Student Attitudes Towards Writing and the Effects on Writing Progress

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Abstract

Attitude plays a large part in students’ literacy learning. Attitude affects motivation to learn and influences how students approach an academic task; in this case, writing. Self-efficacy, an aspect of attitude, is discussed as well. This study examined the relationship between students’ attitudes towards writing and their writing progress. Three first grade students from a private school in western New York were given a survey about attitudes towards writing, and three times they were observed writing in their classroom. Writing pieces were collected from each participant each week for six weeks and analyzed using a rubric. All of the data collected was cross analyzed. The results indicated that student attitudes towards writing do positively or negatively affect writing progress, that more than one method of analyzing student attitude is needed, that regardless of attitude, writing progress takes time, and writing progress does not happen linearly. Recommendations for future research include investigating topic choice and prompts, teacher attitudes towards writing and their writing instructional practices, and which method, or methods, used to teach writing is most effective for improving student attitudes towards writing.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

One year, as a new teacher, there were two boys in my first grade classroom who were very hesitant to write during writers’ workshop. Upon reflection, they were often quiet during the writing mini-lesson and rarely participated. One of the boys always needed to use the restroom when it was time for the students to start writing. When the boys were seated at their desks, they just sat there. They didn’t even seem interested in drawing to get them started. I was surprised at what I was observing and at first I thought they didn’t understand the assignment. So, I would explain and demonstrate it again briefly. I also thought the boys were thinking of something to write, but as time progressed and I noticed the daily inactivity, I realized they were avoiding writing and probably struggling with the task. I wondered how I could help them put their thoughts down on paper and what techniques I could use to get them writing. After all, I needed to help the boys improve their writing abilities. I often thought, “Writing is difficult for them” and rarely, “They don’t like writing.” I hardly took their attitudes towards writing into account. I was often frustrated, and I am sure they were frustrated also. When a plan was enacted to help them write and lessons were modified for the boys, I observed them begin to take an interest in drawing and then writing. They only wrote a few sentences, but they were writing! I was happy and relieved, and they seemed happy and more confident. Overall, from that experience, I learned that it may be a combination of negative attitudes and cognitive difficulty that causes students to avoid academic tasks. I also learned to take attitude into account.

Problem Statement

Writing is a complex activity that requires multiple skills, thought processes, and affective components such as attitudes, feelings, and motivation (Hidi & Boscolo, 2006). One of our major goals as teachers is to help students improve their writing abilities. Typically, teachers
teach students how to get their ideas across and how to improve their deficits in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. However, many factors play a part in students’ literacy learning that teachers need to take into consideration. One such factor is attitude. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) define attitude “as a learned predisposition to respond to an object in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner” (p. 336). Students’ attitudes about an academic topic can influence their motivation to learn, which in turn influences how they approach the task (Tunks, 2010). Paquette (2008) said, “Cognitive characteristics may set limits on students’ development; but affective characteristics will influence whether an attempt is made to reach those limits” (p. 182). For instance, if students have an affective characteristic, such as negative attitudes towards writing, they will tend to avoid the task. Their avoidance of the task will be apparent when writing assignments are turned in consistently late or incomplete (Tunks, 2010). The attitude the boys in the introduction had towards writing most likely influenced their attempt to write. The boys’ avoidance behaviors reflected the lack of initiation needed to start writing and persevere, and therefore, the boys could not reach their limits set by their cognitive characteristics.

This certainly is related to self-efficacy, which is an aspect of attitude. People’s beliefs about their capabilities towards tasks they encounter throughout their lives are called self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). People’s feelings, thoughts, motivation, and behaviors are influenced by self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1993). Knowing and understanding attitude and self-efficacy is the foundation for the current study, which attempts to examine the affect students’ attitudes towards writing have on their writing progress.
Significance of the Problem

A study conducted by Cunningham (2008) in a preschool environment investigated the relationship between literacy environment quality and students’ attitudes towards reading and writing. The quality of multiple classroom literacy environments were rated using the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Toolkit (Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge, & Anastasopoulos, 2003). Results indicated that students had negative attitudes towards reading and writing if they participated in deficient literacy environments; meaning the finest support of language and literacy was not provided. If the literacy environment was assessed as exemplary in providing the finest support of language and literacy, students’ attitudes towards reading and writing were positive. In addition to these results, the study revealed that attitudes towards writing were more negative than attitudes towards reading. Furthermore, Cunningham found that children from more-advantaged families had more positive attitudes toward reading and writing than economically at-risk children. The results from this study should have designers of early childhood programs asking two things. One, “What are we doing to create negative attitudes towards writing” and two, “What can be done to make all literacy environments and programs high-quality for all students, but especially for those at-risk?” (Cunningham, 2008).

Paquette (2008) researched the impact of cross-age tutoring on elementary students’ attitudes towards writing. Using the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000) for second grade participants, the Knudson Writing Attitude Survey (Knudson, 1991) for fourth grade participants, and interviewing the participants, Paquette found benefits of cross-age tutoring on attitudes towards writing. For instance, positive attitudes were developed because of the cross-age tutoring experience, students’ enjoyed writing more, and their writing
also improved. This is significant information because cross-age tutoring provides teachers with an additional method to help their students with writing and their attitudes towards writing.

The results from both studies reveal why teachers need to look beyond how proficient students are as writers and take into consideration how students feel about their writing (Tunks, 2010). Teachers also need to be aware that writing abilities are affected by perceptions students have of themselves as writers (Paquette, 2008). When teachers are aware of their students’ negative attitudes, they can intervene. If teachers do not intervene, negative attitudes will continue to hinder students’ from being successful in their literacy development (Cunningham, 2008).

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between students’ attitudes about writing and their writing progress. Therefore, my research question was:

1. How do first grade students’ attitudes towards writing affect their writing progress?

To conduct this study, I randomly selected three first grade students from a private school in Western New York. At the beginning of the study I administered the Writing Attitude Survey (WAS) that was designed by Kear et al. (2000) to the three students as a group. The students were observed by me three different times during the first three weeks of the study while they wrote independently in class. I recorded these observations by taking anecdotal records on a self-created observation sheet. One observation sheet was used for each student. I also collected copies of their independent writing pieces once each week for six weeks, and each week I analyzed them using the 6+1 Traits® of Analytic Writing Assessment Scoring Guide: 5-Point Beginning Writer’s Rubric (Education Northwest, 2010). At the end of the study, I took these
completed rubrics and cross analyzed them with the anecdotal records and Writing Assessment Survey (Kear et al., 2000) in order to answer the research question.

**Rationale**

As teachers striving to improve student writing, we need to take their attitudes about writing into consideration because attitudes affect their motivation to write. Attitude may also determine literacy success. A good place to start is by using a writing assessment instrument. Writing assessment instruments have the ability to inform teachers’ writing instructional practices (Kear et al., 2000). This is important to be aware of because a teacher’s instructional practice could be one of many factors that affect student motivation.

As a former first grade teacher who witnessed students engaged in writing and those who were not, I have become interested in exploring students’ attitudes about writing and their writing progress. It was with hope that by conducting this investigation, I would learn more about this topic and be able to apply what I learned towards improving my teaching practices.

**Definition of Terms**

*Attitude* – “a learned predisposition to respond to an object in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 336)

*Self-efficacy* - “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives. Efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave” (Bandura, 1993, p. 118).

**Summary**

Writing is often a challenging subject for students. To help students develop their writing skills, teachers employ a variety of techniques for students to learn and use when writing. However, teachers must delve further to understand and learn about their students’ attitudes
towards writing. This should be done because attitude is an important factor that plays a large part in students’ literacy learning. Attitude affects motivation to learn and write and influences how students approach the task of writing. Attitudes are based on self-efficacy beliefs, and that is important to understand as well. Negative attitudes can make writing even more challenging. Therefore, understanding attitude and its effect on the development of successful writers is important for guiding writing instruction. If teachers learn about and understand students’ attitudes towards writing, this knowledge can impact their instructional practices positively (Kear et al., 2000). It is for these reasons that I wanted to investigate students’ attitudes towards writing and the affect attitude has on their writing progress.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Writing is a complex activity that requires multiple skills, thought processes, and affective components (Hidi & Boscolo, 2006). It is a means of communication. It can relay information or provide entertainment. How people approach writing depends on attitude, interest, and objective. Attitude is an affective component of motivation (Graham, Berninger, & Fan, 2007) and can either propel people forward to take initiative or cause them to retreat and avoid tasks. This is important to consider because children’s literacy learning is affected by their beliefs, morals, feelings, and motivation (Bottomley, Henk, and Melnick, 1997). If students’ attitudes towards writing are negative, they will most likely avoid writing; whereas if attitudes are positive, they will probably engage in writing. This will then hurt or help their learning and grades. In this chapter, five ideas related to attitude and writing performance will be discussed. The ideas are attitude and writing achievement, literacy environments and attitudes, self-efficacy, self-efficacy and writing performance, and implications for classroom writing instruction.

A person’s attitude is a developed tendency to respond to a task or object positively or negatively (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). According to Cunningham (2008), children begin to develop attitudes toward reading and writing before they are enrolled in kindergarten. The reason for this early development of attitudes is because infants and toddlers get exposed to written text at home and in preschool settings (Cunningham, 2008). At this stage of life, children are seeing print on everyday items such as cereal boxes and books. They also are holding writing utensils and scribbling and drawing.

Self-efficacy, an aspect of attitude, is a belief people have about their capabilities towards tasks they encounter throughout their lives. “Efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave” (Bandura, 1993, p. 118). Self-efficacy beliefs can determine
whether or not a person will take initiative to act upon a task and persevere when a task is challenging (Pajares & Valiante, 2006). If a student believes he can obtain a desired academic outcome, he will take the initiative and persevere. On the other hand, if a student believes he cannot obtain a desired academic outcome, he most likely will not be motivated to take initiative and persevere with the task.

**Attitude and Writing Achievement**

Graham, Berninger, and Fan (2007) state that little attention has been given to the relationship between attitude and writing achievement. It was only Knudson (1991, 1992, 1995) who examined children’s attitudes towards writing in the 1990’s. In one study, Knudson (1995) wanted to examine the relationship between writing achievement and attitude towards writing as well as the relationship between grade level and gender and attitudes towards writing. The participants involved were 430 first- to sixth-grade students from one year-round school in southern California. Students from three classrooms at each grade level participated. The students in grades 1-3 were given the Knudson Writing Attitude Survey for Primary Grade Students (Knudson, 1992), and the students in grades 4-6 were given the Knudson Writing Attitude Survey for Children (Knudson, 1991). These instruments contain 19 items in Likert-type format and have five possible responses ranging from almost always to almost never. They were administered to the students in their classrooms, and then a choice of writing prompts was given. Finally, Knudson (1995) interviewed 12 randomly selected students at each grade level individually. This was done to discover what students of different grade levels understand of writing tasks and activities, their perceptions of the importance of writing, and to expand upon responses given on the surveys. Two of Knudson’s colleagues and two former classroom
teachers, but current graduate students, reviewed the interview procedures that contained 10 open-ended questions before it was conducted.

To analyze the data, Knudson (1995) used a stepwise multiple regression. At each step, Knudson assessed R-square values to determine which variable, or variables, had an effect on students’ writing performance. The holistic scores on the writing sample was the dependent variable and the students’ grade, gender, and writing attitude score were the independent variables. Results of Knudson’s study verified previous findings that grade, gender, and writing performance are positively related. Results also showed there was a connection between student attitudes towards writing and writing competence. In addition, Knudson found that above-average writers are more likely to be upper grade female students who have positive attitudes toward writing.

Regarding students’ understanding of writing tasks and activities, results from the interview indicated that children view writing as drawing when they begin school, as printing when they advance grades in school, and as cursive writing by sixth grade (Knudson, 1995). Writing stories and reports were preferred by the majority of children rather than writing in workbooks. For one question, the first and second grade students stated that they “learn/learned to write at home or that they taught themselves” (p. 93). In response to another question, students in grades 1-6 said they would work on “improving the mechanical features of their writing” (p. 93) in order to write better than they already do. Finally, all students in grades 1-6 believed writing is imperative for job success, but they could not tell which type of writing is needed.

A study by Graham, Berninger, & Fan (2007) investigated elementary school students’ writing achievement and their attitudes towards writing by testing the following three models:
“writing attitude influences writing achievement in a unidirectional manner, writing achievement influences writing attitude in a unidirectional manner, and the effects of writing attitude and achievement are bidirectional and reciprocal” (p. 516). For this study, attitude was defined as “an affective disposition involving how the act of writing makes the author feel, ranging from happy to unhappy” (p. 516). Participants were 128 first grade and 113 third grade students from a large Northwestern, metropolitan school district. The participants either wrote about a surprising event or funny event that happened at school, and they also completed a seven question survey about attitudes toward writing. In a quiet room, trained research staff individually assessed each child as they completed the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-2 (WIAT-2) Written Expression subtest.

The model that best fit the data with reasonable convergence was model 1: writing attitude influences writing achievement. This was ascertained because the standardized values of the path between all observed variable, such as writing for fun at home, and their corresponding factors (e.g. writing attitude factor) were statistically significant with z values larger than 1.96 (Graham et al., 2007). Similar to Knudson (1995), Graham et al. found that students with positive attitudes towards writing had higher writing achievement. However, unlike Knudson, Graham et al. found that girls were not significantly different from boys on writing achievement.

**Literacy Environments and Attitudes**

Cunningham (2008) examined the effect literacy environments have on young children’s attitudes towards reading and writing. The 201 students between 5 and 6 years old in this study were chosen from 11 magnet schools in a large, urban, Midwestern school district. In the first week of the school year, the students completed a survey about attitudes toward reading and writing. The Student Attitudes Toward Reading and Writing Survey (Trehearne, Healy,
Williams, & Moore, 2003) was administered by their kindergarten teacher or the school’s literacy coach to groups of two or three children. They also had their oral language and literacy skills assessed and scored by their classroom teacher. This was done using the TROLL, or Teacher Rating of Oral Language and Literacy (Dickinson, 1997). For this 5-10 minute assessment, teachers do not need prior specialized training to assess an individual child’s current language skills, reading skills, and writing abilities. Rather than formal testing of actual development, the TROLL relies on a teacher’s professional judgment of a child’s development.

To assess the quality of the language and literacy environments in each classroom, an instrument called the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (Smith et al., 2003), or ELLCO Toolkit, was used. Three separate tools are provided in the ELLCO Toolkit. However, Cunningham (2008) used one tool called Classroom Observation for this study. Six literacy coaches and early childhood educators had to be trained by a certified ELLCO trainer, and inter-rater reliability was established after the training. Classrooms were observed by one trained observer. Classrooms were rated as exemplary, basic, or limited based on fourteen items that are conceptually grouped into the following two dimensions: general classroom environment and language, literacy, and curriculum. Items for general classroom environment dimension include: organization of the classroom, contents of the classroom, presence and use of technology, opportunities for child choice and initiative, classroom management strategies, and classroom climate. Items for the language, literacy, and curriculum dimension include: oral language facilitation, presence of books, approaches to book reading (preschool) or writing opportunities and instruction (school-age), approaches to curriculum integration, recognizing diversity in the classroom, facilitating home support for literacy, and approaches to assessment. The Classroom Observation is scored according to a 5-point scale (5-exemplary, 4-proficient, 3-
basic, 2-limited, 1-deficient), which is used for each of the fourteen items. The item scores are summed and a mean score from the total points is determined (Cunningham, 2008).

Results from the study indicated that classrooms rated exemplary (representing the fourteen items) in their support of literacy development had students with the most-positive attitudes toward reading and writing (Cunningham, 2008). Students with more negative attitudes towards these subjects appeared in low quality literacy environments. Low quality literacy environments were those not representing the fourteen items from the ELLCO.

There were no significant differences between student attitudes and their gender; however there were significant differences between at-risk students and their attitudes. These students who receive free or reduced-price meals had more negative attitudes towards reading and writing than students not considered at risk. The results suggest that the student’s at-risk status, the student’s level of literacy development, and quality of the environment to support literacy may be connected with a student’s attitude toward reading and writing.

**Self-Efficacy Beliefs**

Researchers have established that students’ self-efficacy beliefs are highly predictive of academic outcomes (Pajares & Valiante, 2006). According to Bandura (1977), as well as Pajares and Valiante, self-efficacy beliefs are better predictors of students’ academic accomplishments than knowledge, skills, or previous attainments.

In addition, “Self-efficacy beliefs contribute to motivation in several ways: they determine the goals people set for themselves, how much effort they expend, how long they persevere in the face of difficulties, and their resilience to failures” (Bandura, 1993, p. 131). That is why thought patterns and emotional reactions are influenced by self-efficacy beliefs. If students believe that things are harder than they really are, they have low self-efficacy. As a
result, students will feel anxiety and stress. If students have a high sense of self-efficacy, they will demonstrate great effort and perseverance when they undertake a task (Pajares & Valiante, 2006).

In other words, the choices students make and the course of action they pursue depend upon the self-perceptions they have about their capabilities. When students feel competent and confident about an activity or task, they will most likely select it; whereas if they do not have those feelings, they will avoid it (Pajares & Valiante, 2006). Similarly, if students are motivated towards an academic subject, they will be more willing to repeat tasks within that subject. Repeating tasks will help students improve their skills and increase their chances of achieving success in that subject (Knudson, 1995).

**Self-Efficacy and Writing Performance**

In a study by Pajares and Valiante (1997), path analysis was employed to determine the “influence of writing self-efficacy, perceived usefulness of writing, writing apprehension, and writing aptitude on an essay writing performance” (p. 353). Two hundred eighteen fifth-grade students from three public schools participated in the study. Two schools were in the South and one was in the Southwest. Students completed instruments that measured self-efficacy, perceived usefulness, and apprehension. To measure self-efficacy, The Writing Skills Self-Efficacy scale (Shell, Murphy, and Bruning, 1989) was used. On this scale, eight items require students to measure their confidence regarding their performance with writing skills such as grammar, usage, composition, and mechanics. Students may provide any score between 0 and 100 for each skill.

To “assess students’ judgments of the importance of writing for successfully accomplishing various academic and life endeavors” (Parajes & Valiante, 1997, p. 356), the 10
item Perceived Usefulness of Writing scale, was used. This was an adaptation by Pajares and Valiante of the Writing Outcome Expectations Scale (Shell, et al., 1989).

Students were also given 30 minutes to write an essay on the prompt, “My Idea of a Perfect Day”. This was the performance measure instrument. To grade the essays, holistic scoring with a 5-point scale was used by one of the researchers and a second expert reader. The students’ writing aptitude was rated by their language arts teachers near the end of the first semester. By rating the aptitudes at that time and again before students wrote their essays, the teachers were already familiar with the students’ writing.

The results revealed that writing performance is predicted by the elementary students’ self-efficacy perceptions. In other words, writing apprehension, perceived usefulness of writing, and essay-writing performance is directly influenced by students’ self-efficacy beliefs about their own writing capability (Pajares & Valiante, 1997). Pajares and Valiante also found that female students perceived writing as more useful than male students. In addition, female students had higher self-efficacy and lower apprehension towards writing than male students. However, there were no differences in writing performance between boys and girls.

Another study by Pajares and Valiante (2006) examined students’ self-perceptions of their own writing competence, or writing self-efficacy beliefs. They state there is a relationship between writing self-efficacy, other motivation constructs related to writing, and writing outcomes in academic settings. Their findings indicate that students’ motivation for writing is influenced by their confidence in their writing capabilities.

**Implications for Classroom Writing Instruction**

Students with positive self-efficacy will most likely seek out and engage in writing activities. These students may show they are interested in improving their writing skills also
Studies have shown that students with positive attitudes toward writing had higher writing achievement (Knudson, 1995; Graham et al., 2007). One study revealed elementary students’ self-efficacy perceptions predict writing performance (Pajares & Valiante, 1997). However, not every student will come to a classroom with positive self-efficacy towards writing. That is why it is so necessary for classroom teachers to understand and be cognizant of student self-efficacy and attitudes towards writing. Students’ self-efficacy and attitudes can influence teachers’ instruction and the methods used to teach writing.

It is also important to investigate and identify students’ beliefs about their academic capabilities because they are significant components of motivation and behavior (Pajares & Valiante, 1997). Teachers need to improve student attitudes toward, and motivation for, writing and pay particular attention toward minimizing negative feelings, which leads to avoidance behaviors (Tunks, 2010). Since writing is not only a cognitive activity, but also an emotional activity, all phases of the writing process are influenced by affective components.

**Summary**

By the time children enter kindergarten, they already have attitudes toward reading and writing (Cunningham, 2008). These attitudes will contribute toward students’ literacy learning throughout their school years. Of course, teachers have an enormous influence on their students, and they share in the responsibility for nurturing their students’ self-efficacy beliefs, which can be high or low. In addition, since young children have difficulty making accurate self-appraisals regarding their confidence and self-worth, they must rely on others’ judgments to create their own judgments (Pajares & Valiante, 2006).
Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

Introduction

Students’ attitudes about writing are an important factor to consider when teaching writing. Students’ attitudes can influence their motivation and how they approach a writing task.

This study focused on students’ attitudes about writing and looked at the affect these attitudes had on their independent writing. The participants were three first grade students from a private school and the study was conducted over a period of six weeks. To provide triangulation, multiple data collection instruments were used to assess attitudes towards writing and to determine writing progress. Limitations are discussed as well.

Research Question

My methods and procedures were planned in an effort to answer the following research question:

- How do first grade students’ attitudes towards writing affect their writing progress?

Participants and Context

This study was conducted in one first grade classroom in a private school. This school is located in a suburban area of western New York. The first grade classroom consisted of eighteen students aged six and seven. There were nine male and nine female students. Sixteen students were Caucasian, one was Hispanic, and one was Asian. The Hispanic and Asian students’ primary language was English. Of the sixteen Caucasian students, five were Ukrainian and English Language Learners. One classroom teacher and one teacher assistant were in the classroom.
Procedures of the Study

After receiving approval from the school’s principal, I randomly selected three students from a hat full of eighteen names. Then I sent a letter home to their parents to obtain permission for their child to participate. If fewer than three parents responded positively, I was prepared to randomly select additional students until I had at least three to participate. However, this was not necessary since all three children’s parents gave permission. I used a different pseudonym for each participant to ensure confidentiality.

Prior to the beginning of the six week study, each participant completed the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000). This was used to assess students’ attitudes about writing. I administered the survey to the participants as a group, since time was limited. To collect data during the study, I observed the three participants once each week for the first three weeks of the study during their independent writing workshop. I took anecdotal notes for each participant on a self-created observation sheet every time I observed them. I used one observation sheet per participant. I also collected a copy of a writing piece from each participant every Friday starting from the first week until the last week of the study. There were three writing pieces with prompts and three writing pieces without prompts. The same day I collected the writing pieces, I analyzed each one using the 6+1 Traits® of Analytic Writing Assessment Scoring Guide: 5-Point Beginning Writer’s Rubric (Education Northwest, 2010). This scoring guide assesses ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation.

Finally, on the fifth week of the study and after analyzing the three participants’ writing pieces that Friday, I began to examine all the completed rubrics and cross analyze them with the anecdotal records and Writing Assessment Survey (Kear et al., 2000). This was done in attempt to answer the research question.
Data Collection and Analysis

Writing Attitude Survey. Prior to the study, I spoke with the participants’ first grade teacher to schedule a time when I could take all three students from class to complete the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000). When the time arrived, I brought the three participants to an empty and quiet room in order for them to complete the Writing Attitude Survey (see Appendix A), which consists of twenty-eight questions related to writing. On the survey, four Garfield cartoon characters exhibit a range of emotions from very happy (assigned a score of 4) to very upset (assigned a score of 1). Students indicate their own feelings about writing by circling one of four Garfield characters. The participants and I sat in chairs close together so I could explain and show them the survey. I held one survey in my hand so they could see it, and I began by stating, “I want to find out how you feel about writing. This is not a test so you won’t be getting a grade, and there are no right answers. This is about how you feel about writing.” Then I had the participants look at the picture of Garfield on the far left of the first question. I asked how they thought Garfield was feeling, and they responded with, “Very happy” and “Excited.” We discussed the next picture of Garfield, and the participants said he was sort of happy. For the third picture, the participants said Garfield seemed upset, and for the last picture of Garfield, they said he was very upset. Then I told them I would read aloud each question and they were to put a circle around the Garfield that describes how they feel about that question. However, to check their understanding before we began, I asked them, “How do you feel about having pizza for dinner?” and what Garfield they would circle to answer the question. Then I asked, “How do you feel about eating vegetables?” and what Garfield they would circle. I asked if they had any questions, and they did not. Once I thought the participants understood what to do, I had them sit apart from one another over two tables to prevent looking at another participant’s responses.
Then I distributed the survey and a pencil to each participant. I read each question aloud and gave them time to decide and circle the Garfield that represented their attitude towards each question. I waited until all three were ready for the next question. When all twenty-eight questions were completed, in that one sitting, I collected the three surveys, brought the participants back to their classroom, and left the school for the day. Within two days, I calculated the participants’ raw scores from the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000). To do this, I added all of the points on the Writing Attitude Survey Scoring Sheet (see Appendix B) for each participant.

Observations. The following Monday and first week of the study, I entered the classroom with little interruption. I sat on a chair in the back of the room where I could observe the three participants during their independent writing workshop. I used three of the self-created observation sheets (see Appendix C), one for each participant, to record anecdotal records of their writing behaviors and on and off task behaviors. I repeated this process on Tuesday of the next week and Wednesday of the third week.

6+1 Traits® of Analytic Writing Assessment Scoring Guide. From the first week until the sixth week of the study, I collected one independent writing piece from each of the three participants every Friday via the teacher assistant who made copies of those pieces. Also on Friday, for six weeks, I used the 6+1 Traits® of Analytic Writing Assessment Scoring Guide: 5-Point Beginning Writer’s Rubric (Education Northwest, 2010) (Appendix D) to score each participant’s writing piece.

Limitations

There were some initial limitations of this study. The first limitation was the small sample size. Therefore, the results were specific to the students randomly selected for this study.
Another limitation may involve the writer’s rubric as it, and other rubrics, can be somewhat subjective. The writer’s rubric I chose, however, contains very specific descriptions of each indicator. This may contribute to making the scoring process more reliable and accurate.

**Summary**

I became interested in exploring the relationship between students’ attitudes towards writing and their writing progress because of my previous experience as a first grade teacher. I witnessed students engaged in writing and those who were not and I either thought writing was easy or difficult for them. I rarely took the struggling students’ attitudes into account as I tried to help them with their writing. From this study, I wanted to determine if students’ attitudes towards writing affect their writing progress. I also hoped to learn more about this topic and be able to apply what I learned to improve my teaching practices. In the next chapter, the results of my research will be discussed.
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between students’ attitudes about writing and their writing progress. I investigated the research question: How do first grade students’ attitudes towards writing affect their writing progress?

In attempt to answer this question, at the beginning of the six week study, I administered the Writing Attitude Survey (WAS) (Kear et al., 2000) to the three students as a group (See Appendix A). When the surveys were completed, I scored the results using the Writing Attitude Survey Scoring Sheet (Appendix B). Then, one day each week for three weeks of the six week study, I observed the students while they were writing independently during their writers’ workshop in class. I took anecdotal notes to record these observations on a self-created observation sheet (Appendix C). Each week for six weeks, the students wrote short narratives, which they did not revise or edit. The teacher assistant collected a narrative from each student, made copies, and gave me the copies at the end of each week. When I received them, I used the 6+1 Traits® of Analytic Writing Assessment Scoring Guide: 5-Point Beginning Writer’s Rubric (Education Northwest, 2010) to analyze the students’ writing each week (Appendix D). I began to analyze all the data I had collected at the end of the fifth week of the study to reduce possible bias in my evaluation.

Participants

Todd, Allison, and David (all names are pseudonyms) are all seven years old and first grade students at a private school. From my few interactions with them and my observations, all three children were very friendly and sociable. Before discussing the participants further and discussing their results, a full analysis of the data collection instruments that were used is mentioned below.
Data Collection Instruments

Three data collection instruments were used for this study. The Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000) was used to determine the participants’ attitudes towards writing, three observations were conducted, and one writing sample was collected from each participant each week for six weeks. Each instrument is discussed below.

The Writing Attitude Survey. The survey contains 28 questions, and each question has four Garfield cartoon characters which exhibit a range of emotions from very happy (assigned a score of 4) to very upset (assigned a score of 1). The full scale raw score for each student (all names are pseudonyms) was found by adding all of the item scores. The total possible points are 112.

An informal approach to interpreting the scores would be to look at where the raw score falls related to the total possible points. To determine if a student has an indifferent attitude towards writing, the raw score will be around 70, which will be between the somewhat happy and somewhat upset Garfield student (Kear et al., 2000, p. 23). According to Todd’s and David’s scores, they have an indifferent attitude toward writing as shown in Table 1. Allison’s raw score indicates that she has a more positive attitude towards writing than the boys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Raw Score</th>
<th>Percentile (Mid-Year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Raw score indicates the sum of all points.

Percentile indicates that other students like writing that much less than these students do.
By converting the raw score to a percentile rank using the table provided in the article by Kear et al. (2000), the formal approach to interpreting the scores would be obtained. It should be noted that the Table 1 in the article by Kear et al. is for a midyear percentile rank by grade and scale, whereas this study was conducted at the end of the school year. An end of year percentile rank by grade and scale was not available. Allison’s percentile rank indicates that 63% like writing less than she does. Todd’s percentile rank indicates that 44% like writing less than he does, and David’s percentile rank indicates that 41% like writing less than he does.

Observations. Observations of the three participants were made on different days of the week for the first three weeks during their independent writing period. Using multiple sheets of the self-created observation sheet, I took anecdotal records of each student’s writing behavior and on and off task behaviors I saw every time I observed the students. There will be more discussion regarding the observation results for each student in the section titled, participants’ results.

Writing Samples. Six writing samples, three with prompts and three without prompts, from each participant were collected and analyzed using the 6+1 Traits® of Analytic Writing Assessment Scoring Guide: 5-Point Beginning Writer’s Rubric (Education Northwest, 2010). The 6+1 traits of analytic writing are ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation. The 5-points for each trait are experimenting (1), emerging (2), developing (3), capable (4), and experienced (5). This scoring guide was used to determine writing development over the six week study.

The graphs in the next section represent each trait and how each student performed over six weeks. The y-axis numbers represent the 5 possible points that could be earned for each trait.
The key question for the Ideas trait has to do with the writer staying focused on the topic and sharing original information about the topic. To be considered emerging the big idea is conveyed in a general way through text, labels, and symbols. Todd remained at the emerging stage throughout the six weeks; whereas Allison began improving in the Ideas trait during week three. David had one writing piece that showed capability in this trait, but he was more consistently in the emerging stage.

![Figure 4.1](image)

*Figure 4.1.* This figure illustrates the Ideas trait (Points 1: Experimenting, 2: Emerging, 3: Developing, 4: Capable, 5: Experienced)

The key question for the Organization trait asks if the organizational structure enhances the ideas and makes the piece easier to understand. The graph below indicates that Todd and David tended to remain in the developing stage. However, Allison advanced to the capable stage by week five.
The key question for the Voice trait, or individual expression, asks if you would you keep reading this piece if it were longer. All three participants did well in this trait, although Todd consistently remained in the developing stage.

For the Word Choice trait, the key question asks if the words and phrases create vivid pictures and linger in the reader’s mind. Todd, Allison, and David were in the developing stage, which means they used general or ordinary words to convey a message. More specifically, they attempted to use new words, but those words did not always fit. Vocabulary was limited to safe,
known words. Basic verbs and nouns dominated their writing pieces, and the words were
generic for the topic. In addition, words were grouped in ways that created general mental
imagery.

![Figure 4.4](image)

*Figure 4.4. This figure illustrates the Word Choice trait*
(Points 1: Experimenting, 2: Emerging, 3: Developing, 4: Capable, 5: Experienced)

The key question for Sentence Fluency trait asks if the reader can feel the words and
phrases flow together as the reader reads it aloud. Allison and David were consistently in the
developing stage for this trait. Although Todd was in the emerging stage at the beginning of the
study, he advanced to the developing stage by week 5.

![Figure 4.5](image)

*Figure 4.5. This figure illustrates the Sentence Fluency trait*
(Points 1: Experimenting, 2: Emerging, 3: Developing, 4: Capable, 5: Experienced)
For the Conventions trait, the key question asks how much editing would have to be done to be ready to share with an outside source. All the participants did well in this trait despite the fact that the narratives I scored were first drafts and had not been through the full writing process.

Figure 4.6. This figure illustrates the Conventions trait (Points 1: Experimenting, 2: Emerging, 3: Developing, 4: Capable, 5: Experienced)

The key question for the Presentation trait asks if the finished piece is easy to read, polished in presentation, and pleasing to the eye. Again, for a first draft, the three participants did very well. Todd was consistently in the capable stage and Allison improved by week six.

Figure 4.7. This figure illustrates the Presentation trait (Points 1: Experimenting, 2: Emerging, 3: Developing, 4: Capable, 5: Experienced)
Participants’ Results

This section discusses each participant briefly and the observations and writing samples for Todd, Allison, and David.

**Todd.** During the observations, I noticed Todd had a difficult time taking initiative when it came time to write. He also seemed to have difficulty working independently, and he often sought help from the teacher assistant. When he generated his own topic, his writing pieces did not stay focused on one big idea, and these pieces contained mostly run on sentences. These pieces were based on his personal experience with the topic, which were about his family.

**Observations.** For the first two observations, Todd had a lot of interaction with the assistant teacher who tried to help him generate a topic. For the first observation, he got paper from the front of the room, but didn’t get started right away. He sat on one bent leg on his chair, and his other foot was on the floor. The assistant teacher told him to think about what to write. Eventually, he said, “I’ve got it,” shared the idea with her, sat back down on bent legs, and looked around the room thinking. Then Todd was called by the teacher to read to her. When he returned to writing, he placed his hands behind his head while he sat at his desk, stood up, sat again, and looked around the classroom. The assistant teacher came over to his desk and sat next to him. He talked about what he planned to write. Overall, it took him a half an hour to start writing after he first got the paper. Examples of Todd’s writing appear in a following section, titled Writing Samples.

During the second observation, Todd moved around frequently, and the assistant teacher still tried to help him come up with a writing topic saying, “Did you play yesterday?” He started writing, but then put his left hand on his ear, rubbed his mouth, stopped writing, looked left then right, started writing, erased, looked up, erased, leaned on his right arm (writing hand), stood up,
knelt on his desk chair, and put his right hand to his mouth. He did all of this with his pencil in his hand. The assistant teacher tried to get him to focus. However, Todd continued to move around. He sat on one bent leg with the other foot on the floor, turned away from his desk, stood up, sat down on bent legs, went back to writing, paused, wrote, lifted up the top of his desk, and then the teacher assistant asked him to bring his writing to her so she could look it over. These actions took about twenty minutes.

While thinking of a topic during the third observation, Todd had both feet on the floor, and he sat parallel to his desk looking at his feet. The assistant teacher once again tried to help him come up with a topic, which didn’t take long. This week, Todd seemed to sit still more and move around less. For twenty-five minutes, he wrote, stopped, returned to writing, turned the page and continued to write. He stopped, scratched his right arm, returned to writing, erased, wrote again, and declared he was done writing.

Overall, Todd seemed to have a hard time getting started writing the first two weeks he was observed. He also seemed to needed the assistant teacher to help him generate ideas and to help him focus on the writing task.

**Writing Samples.** Throughout the six weeks, Todd remained at the emerging stage for the Ideas trait (Figure 1). For example, few details are present, some experience with the topic is demonstrated, and if pictures are present, they connect to a few words. Todd demonstrated few details and some experience with the topic for all six weeks of the study. Below is his first week’s writing piece that demonstrates this.
Todd began his piece stating, “Me and my fred (friend) played Mareoh.” Todd then provided one detail, his friend “kept wining”, before moving on to stating what they did next. He listed what they did throughout the writing piece instead of focusing on one topic and providing many details about that topic. What he wrote showed some experience with the topic of playing a game with his friend.

For week three, Todd continued to remain in the emerging stage. Todd’s big idea and opening statement was, “I saw a football game with my dad.” Again, Todd provided few details saying his dad’s team won, his dad was glad, and Todd’s friend’s team lost. He got off topic then stating what he did next and after that. Since Todd didn’t stay focused on the topic and share original information this placed him in the emerging stage again. He remained there through week six.

For week six, Todd was given a worksheet with the writing prompt, “Write a story about a puppy.” Todd began with, “My sister saw two puppies,” but then he said, “I saw a puppy on tv.” After that he wrote, “My sister saw a puppy at my dad’s game. My sister saw a puppy but she was skarrd. We had fun.” Once more, Todd started with a big idea, but did not follow up
with details or stay focused on that one topic about his sister seeing two puppies. He also showed only some experience with the topic. That is why his score for the Ideas trait remained in the emerging stage this week as well.

Todd demonstrated he was in the developing stage for the Organization trait (Figure 2) for all six weeks. To be considered for this stage, a beginning and middle are present, but there isn’t an ending. Furthermore, transitions rely on connective “and,” sequencing and pacing needs to be adequate, and structure needs to be present. Todd’s week five writing piece below has a beginning and middle, but it does not have a conclusion about the topic. Todd began two sentences with and. He also wrote about what he does in the beginning and end, but tells about one experience on the trampoline in the middle.

![Figure 4.9. Todd’s Week 5 Writing Piece](image)

To be in the developing stage of the Voice trait (Figure 3), which Todd was in for all six weeks except week four, individual expression has to be present and the writing has to address an audience in a general way. Todd’s writing piece from week two is an example of why it was scored as developing. In the piece, Todd talks about fishing with his dad. His individual expression comes across in how he tells what they did. He also addresses an audience in a
general way because he does not provide specifics or details about the event. In addition, Todd does not use words or phrases that tailor the narrative to a specific audience.

Figure 4.10. Todd’s Week 2 Writing Piece

Throughout the six weeks, Todd remained at the developing stage for the Word Choice trait (figure 4). In Todd’s week four writing piece, he wrote about himself, his sister, and cousin playing games and being on the trampoline. The figure below demonstrates Todd’s use of safe, known, generic words, basic verbs and nouns, and how those words were grouped to create general mental imagery, which indicates development.

Figure 4.11. Todd’s Week 4 Writing Piece
During the first four weeks, Todd remained in the emerging stage of the Sentence Fluency trait (Figure 5), but by weeks five and six he advanced to the developing stage. In the emerging stage, words are strung together into phrases. Sentence parts are present, but not complete, connective words may appear in sentence parts, and rhythm is choppy and repetitive. Todd’s week three writing piece is an example of an emerging stage.

![Figure 4.12. Todd’s Week 3 Writing Piece](image)

To be considered in the developing stage, simple sentences are used to convey meaning. Most simple sentence parts are present (variety in beginnings or length exists), connective words (mostly “and”) serve as links between phrases, and rhythm is more mechanical than fluid. Todd demonstrated these features in his week five writing piece, which was about summer and what he does then. He wrote, “It is fun to play in the sun. I play in my pool. And I go on my trapling and my dad came on and my sister came on. We had fun and we play’ed basball in my backyard. We fish in the summer I go to parks in the summer.”

Todd was in the capable stage of the Conventions trait (Figure 6) for the first two weeks and week six. To be considered as capable in this trait, more conventions are correct than not. Spelling is usually accurate for first grade-level words, end punctuation is correct, capitals are
more consistent and begin sentences and most proper nouns, and subject/verb agreement with proper tense is present, but can still be spotty. The following is Todd’s week six writing piece, which reflects capability.

![Figure 4.13. Todd’s Week 6 Writing Piece](image)

However for Todd, he went from capable to emerging in the Conventions trait in weeks three, four, and five. His narratives were all rough drafts. To be in the emerging stage, some conventions are correct, most are not. Semi-phonetic spelling is attempted, random punctuation exists, upper and lowercase letters are randomly used, and part of a grammatical construction is present. For week four, Todd wrote, “Me and my serst (sister) and my cust (cousin) came offer my house. we played spins with my cust we had fun. then we went on my trapling we played sewprheros on the trapling. then we played my fafrted game. then I pich to my cust.” His lack of capitals and ending punctuation and his semi-phonetic spelling placed him in the emerging stage. It is important to remember, that like all of the writing pieces collected for the study, this piece was a rough draft. Had the writing pieces gone through the writing process and been final drafts, scores for the Conventions trait would be different.
The Presentation trait (Figure 7) was Todd’s strength and the graph indicates he is consistently capable in this area. Being capable means the formatting of text and pictures is clear and thoughtful. Specifically, handwriting reveals proper manuscript (spaced and written appropriately), words and sentences have proper spacing, and markers, such as titles, headings, bullets, and page numbers clarify, organize, and define the text. Todd demonstrates this in his week five writing piece below.

![Figure 4.14. Todd’s Week 5 Writing Piece](image)

**Todd’s Summary.** According to Kear et al. (2000), a raw score near 70 on the Writing Attitude Survey means a student has an indifferent attitude towards writing. Since Todd has a raw score of 78, it indicates that he has an indifferent attitude towards writing. The three observations revealed an indifferent attitude as well. He had a hard time settling down and starting to write. For example, during the first observation, he got paper from the front of the room and brought it to his desk, but instead of starting to write, he got his writing folder out, opened it, and looked through it. The teacher assistant noticed this and told him to think about what to write. During this same observation, Todd frequently got out of his seat to ask the teacher assistant for help. For the second observation, Todd looked at the teacher then stood up
next to his desk. Again, the teacher assistant told him to think about what to write to help him get started. He sat down on one leg, said, “A-ha”, and began to write. For the third observation, Todd sat on one bent leg, wrote his name and the date on his paper, but then stopped to scratch his leg. He put both feet on the floor, turned away from his desk, and looked down at his feet. Once more, the teacher assistant tried to help him come up with a topic. When Todd came up with a topic and he began to write, during the second and third observation, he tended to remain involved in his writing. This was apparent because occasionally he stopped to think about what to write next, and he stayed in his seat throughout the time allotted for writers’ workshop.

Of the three students, Todd wrote the lengthiest stories, which were more like lists of what he and his family members did. He had the most run on sentences. His six writing pieces showed no overall achievement in all 6+1 traits according to the six 5-Point Beginners Writing Rubrics (Education Northwest, 2010). Over the six weeks, Todd was consistently emerging in the Ideas trait, developing in the Organization, Voice, and Word Choice traits, and capable in the Presentation trait. For the Conventions trait, he demonstrated capability during the first two weeks, but for the next four weeks he was in the developing stage. The one trait in which Todd improved was Sentence Fluency, where he advanced from emerging to developing during the fifth and sixth week of the study.

This information indicates that Todd’s attitude towards writing did not have an effect on his writing progress. His indifferent attitude did not positively or negatively affect his writing, except that he didn’t make any growth. Todd did not make progress except in one trait out of seven, and that was the Sentence Fluency trait.

**Allison.** Based on all three observations, Allison took initiative getting started on writing and she worked well independently, needing little assistance from the teacher assistant. Two of
the six narratives she wrote were about topics she generated. One was based on personal experience, and the other was imagined. These pieces were short and therefore lacked much detail.

**Observations.** For the first observation, Allison got paper from the front of the room, sat in her seat on bent legs, turned away from her desk, thought with a pencil in her mouth, and looked out at the classroom. Soon after, she started to write. Then, she erased, wrote, stopped, looked at me in the back of the room, rubbed her eyes, did some thinking, and as she wrote had her head down. At one point she stopped and looked out to see the teacher who was at the front of the room, erased, wiped eraser shavings off her paper, wrote a little, looked up, erased, stood up to wipe off the eraser shavings, stopped to reread her writing, and pulled at her lip. When Allison stopped writing, she put her pencil down and right away picked it up, then stopped, looked at me, and wrote until she was called to read with the teacher. When she returned, she drew a picture to go with her story. She only took ten minutes to create this writing piece. Then she started writing another piece. Allison’s writing samples will appear in the next section titled Writing Samples.

During the second observation, I mostly observed Allison working on worksheets. She spent the rest of her writing workshop time drawing and coloring pictures to go with the writing she had completed the day before.

For twenty minutes during the third observation, Allison wrote a poem and short story based on her interests. She did not revise or edit these pieces. She sat on her bent legs while she wrote, stopped, looked up, wrote, stopped, and opened her desk briefly. Allison put her back against the wall so she was sitting parallel to her desk and she placed her feet on the chair, while
rereading what she wrote. She began to write again, but stopped, put her pencil down, picked it up, looked at the assistant teacher, looked to the front of the room, wrote, and looked at me.

For every observation, Allison got right to work and needed only a few moments to think about her topic before she began writing. She was not fidgety. She wrote very short stories and usually finished one piece in ten minutes. When she finished a piece, she would begin another. Based on the first and third observations, Allison would write two stories during each writer’s workshop. She appeared to want to write, and she remained focused.

**Writing Samples.** For week one, two, and four, Allison demonstrated that she was in the emerging stage of the Ideas trait (Figure 1). In the fourth week, Allison wrote about a topic that she did not have personal experience with. There were few details and the pictures that were present connected to a few words. Her writing piece for week four demonstrates this.

![Figure 4.15. Allison’s Week 4 Writing Piece](image)

For week three, five, and six, Allison demonstrated improvement in the ideas trait. However, for these weeks, she was given a worksheet with a prompt on it. Being given writing prompts may have helped her focus on a topic and contributed towards her advancement to the developing stage. For week six, Allison stated her big idea, which was, “My puppy is a Yorkie”
and she stayed on topic. She provided fresh information about her dog with relevant details that supported the big idea. She wrote that she loves to play with her puppy and gave his name. Allison also wrote that, “He is so so cute. I feed him two times a day.” Furthermore, her experience with the topic was obvious. All of the aforementioned qualities fall under the developing stage on the 5-Point Beginning Writer’s Rubric.

Allison was in the developing stage like Todd for the first four weeks before advancing to the capable stage for the Organization trait (Figure 2). In the capable stage, the beginning, middle, and predictable ending are present. Transitions work in predictable fashion, the required title matches the content, sequencing is sound, pacing moves the reader through the piece, and the structure matches the purpose of the piece. The following is Allison’s writing piece for week five and demonstrates capability.

For four weeks, Allison was in the developing stage of the Voice trait (Figure 3). However, by week six she progressed to the capable stage. To be considered capable in the Voice trait, individual expression is supported by the text. The writing connects to an audience, voice supports the writer’s purpose, and risk-taking uncovers individual perspective. Allison
demonstrated capability in the piece below for a few reasons. First of all, she connected to an audience with the topic and her sentences. Second, she expressed herself very well. In addition, this expression supported her purpose of telling the audience about her puppy and finally, her last sentence, “Do you have one?” demonstrated risk-taking.

Figure 4.17. Allison’s Week 6 Writing Piece

Regarding the Word Choice trait (Figure 4), the next figure below is Allison’s writing piece from week one, which is about her house. It was scored as developing because she used safe, known, generic words, basic verbs and nouns, and because the way those words were grouped create general mental imagery.

Figure 4.18. Allison’s Week 1 Writing Piece
For the Sentence Fluency trait (Figure 5), Allison mainly remained in the developing stage. Her writing piece below shows that her simple sentences convey meaning. Her sentence parts are present and there is a variety in how she begins her sentences. The rhythm is also more mechanical than fluid.

![Figure 4.19. Allison’s Week 2 Writing Piece](image)

Allison mainly demonstrated experience in the Conventions trait (Figure 6). For the experienced stage, conventions require little editing to be published. In Allison’s writing piece, ending punctuation was correct, capitals were consistently accurate for sentence beginnings, proper nouns, and titles, and she showed some control over basic first grade-level grammar. An example of Allison’s writing piece that demonstrates these features of the Conventions trait is below.
Allison was in the developing stage of the Presentation trait (Figure 7) consistently, which indicates formatting of the text and pictures is generally correct. However, Allison tended to put too much space between words throughout her writing pieces all six weeks. Her week four writing piece is one example of this.

Allison’s Summary. Allison had a raw score of 85 on the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000) indicating she has a positive attitude towards writing. Observations confirmed this and revealed her interest in writing. Her attitude was more positive than the boys’ attitudes.
towards writing. However, her writing pieces did not improve her overall writing progress according to the 5-Point Beginners Writer Rubric (Education Northwest, 2010).

Based on the first and third observation, Allison would sit at her desk and begin thinking about what to write as soon as she got paper from the front of the room. Her thinking was evident because she would turn away from her desk, look out at the classroom with a pencil in her hand or mouth, and then turn around to face her desk and begin writing. Unlike Todd, Allison did not need help initiating writing from the teacher assistant. Her actions during writing revealed that she was involved in her writing. For example, she would erase something, brush away the shavings, reread her writing, and pick her pencil back up to return to writing. She also stayed in her seat throughout the time allotted for writers’ workshop. When Allison finished her writing during the first observation, she brought it to the teacher assistant who read it and praised her good writing. Allison smiled at that.

Over the six weeks, Allison advanced from emerging to developing in the Ideas trait, from developing to capable in the Organization, Voice, and Presentation traits, and from capable to experienced in the Conventions trait. She remained in the developing stage in all but week four in the Word Choice and Sentence Fluency traits.

This information indicates that Allison’s attitude towards writing did have an effect on her writing progress. Her attitude did affect her writing progress positively. Allison made progress in all but two traits. Overall, her writing did improve.

David. Like Allison, David took initiative getting started on writing, he worked well independently, and he did not seek assistance from the teacher assistant. Regarding his writing, he generated three topics. One was based on personal experience while the other two were imagined. David tended to stay on topic and provide some detail.
Observations. For the first observation, David got paper from the front of the room, sat on his bottom on his chair with his feet on the floor, sat up tall, and looked at the teacher in the front of room working with other students. He then began writing, but stopped, looked up, wrote, stopped and rubbed his right hand (he’s left handed), erased, wrote, looked toward the teacher, wrote and stopped. This took him fifteen minutes. He went to get more paper, but was called to read with the teacher. David’s writing samples will appear under the title Writing Samples in the following section.

During the second observation, after David got paper and sat down the same way he did during the first observation, he wrote, looked up, and shook his writing hand twice. He placed the pencil in his right hand, put it in his hair, and then in his mouth. He bounced it on the desk, closed his eyes, wiped his forehead, looked around, and put the pencil down a minute or less to look through his desk for something the girl in front of him asked for. He started writing, then stopped and looked up, returned to writing, stopped, and looked up again. He erased and began writing again even though the girl in front of him talked to him. The assistant teacher noticed he was running out of room at the bottom of the sheet and told him to get a new piece of paper or write on the back. He got more paper, returned to writing, and erased. He wrote for twenty minutes.

In the third observation, David got paper to write a poem. He wrote, looked up, and continued writing. Then he started writing a story. He stopped to scratch his face, he stood up, sat on one bent leg, stood on other leg, looked over his story, and brought his writing piece to me. I asked if he could add more to the story and he said okay. This short story was written in ten minutes.
For the first two observations, David wrote lengthier stories than he did during the third observation. He appeared to want to write and he remained focused. He was not easily distracted from his writing and was rarely fidgety.

**Writing Samples.** The first writing piece from David was scored as capable for the Ideas trait (Figure 1) because the big idea was clear, but general. David stayed focused on the big idea, and the details he added were telling and sometimes specific to the big idea. His experience with the topic was supported by the text also. Below is David’s writing piece from week one.

![Figure 4.22. David’s Week 1 Writing Piece](image)

However, David was in the emerging stage for weeks two, four, five, and six. The big idea was conveyed in a general way through the text. Few details were present, and he demonstrated some experience with the topic. The following is his writing piece from week four.

45
Like Todd, David mainly remained in the developing stage for the Organization trait (Figure 2). For week two, David was also given a worksheet, but the writing prompt was, “Write a story about going fishing.” His title was “Fish ‘n’ friend.” The story had a beginning and middle, but no ending. David began by saying he was at a friend’s house and this friend and David’s brother, who are the same age, “went on a hand powered or rowing boat ride.” Then this friend and David’s brother went fishing. The last sentence David wrote said that he went swimming with the friend’s sister. This had nothing to do with the friend and David’s brother’s boating and fishing adventure, and therefore there was no ending to the story. This reader was left wondering how the story ended. Therefore, due to the lack of an ending and since the sequencing and pacing was adequate and some structure was present, this writing piece was scored as developing.

For the Voice trait (Figure 3), David was in the developing stage for all but one week. Referring to his writing piece from week five, David wrote about what he does when it is time for summer vacation. Since an audience can relate to the activities David participates in during the summer, this demonstrates why his writing connects to an audience. His writing even makes
it seem as if he is talking to you. A person could tell that David enjoys his summers. In addition, the words he used support his individual expression.

![Image of David's Week 5 Writing Piece]

*Figure 4.24. David’s Week 5 Writing Piece*

Like Todd and Allison, David used safe, known, generic words and basic verbs and nouns for the Word Choice trait (Figure 4). His words were also grouped to create general mental imagery. David’s writing piece from week one tells the reader he “went to RIT” and “made two corrol.” Then David wrote, “They go to the top of the room to the bottom of the room” and explained how to make “corrol” for the rest of the writing piece.

Like Allison, David also mainly remained in the developing stage for the Sentence Fluency trait (Figure 5). In the writing piece below, David’s simple sentence parts are present, there is variety in the beginning of his sentences, and rhythm is more mechanical than fluid.
For two weeks, David was in the experienced stage of the Conventions trait (Figure 6). Like Allison, David’s writing piece below shows the same features for experience in this trait. For the experienced stage, conventions require little editing to be published. In David’s writing piece, ending punctuation was correct, capitals were consistently accurate for sentence beginnings, proper nouns, and he showed some control over basic first grade-level grammar.

However, David was in the capable stage for the other four weeks. His week six writing piece about going to the Super Duper Market reveals why. He wrote, “I go to the SUPER
DUPER MARKET! But where is the plazma vision goggles there is plazma hand shooter’s.” In this run on sentence the subject/verb agreement is not correct. He continues with, “They are sold out. Let’s ask a staff worker. I don’t think the main worker. The main worker is grumpy. Later, there is a super truck load tommaro. did you hear that son? that like a million years. Not to me.” More conventions are correct than not, although he did not capitalize two words. His spelling was also usually accurate for grade-level words, which demonstrates why this writing piece was scored as capable.

For the Presentation trait (Figure 7), David alternated between capable and experienced. To be considered capable, his handwriting revealed proper manuscript, spaced and written appropriately, and words and sentences had proper spacing. When David showed experience, his handwriting was neat and easy to read and white space was used well within the piece and to frame text. Below is one of David’s writing pieces that shows experience in presentation.

![Figure 4.27. David’s Week 3 Writing Piece](image)

**David’s Summary.** Even though David had an indifferent attitude towards writing (raw score was 77) according to the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000), observations revealed he was interested in writing. This was evident because David got right to work after getting paper, he did not fidget, and he was rarely distracted. David’s posture even indicated interest in
writing. For all three observations, he sat up straight and always sat on his bottom on the desk chair with his feet under the desk. He kept his legs and feet still. When he was thinking what to write next, he would look up from his desk, take a moment, and then return to writing. During the second observation, the student in front of him turned and asked him for something. He looked in his desk, gave her what she needed, and returned to writing.

David’s writing pieces were longer and provided more detail than Allison’s, but were shorter than Todd’s. Like Allison, David seemed to take more initiative when it came time to write as compared to Todd. However, David’s writing pieces showed little achievement overall. Over the six weeks, David was not very consistent with his writing. For instance, one week he would be in the capable stage and the next in the emerging or developing stage. Only for the Word Choice trait was David consistently developing. His strengths were in the Conventions trait and Presentation trait, in which he was capable or experienced.

This information indicates that David’s attitude towards writing did not have an effect on his writing progress. His attitude did not positively or negatively affect his writing progress, except that he did not make growth.

Summary

Todd showed an indifferent attitude towards writing on the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000) and during the three observations. His writing demonstrated a lack of progress in all traits except in the Presentations trait. David also showed an indifferent attitude towards writing on the Writing Attitude Survey, yet he showed a positive attitude during all the observations. However, his writing revealed a lack of progress in all but the Sentence Fluency trait. Unlike the boys, Allison did have a positive attitude towards writing and her writing demonstrated progress in four out of seven traits. Her attitude towards writing was also
determined by the Writing Attitude Survey and from all observations. Although Allison made no improvement in the Word Choice and Sentence Fluency traits, she remained in the experienced stage five out of six weeks in the Conventions trait. Her writing did improve in the Ideas, Organization, Voice, and Presentation traits. Compiling all this information for each student aided in reaching the conclusions that will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

This study investigated how first grade students’ attitudes towards writing affected their writing progress. In this chapter, I discuss the conclusions, the implications of my research, and I provide recommendations for future research. Based on the results of my research, I came to four conclusions. First, attitudes towards writing positively or negatively affect writing progress. Second, it is important to not only rely on one method of analyzing student attitude. Third, regardless of attitude, writing progress takes time. Fourth, writing progress does not happen linearly. The implications from this study include the need for teachers to be concerned about fostering positive writing attitudes in students, when to examine student attitudes towards writing, and writing assessment instruments and instructional practices. Finally, there are three recommendations for future research, which are about topic choice and prompts, teacher attitudes towards writing and their writing instructional practices, and methods used to teach writing.

Conclusions

The first conclusion is that attitudes towards writing positively or negatively affect writing progress. The observations and the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000) results indicated the participants’ attitudes towards writing, and the information from the six rubrics, per participant, gathered over the length of the study indicated who improved their writing and who did not. This combination of data collection instruments revealed a connection between attitude and writing progress. Todd had an indifferent attitude towards writing, as revealed through the Writing Attitude Survey and the three observations I made, and this did not positively affect his writing progress. David also had an indifferent attitude towards writing, as revealed through the Writing Attitude Survey. However, all the observations indicated David had a positive attitude towards writing. Despite this information, David’s writing did not improve. This is because his
writing pieces were inconsistent in their development. Allison’s positive attitude towards writing, also based on the Writing Attitude Survey and three observations, led to an improvement in her writing and therefore did positively affect her writing progress. The results from this study agree with results from studies by Knudson (1995) and Graham et al. (2007) who found that students with positive attitudes towards writing had higher writing achievement.

The second conclusion is about the importance of not only relying on one method of analyzing student attitude. This became apparent to me when I compared David’s Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000) with the three observations I made. According to the survey, which asks students to respond to questions based on their interests, David had an indifferent attitude towards writing. However, the observations of his on task and other behaviors revealed a positive attitude towards writing. Conducting both a survey and documenting observations is important in order to have the most reliable information. Even Kear et al. state that the results from the Writing Attitude Survey should serve as confirmation of other data collected on attitudes towards writing. Paquette (2008) concurs saying there is a need for additional measures besides the Writing Attitude Survey, such as asking interview questions that have to do with attitudes towards writing.

The third conclusion is that regardless of attitude, writing progress takes time. It takes time to make progress because writing is such a complex task. There are a lot of writing conventions to learn. Furthermore, students learn at different paces. Graham (1992) said for students to improve their writing, they should write four days a week and each day write for 45 minutes to an hour. With that amount of time over a period of months and years, writing will certainly improve. This six week study was a short time to examine changes in writing.
However, I learned from speaking with the participants’ teacher assistant that Todd would not write at all in the beginning of the year. Yet, he is writing now and that shows progress.

Finally, the fourth conclusion is that writing progress does not happen linearly. When students learn something new, there is a learning curve. At first some students may struggle, then do well, but then have a difficult time again as they learn to process and apply new information. An example of this non-linear writing progress can be seen in David’s writing pieces. For example, for the Ideas trait (see Figure 4.1), David was in the capable stage for the first week of the study, but week two he dropped to the emerging stage. Week three he rose to developing, but he dropped back down again to emerging for weeks four, five, and six. This happened frequently with David. However, this fluctuation rarely happened with Allison and Todd.

Implications

One implication for teaching is the need for teachers to be concerned about fostering positive writing attitudes in students. Research has shown that as students advance in school, their attitudes towards writing become more negative than when they were younger (Knudson, 1995). That is why teachers in all grades need to be responsible for not only increasing their students’ competence in writing, but also increasing their confidence in writing and improving their attitudes (Tunks, 2010; Pajares & Valiante, 1997). Tunks says this will help students learn to enjoy writing and work on writing activities without apprehension. Knudson (1991) said an interest in writing and advanced cognitive skills should be developed by writing instruction.

Another implication for teaching is the need to examine student attitudes towards writing at the beginning of the school year and either during and/or at the end of the school year. Giving students a writing attitude survey is a good place to start. Examining student attitudes towards
writing at the beginning of the school year will help teachers get to know their students and give teachers insight into their motivation towards writing. If students have negative attitudes towards writing, teachers will most likely see avoidance behaviors, and they will be able to address it (Tunks, 2010). It is also important to examine student attitudes towards writing at least one other time during the school year to determine if a change in attitude has occurred and if that change is due to instructional strategies (Knudson, 1992).

A third implication for teaching has to do with writing assessment instruments and instructional practices. Writing assessment instruments not only assist teachers in knowing how students feel about writing, but they have the ability to inform teachers’ writing instructional practices (Kear et al., 2000). This is important because teachers can determine which instructional method should be employed so students can learn and improve their writing skills and possibly improve their attitudes towards writing. Instructional methods may include Writer’s Workshop, journaling, whole group writing, and cross-age tutoring, which Paquette (2008) found beneficial for improving writing competence and student attitudes towards writing. This is significant information because these methods provide teachers with additional ways to help their students and meet their needs.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The results of this study revealed that student attitudes towards writing do affect writing progress. The following recommendations are based on the results from this study.

- Topic choice and prompts – In this study, three prompts were given to the participants during the three weeks I did not observe. When I did observe, prompts were not given. When analyzing the results, I noticed the participants tended to perform better
when prompts were given. The written prompts may have served as a guide and helped the participants focus on the topic. However, I did not collect data on this.

- Investigate teacher attitudes towards writing and their writing instructional practices and the impact on student progress. Wilkins (2010) found that teachers’ least favorite academic subject to teach is writing. This could be due to personal experience with writing or feeling unprepared to teaching writing. This in turn could impact their writing instruction and affect their students’ attitudes towards the subject.

- Investigate the methods used to teach writing on students’ attitudes toward writing to determine the most effective method to improve student attitudes. Some methods used to teach writing are: Writer’s Workshop, journaling, whole group writing, and cross-age tutoring. Investigating which one of these methods, or a combination of them, would be most beneficial for students, would help teachers and administrators decide which one(s) to implement in the classroom.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between students’ attitudes towards writing and their writing progress. The data collected from this study led me to conclude that attitudes towards writing positively or negatively affect writing progress, that more than one method of analyzing student attitude is needed, that writing progress takes time, and that writing progress does not happen linearly. The following implications were found also as a result from this study. They are the need for teachers to be concerned about fostering positive writing attitudes in students, when to examine student attitudes towards writing, and writing assessment instruments and instructional practices. Finally, further research is needed on topic
choice and prompts, teacher attitudes towards writing and their writing instructional practices, and methods used to teach writing.

As teachers striving to improve student writing, we need to take student attitudes about writing into consideration because attitudes affect their motivation to write. Attitude may also determine literacy success.

As a former first grade teacher who witnessed students engaged in writing and those who were not, I became interested in exploring students’ attitudes about writing and their writing progress. Through this investigation, I have learned more about this topic and will be able to apply what I learned towards improving my teaching practices.


References


Appendix A

Permission to use this survey was granted by Kim Campbell, Director of Public Relations, of Paws, Incorporated over the telephone on April 10, 2012.
Appendix A

5. How would you feel writing to someone to change their opinion?

6. How would you feel keeping a diary?

7. How would you feel writing poetry for fun?

8. How would you feel writing a letter stating your opinion about a topic?

9. How would you feel if you were an author who writes books?

Permission to use this survey was granted by Kim Campbell, Director of Public Relations, of Paws, Incorporated over the telephone on April 10, 2012.
Appendix A

10. How would you feel if you had a job as a writer for a newspaper or magazine?

11. How would you feel about becoming an even better writer than you already are?

12. How would you feel about writing a story instead of doing homework?

13. How would you feel about writing a story instead of watching TV?

14. How would you feel writing about something you did in science?
Appendix A

15. How would you feel writing about something you did in social studies?

16. How would you feel if you could write more in school?

17. How would you feel about writing down the important things your teacher says about a new topic?

18. How would you feel writing a long story or report at school?

19. How would you feel writing answers to questions in science or social studies?

Permission to use this survey was granted by Kim Campbell, Director of Public Relations, of Paws, Incorporated over the telephone on April 10, 2012.
Appendix A

20. How would you feel if your teacher asked you to go back and change some of your writing?

21. How would you feel if your classmates talked to you about making your writing better?

22. How would you feel writing an advertisement for something people can buy?

23. How would you feel keeping a journal for class?

24. How would you feel writing about things that have happened in your life?
Appendix A

25. How would you feel writing about something from another person’s point of view?

26. How would you feel about checking your writing to make sure the words you have written are spelled correctly?

27. How would you feel if your classmates read something you wrote?

28. How would you feel if you didn’t write as much in school?

Permission to use this survey was granted by Kim Campbell, Director of Public Relations, of Paws, Incorporated over the telephone on April 10, 2012.
Appendix B

Writing Attitude Survey
Scoring sheet

Student's name ______________________________
Teacher ______________________________
Grade ______________________________
Administration date ______________________________

Scoring guide
4 points Very happy Garfield
3 points Somewhat happy Garfield
2 points Somewhat upset Garfield
1 point Very upset Garfield

Item scores:
1. ______  15. ______
2. ______  16. ______
3. ______  17. ______
4. ______  18. ______
5. ______  19. ______
6. ______  20. ______
7. ______  21. ______
8. ______  22. ______
9. ______  23. ______
10. ______  24. ______
11. ______  25. ______
12. ______  26. ______
13. ______  27. ______
14. ______  28. ______

Full scale raw score: ______________________________
Percentile rank: ______________________________
# Appendix C

**STUDENT OBSERVATION SHEET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Notes &amp; Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix D

#### 6+1 Trait® 5 Point Beginning Writer’s Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. EXPERIMENTING</th>
<th>2. EMERGING</th>
<th>3. DEVELOPING</th>
<th>4. CAPABLE</th>
<th>5. EXPERIENCED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Idea is unclear; print sense is just beginning</td>
<td>Big Idea is conveyed in a general way through text, labels, symbols</td>
<td>Big Idea is stated in text</td>
<td>Big Idea is clear, but general—a simple story or explanation</td>
<td>Big Idea is clear; topic is narrow, fresh, and original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Details are missing, or if present, are unclear</td>
<td>Few details are present</td>
<td>Details are relevant to topic and support Big Idea</td>
<td>Details are telling, and sometimes specific to Big Idea</td>
<td>Details are accurate, relevant, high-quality, and support or enrich Big Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Experience with topic is unclear</td>
<td>Some experience with topic is demonstrated</td>
<td>Experience with topic is obvious</td>
<td>Experience with topic is supported by text</td>
<td>Experience with topic is demonstrated clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Pictures, if present, are unclear</td>
<td>Pictures, if present, connect to a few words</td>
<td>Pictures, if present, support topic</td>
<td>Pictures, if present, add descriptive details to topic</td>
<td>Pictures, if present, clarity, enrich, and enhance topic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key question:** Does the writer stay focused and share original and fresh information or perspective about the topic?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Organization</strong></th>
<th><strong>Organization</strong></th>
<th><strong>Organization</strong></th>
<th><strong>Organization</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning/ending is absent</td>
<td>A bare beginning is present</td>
<td>Beginning and middle are present, but no ending</td>
<td>Beginning, middle, and predictable ending are present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Transitions are not present</td>
<td>Transitions are starting to emerge</td>
<td>Transitions rely on connective “and”</td>
<td>Transitions work in predictable fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Sequencing is not present</td>
<td>Sequencing is limited or confusing</td>
<td>Sequencing is adequate</td>
<td>Sequencing is sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Pacing is not evident</td>
<td>Pacing is predictable, monotonous</td>
<td>Pacing is adequate</td>
<td>Pacing moves reader through piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Title (if required) is missing</td>
<td>Title (if required) is attempted</td>
<td>Simple title (if required) works</td>
<td>Title (if required) fits content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Structure is random</td>
<td>Structure is unclear or only starting to emerge</td>
<td>Structure is present and works</td>
<td>Structure matches purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key question:** Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make the piece easier to understand?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Voice</strong></th>
<th><strong>Voice</strong></th>
<th><strong>Voice</strong></th>
<th><strong>Voice</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual expression is not present</td>
<td>Individual expression is emerging</td>
<td>Individual expression is present</td>
<td>Individual expression is supported by text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Writing for audience is not evident</td>
<td>Writing starts to address audience</td>
<td>Writing addresses audience in a general way</td>
<td>Writing connects to audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Voice is not discernible</td>
<td>Voice is emerging in pictures and/or text</td>
<td>Voice is present</td>
<td>Voice supports writer’s purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Risk-taking is not evident</td>
<td>Risk-taking is limited to “safe” choices</td>
<td>Risk-taking reveals moments of sparkle</td>
<td>Risk-taking uncovers individual perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key question:** Would you keep reading this piece if it were longer?

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### 6+1 Trait® 5 Point Beginning Writer’s Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. EXPERIMENTING</th>
<th>2. EMERGING</th>
<th>3. DEVELOPING</th>
<th>4. CAPABLE</th>
<th>5. EXPERIENCED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word Choice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Word Choice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Word Choice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Word Choice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Word Choice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No words are present—only letters strung together or scribbles</td>
<td>Words are difficult to decode; some are recognizable</td>
<td>General or ordinary words convey message</td>
<td>Favorite words are used correctly</td>
<td>Specific, accurate words are used well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Word patterns are imitated</td>
<td>Environmental words are used correctly</td>
<td>New words are attempted but don’t always fit</td>
<td>New and different words are used with some success</td>
<td>Precise, fresh, original words linger in reader’s mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Vocabulary relies upon environmental print</td>
<td>Vocabulary includes phrases, clichés</td>
<td>Vocabulary is limited to safe, known words</td>
<td>Vocabulary is expanding</td>
<td>Vocabulary is natural, effective, and targets audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C No awareness of parts of speech exists</td>
<td>Nouns emerge as main word choice</td>
<td>Basic verbs and nouns dominate piece</td>
<td>Modifiers add to mix of words</td>
<td>Variety of parts of speech adds depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Words do not convey meaning of piece</td>
<td>Words begin to convey single idea or topic</td>
<td>Words are mundane, normal, generic for topic</td>
<td>Words clarify topic and convey meaning</td>
<td>Words enhance, enrich, and/or showcase meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Words do not create mental imagery</td>
<td>Words begin to create mental imagery</td>
<td>Words are grouped in ways that create general mental imagery</td>
<td>Phrases, word groups create specific mental imagery</td>
<td>Strong attempts at figurative language create clear mental imagery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key question:** Do the words and phrases create vivid pictures and linger in your mind?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence Fluency</th>
<th>Sentence Fluency</th>
<th>Sentence Fluency</th>
<th>Sentence Fluency</th>
<th>Sentence Fluency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letters and words are scribbled across page</td>
<td>Words are strung together into phrases</td>
<td>Simple sentences are used to convey meaning</td>
<td>Simple and compound sentences strengthen piece</td>
<td>Consistently varied sentence construction enhances piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sentences are not used, but instead random words or marks</td>
<td>Sentence parts are present, but not complete</td>
<td>Most simple sentence parts are present; variety in beginnings or length exists</td>
<td>Sentence structure varies; variety in beginnings and length exists</td>
<td>Sentences vary in structure, as well as beginnings and length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Connective words do not exist</td>
<td>Connective words may appear in sentence parts</td>
<td>Connective words, mostly “and,” serve as links between phrases</td>
<td>Connective words are more varied</td>
<td>Connective words work smoothly and enrich fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Rhythm is not evident</td>
<td>Rhythm is choppy and repetitive</td>
<td>Rhythm is more mechanical than fluid</td>
<td>Rhythm is more fluid than mechanical and is easy to read aloud</td>
<td>Rhythm is fluid and pleasant to read aloud</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key question:** Can you feel the words and phrases flow together as you read it aloud?

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# 6+1 Trait® 5 Point Beginning Writer's Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. EXPERIMENTING</th>
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<th>3. DEVELOPING</th>
<th>4. CAPABLE</th>
<th>5. EXPERIENCED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>Nearly every convention requires editing</td>
<td>Some conventions are correct, most are not</td>
<td>Half of conventions are correct and half need editing</td>
<td>More conventions are correct than not</td>
<td>Conventions require little editing to be published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Spelling is not evident, only strings of letters</td>
<td>Semiphonic spelling is attempted</td>
<td>Phonetic spelling is used; high-frequency words are still spotty</td>
<td>Spelling is usually accurate for grade-level words</td>
<td>High-frequency words are spelled correctly; spelling is very close on others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>No sense of punctuation exists</td>
<td>Random punctuation exists</td>
<td>End punctuation is usually correct, experiments with other punctuation</td>
<td>End punctuation is correct; some other punctuation is correct</td>
<td>Punctuation is usually correct and/or sometimes even creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Print sense is still emerging</td>
<td>Upper and lowercase letters are randomly used</td>
<td>Capitals are inconsistent but begin most sentences and some proper nouns</td>
<td>Capitals are more consistent and begin sentences and most proper nouns</td>
<td>Capitals are consistently accurate for sentence beginnings, proper nouns, and titles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>No awareness of grammar and/or usage exists</td>
<td>Part of a grammatical construction is present</td>
<td>A grammatical construction is present</td>
<td>Subject/verb agreement, proper tense are present but the rest is still spotty</td>
<td>Some control is shown over basic grade-level grammar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key question: How much editing would have to be done to be ready to share with an outside source? (Expectations should be based on grade level and include only skills that have been taught.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No formatting clues are present; placement of text and pictures is totally random</td>
<td>Formatting of text and pictures is starting to come together</td>
<td>Formatting of text and pictures is generally correct</td>
<td>Formatting of text and pictures is clear and thoughtful</td>
<td>Formatting of text and pictures assists comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Only scribbles are present</td>
<td>Handwriting shows letters beginning to take shape, though random in placement</td>
<td>Handwriting includes few discrepancies in letter shape; shapes are easily identifiable</td>
<td>Handwriting reveals proper manuscript, spaced and written appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Letters and/or words are strung together with no spacing</td>
<td>Spacing between letters and words is attempted</td>
<td>Spacing of words is mostly correct</td>
<td>Words, sentences, and paragraphs have proper spacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>If pictures are present, they are randomly placed</td>
<td>Pictures are placed appropriately</td>
<td>Pictures fit with text</td>
<td>Pictures add detail, support piece, and are appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>No identifiable markers (title, heading, bulleted, page numbers) exist</td>
<td>Markers are present but not connected to text</td>
<td>Some markers match some text</td>
<td>Markers clarify, organize, and define text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>No charts, tables, graphs are evident</td>
<td>Charts, tables, graphs are attempted but randomly placed</td>
<td>Charts, tables, graphs match text and are placed properly</td>
<td>Charts, tables, graphs match and clarify text; are placed together properly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key question: Is the finished piece easy to read, polished in presentation, and pleasing to the eye?

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