students don't have something important enough to them to motivate them, therefore not creating a purpose; even more, not creating a sense that someone is going to read their writing. Prisca Martens (2001) writes, "Writing needs a source and it needs a motivation." I need to find a source and a motivation for my extremely gifted group of young scholars.

Purpose and Rationale- Research Question:

The most challenging task for all my students is writing an organized descriptive piece as well as seeing themselves as effective writers. What Students need to understand is that writing is, "...a vehicle to share what we cannot say out aloud," Prieto (2006). Students need a reason to write and an object interesting enough to write about.

Wintun Joint Unified School District, home of Watty Elementary has a strong emphasis on state writing assessments; the district has a focus on the need for students to produce a good written work and for the students to become excellent readers. Wintun Elementary does not have a universal writing program that the teacher is required to use. Because of the pressure the district and state impose on the school, many teachers forgo the use of process writing and use more formulaic writing programs. One of the most popular formulated programs being used at Watty Elementary is "Step Up to Writing" (Auman, 2006). Through the use of "Step Up to

Writing” students are introduced to writing in a step-by-step process (Scaffold process) using colors and symbols as representations of the elements of writing. After the students memorize what each color and symbol represent, they begin to write sentences. The process begins by writing independent sentences in their appropriate places to produce a multi-sentence coherent paragraph. This process of writing allows students to produce writing pieces quickly with a focus on the organization of a paragraph, in particular topic sentences, details, and conclusions. One critique of using a formulaic writing program is that the students have fewer opportunities to develop creativity. “Step Up to Writing” is one of the more formulaic writing programs.

It would be more ideal to provide the students with time for teachers to teach writing through process writing. However, because of the basic writing needs that the students are missing and because of the difficulty teachers have in implementing a writing program that is process based that also provides the structure and framework that assists students in creating a fluent piece of writing in a timely manner, a formulaic writing program is not the worst writing process approach. Because of the mandated curriculum for math and reading, as well as the quantity of time that we must spend in each, the academic time allotted for writing instruction often falters through the cracks. Since teachers do not teach for ten full hours a day and because the pressures to increase test scores increase day to day, it is impossible to find time for process writing.

In order to give the students in room 10 the best possibility to succeed in developing the structure of writing, the use of “Step up to Writing” is pivotal. For a first year, third grade teacher, one of the main focuses and big academic standards are writing paragraphs and writing descriptive pieces. I have many concerns over using a step by step program that might handicap

students from using their desire and creativity, but at the same time I see the necessity that my students have to fill in the missing basic writing concepts while cementing strong writing skills that students have. I also see the strong push from administration to improve scores so that Watty Elementary will not fall into its fourth year of program improvement.

“Step Up to Writing features research-based, validated strategies and activities that help students proficiently write narrative, personal narrative, and expository pieces; actively engage in reading materials for improved comprehension; and demonstrate competent study skills”(Auman, 2006). I agree with Auman, the strategies provided by “Step Up to Writing” are basic steps to increment students’ understanding of the writing skills that they need to develop to be successful, although they should only be used to give the students the basic understanding of the process while still giving them the freedom and opportunity to express themselves.

Writing is an integral part of the schooling process. It is a skill that, when developed, can assist a person achieve greater thinking and better job opportunities. According to Calkins (1986) we write “to hold our lives in our hands and to make something of them.” At the beginning of the year the focus that I had for my students was to get their ideas on paper and not worry about their spelling, organization, or appropriate punctuation. I was worried more about the freedom my students had when writing. The intent was to improve the content of the students’ writing because it decreased their frustration due to the mechanical errors. As I continued with more of my “free writing” approach, I was communicating with teachers that made clear that students need to know the basic functions of writing to be able to structure it in a correct way. While I want to continue the big focus on the importance of content in my students’ writing, I also want to teach other components of writing to help my students structure their writing in a more appropriate way. Calkins (1986) states that, “our first priority must be to

encourage our students to regard themselves as people who have important reasons, not only to write well, but also to spell and punctuate well and use precise, graceful language.”

Understanding that I had a lack of confidence, and resources, to teach my students writing structure, I began to research strategies that have been shown to be effective. One of the first books that I went to was, *Developing Writing K-3*, written by Roger Beard (2000). The book’s primary focus is on the structure of writing. It also presents research on fundamental aspects that affect writing. Since my students have not had explicit instruction on the structure of writing, I first thought that setting up a writing environment will help them understand and not feel intimidated by the writing process. One of Beard’s findings was that the conditions that the students were in, affected the writing that the students produced. He suggests that there are eight conditions that need to be met before the teacher can promote literacy learning. The eight conditions that Beard suggested are:

Immersion in meaningful print: Being surrounded by print; having access to books, notices, posters, songs and poems; being read to.

Demonstration: Adults writing in front of pupils and talking about what is involved in writing.

Responsibility: pupils taking responsibility for deciding what to pay attention to.

Employment: regularly using writing in a variety of context for a variety of purposes.

Approximation: encouraging and accepting approximations that are part of ‘having a go.’

Response: *adults giving informative and non-threatening feedback to children's efforts to communicate*

Engagement: *pupils actively participating in language events, this is the essential condition, on which the effectiveness of the other conditions is based.*

Beard also mentions that there are some questions that are always worth asking whenever children are involved in writing:

Are they helped to understand why we need to write?

Are they encouraged to think about the purpose of writing and who their audience is?

Are they assisted to take an interest in the different aspects of writing, such as spelling, word choice, word order, punctuation and layout?

Knowing what conditions affect students' writing helped me make sure that these conditions are met in this classroom. More than anything, this article is helpful because of its theoretical perspective and practical suggestions, specifically related to early writers. It confirms that teaching writing can be accomplished by having met the correct conditions. One of the thoughts that also crossed my mind was the issue of students writing in a second language. This intervention will be in Spanish; that means that three of my students will be writing in a second language. Gibbons' (2002) outlines the important variables that might determine a second language learner's success or failure. She notes that it is important to "drawing knowledge of your own students." The teacher must understand that students have knowledge, it might be in their first language, but it can be transferred to be understood in the second language, with

explicit instruction. Although Gibbons' research is about ESL students, it can be applied to EO students learning Spanish.

After reviewing proven research, I decided to first set up my classroom to be one that promotes literacy. Second, I decided to use "Step Up to Writing" because it is a program that assists the learning of the writing structure of the students. I decided to use "Step Up to Writing" as a supplement to help my students with the structure of a paragraph (organization, Topic Sentence, Conclusion), since only four out of eighteen students had a topic sentence and only six out of eighteen had a conclusion. From the district writing sample 90% of my kids scored below a score of 2 on the organization part of the rubric. Third, I decided to use meaningful objects and mini-lessons to provide explicit vocabulary instruction and sentence formation for my students. Avery (1993) says that a short mini-lesson with a strong focus tends to have a greater effect on student writing than other types of grammar lessons. I decided to conduct my intervention in a whole class manner because I felt it would be beneficial to all students. Having been able to recognize the need that my students have, as well I have, it has led me to researching the following question:

How can a multi-sensory approach elicit more complete descriptions in my third graders' writing while learning the structure and formation of a paragraph using the formulaic writing program "Step Up to Writing"?

The Intervention-

Instructional Approach: Since understanding that my students needed something to stir their motivation and knowing that I wanted them to begin writing expository paragraphs, I thought of something that would combine both. The first thing that I did was look at my district pacing calendar. On the calendar there were the literacy themes that needed to be taught for the year. The one coming up was animal habitats, which made the light bulb on top of my head light up. I thought of my childhood and remembered that dogs, cats, and birds made it much more colorful and adventurous. I thought that since we were going to be learning about animal habitats and I had a bird, dog, and cat at home I could make one of these three animals the subject in my students' writing, having the ability to bring the subject to class. I explained to my students that we were going to be learning about animals and that they had a choice between three animals. I also explained to them that I was going to be bringing in the animal that they would choose into the classroom. I had the students write down on a piece of paper their first, second, and third choice. The choices were cats, dogs, and cockatiel bird. To my surprise seventeen out of my eighteen students said dogs as their top choice. One vote went to the cat category. These results made it much more clear on what subject I would use to stir up my students' motivation

The intervention was set up so that students could build their knowledge week after week, using what they learn one week to learn another thing the second week. My intervention took the span of five weeks. Additional mini-lessons were given throughout the intervention as the need arose. This included grammar mini-lessons, sentence structure, and descriptive words. The time slot for the intervention took the 12:50-1:45 time slot. Work was collected from all the students, but analysis was focused on six students identified for the intervention.

Schedule:

Week 1-December 4-8, 2006

Introduce "Step Up to Writing"

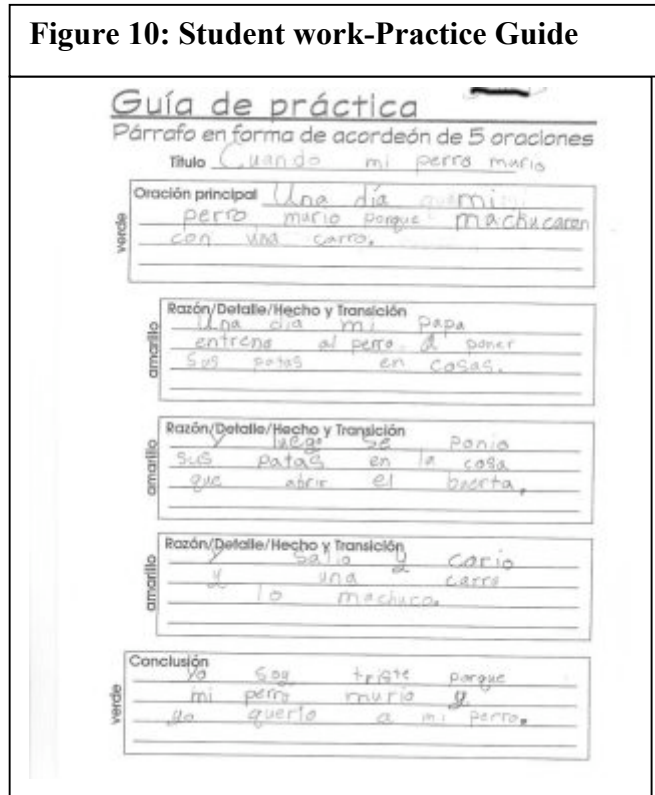
Parts of a paragraph: Green (Verde)-Topic Sentence, Yellow (Amarillo)- Details, Green (2) (Verde)- Conclusion

The students were given a copy of a blank practice guide page from 'Step Up to Writing'. Since about half of the students had used the colors before, I wanted them to use their background knowledge and discuss it with their group members. After they discussed it, I took a dog stuffed animal out, Chucho. On the board I had a blown up version of the Guided Practice page that they had on their desks.

First, I explained that I wanted to write about Chucho, specifically about how he looked, but I didn't know how to begin and I needed their help. Little by little, without introducing the idea of "topic sentence" as a class, we created a topic sentence. The students were then given the opportunity to read and discuss the topic sentence and think we need it. After we discussed it, I introduced the name of the sentence, (oración principal) Topic Sentence. I explained to them the importance of having a topic sentence when beginning to write to tell the reader what you are going to write about. We also filled in the blown up copy of my Guided sheet and gave it a color. I explained to the students that the color is so so that we can remember in the order that the sentence goes and its importance. The students then had the opportunity to practice writing topic sentences of their own as well as writing their own definition of what a topic sentence is.

Throughout this week I introduced details and the conclusion the same way. At the end of the week the students' culminating activity was to fill in a blank Guided Practice sheet with a story about their pet. I asked them to, "Write your own topic sentence, details, and conclusion of

any experience you have had with a pet.” Below, on Figure 10, I present an example of students’ work.



Week 2 December 11-15, 2006

Introduce the Idea of a Paragraph: Using the Guided Sheet of “Step Up to Writing” and transferring it over to lined paper.

Vocabulary: Begin creation of “Descriptive Words-Word Wall”

This week we used the practice guided sheet from “Step Up to Writing” that the students had already filled in to unravel the concept of a paragraph. The students were all asked to take their anthologies out and look at the story “The Night of the Puffins.” On an overhead I had

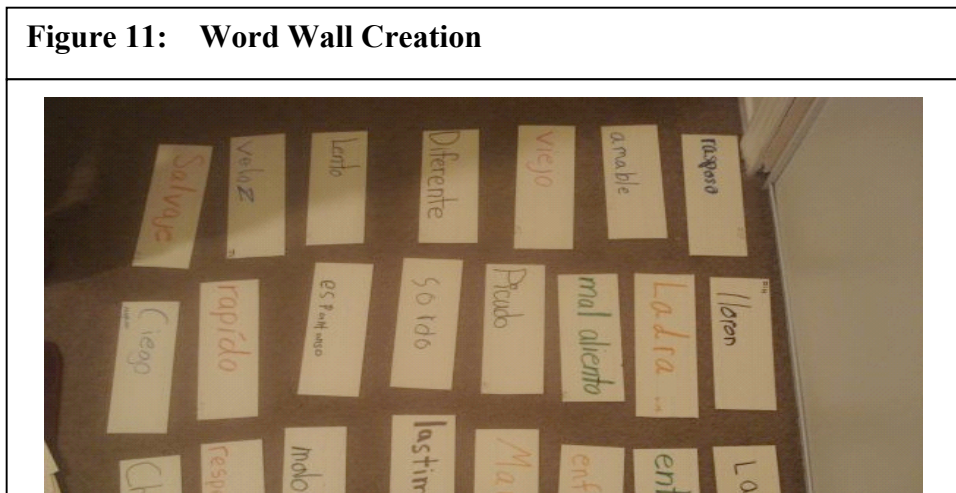
copied the first page of the story. Page by page we identified a paragraph and looked for the different ways the author had included Topic Sentences, Details, and Conclusions. Afterwards the students were asked to write their own paragraph using their guided practice sheet. After we created our paragraphs we switched with partners. The partners had to identify the topic sentence and highlight it green, the details and highlight them yellow and the conclusion and highlight it light green. These activities, I felt, gave my students practice with published literature, with their own writing, and writing from peers at their level.

On December 13, the second week of the intervention, I gave the students a color picture of the dog that they had chosen ahead of time. The students were instructed to describe their dog to their group members. As Lewis (1979) suggests, “It cannot be overemphasized that children who are beginning to write need the experience of talking as a solid underpinning—talking with friends, dictating stories, discussing.” As soon as I dropped it off on their desk, the chattering began. “Mi perro tiene pelo negro,” “Mi perro le gana a tu perro,” (My dog has black hair, My dog can beat your dog), was a couple of things that they said. I decided to give the students a couple of minutes to peer share, otherwise I would not have been able to continue with the lesson.

After the students had a couple of minutes to share, I explained to them that we were going to create a wall of “Descriptive” words about our dogs. I put a stack of cut out sentence strips in the middle of their table groups. I then explained that if they had a word that described their dog, about how it looked, then they had the opportunity to raise their hand and say it to us; they also had to use it in a sentence. After the student said the word they were asked to write it on the sentence strip and staple it on the wall. To keep track of participation I had them write their initial on the corner of the sentence strip. As soon as we began, all the students had their

hands raised. “Lacio, gordo, falso, enojado, arrugado, valiente, chiquito, (fat, skinny, angry, wrinkled, brave, small) and on and on they went. It was more than what I had bargained for. The students continued coming up with descriptive words one after another.

I then asked the students to make sentences using the descriptive words. They had ten minutes to make as many sentences as they could. This allowed the students to have immediate personal understanding allowing them to make a connection of how the word is used. Everyone in the class was able to come up with at least two descriptive words that were different from all the other words that had already been used, to put on the “Descriptive Words-Word Wall.” The students were given ten minutes to come up with sentences using the descriptive words. The groups came up with 15, 13, 12, 16, and 10 sentences. The most common words used in the sentence related to the size; gordo flaco, chiquito, grande, and mediano (fat, skinny, small, big, and medium). At the end of this lesson I reviewed with the students each descriptive word and stapled the picture of the dog that fit that description next to the word. On the overhead projector I also wrote down a short definition of the word. The students were encouraged to write down their own definition of the word. The students then had the opportunity to copy down all the words in their “Work” word journal. In this journal the students write down new words that they find, followed by an illustration of what the word means or a written definition. Below in Figure 11, is a picture of what our “descriptive Words-Word Wall” looked like at the end of our lesson.



Week 3 - December 18-21, 2006

Vocabulary: Word Wall Continuation

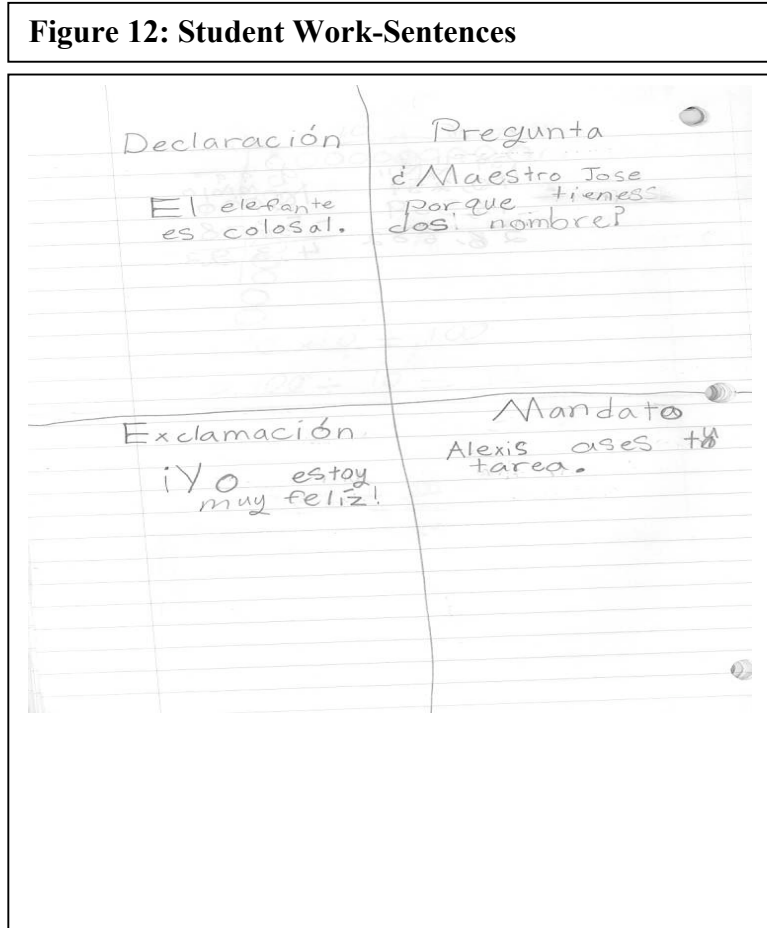
Paragraph: “¿Cómo se siente mi perro?” (How does my dog feel?)

Grammar: Sentence Types (Declarative, Question, Exclamatory, Command)

This week as a class we continued adding new descriptive words to the word wall. The kids were very motivated during this activity. Most of the students loved saying a word and receiving recognition by writing the word on the sentence strip. I believe that they loved it even more because they had the opportunity to add the initials to the words that they thought about. At this point of the intervention I felt that the students were ready to fill in their own practice guided sheet and transfer it into lined paper without much help. I had the students write a paragraph about how their dog feels. The students had to include at least 3 details, a topic sentence and a conclusion. The students were encouraged to use the new words that they learned from the “Descriptive Words-Word Wall.”

One thing that was missing throughout my students’ writing during the baseline data analysis was question marks, exclamation marks, and at some instances, periods. I came to the conclusion that this could have something to do with the students not understanding that there are different types of sentences. In this activity I took a large chart paper and divided it into four sections. Each section had a title, a declarative, a question, an exclamatory sentence, and a command. Before we began the activity, I gave each student a number 1-4. As I gave them an example of each sentence, I had a student from each group come up and say their own example of the type of sentence. The students were also asked to write down as many examples as they could for each sentence. I also encouraged the students to make it funny and relate it to their

dogs; a group point was given if a word from the word wall was used. Figure 12 shows an example of students' work during this activity.



Week 4 January 9-12

Vocabulary: Word Wall Continuation

Paragraph: “¿Cómo se ve mi perro?” (What does my dog look like?)

Grammar: Verb, Noun, Adjective, Article

To get the students using the words from the word wall I asked the students to bring a stuffed animal from home (preferably a dog stuffed animal). If students didn't have any, I had

extras in the class that I provided. The students had to write a paragraph, still using their practice guide on what their dog looked like (e.g., was it small, big, hairy, big ears and so on?) After finishing writing the paragraph they switched, with a partner. This time the partner was not only going to identify the parts of the paragraph, but also look for the four different type of sentences and make sure that they have a period, a question mark, or an exclamation mark if needed.

As a class we did not continue working on the word wall, but the students were asked that, if they came up with any new words, they would be allowed to post them on the word wall. A group point was given for every new word.

Learning to identify Verbs, Adjectives, Nouns, and the Article in a sentence was fun. This lesson that I did was a lesson that I saw from the writing coach during my student teaching. Each part of speech is identified by a shape. A small triangle represents the article, a circle represents the noun, a square represents a verb, and a large triangle represents an adjective. The parts of speech were introduced along with the shape. This lesson was done in Spanish and English. First we talked and defined each part of speech and came up with examples as a class. Then I gave students a card with one of the shapes drawn on it, only the shape, not the part of speech. Each card was also numbered 1-4. That way only one student had the number 1 triangle on it. When I called a number those students had to come up to the front of the class and think of an article, an adjective, a verb, or a noun, depending on the card that they had. The students were able to see how the parts of speech worked together. The students were asked to say each sentence in English first and then in Spanish. For Spanish the students were taught to switch the noun and the adjective. They were able to see that in Spanish the noun comes first and then

comes the adjective. This was a fun, tactile activity that allowed the students to see the words (using the shapes), apply them (by coming to the front of the class), and practice them by discussing with their group members and by writing examples on their work journals.

Week 4 and 5 January 9-16

Real Life Experience: Peanut comes into the classroom

Paragraph: Outcome Data- Rewrite to Districts Writing Sample, Mi perro

This week we reviewed the words, the parts of a paragraph, the colors of the guide sheets, and the parts of speech. We used them during different activities. One of the activities included the students getting a card with one syllable from a word and searching for the other syllables. This was fun for the students and effective. The students also had the opportunity to demonstrate their growth by having the chance to respond to the same prompt. The same guidelines were placed as in the first time that they wrote. The students had the opportunity to use a graphic organizer, as well as their practice guide sheets from “Step Up to Writing”.

Comparing the Baseline and the Outcome data:

All of my students were given the post-intervention writing prompt on January 19, 2006. The students were not timed. Like in the first writing prompt, the students were given time to brainstorm and fill in their brainstorming graphic organizer, the same one was used both times. This time the students also had the opportunity to use their practice guide sheets from “Step Up to Writing”.

After gathering work of every case student and assigning scores to their work using the rubric, both Mrs. Gari and I scored the second writing sample, I compared the baseline to outcome. I wanted to see if my student's work, and my work, had paid off. I took note of which descriptive paragraphs produced the highest and lowest scores and summarized what could have influenced these findings.

Jenny's growth in the use of new descriptive words is evident from baseline to outcome. She had five new descriptive words, 3 of which came from the word wall. Overall the amount of descriptive words from baseline and outcome stayed the same, but the new words used gave her writing a better flow, something that was missing during the baseline analysis (Table 3). By having had explicit instruction on descriptive words, Jenny was able to incorporate those newly learned words into her writing to give it a stronger voice and a stronger message. During the gathering of outcome data I also interviewed Jenny. I asked all the same questions as I had before, but this time I wanted to know what she thought helped her learn to write a paragraph. I asked her, "What activity, from the word wall, the practice sheets, the pictures, or the parts of speech, do you think helped you the most in writing a paragraph? Jenny answered, "I want to say the practice sheet and the picture, the practice sheet because I know where everything goes and the picture cause I could see it." She also motioned that she feels that she is "kind of" a better writer because she writes neater and she knows the parts of a paragraph.

Table 3: Jenny’s Baseline Outcome Comparison

	Baseline # of Descriptive Words	Baseline # of Sentences	Outcome Total # of Descriptive Words	Outcome # of New Descriptive Words	Outcome # of Words From Word Wall	Outcome # of Sentences
Jenny	15	8	15	5	3	13

Like most of the focus students in this study, and most of the students in my class for that matter, Jenny showed the most growth in the structure of her writing. As you would recall, Jenny scored a total of 15 points during the baseline analysis. In the outcome analysis Jenny scored a 17. That is only a growth of 2 points, two very huge points that would have put her on the verge of being at grade level. While it is not a huge change, Jenny was no longer just writing meaningless words, she was able to understand how to organize her writing. Her writing also grew in length; she was able to write five more sentences in the outcome data. During her outcome analysis, Jenny included a topic sentence and a conclusion, although what hurt her score was that her details were still scattered. Jenny’s individual categories based on the rubric are below along with a comparison of her baseline and outcome data analysis (Figure13).

Figure 13: Jenny’s Baseline vs. Outcome Writing

<p>Mi pero que se llama Snowy Descripción Expositiva Escribe un párrafo describiendo tu favorito osito de peluche, animalito de peluche, mascota de casa. Debes incluir detalles específicos, usando palabras precisas que describen. Piensa en lo siguiente: ¿cómo se siente tenerlo en tus manos o brazos?, ¿cómo es el tamaño y forma?, ¿cómo huele y qué es su significado?</p> <p>Mi pero se llama snowy es un dalmata de peluche. Huele muy bonito a bebe porque mi lo dio mi mamá. Se sient como una nube suave. El no ase ruido. El tiene una nariz bien chiciita y es negra. Su boca es muy chiciita. El tiene una mochilita que es</p>	<p>Te voy a contar sobre mi juguete favorito. Mi juguete es un bebe. Su nombre es Mario pero tiene un hermano que se llama Jesus. mi veve me da para que le de de comer a las 8:00 y a las 12:00 de comer de nuevo ya la 1:00 le vuelvo a dar de comer ya las 8:00 le vuelvo a dar y ya se va a dormir. Se que esta muy suave. Se ve chiciita de 1 mes. Se ve feliz y curioso. Su olor es a fresa. El ruido lo ase como un bebe. Mi juguete es mi favorito y lo quiero mucho.</p> <p>1 topic sentence 15 descriptive words 1 clear and good conclusion 10 clear sentences</p>
<p>Translation: My dos name is snowy and is a stuffed animal dalmata. It smells pretty like a baby because my mom gave it to me. It feels like a new soft. He does not make noise. He has a nose very small and is black. His mouth is small. He has a back pack that is.</p>	<p>Translation: I’m going to tell you about my favorite toy. My toy is a baby. His name is Mario, and has a brother who’s name is Jesus, My baby has hours that I have to feed it. I have to feed it at 8 and at 12 and then I have to feed it again and then again. I know that he is very soft. He looks very small like 1 month. He looks happy and curious. His smell is like a strawberry. He makes noises like a baby. My toy is my favorite and I like it a lot.</p>

Jenny	ideas	organization	voice	word choice	sentence fluency	conventions	Total Score
Baseline	3	2	3	3	2	2	15
Outcome	3	3	3	3	3	2	17

Isidro was one of the few students that were not very motivated by learning and writing about dogs. He was the one that said in his interview that he does not like writing that much. Even though that was the case, Isidro was one of the students that made the biggest growth. He is one of the students that I believe were helped out the most by the inclusion of the formulaic writing program “Step Up to Writing”. It allowed him to organize his thoughts more. Every time

that we worked with the guided practice sheet from “Step Up to Writing, he was one of the first students to finish, and when he finished he always had a well developed topic sentence, details, and conclusions. One of the things that increased the most was his amount of descriptive words. He went from having only 9 descriptive words during the baseline to having 16 in the outcome. He was one of the students that used the word wall well. All of the 3 words he used from the word wall are higher level thinking words that are considered higher quality. Like before, Isidro still did not write a lot, only 12 sentences, but the amount that he wrote was effective (Table 4).

Table 4: Isidro’s Baseline Outcome Comparison

	Baseline # of Descriptive Words	Baseline # of Sentences	Outcome Total # of Descriptive Words	Outcome # of New Descriptive Words	Outcome # of Words From Word Wall	Outcome # of Sentences
Isidro	9	7	16	6	3	12

In Isidro’s case, I credit his progress to the participation he had. All throughout the intervention he was always participating. He specifically loved having his stuffed animal with him. He also was motivated by the pictures and by the color schemes used by “Step Up to Writing”. Although he has admitted that he didn’t like writing, he didn’t show that throughout this intervention. Isidro made the biggest leap on the rubric. His score went from a 14.5 to a 17.5, a growth of 3 points and only .5 points away from being at grade level. Isidro’s scores in

individual categories based on the rubric are listed below along with a visual comparison of a baseline and outcome data (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Isidro's Baseline vs. Outcome Writing

<p style="text-align: center;">Muestra de Escritura de la Primavera – Tercer Grado</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Descripción Expositiva</p> <p>Escribe un párrafo describiendo tu favorito osito de peluche, animalito de peluche, mascota de casa. Debes incluir detalles específicos, usando palabras precisas que describen. Piensa en lo siguiente: ¿cómo se siente tenerlo en tus manos o brazos?, ¿cómo es el tamaño y forma?, ¿cómo huele y qué es su significado?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Isidro</p> <p>Ellos se miran como un peluche pero son de verdad. Uno de ellos es cafe el otro es blanco. También yo y mi hermano asustamos a los dos grandes pero a uno chiquito no porque nos gusta jugar con él. El nombre del blanco es bob-</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Yo te voy a contar sobre mi peluche.</p> <p>Mi peluche se siente suave. X esta peluch. Mi perro tiene una camisa negra. Su color es cafe claro. Se miraba enojado. Mi peluche no huele a nada. Mi peluche no hace ni un ruido. Mi peluche esta mediano. Los arejar de mi peluche es tan chicas. Sus ojos estan cafeses y negros. La nariz de mi peluche esta negra.</p>
<p>Translation: They look like a stuffed animal but they are not real. One of them is brown and the other one is white. Also my brother and I scare the big ones, but the one of the little ones no because we like playing with him. The name of the white one is bob-</p>	<p>Translation: I'm going to tell you a bout my stuffed an soft and is hairy. My dog has a black shirt. His color is li stuffed animal does not smell like nothing. My stuffed a noise. My stuffed animal is medium. His ears are mediu black. The nose is black.</p>

Isidro	ideas	organization	voice	word choice	sentence fluency	conventions	Total Score
Baseline	1.5	2	3	3	2	3	14.5
Outcome	3	3	3	3	2.5	3	17.5

Lilia is the only Spanish Language Learner that I included in this study. I included Lilia because she represents a small percentage of students in my class, and because the other two Spanish Language Learners scored high. Like Jenny and Isidro, Lilia's scores improved. Like Isidro, she was one of my two focus students that were not too motivated. Jenny was not

motivated because it seemed like too difficult of a task for her. I attribute the cause of her growth to the word wall and to the grammar mini-lessons. Lilia had good structure during her baseline analysis, but had many miscues on what article to use and didn't know how to conjugate verbs, she also did not have a good variety of descriptive words. One thing that also helped Lilia was the fact that one of the lessons in Houghton Mifflin was conjugating past and future verbs. Like Isidro, Lilia also became more involved and participatory as she saw that her peers enjoyed the activities. Below on Table 5 I present the change that Lilia made from baseline to outcome.

Table 5: Lilia's Baseline-Outcome Comparison

	Baseline # of Descriptive Words	Baseline # of Sentences	Outcome Total # of Descriptive Words	Outcome # of New Descriptive Words	Outcome # of Words From Word Wall	Outcome # of Sentences
Lilia	10	7	16	6	3	11

Lilia's growth continues the achievement pattern that Isidro and Jenny had. She only improved 2 points in her overall rubric scores going from 15 to 17, a point away from reaching grade level. Like all the other focus students in this study, Lilia showed the most growth in the structure of her writing. Although Lilia didn't score high enough to be at grade level, she did demonstrate a higher skill level and understanding of the composition of a paragraph, even though it was in Spanish and was very challenging for her. I attribute Lilia's growth to the repetitive use of the "Step Up to Writing" guided sheets. The repetitive use gave Lilia an opportunity to practice the new learned skill over and over.

Figure 15: Lilia’s Baseline vs. Outcome Writing

<p>Muestra de Escritura de la Primavera – Tercer Grado</p> <p>Descripción Expositiva Escribe un párrafo describiendo tu favorito osito de peluche, animalito de peluche, mascota de casa. Debes incluir detalles específicos, usando palabras precisas que describen. Piensa en lo siguiente: ¿cómo se siente tenerlo en tus manos o brazos?, ¿cómo es el tamaño y forma?, ¿cómo huele y qué es su significado?</p> <p>Mi mononose llama Budy. Mi mono es color café claro. Mi mono tiene ojos negros y es delgado. Mi mono no hace ruido porque es un "stufftanimol". Huele bien como mi cuarto y mis otros animales. Es suave como mi cama y mi flisblank.</p>	<p>Mi mono</p> <p>Yo voy a decir sobre mi pedo Mi peluche es un mono. Mi mono es el color café claro. Mi mono tiene un camisa. Mi mono es largo y es largo en las manos también. Mi mono tiene ojos negros. Mi mono es suave tiene pelo corto y es muy calentito. Mi mono no huele. No hace ruido también. Mi mono es especial para mi papa mi papa agato mi mono cuando ni familia y yo fuimos a campar. Mi mono no tiene un nombre. Y es todo de mi mono. Y es todo de mi mono.</p>
<p>Translation: My stuffed animal is named Budy. My stuffed animal is brown. My stuffed animal has black eyes and is skinny. My stuffed animal doesn't make noise because he is a stuffed animal. He smells good like my room and like my other animals. He is soft like my bed and my flees blanket.</p>	<p>Translation: I'm going to say about my stuffed animall. My stuffed animal is light brown. My stuffed animal has a shirt. My stuffed animal is long and has large hands also. He is soft and has short hair and he is very warm. My stuffed animal does not smell. He also doesn't make noise. My stuffed anima is special to me because my dad got it when my family and I went camping. He does not have name. That's all about my stuffed animal.</p>

Lilia	ideas	organization	voice	word choice	sentence fluency	conventions	Total Score
Baseline	3	2	3	2	2	3	15
Outcome	3	3	3	3	2	3	17

Paco, unlike Isidro and Jenny, was very enthusiastic and motivated to learn and write about dogs. He talked about a pet he had once and how he played with it. Unlike the other


students, Paco made the least growth, at least that is how it seems from the numbers. Paco wrote the same amount of descriptive words during the baseline and the outcome analysis. He increased his amount of sentences by writing four more during the outcome than in the baseline. Paco did however include five new descriptive words, four of which came from the use of the word wall. It has been said that a higher interest level, like in Paco’s case, produces a better outcome, but one needs to remember that Paco already had a high score.

Table 6: Paco’s Baseline-Outcome Comparison

	Baseline # of Descriptive Words	Baseline # of Sentences	Outcome Total # of Descriptive Words	Outcome # of New Descriptive Words	Outcome # of Words From Word Wall	Outcome # of Sentences
Paco	16	10	16	5	4	14

Like the other focus students, Paco improved his rubric score from 17.5 in the baseline analysis to 19 in the outcome analysis; a growth of 1.5. Although this again seems very minute, it puts Paco at a passing score, which is the goal. Paco did demonstrate more appropriate writing by increasing the way his details were organized. For the most part, Paco did not show disorganization when he wrote his details. Throughout the intervention Paco was very active. Every time that there was an opportunity to participate, he was the first to raise his hand, and the first to begin telling a story about his pet. The findings for Paco suggest that writing about something that he is interested in supported his use of new and higher quality descriptive words. Paco’s individual categories based on the rubric are below (Figure16).

Figure 16: Paco's Baseline vs. Outcome Writing

<p>Muestra de Escritura de la Primavera – Tercer Grado</p> <p>Descripción Expositiva</p> <p>Escribe un párrafo describiendo tu favorito osito de peluche, animalito de peluche, mascota de casa. Debes incluir detalles específicos, usando palabras precisas que describen. Piensa en lo siguiente: ¿cómo se siente tenerlo en tus manos o brazos?, ¿cómo es el tamaño y forma?, ¿cómo huele y qué es su significado?</p> <p> <i>Mi mascota es un pescado muy pequeño. Lo compre en la Wall Mart. El es bonito y tiene muchos colores del arcoiris. Mi pescado le da rapido alrededor de la pesera. Mi pescado se siente resbaloso yo creo que</i> </p>	 <p> <i>Mi perro Bombon</i> <i>Voy a contar sobre mi perro Bombon.</i> <i>Mi perro es muy feroz y es un "husky".</i> <i>Mi perro es fuerte porque tiene dientes muy muy grande.</i> <i>Mi perro es de tres colores los colores</i> </p>
<p>Translation: My pet is a small fish animal. I bough it at the Wal-Mart. He is pretty and has many colors like a rainbow. He swims fast around the aquarium. My fish feels bumpy, I think that...</p>	<p>Translation: I'm going to tell about my dog Bombon. My dog is very ferocious and he is a "Husky". My dog is strong because he has large teeth. My dog is of three colors. The colors are....</p>

Paco	ideas	organization	voice	word choice	sentence fluency	conventions	Total Score
Baseline	3	2.5	3	3	3	3	17.5
Outcome	4	3	3	3	3	3	19

Josue is the student that loves to talk, but unfortunately those stories that he tells do not always translate to writing. Josue is also the student that opened my eyes during the baseline

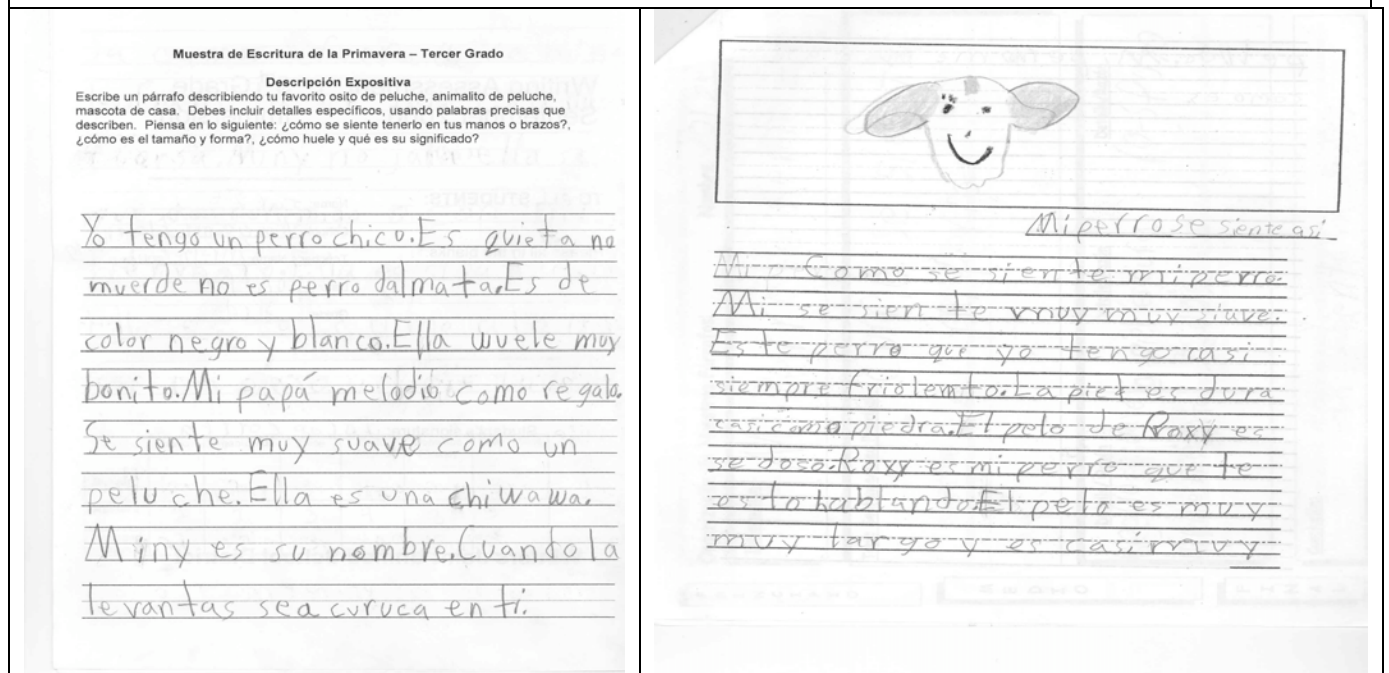
analysis. Throughout the year I had not seen him write the way that he did. Josue loved the topic about dogs. His dog at home had just had two little puppies. This was fortunate because he is a student that needs a little push. From baseline to outcome Josue actually declined in the total number of descriptive words used. During the baseline analysis Josue wrote 15 descriptive words compared to 14 during outcome. One area in which you can see Josue’s maturity as a writer was his inclusion of five new descriptive words, all five came from the word wall. The growth that this student made is due to his motivation and constant participation. Every time that a student would talk about their dog or bring up a new descriptive word he would always compare it to his new puppies. During the post interview I found Josue’s answers the most profound. This time he said that writing was not important to him because he did not write that much, but noted that he is a bad writer in English and a good writer in Spanish because; “I know the language more.” I thought that his statement was very profound and provided a detailed example of his understanding of the progress he has made. Like most of the other focus students, he said that the most helpful activity was the use of the “Step Up to Writing” practice sheets. Josue was the student that would go to the library and get books about different breeds of dogs (Table 7).

Table 7: Josue’s Baseline-Outcome Comparison

	Baseline # of Descriptive Words	Baseline # of Sentences	Outcome Total # of Descriptive Words	Outcome # of New Descriptive Words	Outcome # of Words From Word Wall	Outcome # of Sentences
Josue	15	8	14	5	5	13

Like Paco, Josue on the rubric did not show a significant growth. Josue increased his score from 17 to 18, a growth of one point. Although the overall growth was not there, Josue demonstrated his growth as writing by demonstrating his knowledge of the structure of a paragraph. Josue was able to develop a topic sentence, and a conclusion. The fact that Josue incorporated a topic sentence, a conclusion, and five new descriptive words demonstrates that the word wall, the topic, and the use of Step Up to Writing had a significant impact on his development as a writer (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Josue's Baseline vs. Outcome Writing



Translation: I have a small dog. She is clam doesn't bite and is a dalmata. She is black and white. She smells very good. My dad gave her to me as a gift. She feels soft like a stuffed animal.

Translation: How does my dog feel. My dog feels very soft. This dog that I have is always cold. Her skin is hard almost like a rock. Roxy's hair is waxy. Roxy is the dog that I'm talking about. The hair that she has is very, very

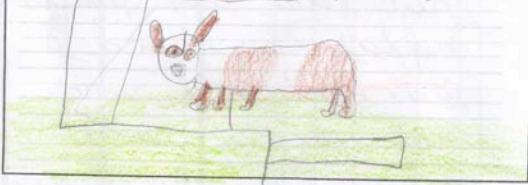
Josue	ideas	organization	voice	word choice	sentence fluency	conventions	Total Score
Baseline	2	2	3	4	3	3	17
Outcome	3	2	3	4	3	3	18

Braulio is a student who thinks that writing the most means that you have done a better job. He loves to write and write and write, although sometimes he forgets what the writing assignment was. During this intervention Braulio was like Josue. Braulio popped out of his feet as soon as a question about dogs was asked. He loved having with him his picture of a pitbull. During this intervention Braulio did not improve the number of descriptive words he used from baseline to outcome data, he had 16 in both. Braulio is a strong Spanish speaker, which could be an indicator of the amount of descriptive words that he had during his baseline analysis. Braulio did have four new descriptive words; three came from the word wall. Like all the other focus students, Braulio increased his number of sentences. I believe that the reason that Braulio, and the other students, increased their number of sentences was because they learned how to punctuate the different sentences and more vocabulary. These activities were conducted through a mini-lesson approach because Avery (1993) found that a mini-lesson has a greater effect on student writing. Braulio did not change his attitude towards writing. His answers stayed the same. When asked what was the most helpful activity he said that it was talking to his group because he heard their funny stories. He still believes that writing is about length and that it is important, but still cannot explain why it is important. Table 8 represents Braulio's preliminary/baseline to outcome sentence and vocabulary scores.

Table 8: Braulio's Baseline-Outcome Comparison						
	Baseline # of Descriptive Words	Baseline # of Sentences	Outcome Total # of Descriptive Words	Outcome # of New Descriptive Words	Outcome # of Words From Word Wall	Outcome # of Sentences
Josue	16	9	16	4	3	13

Braulio, like Jenny and Lilia improved his rubric score from 15 to 17. He improved his rubric score by two. Braulio was helped out by the use of practice guided sheets. The fact that he had to write one sentence in each colored section allowed him to write his sentences much shorter, but more precise. Braulio was very motivated; his high interest allowed him to pay attention and learn new descriptive words, which he included in his outcome writing.

Figure 18 Braulio's Baseline vs. Outcome Writing

<p>Muestra de Escritura de la Primavera – Tercer Grado</p> <p>Descripción Expositiva Escribe un párrafo describiendo tu favorito osito de peluche, animalito de peluche, mascota de casa. Debes incluir detalles específicos, usando palabras precisas que describen. Piensa en lo siguiente: ¿cómo se siente tenerlo en tus manos o brazos?, ¿cómo es el tamaño y forma?, ¿cómo huele y qué es su significado?</p> <p>Título: El perro de mi maestro. Chucho es suave y un pocito café y tiene los ojos bien grandes y los ojos son del color café o negros. Chucho esta muy bonito. Chucho tray las orejas café y grandes. Las</p>	 <p>... Mi perro se llama Omar mi perro esta muy chico y café y blanco. Mi perro es muy bonito. Mi perro me esta mirandome de enfrente de</p>
<p>Translation: Chucho is soft and a little brown and has large eyes they are brown or black. Chucho is very pretty. Chucho has the ears brown and big. The</p>	<p>Translation: My dogs name is Omar. My dog is very small and brown and white. My dog is very pretty. It looks like my dog is looking at me in the front of...</p>

Braulio	ideas	organization	voice	word choice	sentence fluency	conventions	Total Score
Baseline	2	2	3	3	2	3	15
Outcome	3	3	3	3	2	3	17

Cross case Analysis:

After examining the students' individual growth from baseline to outcome I compared Lilia's and Isidro's progress through the intervention. Both Lilia and Isidro were two of the students that were not too motivated with the idea of learning about dogs, at least that is what they had said. The engagement data proved otherwise. I compared these two students because

both had similar attitudes and similar scores during the preliminary/baseline stage. Engagement data through various activities as well as change in scores are listed below in Table 9.

Table 9: Preliminary/Baseline-Outcome Engagement Comparison									
	Baseline Score	Outcome Score	New Descriptive Words	Number of Sentences	Topic Sentence	Conclusion	Word Wall Creation	Parts of Speech Activity	Sharing Activities
Lilia	15	17	6	11	x	x	High (4 words)	Medium	High (Always shared)
Isidro	14.5	17.5	6	12	x	x	Medium High(3 words)	High (actions words)	Medium High

Both Isidro and Lilia improved the integration of six new descriptive words from their preliminary/baseline writing to their outcome writing. Isidro and Lilia had scored some of the lowest total rubric scores during the preliminary/baseline, during the outcome they were two of the students that improved their total rubric scores by the greatest difference. Isidro had the biggest growth from all the focus students, an improvement of 3. Lilia had one of the highest, an improvement of 2. During the word wall creation activity, Lilia came up with four descriptive words. She came up with the highest number of words during the word wall creation. Isidro, the quiet very shy student, came up with three descriptive words. Their hands came up constantly and were called on because of their excitement and involvement, like most all students in the class had. Throughout all the other activities both students maintained a high level of

engagement and participation. Both of these students did not have a desire at the beginning of the intervention to write about dogs, but to both students the topic and the activities appealed to them. Because of the appeal the topic and activities had for these two students, their writing improved and became theirs. Like Martens (2001) understood, “Children must have ownership of the writing process in terms of deciding what they should write about.” Lilia and Isidro, like the rest of my class, had the opportunity to choose their picture, think of their words, and write about what stuffed animal or pet that they wanted. The students were given “ownership” of their writing and during the activities. This allowed them to understand what was been asked of them therefore improving their writing.

Preliminary/Baseline-Outcome Summary (Focus Students):

By looking only at the amount of descriptive words one might surmise that the intervention was not effective. Four out of the six focus students either did not increase the number of descriptive words or wrote down fewer descriptive words in the outcome writing. However, I believe, that the quality of the descriptive words in their writing did demonstrate improvement. Whereas before the students descriptive words targeted colors and size such as, “es blanco, es café, es azul (it’s white, it’s brown, it’s blue” and so on), now the students used words communicating more complex ideas, texture, behavior, shape and size. Moreover, these were woven into more complex structures often using similes and comparisons with “like” or “as”. In his baseline writing sample Isidro wrote descriptions such as, “Uno de ellos es café y el otro es blanco, (one of them is brown and the other is white). In his outcome written piece Isidro wrote, “Mi peluche se siente suave como una almoadá” (my stuff animal feels soft like a pillow). This shows that Isidro is making a comparison of two objects instead of just saying my stuffed

animal is soft, now it's soft like a pillow. Other new words used in students writing included, "feroz" (ferocious), "fuerte" (strong), "colossal" (colossal), and "enojado" (angry). Some of the words from the Descriptive Words-Word Wall were "mal aliento" (bad breath), "rápido" (fast), "salvaje" (wild), and "respetuoso" (respectful). The use of new better quality words is a clear sign of a higher level of writing. Juel (1998) says that writing is composed of two basic factors: spelling and ideation. Ideation is the ability to generate ideas. This involves both generating thoughts and then organizing them into appropriate sentence form.

Compared to their first attempt, the students also demonstrated a growth in the understanding of the structure and composition of a paragraph. In the baseline data only Paco had his writing skills developed enough to write a basic, but clear, topic sentence. In the outcome data, five out of the six focus students had the understanding that they needed to tell their audience what they were going to write about by including a basic, but clear topic sentence, all of whom indented correctly as well. Also in the baseline data only Paco and Jenny had a basic, but clear, conclusion. In the outcome data every one of the focus students had developed the awareness that a closing sentence was needed. To me, as the teacher researcher this data allowed me to understand that while the amount of descriptive words did not increase dramatically the quality of the students' writing increased incredibly. I attribute some of my students' growth to the fact that they took their writing personally. The students made their writing more personal to them because they had the opportunity to pick the picture of the dog that they wanted. That gave the students a sense of ownership. Like Martens, Calkins indicates that students care about writing when it is made personal. The activities throughout the intervention allowed the students to make their writing personal and obtain ownership of their work.

Below Table 10 is comparing the number of topic sentences, and conclusions from the baseline to the outcome data. From this data analysis exercise, I found that my students improved from having only one student write a topic sentence in the baseline data to having 5 total students write a topic sentence in the outcome data.

Table 10: Preliminary/Baseline Topic Sentences-Outcome Topic Sentences

Student	Topic Sentences-Baseline	Topic Sentences-Outcome	Student	Conclusion-Baseline	Conclusion-Outcome
Lilia		X	Lilia		X
Jenny		X	Jenny	X	X
Braulio			Braulio		X
Paco	X	X	Paco	X	X
Isidro		X	Isidro		X
Josue		X	Josue		X

My students seemed to be doing well in writing topic sentences that had to do with the prompt as well as conclusions, although some are still not getting the purpose they serve. This outcome data is not to say that my students are not having difficulties generating a topic sentence or a conclusion in writing a paragraph, but it does demonstrate that most have acquired a sufficient understanding of writing a paragraph. Students are still struggling and thinking for long periods of time, the difference is that now when they think they are able to write down their thoughts, and they make sense. Hefner (2006) found that her students' essays increased in length and so did the length of the explanations. Not only did they perform better with explanations, but they also learned how to organize tier essays with correct paragraphing and transitional words. Heidi Hefner is a fellow teacher researcher who also implemented "Step Up to Writing" in her classroom and had results as what my students demonstrated.

After examining the district writing sample outcome data I was quite surprised, in the best of ways, and very pleased. At the end of my study every focus student and fifteen out of the eighteen students in my class had improved their compiled rubric scores. The average compiled scores from the baseline data was a 15.89, which I rounded up to 16. The average scores for the outcome data, using the same prompt and scoring rubric, is 18.45, which I rounded down to 18. That means that, on average, every student scored 2 points higher. This is a good indicator of the effectiveness of the multi-sensory explicit instruction approach that was provided to my students. All six focus students improved their compiled rubric score. The following table illustrates my students' gains (Table 11):

Table 11: Rubric change Preliminary/Baseline to Outcome				
Student	Total Score-baseline	Total Score-outcome	change in points	increase in points
Lilia	15	17	2	2
Jenny	15	17	2	2
Braulio	15	17	2	2
Paco	17.5	19	1.5	1.5
Isidro	14.5	17.5	3	3
Josue	17	18	1	1
Average:	15.6	17.6	1.8	1.8

I believe that my students' score increased due to repetition, explicit instruction, and structured practice throughout this intervention. The intervention required direct-explicit instruction and allowed the students to build their understanding one step at a time. The writing also became a routine and helped the students understand that it was something we were going to do. My students responded very well to the color coded schemes and the practice guide worksheets from "Step Up to Writing". For them, adapting to the color schemes it made

everything more structured and less difficult to understand. These scores do not confirm that my students made it to grade level, but reading their writing and seeing how much their organization and quality improved puts me at ease.

Conclusions:

What role did “Step Up to Writing” play in students’ learning the structure of a paragraph?

The use of “Step up to Writing” as a supplemental material was effective for my students. Since I did not want to take their creativity away, nor their freedom I had once given them, using parts of the formulaic writing program helped my students understand the formation of a paragraph. Providing the same graphic organizer, or practice guide sheet, allowed my students to have repetitive practice with the same material, giving them a better chance to learn the process. As Carroll & Wilson (1993) aptly phrased it, “In classrooms where the prewriting is taught and practiced as an ongoing activity, as liberating, students learn its value as a collection of strategies from which to draw.” Using the practice guide sheets from “Step Up to Writing” was our prewriting activity; while it was not creative or free, five out of my six focus students said that they thought it was the most beneficial activity. In the words of Josue, “If I didn’t have that sheet I would put the conclusion on top and wouldn’t know where the main sentence would go, or the space.” Looking at my students’ outcome performance and the tremendous growth my students made with the inclusion of topic sentences, indentation, and conclusions, I believe that “Step Up to Writing” was very effective for them. One of the goals at the beginning of this intervention was to teach my students to write a paragraph; while not all students met the goal. I think we are on the right path to get there before the school year is over. The majority of the students

understand that there are certain parts a paragraph must have and in the order in which they belong. This was the success that I was looking for since the beginning of the intervention.

What role did explicit instruction play in increasing different vocabulary words in my students writing?

Reaching the goal of increasing the use of different descriptive words was reached through the use of multiple scaffolds. The best scaffold, I felt was the descriptive word wall. Having created the descriptive word wall with the students, allowed the students not only to make it their own, but also it gave them the opportunity to be reminded that it was there for their use. The ease in creating the word wall and getting better quality words out of my students could have been influenced by the interest level the students had in dogs and materials relating to dogs.

I feel that my students and I have met the goal of including different descriptive words in their writing. While the students did not increase the total amount of descriptive words used, they did increase the quality of the descriptive words used. The use of higher quality words gave their writing a better flow and made it easier for a reader to follow. Through the use of the formulaic writing program “Step Up to Writing” and the different scaffolds, the students were able to understand how to write a paragraph and include different descriptive words of higher quality.

Reflection:

This adventurous inquiry into descriptive paragraph writing allowed me to understand my students, and it allowed my students to establish their individual voices. Like Thomas Pietro (2006) said in his reflection, “Through the process of letter writing I was able to witness that students’ writing reflects personality,” While my students did not write letters, their writing still

reflected their personality. I was able to understand that sometimes what you think the students would think is more valuable, in this case the pictures of the dogs and bringing the dog to the class, is not what they find more valuable. I am not sure if my students were giving me answers that I wanted to hear during the post interview, but almost all mentioned that having the practice sheets helped them learn the parts of a paragraph and the order in which the parts go.

If I were to conduct this inquiry again, I would give my students more surveys or find other ways to get to know more of their interests. I would interact with them in the playground to learn about their out-of-class personality and interest. One thing I would do is interview their teacher from the previous year to find out more about their individual needs, as well as to what they were exposed.

I am thankful that I had the opportunity to investigate these questions to the fullest. Without this investigation I fear I would have missed all the professional growth I have done my first year of teaching. As Rebecca Faulds, a fellow teacher researcher, quoted another teacher researcher, “A teacher researcher, among other things, is a questioner. Her questions propel her forward” (Faulds, p.48).

In the future it is not realistic to conduct such a detailed study for every question that might evolve in the classroom, but it is important to investigate answers to those questions. Through this intervention I have learned that, in order to get answers to my questions, I need to ask experienced teachers or consult with data. I also learned that what worked for my students might not work for everyone and what worked for some researchers might not work for my students. I learned that I do not need to invent the wheel; I just need to modify it to fit the academic needs in my classroom. The most important thing that I take from this intervention is that students respond to material that is relevant to them. Students, like Lilia and Isidro, become

interested and engaged when they become excited and notice how other students are engaged and interested. As teacher researchers, we need to advocate so that our curriculum is more relevant to students. Without appeal and relevance, students will not make it “personal”, like Calkins said, and they will not show “ownership” and therefore lose interest and never master the skill.

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Appendix A

Appendix A: Watty Elementary, 3rd Grade Writing Rubric, 1st Trimester (Descriptive Paragraph)

<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Very Good</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">"Wow!"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A "5" writing story should have a beginning, a middle and an end in paragraphs.• The <u>story has good ideas and is clear to the reader</u> when reading your story.• It has describing words and details.• It has complete, meaningful sentences.• It has <i>few</i> spelling, punctuation and grammar mistakes. • It has very few capital letter mistakes.
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Satisfactory</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">"Well done!"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A "4" writing story has good ideas with a beginning, a middle and an end.• It has some describing words and details.• It has complete, well-formed sentences.• It has <i>some</i> spelling, punctuation, capital letter and grammar mistakes.
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Fair</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">"You Made It!"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A "3" writing story has some good ideas but they may not be in order from beginning, middle and an end.• It has a few describing words or details.• It has generally correct complete sentences.• It may have <i>many</i> spelling, punctuation, capital letter and grammar mistakes.
<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weak</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">"Needs Work!"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A "2" writing story has some ideas but they are not in any order.• It does not have complete sentences.• It has <i>many</i> spelling, punctuation, capital letter and grammar mistakes.
<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Poor</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">"Try Again!"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A "1" writing story is mixed up and the reader cannot understand it.

Appendix B

Appendix B: 1st Trimester Anchor Paper Score of 14 (low)

3rd Grade Writing Prompt

Writing Situation:

Escribe un párrafo que describe tu favorito oso de peluche, animal de peluche, o mascota de casa. Ten cuidado en incluir detalles específicos, usando palabras exactas.

Piensa en lo siguiente: ¿cómo te sientes cuando lo tienes en tus manos, como es la textura, qué color es, que es el tamaño y forma, tiene un olor, y que sentimiento tiene para ti?

A mi me gusta mi osito de
peluche. Mi peluche es suave
y suena diferente y ese no
dice nada norlas se llora pero
no habla y es café y es
otro y se oye como maracas
y buele a per surte. cuando

Appendix C

Appendix C: 1st Trimester Anchor Paper Score of 18 (Medium-At Grade Level)

3rd Grade Writing Prompt *Dual Immersion*

written
Sample

Writing Situation:

Escribe un párrafo que describe tu favorito oso de peluche, animal de peluche, o mascota de casa. Ten cuidado en incluir detalles específicos, usando palabras exactas.

Piensa en lo siguiente: ¿cómo te sientes cuando lo tienes en tus manos, como es la textura, qué color es, que es el tamaño y forma, tiene un olor, y que sentimiento tiene para ti?

Quieres saber sobre mi oso de
peluche. Mi oso de peluche es
rojo, azul, café y amarillo. Mi oso
de peluche se siente bien esponjoso
y suave. Mi oso de peluche olorea
a perfume y a flores. Mi oso
de peluche olorea a mi
casa. Mi oso de peluche olorea a
perfume porque yo pongo mi

Fall

Appendix D

Appendix D: 1st Trimester Anchor Paper Score of 21 (High)

3rd Grade Writing Prompt

Writing Situation:

Escribe un párrafo que describe tu favorito oso de peluche, animal de peluche, o mascota de casa. Ten cuidado en incluir detalles específicos, usando palabras exactas.

Piensa en lo siguiente: ¿cómo te sientes cuando lo tienes en tus manos, como es la textura, qué color es, que es el tamaño y forma, tiene un olor, y que sentimiento tiene para ti?

Mi Peluche favorito es una ballena bebe porque son suabesitas y nadan en el mar tambien porque son muy bonitas y tambien porque tienen frijoles adentro de las ballenitas y tambien me gusta el color

Appendix E

Appendix E: Preliminary/Baseline Attitude Survey

Writing Attitude Survey Room 10

- 1. Is writing important to you? Why?**
- 2. How do you feel about writing? Do you think that you are a good writing why or why not?**
- 3. Why do you think people write?**
- 4. At home when do you write?**
- 5. Who do you think is a good writer? How do you know that they are a good writer?**
- 6. How do people learn how to write?**

Appendix H

Appendix H: Step Up to Writing Practice Guide (Guía de practica)

48

Guía de práctica

Párrafo en forma de acordeón de 7 oraciones

Título _____

verde

amarillo

rojo

amarillo

rojo

rojo

verde

Appendix I

Appendix I: Step Up to Writing Complete Sentence Guide (Oraciones Completas)

3

Oraciones completas

Fragmento	Oración completa
Ejemplo 1 en la caja al lado de su cama	María escondió su diario en la caja al lado de su cama.
Ejemplo 2 porque mi amiga me lo recomendó	Leí el libro porque mi amiga me lo recomendó.
Ejemplo 3 comiendo galletas y tomando leche con su abuela	Julia estaba comiendo galletas y tomando leche con su abuela.
Hazlo tú 1. un payaso alto y flaco	
2. cuando estaba cansado	
3. corriendo lo más rápido posible	

Appendix J

Appendix J: Step Up to Writing Paragraph Planning Guide (Planificación para los párrafos)

30

Nombre y apellido: _____ Fecha: _____

Hoja de planificación para los párrafos

Título: _____

Oración principal: _____

★ _____
 —
 —

★ _____
 —
 —
 —

Conclusión: _____

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