Ways I Can Support and Motivate Students Who Struggle With Writing: A Self-Study

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Ways I Can Motivate and Support Elementary Students Who Struggle with Writing: A Self-Study

By Jessica Aldinger

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of The College at Brockport, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education
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Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

While substitute teaching in a fourth grade classroom, I noticed that whenever I asked Jorge (all names are pseudonyms) to write something, he seemed to devote as little time and effort to the writing process as possible. Instead, he preferred to draw or use the iPad. I suspected that Jorge lacks confidence in his writing abilities and often felt frustrated, but he didn’t let on to his peers. Instead he joked about writing, making comments like, “Who needs writing when we have YouTube?”

When I asked Jorge to write an essay about whether students should be required to wear uniforms in school, before I could even finish my directions, he grumbled, “This is stupid.” I asked Jorge to plan what he would write and take his time while working on the essay. I encouraged him to give his best effort to the piece of writing. He was done in five minutes, ignoring everything I said. I did not observe Jorge using any planning strategies and he seemed to devote minimal time and effort to the writing process. Once Jorge completed the last sentence, he immediately put the paper in his desk never rereading or editing his work. It appeared that his primary goal was to complete the assignment and be done as quickly as possible. I interpreted these actions to indicate that he had no intentions of engaging in the writing process.

The next day, I reviewed the checklist of the writing process and the components the students need to include in their essay. When I asked the students to take out their essays and revise, Jorge rolled his eyes and said, “My writing is perfect!” I told them that I would be conferencing during our writer’s workshop time throughout the morning. I met with Jorge first and asked him what he did to plan his essay. He told me, “I did not need to plan this essay about
uniforms; I just wrote what came to my mind.” He went on to tell me that he didn’t think his writing needed to be revised, it looked just fine. Here is Jorge’s unedited writing piece:

   Children should be require to wear uniforms. Then ever one will look the same at schol and no one will have to argu with their parents over what to wear. In conclusion children should be require to wear uniforms to school everyday.

   After meeting with Jorge and going through the checklist of the writing process, I discussed what things Jorge could add to his writing. We talked about adding more details and reasons for requiring students to wear uniforms to school. I asked him what another reason would be that students should wear uniforms to school. He told me, “Students should wear uniforms so kids don’t get picked on for what they wear.” I said “Very good, that is an excellent reason, because students shouldn’t have to deal with getting picked on and bullied for the type of clothes they wear to school.” He nodded his head in agreement. Then we moved on to the revising and editing stage of the writing process. I asked Jorge if he revised and edited his draft. He looked at me and said, “It looks fine to me.” I said, “Well let’s go through and see if you think you wrote this writing piece to the best of your ability. Let’s see if you capitalized every letter that should be capital and put a punctuation mark where they belong. Let’s see if this writing piece makes sense when we read it aloud. Is that okay?” He nodded in agreement. After we read his piece aloud he looked at me with a confused look on his face. I could tell he knew his writing didn’t make sense after we read it aloud, yet I still asked him what was wrong. He responded, “That doesn’t make any sense and it’s really short!” I asked, “What can we do to spice up this writing piece?” He said “Well first…” Then he went on to make changes in his writing. This is the final, unedited piece Jorge wrote for our publishing day:
Children should be required to wear uniforms. Then every one will look the same at school and no one will have to argu with their parents over what to wear. Students should wear uniforms so they don’t get picked on for what they wear. It isn’t fair that students get piced on for what they wear to school. A uniform wood keep all students equal. In conclusion children should be required to wear uniforms to school everyday.

Santangelo, Harris and Graham (2008) suggest that students who approach the writing process similarly to Jorge, frustrated, lack of confidence and lack of attending to the writing process, may go on to become high school students who do not meet the national expectations for writing knowledge and skills. Given his behaviors and attitudes towards writing it is reasonable to believe that without an effective intervention, Jorge may continue to lack an interest in writing. In my opinion, based on his attitude and behaviors, Jorge seems to lack motivation for writing.

Jorge’s peer, Sarah struggles with writing, but for different reasons. Unlike Jorge, I’ve noticed how highly motivated Sarah is to write during writer’s workshop. She has many creative ideas, and is always eagerly sharing them with classmates. When reading, Sarah’s writing I notice that it often lacks details, transition phrases, a clear setting, actions and a plot, leaving the reader with the task of trying to connect the ideas to make sense of what Sarah has written. I find it difficult to read her handwriting, which further complicates the process. Sarah willingly accepts my feedback when I offer her guidance and support for her writing.

Students who struggle with writing often do so for a variety of reasons (Graham & Harris, 2005). Some students, such as Jorge, struggle with the motivation while others like Sarah struggle with fine motor ability and the writing process. It is important, that I know how and why students are struggling so I can develop ways to support their abilities and motivate them to engage fully in the writing process.
Significance of the Problem

Recent findings from the National Assessment of Education (2008) suggest that only one out of every five high school seniors have the required writing knowledge and skills they need to be successful. Santangelo, Harris and Graham (2008) state that more students are finding it difficult to plan, compose, draft and revise their writing, and are unable to find and use strategies that are effective in the writing process.

As part of my self-study research, I wanted to learn how to integrate effective strategies into my writing instruction that students like Jorge and Sarah could then use independently as they engage in the writing process. I wanted to find ways to support all students while motivating those students who seem to struggle with writing.

Student confidence plays a key role in motivating student writers (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007). Jasmine and Weiner (2007) discuss how teachers play a critical role in creating an atmosphere where students are comfortable and safe and motivated to write. They believe the writer’s workshop approach can provide opportunities for students to have a positive and motivating writing atmosphere. These opportunities include, working with peers, choosing what they wanted to write about, choosing a place to write in the room, and choosing a writing buddy (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007). Students who participate in writer’s workshop can increase their independence with and enjoyment of writing and develop more confidence and sense of self-worth (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007). Jasmine and Weiner (2007) recognize that the writer’s workshop model raises students’ motivation for writing and their self-perception.

During the writer’s workshop program, the teacher begins with a short sharing or reading, and then conducts a mini lesson, or skill instruction, where he or she introduces a new skill (Helsel & Greenberg, 2007). After the mini lesson, students write independently while the
teacher conferences individually with students. The workshop concludes with a closing or sharing time. According to Helsel and Greenberg (2007), students in a writer’s workshop classroom are constantly moving and the room is bustling with activity. Teachers provide their students with ample opportunities to work with their writing buddies and revise their writing. Many students flourish in the writer’s workshop environment (Helsel & Greenberg, 2007).

Pollington, Wilcox, and Morrison (2001) highlight how students who struggle with writing often experience a growing sense of frustration during the writing process. Those students have a diminished belief of their capabilities, a slippage in their grades and a lack of self-worth. And more often than not, students who struggle skip the very first steps of the writing process, which makes writing worthwhile: identifying why writing about a particular subject matters to them in the first place.

Fernsten and Reda (2011) believe that when teachers provide students with opportunities to make a connection to what they are writing, it makes a difference. The authors believe that teachers should give students the opportunity to write about something that matters to them. Teachers may give a prompt that is open-ended and involve reflection. For example, teachers may read a short poem or story and then ask students to reflect on their feelings and thoughts about the poem or story. Students could also choose to write about whatever comes to mind in relationship to the poem or story. When students are asked to reflect on experiences they are often able to take ownership of and feel a sense of pride in their writing. Such experiences will over time enable students to gain confidence in their abilities and increase their interest in writing (Fernsten & Reda, 2011).

Students who struggle with the writing process can benefit from using technology while writing (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). There are many forms and applications of technology
that can benefit students who struggle with writing. Digital stories provide a form of technology that students use as an alternative to writing a story by hand (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). Digital stories enable students to create a story on paper first and then use storyboards on the computer to put together a movie. Students then add graphics, soundtracks and a narration to bring the story to life. Using this multimedia approach enables students to discover their voice, structure their writing and gain confidence in their abilities (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). Digital storytelling can be motivating for all students, not just students who struggle with writing.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this self-study was to help me gain insight and understanding into ways I could better support and motivate students who struggle with the writing process. I researched various ways teachers engage students who struggle with writing, in terms of motivation and ability, and then tried those that seemed appropriate with my students. As I have already learned, students who struggle with writing may fall behind when their teachers don’t notice how they are struggling (Graham & Harris, 2005). I firmly believe in early intervention and wanted to find and use strategies such as writer’s workshop and digital storytelling to support students who struggle with writing. Through this five week study, I sought to answer the research question: How can I support and motivate students who struggle as writers?

I examined research that focuses on teaching students self-regulation strategies along with writing skills (Mason, Harris, & Graham, 2009). Plan, organize, write, edit and revise (POWER) and does it make sense? Is it connected? Can I add more? Note errors (SCAN) are two examples of self-regulated strategies that students can use during the writing process. When
a teacher is using a new writing strategy, it is important that he or she scaffolds students’
learning through the use of modeling and repetition so students are able to see the strategy and
then, in time, begin to integrate it independently (Englert, 2009). The self-regulated strategies are
taught with the student who struggles with writing in mind (Englert, 2009). Students who
struggle can use the self-regulating strategies for daily writing tasks to support their ability to
write independently (Englert, 2009).

I believe through the process of conducting this self-study that I have become a better
observer of students’ writing behaviors, and furthered my insights into how I can support and
motivate students who are struggling with the writing process. I recognized that the experience
of researching a question relevant to my teaching practices has improved my ability to collect
and analyze data and enhanced my abilities as a teacher of all students, not just those who
struggle with writing.

Throughout this self-study, I documented my teaching practices and my observations of
students in a researcher journal. In addition, I continued to research effective strategies for
supporting and motivating students who struggle with writing by reading books and articles
related to the topic. I integrated those strategies that were most appropriate for my students given
their needs, attitudes and abilities.

**Study Approach**

My study followed a self-study protocol (Samaras, 2011). I observed while working as a
substitute teacher in a large urban school district in western New York. I have been a substitute
teacher in the district for four years. I have worked with many students from low socioeconomic
backgrounds. I have seen many students struggle with the writing process. Throughout my self-study I was a nonintrusive participant.

There are five characteristics of a self-study; (a) self-initiated and focused, (b) improvement-aimed, (c) interactive, (d) multiple, primarily qualitative methods, and (e) exemplar-based validation (Samaras, 2011). I incorporated each of these into my research. I conducted a self-study that was self-initiated and focused on my continued development as a teacher. I believe the findings from the study will enable me to improve my practice as a teacher who supports all students during the writing process. I took a qualitative, narrative based approach to the research through the collection of data grounded in daily observations and reflections of my teaching. The self-study was improvement-aimed because my aim was to improve my ability to support the writing behaviors of students who struggle with writing as well as motivate those students who lack a desire to engage in the writing process. The self-study was exemplar based validation because a self-study should follow all the guidelines for trustworthiness used by researchers, which validates the findings. It is important that the self-study be recursive and nonlinear in nature. I reflected daily on my teaching approaches and engaged in a process of trial and error with the intent to improve my abilities and knowledge base, as well as my students. I focused on my research question by observing students’ writing behaviors throughout the school day and reflecting on my own teaching practices during the English Language Arts (ELA) block. I conducted a six week study while substituting in a variety of elementary classrooms.

**Rationale**

I chose the topic of how I can better support and motivate students who struggle with writing as my self-study because writing is very important to me. Since becoming a teacher, I
have seen many students struggle with the writing process. I want to find ways to motivate students and build their confidence in their writing abilities.

Observing and journaling over a six week process enabled me to build my understanding of the most effective strategies and techniques that I could use to support and motivate students who struggle with the writing process. I recognize that it is important to address multiple aspects of competence, or the ability to do something successful, when teaching students who struggle as writers (Graham & Harris, 2005). Students have a need for competence, where they strive to control the outcome of a situation (Boyd, 2011).

Summary

The act of writing a story, poem, essay or letter can at times be overwhelming for students. Some may struggle putting their thoughts and ideas together to compose a story. Some may be unable to plan and organize their writing to create a cohesive narrative. Others may struggle with the mechanics and technical aspects- punctuation, spelling and conventions- of the writing process. Others may be unmotivated to write and have no interest in communicating or expressing themselves in writing. Through this self-study I wanted to find ways to support all students who are struggle with the writing process.

Through my review of the research related to writing instruction I found strategies that I could integrate into my teaching to motivate and support students while they are writing. Having a plethora of strategies to use with students enabled me to motivate students to be successful. I recognized that in order to help students become engaged in the writing process and feel successful as writers they needed to feel motivated and confident in their writing abilities. Self-
regulated strategies and integrating technology are two important strategies that I investigated and integrated into my teaching practices over the course of the six week self-study.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

I recognize that it is my responsibility as a teacher to support the literacy development of all students, but specifically those who struggle with writing. Finding and using strategies to support these students was one of my goals in this self-study as I researched the question: How can I support and motivate students who struggle with writing? In order to contextualize my self-study research, I reviewed literature related to writing instruction in general as well as for students who are struggling with writing, specifically strategies that teachers can use to support students who struggle. I also researched ways that teachers can use to motivate students who struggle with writing.

I begin this chapter by defining the behaviors of a writer who struggles. I then turn to a discussion of the literature related to different strategies teachers can use to help writers who struggle become independent. I then move into a discussion about the Common Core Learning Standards and how they relate to expectations to student writing. I next explore ways teachers can integrate different forms of technology into the writing process to support students who struggle. I conclude by discussing ways teachers can motivate students who struggle with writing.

Students Who Struggle With Writing

There are often common behaviors and characteristics of students who struggle with writing (Santangelo, Harris & Graham, 2008). Santangelo, Harris and Graham (2008) indicate that often students who struggle as writers face challenges with their writing related to difficulties acquiring, utilizing, and managing the strategies that are used by skilled writers. Students who struggle with writing often lack knowledge of writing and have ineffective
approaches to the writing process. They often do not plan in advance and have difficulty generating content ideas or struggle with brainstorming. They have difficulty formulating ideas about which to write. In addition, Santangelo, Harris and Graham (2008) recognize that students who struggle with writing often do not revise and edit their work, struggle with handwriting, and have difficulty putting time and effort into their writing piece. These students will often be the first ones done with their writing, and will not go back to edit when there is time permitted for editing and revising (Santangelo, Harris, & Graham, 2008).

In order to support writers, Bradley and Lock (2001) suggest teachers think about how to develop their students’ writing skills and abilities in each writing session. Demonstrating how to use a specific skill is important. For example, when a teacher does a five to ten minute demonstration of how to generate a topic list for writing ideas it can help writers visually see how to compose the list, instead of just having it explained to them. Bradley and Lock suggest that teachers give students who struggle positive motivation and encouragement as the students move through the writing process. It is important that teachers find and validate areas of strength in their student’s writing and comment positively before focusing on the areas of writing that need improvement. Bradley and Lock believe that it is important for writers who struggle to have consistency and develop persistence in their daily writing routine (2001).

McMaster, Du, Parker and Pinto (2011) encourage teachers to use early identification and early intervention such as Response to Intervention (RTI) to address students’ literacy problems and to prevent future writing problems. RTI’s goal is to provide personalized, just in time intervention for students who are in danger of falling behind. There are three tiers of RTI. The first tier is given to all students. Tier 2 is used with students who benefit from extra, more personalized instruction, in small groups. Tier 3 involves the school’s most effective, trained
teachers, who provide intense, individual instruction only for students who do not succeed in Tier 2 (Robins & Antrim, 2013).

Saddler and Asaro-Saddler (2013) state that in Tier 1 the teacher’s instruction should be interactive and individualized and directed to help students improve conventions of print, sentence construction, and genre requirements. Students should also be writing across content areas and working collaboratively with other students in order to make the writing task meaningful to the student. While students in Tier 1 are writing through the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) they should receive frequent feedback from peers and teachers. Saddler and Asaro-Saddler believe the first major step in establishing a quality writing program is to schedule time for writing. They believe it is imperative that children write for 45 to 60 minutes a day to encourage students to think, reflect and revise their writing. Students will not progress as writers unless opportunities to apply and develop their craft are provided.

Saddler and Asaro-Saddler state that Tier 2 intervention is the same writing instruction as Tier 1, however, teachers do it in small groups of four to eight students. The intervention sessions are 20 to 40 minutes and provided to the student several times a week. The intervention of Tier 2 is more individualized and intense to meet the student’s struggling needs.

Teachers use Tier 3 intervention with one to four students and usually for 45 to 60 minutes, several times per week. Tier 3 intervention focuses in on, additional repetition of the writing skill, an increase in praise and feedback to the students and enabling the students to learn the writing skill at their own pace. Tier 3 is the most intense of the three tiers of intervention. Not all students require Tier 3 interventions.
Difficulties with writing tasks, such as spelling, handwriting, and composing, can have lasting and detrimental effects on students as they progress through high school and beyond (McMaster, Du, Parker & Pinto, 2011). By intervening early, teachers can provide the students who struggle as writers with the support they need to become more successful in the future.

**Strategies for Developing Students’ Self-Regulation**

Fernsten and Reda (2011) discuss how Twenty-first century literacies will require students to think outside the box and more critically about new writing tasks because technology has increased the intensity of literate environments. Twenty-first century literacies refer to students’ abilities to create, critique, analyze and evaluate multimedia texts.

Digital literacies are an example of Twenty-first century literacy, where students can create, manipulate and design their own projects. With technology advancing so rapidly in the Twenty-first century, teachers are able to use the Internet and other multimedia texts to create assessments for students (Fernsten & Reda, 2011). Use of Twenty-first century literacies require studentst have proficiency and fluency in tools with technology that are necessary to build their writing performance (Fernsten & Reda, 2011).

Students must also be able to build cross-cultural connections and build relationships with others to strengthen independent thought (Fernsten & Reda, 2011). Fernsten and Reda go on to say that students need to have cross-cultural connections because the students need the interpersonal skills that require the student’s to collaborate with others. Working in groups has become a big component of Twenty-first century literacies (Fernsten & Reda, 2011).

A teacher’s critical focus on effective writing strategies can help students develop effective and sophisticated approaches to composing a writing piece, similar to those of skilled
writers (Milford & Harrison, 2010). The main goal of teaching strategies is to promote students’ use of self-regulation in writing (Milford & Harrison, 2010). Milford and Harrison (2010) believe students should learn these self-regulated strategies from the teacher and gradually use the strategy with support, eventually using the strategy independently. Self-regulated strategies are an instructional model where the teacher helps the students explicitly learn the same kinds of planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing strategies that are used by successful writers.

**Self-Regulated Strategy Development**

Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD), designed and first implemented by Graham and Harris (2005), is designed to explicitly teach and guide students to set goals, monitor their performance, self-instruct, and self-reinforce. Mason, Harris and Graham (2011) define the process of each step: teachers can use goal setting to help students set specific, challenging, and measurable goals for themselves. Teachers help students self-monitor their progress in achieving their goals, by counting the number of strategy they used while planning, as well as counting the number of parts written in their final piece. Mason, Harris and Graham state that teachers encourage students to revise their planning notes and final writing pieces to include any missing parts. A graphic organizer may be a helpful tool for students to use when they are planning their writing. While teachers are explicitly teaching the students strategies for planning, drafting, and revising text, it is effective in improving the performance of students who struggle with the writing process (Mason, Harris & Graham, 2011). The six recursive stages of SRSD are:

- Develop background knowledge
- Discuss strategies
• Model the strategies
• Memorize the strategies
• Support the use of the strategies and self-regulation strategies
• Independent performance

The students can move back and forth between the stages depending on whether they are understanding the strategy or not. The teacher explicitly teaches SRSD and practiced by students independently or in small groups throughout the writing process. The teacher can use this approach to help students develop genre specific and general writing strategies (Mason, Harris & Graham, 2011).

Mason, Harris and Graham (2011) discussed how Roger, a middle school teacher used a strategy called POW: Pick my idea, Organize my notes, Write and say more, with his students. Roger told his students that he was fully committed to supporting their writing goal and teaching the POW strategy to support students with their writing. Roger wanted the students to agree that they were equally committed to learning the strategy and working hard on their writing. He modeled the strategy for his students and conducted a think aloud for the students to see the writing process. After Roger chose his writing topic, he helped students choose their own ideas (Mason, Harris & Graham, 2011). He then helped the students come up with mnemonic devices to remember the steps of POW. Most of Roger’s students were able to write independently so he assessed students on their use of the strategy and on their writing pieces (Mason, Harris & Graham, 2011).

Teachers can integrate two or more of the self-regulated stages, which are not meant to be taught in a linear fashion, into a lesson. Graham, Harris and MacArthur (2006) discussed how Ms. Dandoff, a fifth grade teacher, shifted the stages of self-regulatory strategy development
around based on her students’ needs. During the discussion stage, Ms. Dandoff explained the strategy and created a chart with the strategy and the student’s ideas to help them remember the strategy. While Ms. Dandoff was in the discussion stage, she integrated the memorize strategy by asking the students come up with mnemonic devices. Later in the week while students were in the independent stage, Ms. Dandoff had the students who were struggling join her for extra support and modeling. Ms. Dandoff went back and re-modeled how the students could use the strategy in their writing. In Ms. Dandoff’s class, students had a strategy for writing that required them to use to choose a topic, brainstorm, organize, read, write, and say more. One student came up with the saying, “Choose brainstorm, organize- they will help you read, write and say more: check it out!” It is just a silly sentence, but it helped students remember the strategy.

Mason, Harris and Graham (2011) discuss the importance of teacher scaffolding in both elementary and secondary settings. Teacher support and guided practice are critical to SRSD. The teacher begins as the leader and gradually the student assumes more and more responsibility. During the support it stage, the students in Roger’s classroom began writing for themselves, instead of watching their teacher demonstrate how to write and use the strategy on chart paper. Teachers work toward students taking ownership of self-monitoring their use of the writing strategy, and determining what strategy to use depending on the writing task. Teachers encourage students to create their own “think sheets” and planning sheets because the graphic organizer won’t always be available. A “think sheet” is a visual aide that contains prompts and questions students can use in their writing (Englert, 2009). Findings from Mason, Harris and Graham’s (2011) study of middle school students in a low income urban school district, indicate that when students use self-regulated strategies they improve what they write, how they write and how they perceive the writing process.
POWER Strategy

Plan, Organize, Write, Edit, and Revise (POWER) is a self-regulated writing strategy that students can use that is very similar to the writing process. To guide students through each stage, teachers provide “think sheets” that students use to visualize that particular part of the writing process. Englert (2009) states that “think sheets” have prompts, questions and cues that students can use to self-monitor and promote strategic actions. Englert says, “Graphic organizers serve as objects to think with and objects to write with. Teachers should teach these organizational tools and text structures as strategies.” (p.109, 2009) Students should use the “think sheets” and other graphic organizers to support their writing, not just copy them from the board and fill them out. It is a strategy for students to use for planning their writing (Englert, 2009). Englert defines a graphic organizer as a visual tool that aides students in representing ideas, thoughts, concepts, knowledge, or ideas and the relationship between them. The main purpose of a graphic organizer is to support students in their learning through a visual representation (Englert, 2009).

Students can use the POWER strategy for a variety of different writing tasks and teachers can create a cheat sheet for students to use and put on their desk to remind students of the strategy. For example, the acronym POWER could be written on a card and then the word for each letter next to it. It is crucial for teachers to explicitly teach their students how to use the strategy and go through the entire writing process. Each word of POWER: plan, organize, write, edit and revise is a strategy, requiring the students to go through each step of the writing process.

Teachers begin by demonstrating how students can plan their writing. Students can ask themselves questions such as “What am I writing about? Who am I writing for? What do I know?” Next, teachers demonstrate and model how students can organize their writing. During
this phase, students ask themselves questions such as “How can I group my ideas? What can I call my grouped ideas?” (Englert, 2009)

The most important and longest step is when teachers explicitly teach students how to write. In this step, students write main idea sentences that introduce the grouped ideas, add related details, evidence and examples and use keywords.

The teachers should show students how to edit their writing because many students do not want to engage in this process. During this phase, students ask themselves, “Does everything make sense? What questions will my readers have?”

Revising is the final part of the strategy, POWER. This is when the students add, delete and rearrange their writing. The teacher helps students develop the strategies of revising their work, correcting errors and adding and deleting some parts of their work, which can lay a strong foundation for their students’ success as writers (Englert, 2009). Over time, students learn that the first draft of their writing is not their last. Graham, Harris and Mason (2005) state, “The knowledge of struggling young writers can be improved substantially by teaching them strategies for planning and writing in conjunction with the knowledge and self-regulatory procedures needed to use these strategies effectively” (p. 238).

SCAN Strategy

Santangelo, Harris and Graham (2008) studied a fifth grade classroom where students used the self-regulated stages of development and a self-regulated strategy, SCAN, during writer’s workshop. SCAN stands for does it make Sense? Is it Connected to my belief? Can I Add more? Note errors. Barbara and Joan were the teachers in the fifth grade class and they began the workshop with individual conferences with students that focused on what the students
already knew about the story writing process and elements of the story. The teachers introduced the new story grammar strategy and then discussed with the students how including story elements and details would improve a story.

During a mini-lesson, students focused on the strategy and on including story elements such as, plot, setting, characters, resolution and emotions to their writing. Students then looked at previous writing and graphed how many story elements they used in their previous writing. Santangelo, Harris and Graham (2008) highlight that this is a way for students to visually see how many story elements they use in their papers.

In the next step in the self-regulation stage of development teachers model the strategy for students. Barbara shared an idea that she had for her writing with her class and used the “think aloud” technique to model how the use the SCAN strategy to develop the students’ writing. Barbara wrote the first draft on large chart paper with the class. Once the first draft was complete Barbara introduced the SCAN revision strategy: Does it make Sense? Is it Connected to my belief? Can I Add more? Note errors. Barbara modeled how to use the SCAN strategy by going through each step and thinking aloud with her rough draft. Barbara and the class focused on revising and editing their first draft. She modeled how to make sure all the story elements, setting, characters, characters’ goals, plot, problem, and solution, were included and then worked on improving and elaborating on her ideas.

In the next step of the self-regulation strategy of development students memorize the SCAN strategy using a mnemonic device or some type of creative way that helps them remember the steps of the process (Santangelo, Harris & Graham, 2008). Barbara and Joan had students start to independently use the strategy. Some students still struggled with writing and
using the strategy so Barbara and Joan collaboratively planned a story with them and supported them through the writing process (Santangelo, Harris & Graham, 2008).

The final step is complete independence, which most students meet; however, the students who struggle with writing, often need extra support. Barbara and Joan conferenced with students to evaluate their use of the self-regulation writing strategy and the SCAN self-regulated strategy. They also discussed with students how they could transfer these strategies to other writing tasks (Santangelo, Harris & Graham, 2008).

**Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy**

The Common Core State Standards place a great deal of emphasis on daily writing (Butler, Monda-Amay and Yoon, 2013). Daily writing is a way to improve students’ abilities to communicate their thoughts and ideas through writing and a deeper way of thinking (Daddona, 2013). An example of this would be when a teacher asks students to reflect on a poem, a newspaper article or a short story, for five or ten minutes each morning. Such an opportunity provides students with a short amount of time to write and make real life or text connections, while still using and developing their deeper level thinking skills (Daddona, 2013). Troia and Olinghouse (2013) discuss how academic writing is an essential part of the kindergarten through twelfth grade experience as the students are expected to compose texts, in order to demonstrate, support, and deepen their understanding and knowledge of the academic language and themselves as writers.

Troia and Olinghouse state that the Common Core State Standards will help facilitate an emphasis on evidence-based writing. Evidence-based writing is said to increase student
achievement through specification of academic content standards (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013). With evidence-based practices, students’ writing becomes authentic and research-based.

Smith, Wilhelm and Fredricksen (2013) state that traditional approaches to writing instruction, such as asking students to compose in response to a writing prompt fail to help students develop the knowledge that expert writers use to succeed. Smith, Wilhelm and Fredricksen indicate that students need five kinds of composing: composing to practice, composing to plan, first-draft composing, final-draft composing and composing to transfer.

Students should start with composing to practice by practicing the writing procedure they will need to know (Smith, Wilhelm & Fredricksen, 2013). For example, teachers should give students time to practice writing. In the first writing anchor standard of the Common Core---write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence---teachers need to support students with many opportunities to practice developing claims and writing supporting arguments (Smith, Wilhelm & Fredricksen, 2013). In many schools, composing to plan is done through brainstorming. Teachers worry about the extent to which brainstorming has become the dominant mode of prewriting that students are asked to do it because it presumes that students already know all that they need to know in order to write (Smith, Wilhelm & Fredricksen, 2013). Making effective use of what a student already knows is certainly crucially important, however writing is also about discovering new knowledge (Smith, Wilhelm & Fredricksen, 2013). Teachers must help students with the process of finding evidence from text for their writing, or by composing effective interview questions or surveys, or designing experiments (Smith, Wilhelm & Fredricksen, 2013). Such practices relate to the Common Core Standards because the standards are evidence-based and require students to demonstrate independence through writing. With these strategies for
writing, students will eventually be able to demonstrate their independence in the writing process (Smith, Wilhelm & Fredricksen, 2013).

Instruction in first-draft composing is designed to help students overcome the fear of the blank page, a problem that plagues even professional writers (Smith, Wilhelm & Fredricksen, 2013). Teachers often provide students with many opportunities to get started on their first draft.

Once students have completed their drafts, students will begin the publishing and polishing process. Smith, Wilhelm and Fredricksen (2013) believe that teachers should teach students what they can accomplish through revision so they understand that revision means making sentence-level corrections as well as making substantive changes.

Composing to transfer is the most important part of the process (Smith, Wilhelm & Fredricksen, 2013). The researchers discuss that students must be able to take what they wrote and reflect on their writing. Students must be able to transfer their knowledge and skills and automatically apply those skills to a new writing task (Smith, Wilhelm & Fredricksen, 2013). The Common Core State Standards call for students to be regularly engaged in all five kinds of composing of crafting the convincing arguments, clear and comprehensive information texts, and compelling narratives (Smith, Wilhelm & Fredricksen, 2013).

Smith, Wilhelm and Fredricksen (2013) suggest that teachers review the Common Core and their own practices to ensure they are creating opportunities for their students to develop the deep and transferable knowledge about writing that students will need in college and in their careers. It is important that teachers look at all the standards, not just the grade level they are teaching, because the expectations for different grade levels intertwine and relate to each other (Daddona, 2013).
The Common Core State Standards have modules for each grade level and include, skills modules in which students practice blending (reading) and segmenting (spelling) using the sound spellings they have learned through a synthetic phonics approach. Handwriting, spelling, and the writing process are also part of the skills strand. The ELA curriculum includes six modules that focus on reading, writing, listening, and speaking in response to high-quality texts. McLaughlin and Overturf (2012) indicate that each module is intended to last a quarter of a school year; the addition of two extra modules allows for teacher choice throughout the year. The modules will scaffold content that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA and Literacy. Each module is supposed to culminate in an end-of-module performance task, aligned to the CCSS, which can provide information to educators on whether students in their classrooms are achieving the standards (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). Modules may include several units and each unit may include a set of sequenced, progressions of learning experiences that build knowledge and understanding of major concepts. The modules also include daily lesson plans, guiding questions, recommended texts, scaffolding strategies, examples of proficient student work, and other classroom resources (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012).

Integrating Technology into the Writing Process

The Common Core State Standards are designed to establish consistency and set high expectations for all students (Butler, Monda-Amaya & Yoon, 2013). Technology is integrated throughout the standards at all grade levels, placing emphasis on the use of a variety of digital tools such as, the Internet, iPad applications and digital stories, and generating inquiry using digital content and resources (Butler, Monda-Amaya & Yoon, 2013). Butler, Monda-Amaya, and
Yoon (2013) believe that students who use technology to convey ideas and designing of production is done using multimedia and digital projects.

Students, who struggle with writing, may struggle with a range of difficulties, such as, conventions, organization, story elements, motivation and persistence in writing (Butler, Monda-Amaya & Yoon, 2013). Word processing, concept mapping, the Internet, and digital storytelling are just a few examples of how students who struggle with writing are using technology to improve their writing (MacArthur, 2009). The use of technology such as computers, iPads, Kindles and digital technology during the writing process can be a way to motivate all students (MacArthur, 2009).

**Word Processing**

One of the potential benefits for students to use word processing during the writing process is the ease with which they can edit and revise (MacArthur, 2009). MacArthur (2009) was studying educational technology to see if and how the technology could support students who struggle with writing. MacArthur (2009) focused on students in a summer literacy program. Students wrote articles and stories using a word processor that they then published in a camp newsletter. MacArthur states that students often struggle with the revision and editing stage of the writing process, so their teachers reminded them to constantly go back and revise their work when they are typing on the computer.

According to MacArthur, word processing can be effective if combined with a writing instruction program. MacArthur believes that when students have opportunities to write about topics that are important to them, and then have ample opportunities to share their writing with their classmates, as they do during writer’s workshop, they will feel ownership of their writing.
When teachers encourage students to use correct fingering while typing and then monitor their speed and accuracy on the keyboard, this helps students develop their word processing skills. In order to get the full benefit of word processing students should complete the entire writing process from drafting through publication using the computer (MacArthur, 2009). Teachers can support students who struggle with writing by allowing them to draft, edit and revise their writing, using the computer and word processing (MacArthur, 2009).

The students in MacArthur’s study were an elementary self-contained classroom and learned the self-regulated strategy, CSPACE: Characters, Setting, Problem, Action, Conclusion and Emotion. The students developed a narrative using the entire writing process, planning, drafting, editing, revising and publishing while using the word processor to support their writing process.

Concept Mapping

Concept mapping and graphic organizers are two strategies used widely during writing instruction to ease the process of revision for students who struggle with writing. A concept map is a diagram that often represents ideas and information in boxes or circles and shows the relationship between those ideas and information (MacArthur, 2009). Students can insert new ideas and easily change the organization of information (MacArthur, 2009). There are many computer programs that students can use to create a concept map or graphic organizer. One software that students can use to create a concept map is Inspiration, which allows students to visually organize and represent their ideas on the computer. The software was created by Helfgott and Westhaver in 1982 to help students comprehend, create, and communicate their ideas using a concept map (MacArthur, 2009).
One advantage of using this type of visual tool is that it enables students to easily edit and revise their graphic organizer during the brainstorming process. According to MacArthur (2009), electronic concept maps can go beyond paper ones because students can hide details, and expand maps to fit their needs. Most electronic concept maps have a feature that the student can use to automatically turn it from a map to an outline. Such a feature enables students to create a visual representation of their planning, and then move to an organized outline of their thoughts and ideas. The outline could contain boxes for an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion. Helping students who struggle as writers to see their ideas visually in a concept map can help them understand how to move from brainstorming to organizing their work for the next phase of the writing process (MacArthur, 2009).

The Internet

Teachers use the Internet in many ways to support teaching and learning (MacArthur, 2009). For example, teachers publish their students’ work on a classroom web page, visit online writing sites to gather resources or enable students to surf the Internet for a book club project (MacArthur, 2009). Teachers invite students to develop inquiry projects that require them to research information on the Internet and then present on their research in a written piece.

Students can become highly motivated when an activity involves research using the computer, rather than using books to find their information (MacArthur, 2009). MacArthur (2009) describes projects with students in kindergarten through twelfth grade, which stimulated motivation for writing. In MacArthur’s study, teachers in kindergarten through twelfth grade used the Internet with writing extensively in their classrooms. The teachers published their students’ work on web pages, had online writing sites and wrote collaboratively with other
schools. When the students were working collaboratively with other schools, the students were working on intercultural communication projects where students wrote back and forth to students of different backgrounds and experiences. MacArthur found that the inquiry projects with other schools drew on student’s interests and motivated students to write. In the secondary classrooms, teachers used the Internet more for access to information than for publication. Students could also post articles online or participate in discussion boards for a topic chosen by the teacher. In one classroom, students chose an online article from their local newspaper and worked in a group to collaboratively summarizing the article. Students had to revise and edit their writing. The class put their articles and summaries together in the form of an online class newspaper. According to MacArthur, the students were motivated to write, knowing their work was going to be published on the Internet (2009).

Many teachers identify their use of the Internet with students as a way to interactively support a lesson (Kervin, Verenikina, Jones, & Beath, 2013). One teacher used an interactive whiteboard connect with the Internet to interactively support and motivate her students, ages eleven to thirteen, during a lesson on maps by displaying a map from the Internet on the whiteboard. She had the students come up to the whiteboard and locate places on the map (Kervin, Verenikina, Jones, & Beath, 2013). This lesson was motivating to students because they were able to interact with the map by locating places and features on the map, instead of reading and viewing them in a textbook. Kervin, Verenikina, Jones, and Beath (2013) describe how the teachers with students from four to thirteen recognize that their students were interested, motivated and inspired to write and use the technology, such as, iPads, Kindles, Internet, and interactive whiteboards to support students learning in the classroom. With the evolving world of
technology, we, as teachers, are witnessing dramatic growth in the number of students using the Internet as an essential learning tool in their daily lives.

Many teachers have used the Internet to bring undeniable opportunities in helping students who struggle with writing (Foroutan, Noordin & Hamzah, 2013). Foroutan, Noordin, and Hamzah (2013) say that students who use the World Wide Web begin to understand that besides connecting to the real world, and doing research, the Internet is no longer just a fun thing to do; it is a form of communication.

In Foroutan, Noordin, and Hamzah’s study (2013), 42 students, ages 20 to 22 years old, were divided into two classes. One group was a paper and pen dialogue journal group. The other group was an e-mail dialogue journal group. After being taught by the teacher how to use the e-mail system, both the e-mail group and pen and paper group were asked by their teacher to write and dialogue for fifteen minutes at the beginning of their class period. The minimum was three sentences and there was no maximum for the writing. At the end of the class period students were asked to respond to a peer’s dialogue writing. At the end of the study, results were compared by the researchers in terms of the students’ post writing scores. The students in the e-mail dialogue group outperformed their peers in the pen and paper group. Foroutan, Noordin, and Hamzah (2013) believe that the use of e-mail enabled the students to improve their learning and inspired them to write as it logically and organize their thoughts. With e-mail, the students are able to correct their mistakes and rewrite easier on the screen without worrying about the structure or grammatical errors (Foroutan, Noordin & Hamzah, 2013).
Applications for the iPad and the Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards embed the use of technology into the writing standards (Cohen, 2012). For example, writing standard six states, “Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others” (Cohen, 2012). Students can use iPads that have applications or “apps” that strive to meet writing standards one, five and six (Cohen, 2012). Cohen (2012) discusses the Common Core State Standards and the different iPad apps that students can use to incorporate technology.

K-5 Writing Standard One: Text Types and Purposes, focuses on writing arguments to support claims on a topic or idea, with supporting details and evidence. Subtext is an iPad app that students can use to read collaboratively (Cohen, 2012). Any article on the Internet can be read by the students in Subtext, and students can use the article to summarize or analyze it. Students can highlight, annotate, ask questions and look up phrases in the article. Cohen (2012) says, Subtext aligns with K-5 Writing Standard One: Text Types and Purposes because students can use the app to make meaning from the text and find evidence to support their argument.

K-5 Writing Standard One: Text Types and Purposes indicates students write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. News 360 is an iPad app that students can customize to view the news on the left or right of the screen. News 360 aligns with Writing Standard One because students are finding topic and finding evidence to support and defend that topic. The students are then able to read the news articles and write about the different points of view because the app always provides issues with two sides. Cohen (2012) indicates that News 360 enables students to look up a current issue and see the perspective from two different sides.
K-5 Standard Five and Six: Production and Distribution of Writing represent the writing process; planning, revising, editing, rewriting, using the Internet and publishing. For planning students’ writing there is an iPad app called Lino that helps students organize their writing ideas in ways that are meaningful to them. Lino helps students to see their ideas in a linear way (Cohen, 2012).

Popplet is a graphic organizer iPad app that students can use to create text or photo bubbles to help them see their ideas in organizational or graphical way (Cohen, 2012). Cohen (2012) believes that students who struggle with writing can use this form of technology to organize their writing in a more visual way. While students are using the apps, they can integrate technology with writing. Most of the apps require students to use the Internet, often times they are producing and publishing writing and interacting and collaborating with others (Cohen, 2012).

**Digital Storytelling**

Digital writing instruction is defined as compositions created with reading, writing, viewing, listening and collaborating on a computer or other device that is connected to the Internet (Butler, Monda-Amaya & Yoon, 2013). Students engage in writing through a variety of digital formats: e-mail, social media, web sites, and Internet navigation. The Common Core State Standards refer to multimodal strategies for writing, which Butler, Monda-Amaya and Yoon define as print, recorded music, photographs, the Internet, and computer based programs to create digital stories (2013).

Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) define digital stories as a multimedia text consisting of still images complemented by a narrated soundtrack that tells a story or presents a documentary.
Creating digital stories can be motivating for students because they can remain engaged throughout the entire writing process (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). Digital stories are an example of a multimedia text that encompasses both traditional and new literacies and has the potential for stimulating writers who struggle (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009).

Digital storytelling incorporates seven elements into narrative writing that a writer can use to create an effective digital story: point of view, dramatic question, emotional content, economy, pacing, the gift of voice and soundtrack (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). Point of view enables the storyteller to express through first person their personal experiences, which then allows the viewer to connect with the storyteller. When a storyteller creates a dramatic question it can grab a viewer’s attention. Use of a dramatic question is how the plot is formed in the digital story. When a storyteller uses an emotional content, the viewer will more likely stay engaged throughout the entire digital story. The storyteller must choose appropriate music and images to coordinate with the story. Economy focuses on the storyteller being aware of the use of language and knowing who their audience. When the storyteller is creating a digital story that person must keep their pacing of the story in mind. The storyteller does not want to create a story that is too fast or too boring and slow. A storyteller’s voice is essential to the digital story. Using the storyteller’s own voice is crucial in narrating their story. Pitch and expression is important when the storyteller is creating the story. When a storyteller is selecting the soundtrack for their digital story they must be mindful in their music selections. The storyteller will want to choose music that will enhance their digital stories and create an emotional response (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009).

Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) highlight that storytellers go through the entire writing process---planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing---of composing a story, using
pencil and paper or a word processor. The storyteller then puts the story into numbered storyboards. The storyteller then adds scenes, personal pictures, clipart or image frames to tell their story. The storyteller can use drawings that they have drawn themselves and then scanned into the computer, or they can search the Internet to find pictures and graphics to match their story. When the storyteller’s use media from the Internet, they must cite their work and any other copyright information, often times it is put into the rolling credits at the end the digital story.

Next, the storyteller creates the narration for the story. The use of a storyteller’s voice can make the digital story interesting and engaging, so the storyteller should view this part of project as a performance. The storyteller’s voices come out in the narration, enabling the audience to feel the writer’s passion for the topic. The storyteller then compiles the media files into a movie.

Teachers and students can use the software program, Microsoft Photo Story 3, through the process (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). At this point, the storyteller can add soundtrack to the movie to enhance the narration and support the overall impact of the story. The final step is editing and revising. The storyteller adds title pages, transitions between slides and any other final touches. An important step in the process is when the writers share their digital story with their peers, which mirrors the process of sharing any final writing piece. Publishing is one of the most important components of the writing process because it provides an opportunity for the storyteller to feel a sense of ownership of their writing and creation (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009).

Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) state that engaging with the components involved in creating a digital story may help students who struggle with writing because they compose more strategically and through an interdisciplinary framework. Students’ narrations of their stories reduce common struggles among the struggling writers such as the writing process, providing...
important details, and creating a plot. Students are drafting their first copy on paper, however when they put their drafts into the storyboards, they will see the gaps in their writing. Students who struggle with writing will be able to visually see what is missing and fill it in with the missing details, plot, characters, problem or resolution (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). Students who struggle with the writing process are able to edit and revise their writing with ease using the digital story. Students can replace images quickly; and the students can edit their narration with little frustration (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009).

**Motivating Students Who Struggle with Writing**

According to Lienemann, Graham, Leader-Janssen, and Robert-Reid (2006), teachers can help their students develop the skills or knowledge they need to use and apply the self-regulated strategies effectively to enhance student motivation, the writing task and the student’s behavior during writing.

**Intrinsic Motivation**

Intrinsic motivation is an important motivator in daily life (Boyd, 2011). When applied to education, there are three primary psychological needs for students: the need for competence, the need for self-determination, and the need for relatedness (Boyd, 2011). Boyd (2011) defines the need for competence as students striving to control outcomes of situations. The need for self-determination entails student’s attempts to feel ownership of their own actions and to have a voice in determining their own behavior. The need for relatedness refers to students being able to relate to others and themselves as well as being able to socialize with other students (Boyd, 2011).
In a 2011 study, Boyd worked with Teresa, a student who was labeled learning disabled (LD). Teresa struggled with writing on a daily basis. During the study, Teresa’s teacher, Boyd, asked her to read from a wordless picture book and encouraged her not to worry about whether she was right or wrong. After she read aloud from a wordless picture book, Teresa wrote her story on paper. Teresa’s use of the picture book allowed her to have some degree of success because she wasn’t worrying about getting words wrong or what the story said. Teresa took initiative, she was engaged in the reading and writing process because it was her own story and she felt competent. Intrinsic motivation stems from a student’s interests and capacities to overcome challenges that are neither too difficult nor too easy (Boyd, 2011).

In his study of a third grade classroom, where assignments were being evaluated by a group of teachers and Miller, based on how challenging they were to students, Miller (2003) recognized that students were more intrinsically motivated and focused when they wrote multiple paragraphs over several days while collaborating with peers, rather than when working alone underlining answers from a workbook. Miller found that when a teacher provided students with challenging academic tasks, it increased the students’ learning and motivation. He discovered that students were much more engaged in learning when the task was more difficult, rather than being too easy. For example, instead of giving students a worksheet about pronouns, contractions or vocabulary, the teacher gave the students a writing task of having them write a letter to the next year’s class explaining what they need to know in their new grade. The writing task was a high-challenge task that required students to write for a long period of time; however the writing was worth the student’s time. Teachers promote the higher level thinking abilities of their students when they give students opportunities to assume increasingly higher levels of responsibility for their learning by writing the essays and writing multiple paragraphs, instead of
doing worksheets and simple writing tasks (Miller, 2003). Motivation and learning are thought to increase when students use prior knowledge to construct an understanding of a topic (Miller, 2003). Miller found that students can become attached and engaged in their work when they are working on it for the length of time. Students feel a sense of ownership of their work because they have put such an amount of effort into their work (Miller, 2003).

**Motivation and Self-Perception**

According to Pollington, Wilcox, and Morrison (2001) teachers can use Calkins’ Writer’s Workshop (2006) to help improve their students’ motivation and self-perception. The researchers recognize that self-perception can affect students’ learning by influencing their choice of activities, task avoidance, effort expenditure, and goal persistence.

Writer’s workshop can be used by teachers in all grade levels. Lucy Calkins has created units of study for each grade level tailored to meet the developmental and curricular needs for the students. A unit of study is follows a specific timeline for each grade level and students have a variety of choice in their topic and style of writing, which can motivate them to enjoy writing and become engaged in the writing process (Pollington, Wilcox, & Morrison, 2001). Each unit of study takes about a month to complete and ends with the student’s sharing their writing with their peers. The teacher acts as a mentor author, modeling writing techniques and conferring with students as they move through the writing process. Pollington, Wilcox, and Morrison (2001) indicate that self-perception affects learning by influencing individual’s choice of activities, task avoidance and goal persistence. Writer’s workshop allows students the chance to have individual choice and set personal goals.
Pollington, Wilcox, and Morrison (2001) examined how teachers had students in fourth and fifth grade choose their own writing topics during writer’s workshop. The skills instruction, which the teachers provided during the mini lesson, was either to the whole class or to small groups. The skills lesson addresses some elements of writing such as the difference between recopying and revising. The skills lesson lasted ten to fifteen minutes (Pollington, Wilcox, & Morrison, 2001). After the skills instruction, students had a block of 30-40 minutes of work time, where they wrote independently or small group writing, or conferenced with the teacher. The workshop concludes with sharing time. Students share their writing in a variety of ways: over a microphone, posted in the hallway and “buddy sharing.”

At the end of the study, Pollington, Wilcox, and Morrison (2001) asked the fourth and fifth grade students how much they liked writing. Seventy-eight percent of students reported liking writing during the writer’s workshop, compared to 48 percent before the study started. After the study, Pollington, Wilcox, and Morrison reported an increase in enthusiasm among students and an increase in motivation in writing. Students were motivated during the writer’s workshop by having the option of choice writing, instead of a daily writing prompt. Students also were motivated by knowing that they were going to share their writing with their classmates. Students look forward to the publishing and sharing day with their peers because it is a day to showcase the writing piece they had worked so hard on. According to the finding of Pollington, Wilcox, and Morrison’s study intrinsic motivation can play a key role in writer’s workshop (2001).
Learning Clubs

Learning clubs are similar to literature circles and book clubs, and involve teachers organizing active learning events based on student selected areas of interested (Casey, 2009). According to Casey (2009) students are often motivated by opportunities and choices they get to make about their reading and their participation while sharing responsibility for their learning. Students form small groups, learning clubs, based on a shared interest that they will then use reading, writing, speaking, viewing and listening to learn about their topics from (Casey, 2009).

Student dialogue and participation can be important in the learning club because it provides all students an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas on the reading. Collaboration plays a critical role in learning clubs (Casey, 2009). Casey (2009) says that the move toward independence involves careful scaffolding of written materials and instructional exchanges between the teacher and student with the construction of purposeful groups. Students need to be structured based on strong readers who can take the “lead” and be organized and can motivate the other students in the group (Casey, 2009).

According to Casey, learning clubs weave together principles of motivation, engagement, and literacy development. Students are given the opportunity to become motivated by the material of literature in the learning clubs and the student conversations. Students are engaged because they are making choices about their reading, they are being responsible for their own learning, and they are able to draw on social interaction to mediate these literate processes (Casey, 2009). Learning clubs are a shared event for students to collaboratively come together to learn. Students are promoting literacy development by using multiple strategies to ensure comprehension and by forming groups based around a similar interest where the students use literacy to learn.
Casey (2009) studied a classroom of seventh grade students who participated in learning clubs with their teacher, Sharon. During the study, Sharon had her seventh grade students write the next chapter to the book they were reading in their learning clubs. Because this was not a traditional writing class, the writing portion of this class was different as well. The writing task Sharon had the students do was to choose from a variety of choices that required the students to do some kind of writing. Students were able to choose from writing a paragraph, creating a Venn diagram that compared the characters, creating a poster about the characters, or to write a response to the chapter they read. Students who struggle with writing were motivated by this writing task because they were able to be creative and use their imagination; as well they were able to choose which task they wanted to do (Casey, 2009). Sharon used this writing assignment to assess the students’ understanding and motivation from the conversations the students had in their learning club groups. In this study, students struggle as part of the process, which motivates them to consider what is being learned and how they construct the learning (Casey, 2009). Casey found that the learning clubs motivate students to actively pursue literacy events because they want to become readers and writers (2009).

Summary

Supporting the literacy development of all students, specifically those who struggle with writing and motivating them is my ultimate goal. After reviewing the literature related to writing instruction, I have gained an understanding of strategies that teachers can use with students who struggle with writing. I have also found ways that teachers can motivate students. In my work as a substitute teacher, I used these strategies and motivating techniques to increase the achievement of those students who struggle with writing.
Self-regulated strategies are taught explicitly by teachers and used by the students who struggle with writing. POWER and SCAN are two examples that students can use during the writing process. By observing students who struggled with writing and reviewing the literature, I have gained a deeper understanding of strategies that can be used to allow students to become successful writers.

Integrating technology into writing is part of the Common Core State Standards and can also support students who struggle with writing. After reviewing literature related to technology, I have gained a deeper understanding of digital storytelling, the use of the Internet, word processing and applications for the iPad.

Student motivation and self-perception are factors that can influence students who struggle with writing. When a student is motivated to write they often become more engaged and interested in the writing task. After working with students in the classrooms and reviewing the literature on motivation of students who struggle with writing, I was able to find ways to motivate students to write.
Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

Through my work as a substitute teacher, I have noticed how students struggle with writing tasks such as composing stories or reports or letters. I recognize that some students have not yet developed strategies to support their ability to engage successfully in the writing process. I have noticed how students who are successful in their attempts to write have confidence in their writing abilities. They use self-regulated strategies to develop and sustain their process. My ultimate goal is to help all students learn the self-regulated strategies they need in order to become successful writers. Part of becoming a successful writer is having confidence and motivation to write. Another goal of mine is to find ways to motivate students who struggle with writing.

I conducted this self-study research in order to become more effective at teaching writing. Through this six week self-study, I sought answers to the question: How can I support and motivate students who struggle as writers?

Participant

I conducted a self-study so I am the only participant. I am a substitute teacher, so I interact with many students ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade, in general education and inclusion classrooms in a large urban school district in western New York. I substitute on a daily basis from nine o’clock in the morning until three thirty in the afternoon. In my daily work as a substitute I follow the teachers’ lesson plans, while integrating my own ideas. Because I have been in the same elementary school for a couple years the teachers often let me teach my own lessons. This allows me to incorporate my educational beliefs of progressivism. I always try to
allow time for students to work collaboratively with their peers. Student-centered learning plays a very important role in my educational beliefs and how I create opportunities for students.

**Context of the Study**

I conducted this study in a large elementary school in an urban school district in western New York. At the time of the study the student population of the school district was: 64 percent African American/Black, 22 percent Hispanic, 11 percent White, and 3 percent Asian/Native American/East Indian/Other. Eighty-eight percent of students in the school district are eligible for free/reduced-price lunch. Eighteen percent of students have special needs. Ten percent of students have limited English proficiency. There are 72 different languages spoken. Twenty two percent of schools have a poverty rate of 90 percent or higher. This is the highest poverty rate among New York State Big 5 districts. The school district has 36 elementary schools and 23 secondary schools. They have a variety of programs that are available to students and parents, such as: Young Mothers Program, Family/Adult Learning Center and a Parent Education/Training Center. The school district has approximately 5,700 employees, including: 3,350 teachers, 500 administrators, 1,850 support personnel and utilize approximately 950 substitute teachers. In 2011-2012, 17.7 percent of students were classified as special education students.

The elementary school in which I conducted my research had 470 students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade in 2010-2011. Sixty three percent of students in the school were eligible for free lunch. Nine percent of the students were eligible for reduced-price lunches. The racial makeup of the students was 76 percent African American, 9 percent Hispanic or Latino, 2 percent Asian, 11 percent white, and 1 percent multi-racial. In 2010-2011, 71 to 80
percent of students were from families who received public assistance. The average class size was 24 students. Currently, the school is kindergarten through eleventh grade. The school is increasing the number of students attending each year. The annual attendance rate for the 2010-2011 school year was 96 percent. Up until 2010-2011 school year there was 0 percent teacher turnover rate. In the 2010-2011 school year the teacher turnover rate was 14 percent. All teachers at the large urban school have a teaching certification and 7 percent of teachers have a master’s degree plus 20 or more hours of doctoral work. One hundred percent of teachers participate in professional development. This shows the high level and experience of the teachers in this particular school.

The teachers in the school use inquiry based teaching. Inquiry based learning is a dynamic approach with a focus on process that is interactive, experiential, and exploratory. It instills not only a specific academic goal, but a personal framework for lifelong self-education and the pursuit of knowledge (Fry, Klages & Venneman, 2013). Academic excellence, innovation, creativity, inquiry, and discovery are the goals of this school. The classroom environments are setup in groups, often referred to as teams, with tables, not desks, and students are collaborating more often than not. Each classroom has a library of books; all the classrooms are organized differently. However, all the teachers have a section for their expedition books, which corresponds with the grade level expeditions. Every classroom in the school has a SMART Board, which is used during the majority of learning activities. Students in kindergarten, first and second grade classrooms also use iPads.
My Positionality as the Participant and the Researcher

I am a 25 year old white female. I was raised in a middle class family in a suburban neighborhood in western New York. I completed my undergraduate studies at The College at Brockport, State University of New York. I earned a bachelor of science degree in health science and teaching certification in childhood inclusive education. I have my initial teaching certification in birth through second grade and first through sixth grade, in general education and initial teaching certification in first through sixth grade, students with disabilities. Currently, I am pursuing my master’s degree in literacy education at The College at Brockport, State University of New York. I am entering my fourth year of substitute teaching.

My educational philosophies shape the way I approach my work as an educator. I believe the best philosophy of education is progressivism. Progressivism is a student-centered approach to learning. The students are actively involved in the learning process. Schecter (2011) highlights that John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget are the theorists and psychologists who are associated with the progressivism philosophy. I believe that when I create opportunities where students can share their opinions and ideas, they learn and understand the concepts more in depth. In my experiences, classrooms in which a teacher uses the progressive philosophy involve hands on activities and students have opportunities to use a variety of manipulatives and engage in social interactions. I do not believe the teacher should be the only person talking in the classroom, I think the teacher should provide the curriculum and conduct assessments, but he or she should act as a facilitator.

According to Cubukcu (2012), “learning is not only about knowledge making. Children need to be active learners within the context of culture, community, and past experiences” (p. 50). I believe it is important that students are actively participating in their learning throughout
the school day. Reader’s Theatre is one approach to actively engage students in literacy learning. Instead of reading from a text book, the teacher can assign students to groups and give each group a different play based on the students’ reading abilities. Students practice their lines and then perform the short play for the peers. In my experience, students find Reader’s Theatre more interesting and interactive. I have seen many students really getting into their lines and parts. Reader’s Theatre not only can help students improve their reading abilities, but they can practice fluency, communication skills and speaking skills.

Internal motivation is a key part in progressivism (Cubukcu, 2012). I believe progressivism is important because it takes into account the student’s interests and in turn, can increase their motivation to learn. Internal motivation can support sustained thinking of the writer (Metsala, 1996). Metsala (1996) highlights that internal motivation springs from experiences and interests and the reasons for this are, involvement in hands on activities, curiosity, social interaction and challenge. Internal motivation has a lifelong effect on writers (Metsala, 1996).

In the urban school district in which I substitute teach, I see students who appear like they could care less about school. I suspect that if these students experienced a student-centered approach to learning, or a progressivism approach to learning, they would have opportunities to become more responsible for their learning, thus increasing their motivation to learn. Cubukcu (2012) recognizes that, student-centered learning is a model in which students play an active role in their own learning. Because students pursue their own goals, all of their activities are meaningful to them.

According to Schecter (2011) Vygotsky believed that social interactions among students are crucial for supporting learning and understanding. Students will increase their social and
communication skills when they have opportunities to move around the classroom, participate in
group work and complete a variety of assignments. Providing students with opportunities to
collaborate can help them become successful (Schecter, 2011).

I believe the most effective approach to literacy education is a balanced literacy
approach that integrates reading with writing instruction. They highlight how the balanced
literacy approach incorporates direct teacher instruction and student-centered activities which
include, independent reading and writing, shared reading and writing, and guided reading and
writing (Frey, Lee, Tollefson, Pass, & Massengill, 2005). Frey, Lee, Tollefson, Pass, and
Massengill believe that a well-implemented balanced literacy program must include elements of
community, optimism, authencity, integration, teacher modeling, and student interaction.
Integrating other content areas into literacy allow students to become engaged in reading and
writing. Teachers can use shared writing to support students who may struggle with a new
writing concept. Students interact with each other during turn and talks, where a teacher gives a
prompt and students turn and talk to a person next to them. Students also can interact with their
peers in small groups throughout the school day during the student-centered activities. I believe
that students are set up for success by having a classroom with a balanced literacy approach
because of the dynamic approach to learning. Students are provided an ample amount of teacher
modeling as well as peer to peer interactions throughout the school day. With a balanced literacy
approach each subject area is not taught separately, the content is integrated throughout the day.
For example science is taught during ELA, which keeps students engaged because the content is
more interesting and appealing to students, rather than reading a boring text.
In addition, I believe that teachers need to scaffold student learning to ensure students are learning in ways that are challenging enough, but not too difficult. Gredler (2012) highlights Vygotsky’s (1930-1931/1998) idea of zone of proximal development (ZPD). The purpose of ZPD is for identifying intellectual functions of a student, a template for rethinking current classroom practices, providing supporting rationale for concerns about current curricula and providing support for collaborative learning in the classroom (Gredler, 2012). I believe that it is important for the teachers to scaffold student learning in the zone of proximal development to support the student, but still enable the student to be challenged and to do the work independently.

I recognize that I need to be reflective in their practice, stay current in best practices and continually assess what is working and what isn’t. I believe this is important because I should be up to date on the best assessments and literacy programs. Attending professional developments and collaborating amongst other staff members is one of the best ways I can gain insights into the best teaching practices.

Data Collection

Throughout this self-study I documented my experience as a substitute teacher, specifically how I supported students who struggle with writing. In my daily work as a substitute, I tried to anticipate and determine the students who struggled with writing. I had previous experience working with all of the students in this particular urban elementary school and I used my expertise and knowledge to determine the struggling writers.

After each day of substitute teaching, I focused specifically on the writing activities and experiences of that day. I discussed what I did with the lesson plans the teacher left for me, the
grade level, my interactions with students, how I adapted the lesson plan to support student learning, the language I used to create a supportive learning environment, the specific teaching strategies I used to support the students’ ability to stay focused, engaged and motivated and any strategies I used to manage the students’ behaviors.

In order to become a more effective teacher I realized that I need to reflect on my own teaching practices. I used a teacher researcher journal as my source of data collection. Borg (2001) says the journal is not just a place for recorded events, but a forum for reflection where ideas are generated and explored and discoveries are made in and through writing. Borg (2001) also states that research can be emotional and the research journal can assist the researcher in acknowledging the emotions and helping the researcher express these emotions and react to them.

I created two entries each day. I did a play by play version of the ELA block for my first entry. For my second entry, I reflected on my teaching practices, focusing specifically on improving and enhancing my practices and approaches to writing instruction and supporting and motivating students who struggled with writing.

As part of my data collection, I looked at the students’ writing to see what they were doing well, what they were struggling with and then crafted my instruction accordingly. Throughout the writing instruction, I observed student behaviors and strategies they were using. I looked at the classroom environment to see how the teacher arranged and organized it. For example, I looked at the types of visuals---posters and anchor charts---the teacher had posted to support and potentially motivate the students. During my instruction, I asked the students natural and authentic questions to get a better understanding of their experiences and what they know. I recorded their questions and comments in my research journal.
Data Analysis

I analyzed the journal entries and reflections. Samaras (2011) highlights that data analyses are not linear processes. Research is recursive and requires revisiting research and reexamining the data. Keeping well documented notes was very important throughout the research and data collection process (Samaras, 2011). This process enabled me to code the entries and reflections related to my instructional strategies, my language, and motivational tactics. Samaras (2011) defines codes as tags or labels for assignments or units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. I then determined categories and common themes from the coding process.

Procedures

My data collection took approximately six weeks. I substitute taught in several different classrooms, four to five days a week, throughout the six weeks and collected twenty five days’ worth of data. Each day I was called to substitute, I walked into the classroom and read over the lesson plans for the day. I focused a large part on the ELA lesson that I was going to be teaching. While teaching the lesson I kept a notebook by my side to keep track of what the students were asking and saying and what types of questions I asked the students. Before I left the classroom for the day I made sure to write down what types of anchor charts or other beneficial writing tools were in the classroom to support the students who struggled with writing.

After I went home each day I wrote a play by play of what happened specifically the ELA block, focusing on student behaviors, interactions between myself and the students, especially the students who struggled with writing and ways I motivated students to write. After the journal entry I wrote a reflection about how I thought the day went, incorporating positives of
the day, challenges from the day and what I would do for the next time. Each day I substituted I did this process.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

As a teacher-researcher it is crucial that I accurately conducted this study in an ethical and unbiased manner. According to LaBoskey (2004), through a self-study methodology, the teacher-researcher will learn through the process of reflection. Using a research journal enabled me to reflect on my teaching literacy. I constantly reread my journal to reflect on my own teaching practices. A self-study requires a self-initiated and focused research. LaBoksey (2004) also stated the self-study must be improvement aimed. It is imperative that all aspects of the research I conducted are taken to ensure authenticity, accuracy, validity, and reliability. To ensure trustworthiness, I observed and substituted in a variety of classrooms. To ensure a triangulation of data, I used writing samples from a variety of grade level students, recorded my observations in my journal daily and observed student behaviors. Due to the duration of the five week study, prolonged engagement increased the validity of the study. Self-studies validate confirmability by the construction, testing, and re-testing of exemplars. During my self-study I constantly looked back at my research question and then found ways to support the students in the classroom, and then went back and found new ways to support students.

Limitations of the Study

The self-study I conducted had several limitations. One limitation is that with the twenty five days of data, often one day experiences, it provided me with a partial glimpse into the process of supporting students who struggled. I did not get the full picture of what it meant to
support that particular student who was struggling with writing, because it normally was a one
day substituting assignment, except in the case of the kindergarten classroom.

Another limitation was my role as a substitute teacher enabled me limited access to
students’ understanding of the writing process, their experiences, and their interests. I was only
able to work with students for a short period of time, which prevented me from making
connections and establishing rapport with the students that their regular teacher would be getting
with them.

Summary

Working as a substitute teacher has allowed me to see many students at all grade levels
who struggle with a variety of writing tasks. By doing a self-study, I gained insight into my own
Teaching practices and I revised and improved my teaching strategies based on the needs of my
students. Scaffolding a students’ learning is important to ensure successful writers. Through my
research and data collection, I found ways to support and motivate students who struggle with
writing.
Chapter Four: Findings

I believe that providing opportunities for students to engage in writings should be an essential part of the school day and support their literacy development. While conducting this self-study during my daily substitute teaching placements, I found many ways to engage students in writing activities and integrate writing through the Common Core State Standard Modules.

Over a six week period, I spent at least twenty five days in various classrooms and grade levels in one school, working with a diverse group of students. The teachers in the school use the Common Core Modules and domains (New York State Department of Education, 2013) for the literacy instruction. I recognized that the modules are structured very specifically and the expectations and tasks do not always meet individual needs of students.

The following twenty five journal entries document my daily interactions of how I used the modules and engaged the students in writing activities. Each journal entry is followed by a reflection of how I used language during my writing instruction, how I adjusted the content of the module to meet the students’ needs, what went well for each lesson, what was and what I would change for the following lesson. I collected data from November 4, 2013 to December 13, 2013.
November 4, 2013- *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*

It was my first day in a kindergarten classroom and I was a little nervous, but very excited to work with the ones! It was a class of twenty one students. It was an inclusion classroom, with two teachers. I was the general education teacher for the day. There were eight students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The students’ disabilities ranged from autism, to speech impaired, to emotional disturbance. There were no sub plans for me because the teacher I was subbing for had an emergency and was going to be out for two weeks.

I didn’t know much about the kindergarten curriculum, I had only subbed in kindergarten twice before. Luckily, I had a VERY experienced teacher in the room with me. She told me that she would be leading the English Language Arts (ELA) lessons (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and she would take care of the math. She gave me the domains for ELA Common Core State Standards and the topics were on nursery rhymes and I read them over for the next 15 minutes to prepare myself for the lesson. She told me that our day would mostly be taken up by those two core subjects. I took a deep breath and knew I was in for a fun-filled day! It was only 8:45 a.m.

When the kids arrived at 9:00 a.m. they were all smiling faces, saying “Hi Ms. A!” The students had all seen me before in the school and knew who I was. Yet, they were all wondering where there teacher was and why I was there. I told the students I would be in their classroom for the next couple of weeks. The students ate their breakfast and we moved into morning meeting. The other teacher led the morning meeting and I helped manage student behavior; telling students to, “quietly sit on their bottoms”, reminding students to, “face forward” and “sit criss-cross applesauce.”
After morning meeting we moved onto the ELA lesson. I followed the script of the modules exactly. The first thing I did was tell them the purpose for listening to the story today. “Today you are listening to another nursery rhyme about a star at night. Listen to how the rhyme describes the star.” Next, I asked the students to look at the SMART Board as I read the poem, “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” aloud as they followed along. Students were studying the nursery rhyme and fable domain, which is part of the Common Core curriculum modules for kindergarten through second grade. I reread “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” for a second time. I told the students they would then need to recite the nursery rhyme back to me as a class. As a class we read the rhyme from the SMART Board in unison. Next, I asked the students the comprehension questions provided at the end of the listening domain: “What is the character in the nursery rhyme wondering about?” I waited for the students to raise their hands. However three or four students shouted out the answer, “Stars!” Then I asked the students, “Who can raise their hand and tell me how does the nursery rhyme describe the star?” I waited for a majority of the students to raise their hands and I called on a student to answer. He said, “They describe it to a diamond.” “You are right, they do describe it like a diamond!” I said. “Boys and girls, how are diamonds and stars alike?” The students sat there for a minute or so. Then several students raised their hands, followed by a couple more. I called on one girl, in a quiet, unsure voice she said, “They both shine?” I said, “ABSOLUTELY! What else are diamonds and stars?” No one moved, the students just sat there, I began getting nervous, and maybe they didn’t understand. Then after a minute of wait time, a couple students raised their hands, then a few more. I called on a boy this time. “They are both white.” He said. “Well, they could be white, however, not all diamonds are white, they are more clear.” I said. “But that is a wonderful try and I am glad you are thinking. Does anyone else have a guess at how diamonds and stars are alike?” Another student
responded, “They are both bright!” “You are right! They are both bright and shiny!” “Now, for the last question I want you to take a minute to think to yourself about what other things might shine like stars and diamonds. Then after a minute you are going to share with a partner. But first you need to think alone. Ready, go.” After a minute went by, I had the students turn and talk to the person next to them about what other things they know that shine. I walked around the carpet and listened to what students were talking about. Things I heard were; cars, metal, rings, earrings, shiny quarters and my mom’s wedding ring.

After asking the students the comprehension questions, students moved onto the word work provided by the domain in the Common Core Standards. I gave the students the directions on the carpet. The focus of the lesson was for students to listen to how the nursery rhyme described the star. I told the students, “You will need to write things that you wonder about. For example, I wonder what it would be like to travel in a spaceship. So that is something I would write on my paper.” After giving the directions I asked the students if they had any questions and then I sent them back to their seats with a blank piece of paper to complete the assignment.

As I walked around the room and observed students writing different things they wondered about, I saw some students getting right to work. I saw other students sitting tapping their hands or pencils on the table or doodling on their papers. I asked one student, Frank, why he wasn’t writing things that he wondered about and he said, “I don’t wonder anything.” I responded, “Well, Frank I am sure there are plenty of things you wonder. For example, I wonder why the sky is blue, or why a rainbow comes out after it rains. Those are some things that I would write down as things I wonder about.” Frank looked at me for a minute and then smiled. He put the pencil right on the paper and starting writing. He didn’t stop until time ran out.
I walked over to Samantha who I saw doodling on her paper and I asked her why she wasn’t doing what she was supposed to be doing? She responded, “Because I don’t want to. I hate writing.” I asked her if I could help her. She said, “Yes.” The other teacher in the classroom told me earlier that Samantha struggled with writing tasks and often needs an adult to praise her and motivate her to write. Writing was not Samantha’s favorite subject because she struggled with the handwriting component. I asked Samantha some things that she wondered about and she told me she wondered about, “Why we have to come to school? Why my mom makes me do chores? Why it snows here?” I chuckled a little bit because her wonderings were cute for a five year old. I asked Samantha to give me her wondering in a complete sentence and to spell each word the best she could and that I would write the sentence for her. She said, “i wudr y we hv to cm to skol” I then had Samantha trace over the sentence I wrote. After she did this she smiled and said, “Thank you Ms. A!”

The ELA block was an hour. It was now time for snack and math.

Reflection

What I did well?

I felt that my interactions with the students went very well. During the ELA lesson, I kept the students engaged throughout the read aloud. I believe that having the pictures to match the nursery rhyme kept the students motivated to follow along. By having the pictures of the stars that kind of sparkle, help the students make a connection to what they are listening to. Seeing the pictures with the words on the SMART Board, help some students visualize the nursery rhyme.
What was challenging?

The challenging part of the day was when we went back to our seats to do the “I wonder” part of the lesson. Some students got right to work, however, other students just sat there. I should have modeled a little more with the students. I did not explain what a wondering was and some of the students did not know what a wonder was and that may have caused some of the students to be frustrated when writing. Determining what the word means first may have supported students. Making a connection between the nursery rhyme and the writing activity would have been beneficial to the students. Then modeling with my own sentence should have been the next step. I gave them one example with the spaceship of my own. However, I should have written my own example on the SMART Board, so they could have seen how I wanted their sentence to be done. I could have given them a sentence frame: I wonder about the sky because I do not know why it is blue.

With so many students not getting right to work and only two teachers in the room, it was a little overwhelming to have so many students frustrated and not on task. Once I noticed so many students frustrated or overwhelmed, I should have brought all the students back together and completed a group sentence to spark enthusiasm. I started to walk up to the students who weren’t on task, however, as soon as I began to work with one student, it seemed that another student who didn’t know what to do, or didn’t know what to write, began to talk or just doodle. Drawing tells me that students are thinking about some things. I could have asked the students what they were drawing. Drawing can be a springboard for writing because some students who struggle with writing, draw as a way to express their writing.
What will I do differently?

In the next lesson, I will be sure to take the students who are doodling or drawing on their papers and expand on their drawings and find out what their drawings are all about. I will be sure to highlight and engage students in conversations about their drawing. This creates opportunities for oral language development. Even if that means I have to write some of the words down for them and have them trace over the letters that is still their thinking getting down on the paper!

Next time, I will model whole group before sending the students back to their own tables. I also think I will pair students depending on writing levels after the whole group instruction. The other teacher in the room will help me with, seeing as I have only known the students one day. This may help with some of the confusion and the chaos in the room. Due to time constraints I did not do all of the word work activities with the students. I only used the statement; “I wonder about ___________” with the students. I modified the lesson so that I could have the students write for a short period of time during ELA, rather than doing all the word work activities provided in the Common Core domain and not writing.

November 5, 2013- Hickory, Dickory, Dock

I was back in kindergarten today! I had more confidence today than the first day because I knew what I was getting into and I had one day under my belt with the smiling students. After students walked into the room at 9:00 a.m. I greeted them with warm welcomes and moved right into ELA.

I had the students sit as a whole group on the carpet. I explained that today they were going to listen to a new nursery rhyme called “Hickory, Dickory Dock.” I said, “You need to listen closely to what happens to the clock.” Then I read aloud the rhyme from the text on the
SMART Board. I believe that showing the students the text of the nursery rhyme while I read it aloud helps students who are visual learners as well as for students who are auditory learners. While I am reading I am pointing to each word. This allows students to track the words with their eyes. After reading “Hickory, Dickory Dock” aloud twice, I asked the students to echo the rhyme with me. “Okay boys and girls, I have read the poem twice aloud for you, now it is your turn to read the nursery rhyme. I am going to read each line of the rhyme then you are going to repeat it after me. Thumbs up if you understand.” After seeing all the students’ thumbs up, I went through each line of the nursery rhyme and read it one by one and had the students repeat the lines after me. After finishing the echo, I congratulated the students on being such wonderful nursery rhyme readers! All the students were participating during the echo and were fully engaged.

After completing the echo reading with the students, I moved onto the literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension questions that the Common Core Nursery Rhymes and Fables domain provided. “What ran up the clock?” I asked. Almost every single students hand shot up in the air. I called on one girl in the back. “A mouse!” She said with a big smile on her face. I responded with a smile on my face and a little hop in my step, “You got it! Who can raise their hand and tell me what happens when the clock strikes one?” I waited for students to raise their hand. Two boys and seven girls raised their hand. I called on one of the boys. “The mouse runs.” He was right; however I wanted the student to say where the mouse runs, so I had to pry for more information. “Where does the mouse run? Does he run to the left?” There were a lot more students raising their hands this time. I called on the same boy. “He runs DOWN the clock.” “Yes you are right. He runs down the clock.” I said. “Now boys and girls, I need you to really think about this question, why do you think the mouse would run down the clock when it struck
one?” I waited a whole minute before anyone raised their hand. It felt like an hour. I only had six students raise their hands. I called on a boy. He said, “Because the mouse was scared.” “Yes the mouse was scared or frightened.” I repeated back to the students.

After we finished the comprehension questions, we moved onto the writing portion of the lesson. I modified the Nursery Rhymes and Fables domain slightly. Instead of sending the students right to independent work, I modeled with the whole group first. I went to a blank page in SMART Notebook and I asked the students what the word “frightened” meant. Two-thirds of the students raised their hands. I called on a girl and she said, “Scared.” I responded and said, “yes, you are right!” I wrote the word “frightened” on the SMART Board and the word “scared” next to it. Then I asked the students, what are some sounds that might frighten or scare them. All the students raised their hands. I called on a couple students to share out their answers and they said, “Thunder.” “Gun shots.” “Fireworks.” “Alarm clock going off in the morning.” I told the students those were all frightening sounds. I wrote a sentence on the SMART, “An alarm clock can be a frightening sound in the morning when it wakes me up!” Then I told the students they were all going to have a chance to write about sounds that frighten them. I gave each student a sheet of paper and paired them with a peer. I had the students who struggled yesterday stay with me and their partner on the carpet. I had the students who were able to work independently yesterday go back to their seats with their partner. The other teacher in the room monitored the students at the tables while I worked with the students on the carpet.

While moving between the seven pairs on the carpet, I noticed one partnership talking before they started writing about what scares them. Both students were talking about scary sounds. One boy said, “The gun sound that went off down the street is scary.” His partner said, “Yeah, I know that gun noise is a scary sound, but I think thunder and lightning is scarier!”
listened to the two boys go back and forth discussing their frightening sounds and whose sound was scarier. I loved the discussions I was hearing. Another pair were sitting not discussing anything. I asked the boy and girl what they were thinking. They said, “Ms. A, we are thinking about scary sounds.” So I asked them to tell me what kind of sounds they were thinking about. “Well, we think thunder is scary and we think that fireworks in the summer time can be scary and loud.” I responded. “You are right, those are some pretty scary sounds we hear. How can we write those ideas you have on the paper? How would we start our sentence?” The students looked at me for a second, with a confused look on their face and then the girl said, “We can start by writing we think thunder is scary.” I told her that was a good idea; however, we want the reader to know that we are talking about sounds that frighten people. So I suggested they add the word sound in their sentence so the reader would know they were talking about scary sounds. I watched as both students took turns writing the sentences they came up with on their paper: “we tk tdr nd fwks r skre cns.” I smiled at their writing because I could tell the students put forth the effort to try their best to write. They sounded out what they could and they found words they knew on the word wall. The two students worked together to write their sentence and included the suggestion I gave them about adding the word “sounds” in the sentence so the reader knew what they were talking about.

I concluded the lesson by bringing all the students together and asking three pairs of students to share their sentence with the group. This enabled the students to hear what their peers thought were frightening sounds and also a way for students to practice their speaking skills.
Reflection

What I did well?

This listening strand of the domain of the Common Core Standards as a whole went much better compared to yesterday’s lesson. I liked how I checked for understanding after I gave directions. I asked the students to give me thumbs up if they understood. This was a quick self-check to see how many students understood the directions and how many students were already confused.

I liked how I modeled for students in this lesson. I modeled how I wanted their thought process to sort of look like and what I wanted their writing to sort of look like. I liked how I had some students shared their ideas.

For this lesson I also had the students work with a partner. With the other teachers’ help, I strategically put the students together based on their writing and reading needs and strengths. I sent the partners who were able to work independently to their tables and the other teacher monitored them. I talked with a pair who weren’t yet writing, to try and see if I could motivate or support them to begin writing. They were talking about frightening sounds; it just seemed they didn’t know how to put their thoughts on paper. The boy and girl knew the frightening sounds they wanted to write about, so I continued to ask them questions about their sounds and how we could write their sentence. By talking out their thinking, we were able to write a sentence between the three of us. The students are in kindergarten and they are going to need more than one example before they are ready to go off and engage independently with a task. By supporting their thinking process and asking them to tell what sounds frighten them I was able to help them think of a sentence.
What was challenging?

The part that is challenging and will continue to be challenging throughout this self-study is that the Common Core listening strands domain is very scripted. Everything has to be read verbatim because that is how the teacher left it in her sub plans. She told me I could modify then word work at the end to make it in to a writing task if I choose to, however, she told me that I must read everything as it is for the read aloud and comprehension questions. It is a challenge to stick to the “script” when I have students who need the extra support. Because many students struggled the day before, I felt it would not be beneficial for me to send the students to their seats to individually do the assignment. I also struggled to get around to help more pairs of students due to time constraints. However, I spent quality time with the two or three groups that I did work with during the lesson.

What will I do differently?

Next time, I will continue with the next nursery rhyme in the listening domain. I will keep modeling the writing task as a whole group because I think the students are able to visually see what they should be doing. I also liked how the partners worked out and separating the students based on their writing needs and strengths seemed to work out well. I will continue with the same process. One thing I will add is when we come back together at the end as a whole group, I will to do a self-check on students’ understanding of the lesson. Maybe the students could rate themselves using their fingers of one through five of how well they understood the lesson. This may give me a quick check to see who got it and who didn’t. I would also like to make sure I state my focus of the lesson before the lesson gets started. The focus of this lesson was identifying frightening sounds and to listen for what happens to the clock in the nursery
rhyme. I will use the self-check based on the focus of the lesson. Students can rate themselves on that focus.

November 6, 2013-Diddle, Diddle Dumpling

For the ELA block on this day I had the students come together as a whole group to start. I told the students the purpose for listening that was in the listening strand domain of the Nursery Rhymes and Fables of the Common Core Standards. I told the students that we would be reading a new nursery rhyme about interesting things a character named John does when he goes to bed. I told the students that today’s focus was to listen carefully to find out what the character wears to bed and if you could wear anything to bed what would it be? I saw some students already becoming engaged, just by the smiles and looks on their faces. A couple students even giggled.

I read the nursery rhyme, “Diddle, Diddle Dumpling” aloud to the students once. Then I read each line of the rhyme aloud and had the students echo me. I had the nursery rhyme on the SMART Board so the students were able to visually see the nursery rhyme and were able to follow along with me as I pointed to each word with my finger. I complimented the students as we went through each line and gave them positive praise on how well they were reading.

After doing the read aloud and echo, we moved onto the comprehension questions that were provided in the listening strand domain. I asked the students, “Who is the main character of the nursery rhyme?” Almost every single hand went up. I called on Jason. He responded, “John was the main person” “You got it dude” I said back. “What does John wear to bed?” I asked the students. No one raised their hands. I gave a couple more minutes of wait time, then three students raised their hands, then three more, then two more. I called on a girl, Rebecca. “He wears stockings and shoes.” “Well Rebecca, he does wear stockings your right about that,
however how many shoes does he wear to bed?” I said. She looked at me for a second and said, “Oh, only one shoe!” “Yes you are right!” I said back. We moved onto the next question. I asked the students, “Who is telling the story?” I had five or six students raised their hands right away, then a couple more did then a couple more. After a full minute of wait time went by, I had almost all the students with their hands up. I called on Samantha. She said, “John’s ma’ and dad are telling the story because they kept saying son.” I said, “Exactly Samantha, you are right, when someone refers to a person as their son, they are that persons’ parents.”

For the writing portion of the lesson, I modified what they wanted me to do because they were not going to have the students write at all and I think they need to write at least something every day. I modeled for the students what I wanted them to do. I went to the next slide on the SMART Board and read the question to them. It said, “If you could go to bed wearing anything what would it be?” I reminded them of the character, John, we read about in “Diddle, Diddle. Dumpling.” I pulled down the shade on the SMART Board and shared with them my sentence: If I could wear anything to bed it would be clown shoes and a rainbow clown suit. This made all the students laugh hysterically. I told the students they would be working with the same partner from yesterday’s writing activity. I asked the students to give me a thumb up if they understood the directions I gave them. All the students gave me a thumbs up. I gave them their paper and I sent them off to write their sentence. I tried to make it to more groups this time around and monitor more of the students on the carpet. I saw a lot more discussions today and it could be because of the content of the writing topic. I walked over to two boys who were laughing. I asked them what they were laughing about. They said, “We are laughing cuz we would wear batman capes and Spiderman suits to bed. Or we would wear the iron man gear because if there was a problem in the world, we could wake right up and be iron man ready!” I said, “Wow you
are totally right, those are terrific ideas. Now how can we get those amazing ideas onto the paper? How can we start your sentence?” The boys both looked at me, they both often struggle with motivation to write, however with their ideas flowing it seemed like they were going to have an easy time writing. However, at this point they seemed stumped. I reminded them what they told me they were going to wear to bed. They laughed and said, “Okay we can start our sentence by saying, we would wear batman and Spiderman suits to bed so that we can fight people if there was a problem in the world!” I said that sentence sounded awesome. I walked over to another group on the carpet who was writing and this is what they had on their paper, “ef we kod war klos to bd we wod war prnss tutus and crns.” I talked to the two girls about their writing. I asked the girls why they wanted to wear princess crowns and tutus and they said because then they would always feel like princesses. I told them that I always wanted to be a princess too. I told the girls they did a nice job sounding out the words they didn’t know. I went to another group who seemed frustrated because they said they didn’t know how to spell a lot of the words. I told them to do their best and to use each other to figure out the words. I asked the students to read me what they had so far. Their paper so far said, “we wold wer r skol onifrm to bed” I told the students they were off to a wonderful start! I asked the students what else they wanted to add to their sentence. They said so that they could sleep in. I laughed. I told the students that was a smart idea. If they wear their school uniform to bed, they wouldn’t have to get up so early. They both smiled and nodded at me. I told them that they were on the right track with writing and to keep working together to figure out the spelling of words. I would have stayed and helped the students more, however they did so well with the first part of their writing, that I knew they could finish the rest of the sentence themselves. They just needed the positive praise and motivation to continue their writing. The students had great ideas.
After visiting with a couple pairs of students I called for the students to come back together as a whole on the carpet. I asked for four groups to share their writing. After the students shared they writing I asked the students to give me a fist to five (which the students were very familiar with) of how well they understood the lesson today. I asked the students to put it in front of their chest so only I could see it. This was a self-check for me to see how well the learning went for them. I saw mostly fours and fives which tells me students understood the lesson and were engaged.

Reflection

What I did well?

I really loved how I had engaged the students during the writing portion of this lesson. I am very glad I modified this lesson to add a writing portion. I think the students really enjoyed writing and having fun with the topic. By choosing this interesting topic for writing students, who were not normally motivated to write, were laughing and discussing the writing topic. Even during the read aloud, students were finding the story silly. The main character went to bed with stockings and one shoe on. I also enjoyed reading and listening to students share their sentences with the class. Most students also had a reason for why they would wear the item(s) to bed. For example the student who said he would wear his school uniform to bed, he said it was because he wanted to sleep in a little bit longer.

I was also able to get around to more groups and work with more students. The students are all at different stages of the writing process. Some students who just scribble on their paper are at the emergent stage. Other students are sounding out each word and getting the majority of the sounds and letters, but missing a few, which is the majority of the students, is the phonetic
stage. With the domain it is hard because there is not a lot of focus on the writing portion, it is more on the listening and comprehension of the text.

However, I do think with the question I created for writing, I was able to support more students and more students were motivated to write. I saw a lot more students getting right to work and more enthusiastic about the topic.

**What was challenging?**

The challenging part of the lesson was not having the writing portion written into the listening strand domain. I was able to modify the lesson to add in one, which I am glad I did because the students really enjoyed it. Following the domain exactly can be challenging and frustrating because it does not give me freedom to teach the way I want to teach. Students are only writing one sentence the entire literacy block. I would like to see more writing, however the majority of the time is spent on the read aloud and the comprehension questions.

**What will I do differently?**

Next time, I will keep engaging the students for the writing process. It seems that the students are more motivated to write when they are engaged. I was able to support more groups this time around and I would like to keep supporting students throughout their writing process. I think by even just having a conversation with students about their writing, it helps the students talk out what their sentence will be. I will continue with the self-check at the end, because this quick check for understanding seems to hold the students responsible for their learning.

**November 7, 2013- Little Bo Peep**

I began the lesson with telling the students the purpose for listening from the listening strand domain from the Nursery Rhymes and Fables of the Common Core State Standards. “We
are going to listen to a nursery rhyme about a little girl named Bo Peep; it is her job to take care of a group of sheep.” I told the students today’s focus was to listen carefully to find out if Little Bo Peep does a good job or not and if you think the sheep will come home or not.

I read the nursery rhyme to the students aloud, showing them pictures as I went along. After finishing the rhyme once, I told the students that it was time to echo me. Because we had done the echo protocol several days in a row, the students were very familiar with how I wanted it done. I had the nursery rhyme of “Little Bo Peep” on the SMART Board and I read the first line of the rhyme aloud and the students repeated the line after me. We did this for the entire nursery rhyme.

After the echo we moved onto the comprehension questions provided by the listening strand domain. I asked the first question, “Who is the main character in the nursery rhyme Little Bo Peep?” I waited for students hands to go up. Almost immediately I had the majority of the students raise their hands. I called on a boy, Jackson. He responded, “The little girl” I wanted to prompt him a little more to see if he knew her name so I said, “Well Jackson, the main character is a little girl however, she has a name, do you know her name?” He said, “Umm, well I think her name is Bo Peep.” “You are right!” I said back. I read the next question in the domain, “According to the nursery rhyme will Bo Peep need to look for her sheep or will they come home by themselves?” The students kind of sat there for a minute, thinking, and then five students started to raise their hands. I waited a couple more minutes and I restated the question because only a few students had their hands raised. I said, “In the nursery rhyme we just read, do the sheep come home by themselves, or does Little Bo Peep have to go and find them?” More students started to raise their hands. Sometimes the students need the question worded a different way or just repeated another time for them to understand. I called on a girl, Daja. She said, “The
sheep come home wagging their tails.” I praised her on her correct answer and moved onto the next question. “Does Little Bo Peep do a good job of taking care of her sheep?” I asked the students. Half of the students raised their hands. I called on a girl. She said, “Yes I think so.” I called on a boy, “No I don’t think so, she lost the sheep!” I called on another boy, “No way! The sheep were missing.” I called on one more student, “No, she didn’t take care of the sheep, she couldn’t find the sheep.” I told the students that if they thought that Little Bo Peep didn’t do a good job of taking care of the sheep they were correct and to give themselves a pat on the back. I said, “Like some of our friends who shared said, Little Bo Peep couldn’t find the sheep in the nursery rhyme. If you lose your animals or the things you’re responsible for looking after, then you aren’t doing a good job.” For the last question I showed the students a picture of Little Bo Peep. I asked the students if she was happy or sad. They all raised their hands. I called on a boy and he said, “Sad.” I said, “How do you know she is sad?” He said, “Because she is crying in the picture.” I smiled and told him that he was right. I asked the students if they remember why Little Bo Peep was crying in this picture. Most of the students raised their hands. I called on a girl, Ramaha. She said, “Because she couldn’t find her sheep.” “Yes you are correct!” I told Ramaha. After the questions we didn’t have enough time for a writing activity so we did a think-pair-share activity.

For the think-pair-share activity, I gave the students a prompt and had them turn to a neighbor and talk about the prompt. The students were staying on the carpet for the prompt because we only had eight minutes before we had to go to specials. The prompt I gave them for this nursery rhyme was, “Do you think the sheep will come home?” I gave the students five minutes to talk to their neighbor about whether or not they thought the sheep would come home. I walked around and listened to the conversations between the students. One conversation I heard
was, “I don’t think the sheep will come home cuz who wants to go home to a girl who forgets about their animals?” said one girl. The boy she was talking to said back, “Yeah but where else would the sheep go? They have no other home.” The girl said, “Well I mean they could go live on a farm, maybe.” The boy responded back, “Yeah but who will take care of them on a farm? What if there is no farmer? I don’t know where they would go? They should just go back to Bo.” I loved the conversation the two students were having. They were having a debate back and forth on where the sheep should go and whether the sheep should come back to Bo Peep. Two other boys were just sitting there. I walked over to them and asked why they weren’t discussing the question. They said because they didn’t know the answer. I said well there isn’t a right answer it is just what you think, it is your opinion. They just looked at me. I said, “Well do you think the sheep will go back to Little Bo Peep?” The one boy said, “No.” I said, “Why not?” He said, “Because they already ran away and she was the one who made them run away by being a bad owner.” I said, “Okay, fair enough.” I asked the other boy, “What do you think? Do you think the sheep will come back?” He said, “Yeah, they have nowhere else to go.” I said, “See you guys do know how to answer the question, you just have to think about what the question is asking and have a discussion back and forth. There is no right answer, it is just what you think. Nice job!”

After visiting two more groups, I called the students back together as a whole and I asked some of the groups to share what they thought about the sheep coming back home. It was very interesting to hear that the students were almost split evenly on whether they thought the sheep would come home or not. We wrapped up the lesson with a quick self-check on the focus of the lesson and whether or not they understood the lesson or not by rating themselves on a scale of 1-5. 1 being they didn’t get the lesson at all, 3 being they got the lesson, but needed some help and
5 being they understood the lesson completely and could even teach it to someone in the school. I saw a lot of 3’s and 4’s which tells me the students were understanding the content but needed some extra help with some areas.

**Reflection**

**What I did well?**

I felt I was able to have a good amount of wait time for the students when asking the comprehension questions. Wait time is not always easy because it can be awkward when I have to just stand there and wait for students to give me the answer, but often times if I restate the question for the students, I will get more hands and student participation. The students were actively participating and engaged throughout the lesson. I also did a great job with student prompting during the comprehension questions. For example, when Jackson said the main character was a little girl, I prompted him to give me the girl’s name, Little Bo Peep. He knew her name, he just needed a little pushing to get there. At the end when the students did the think-pair-share, they were able to have a discussion with a partner about whether or not the sheep were going to come home. While walking around I heard a lot of great conversations that I was really intrigued by. Students were debating back and forth, some students didn’t think Bo Peep even deserved the sheep after losing them, and other students felt bad that she was crying. I would have liked to see the students write their ideas on paper, however because of time they just ended up sharing their ideas aloud.

**What was challenging?**

The challenging part of the lesson was not having enough time for writing. This is really frustrating to me since my focus is on writing. There was nothing I could do about time. I did just have the students answer the prompt: do you think the sheep will come home? And share
their thoughts with their partner next to them. I had only one group respond just “Yes they will come home.” I prompted that group to keep going with their response and say why they think they will come home. Then I heard the students get into a deep conversation about, “How Bo Peep deserves the sheep because she was crying and I felt bad she was crying because she is sad.” Again I wish I could’ve had the students’ thoughts and ideas in writing because they had such amazing ideas.

**What will I do differently?**

Next time I would continue with the domains and nursery rhymes. I would like to continue reinforcing the explanation in the answers. For example, if the question I give asks do you think the sheep will come home? I would like the students to answer it but then also give a reason why they think that. I don’t think it is ever too young to have students start explaining why they think something. Even if it is something as simple as because Bo Peep was crying and sad. That is a plenty good reason for a kindergartener. I just think the younger we start students out explaining and giving reasons, the more used to it they will be. I would also like to make sure the students are writing in the next lesson for sure because they didn’t get to write in this lesson.

**November 8, 2013- Little Boy Blue**

Today’s focus for ELA was to compare “Little Boy Blue” to “Little Bo Peep.” The students were going to listen to a new nursery rhyme “Little Boy Blue” and see if the person in this nursery rhyme takes care of their animals or not. I read the rhyme to the students twice, showing them pictures to match the text.

Then we moved onto the echo. I posted “Little Boy Blue” on the SMART Board for all the students to see and then I told the students I would read the first line and they would repeat it
after me. We did this for the entire nursery rhyme. After we finished reading the entire rhyme I complimented the students on how well they did at reading the rhyme. They had gotten so much better at the echo. I told them that soon they would be able to do it without the rhyme in front of them! They gasped!

After the echo we moved onto the comprehension questions that were provided by the listening strand domain. I asked the literal question that I usually start with, “Who is the main character of the nursery rhyme?” Almost every student raised their hand. I called on a boy, Jason. He said, “Little Boy Blue.” “Yes Jason, you are correct! Now where was Little Boy Blue in the story?” I asked the students. Some students had a confused look on their face, so I restated my question. “At the end of the nursery rhyme it tells us where Little Boy Blue was, where was he?” A lot more students raised their hands. I called on a girl, Veronica. She responded, “He was under the haystack!” I moved onto the next question after complimenting Veronica on her correct answer. “Where were the sheep?” I asked the students. Again, almost all of the students raised their hands. I called on a little girl, Janiya. She said, “In the meadow.” “Do you agree?” I asked the other students. They gave me the thumbs up in agreement. The questions were moving right along. Hopefully there would be time for writing today! I asked the students the next question “Is it a problem the cow is in the corn, why or why not?” I waited a whole minute before students started to raise their hands. I called on a boy who said, “Yes the cow in the corn is a problem because all he is doing is eating the corn and that ain’t good.” I told him, “You are right, that isn’t good that the cow is eating the corn.” The last question I asked the students was, “Why do you think the nursery rhyme asks Little Boy Blue to come blow his horn in the beginning?” No one had raised their hand for a whole minute. Another minute went by and only one student raised their hand. I restated the question, “At the beginning of the nursery rhyme, it
says, ‘Little Boy Blue come blow your horn’ why do you think he does that?” Eight more students raised their hands. I called on a boy, Mark. He asked, “To scare the sheep?” I said, “Not quite, but I like that you were trying!” I called on a little girl, Mariah, she said, “It was kinda like a sheep call, it made the sheep come to Little Boy Blue.” “Yes you are right!” I told her. After the questions we moved onto the writing task I created for the students.

I flipped to a blank SMART Notebook page and while the students were still on the carpet, I asked the students a question, “How are Little Bo Peep and Little Boy Blue the same or different?” I told the students that I wanted them to think for a whole minute before they were to raise their hands. Three students raised their hands before the minute was up. I motioned for them to put their hands down and to think. After a minute went by, I modeled my own thinking and writing on the SMART Board. I wrote, “Little Bo Peep and Little Boy Blue are different because one is a girl and the other is a boy.” I asked the students to read my sentence with me. I pointed to each word and they read it with me. After reading my model sentence, I repeated the directions to the students and I told them they would be working in groups of three and only writing on one paper. They would need to take turns writing and each person would need to write some of the words, they would all get a turn to write and then draw a picture to match the words.

With the help of the other teacher, I put the students in groups based on their writing strengths and needs from previous lessons and sent them to different locations in the room. I worked with one group right away because one student began throwing a temper tantrum because he didn’t like who he was working with. I told him I would work with his group for now. He didn’t seem too happy but he agreed. First, I asked the students what was the same about the two nursery rhymes. One of the students in the group said, “Both characters had to look for sheep.” “Exactly!” I asked the other students if that was okay to write on their paper.
The students all agreed it was okay. I then asked the students how they would begin to write their sentence. Another student in the group said, “Bo Peep and Little Boy Blue are the same cuz they both have to look for sheep.” I said, “Yes that sounds great!” I told the students to work together to write the sentence as a group. They all smiled and said “Okay!” I stopped at the next group who had a drawing on their paper but no sentence. I asked the students, “Why don’t you have a sentence first?” They said, “Well we like drawing, not writing.” “Well unfortunately, you have to write your sentence first, then you can draw to match your writing, however your drawing is beautiful!” I told the students. I asked the students, “What is the same or different about Little Bo Peep and Little Boy Blue?” They said, “Well both the girl and boy in the nursery rhymes do a bad job at doing their jobs.” I told the students they had a really good point and that Little Bo Peep lost the sheep and Little Boy Blue went missing. So both characters did a bad job at doing their jobs. I asked the students, “How would they start their sentence?” One student made the “b” sound for the word both. I said you are correct. I helped the students write the word “both.” Then I told the students to work together to finish the sentence and that I would be back to check on them. I was able to get to one more group before time was up. This is what they had on their paper when I walked over, “both gl and bo ded a bd gb et thr gbs.” As a group they sounded out each sound they heard and wrote the sounds individually to make the word. After visiting with that group it was time to wrap up ELA, I brought the students back to the carpet and had them bring their papers up. I had the student’s rate how the lesson went with a fist to five. They had done this the day before and with many previous lessons with the other teacher so they were familiar with the process. I had the student’s rate themselves on how well they thought the writing went on a scale of one through five. One being they thought it was extremely hard. Five
being it was too easy. I had most students give the writing a three, some students said four, and the one student who was mad at the beginning of the lesson said one.

Reflection

What I did well?

I had mixed feelings about this lesson. I felt the comprehension questions and read aloud part went well. The students are really getting a hang of the echoing and repeating of the nursery rhymes. I would like to see if I can challenge the students by taking away the rhyme from the SMART Board and seeing if they can just listen to me read the nursery rhyme and then repeat me line by line by just listening to me. The students were able to answer the literal and inferential comprehension questions without me prompting too much.

A couple times I had to restate the question for students; however that is common for students in general. While I was walking around and working with students during the writing portion of the lesson, I also heard great conversations with students about what was similar and different in the two nursery rhymes. I am glad that I put the students in groups of three because they were able to work together based on their writing strengths and needs to put together a high quality sentence. I heard conversations between students where students were sounding out words and discussing what event happened in what nursery rhyme. The students got along very well together. The students’ writing has continued to progress. I have seen motivation in students just from their positive attitudes towards writing. When I say it’s time to write, they smile instead of getting upset.

What was challenging?

I wish I would have had more time for the students to go around in a circle and share their sentences and pictures with their peers, however, once again because of time; we were
unable to do so. Another challenge in this lesson was having a student who threw a temper tantrum throughout the entire beginning of the lesson and then was thrown off for the whole lesson. I wish I would have handled the situation better by maybe staying in his group longer or explaining that I needed to work with other students and see what type of work they were doing. He was fine and in control when I was working in his group, however, I was not able to stay in his group the whole time, I wanted to move to other groups and see other students’ writing. I think the question that I came up with for the writing task was a little difficult for the students, but with three students in the group working together, they were able to come up with high quality sentences.

**What will I do differently?**

Next lesson I will have the students listen to the read aloud twice and then echo me one line at a time without seeing the nursery rhyme on the SMART Board. I think this will be a challenge for the students; however I think because they are doing so well with the echo, I would like to challenge them. If it goes terrible, then I will go back to showing the nursery rhyme on the SMART Board while I do the echo with the students. I will continue to challenge the students with the writing task because they are doing a great job. I really liked the groups of three for the writing task because it brought out a lot of strengths in some of the reluctant writers.

**November 12, 2013 - Baa, Baa, Black Sheep**

I began the ELA lesson by telling the students they were going to listen to another nursery rhyme about sheep. I told the students the focus of the lesson was to listen to find out who in the nursery rhyme would receive a bag of the sheep’s fur or wool and how the wool ended up in the bags. The students listened to the nursery rhyme, “Baa, Baa, Black Sheep.” After
reading the nursery rhyme to the students twice, I had the students echo me. I tried to have the students echo me without looking at the words on the SMART Board. I was a little nervous about the echo without the students seeing the words on the SMART Board, but they did a wonderful job. They struggled for the first line, but I told the students to listen very carefully and that they had to listen to what I was saying, then repeat each line. After they struggled for the first part, they got the hang of it and they did a great job with the echo. They were able to recite and repeat each line of the nursery rhyme after I did. After the echo procedure we moved onto the comprehension questions.

The first question was a literal question that I asked the students, “What is the item that the person in the rhyme asks the sheep if he has?” The students all raised their hands. I called on a girl, Raniaha. She said, “Wool.” I complimented her on her correct answer and moved onto the next literal question. “How many bags of wool does the sheep say he has?” Again, all the students raised their hands. I called on a boy, Matthew, he said, “Two plus one more equals three!” I laughed and said, “Yes Matthew, the sheep said he had three bags of wool.” Matthew was always a student who gave above and beyond answers. The next question was an inferential question. It made the students think a little bit. I asked them, “What color do you think the wool is?” One student raised their hand. I waited another minute. Then a couple more students raised their hands. I waited thirty more seconds and then I repeated the question, “What color do you think the wool is?” More students raised their hands. About two-thirds of the class had their hands up. I called on a boy, Marcus. He said, “Maybe black?” I asked him why he thought black. He said, “Well because in the rhyme it said the sheep was black so the fur on the sheep had to be the same color as the sheep, right Ms. A?” I asked the rest of the class what they thought about Marcus’ answer. Some students nodded in agreement, other students said they thought the wool
was white. I called on another student who thought the wool was white. I asked her why she thought the wool was white. She said because all sheep’s are white. I said, “Well Sherry, we are referring to the nursery rhyme, so we have to remember that the nursery rhyme might not be real life, so it might be fiction or made up, so if we look back at the nursery rhyme, what color is the wool and sheep in this nursery rhyme?” Sherry said, “Ohhhhhh! Black!” I said, “Yes, boys and girls, so Marcus you are correct, the wool is black because it talks about a black sheep.” The last question was, “Do you think this nursery rhyme is real or make believe, and why or why not?” I had the students turn and talk to a neighbor about this question. Even though I had just kind of told them the answer in a discussion with Sherry’s answer, I still wanted them to discuss this question and give a reason why or why not. The student’s discussed for two minutes and then I brought them back together for a whole group discussion. I called on Rebecca who said, “Its make believe because sheep can’t talk.” I said, “Yes that is true! Why else is this nursery rhyme make believe?” Ky raised his hand and said, “Because sheep can’t have three bags full of wool and sheep can’t be black and talk.” “Yes you are all right. This nursery rhyme is make believe.” After the questions we moved onto the writing portion.

The students were extremely restless during the writing portion of the lesson. Two students were rolling around on the floor. One student was jumping up and down. Another student was crying. I tried to get the students settled; however some students just couldn’t get themselves in control. The other teacher in the room took some of the students to the other carpet in the other half of our classroom. This helped the students who were calm and focused. After some of the students were removed, there was only seven minutes left for writing time. I decided to modify what I was going to have the students do. I asked the students a question, “How do you think the wool in this nursery rhyme got into the bags?” I told the student’s that because of
time they were going to turn and talk to the person next to them instead of writing their answers on paper. Two students started crying because we were not writing today. This made me happy inside because the students wanted to write, however I did not want the student’s crying, we already had four students upset. I explained to the students, “We ran out of time for writing. However I am super happy that you LOVE writing and that warms my heart soooo much that you love to write and I promise that we will get to writing tomorrow. How does that sound?” The two girls smiled and then turned and started talking about the question I gave the students. I walked around the carpet and monitored the students’ discussions. Two boys, Justus and Ky were saying, “The sheep’s wool prolly get buzzed off and then put into baggies. That’s prolly how it got into the bags. I mean think bout it.” Two girls, Samantha and Rebecca just sat there. I sat next to them and asked them what they thought about the question. They said, “I don’t know.” I said, “Well how do you think the wool ended up off the sheep and into the bags?” The two girls just sat there for thirty seconds and then asked, “Well maybe the sheep got a haircut?” I asked, “Well Samantha do you get haircuts?” She said, “Yes!” I said, “Okay and if you wanted to save your hair after your haircut where do you think you would put your hair?” She said, “Well prolly in a bag.” I said, “Yes you are right! So how do you think the wool got into the bags in the nursery rhyme?” Rebecca said, “Because they cut the hair off the sheep and put it into the bags, like a sheep hair cut!” “You got it girls!” I responded back. After walking around to a few more groups, I called the students back as a whole. I had the students share out some of the responses they talked about with their partners and then we did a quick fist to five on the focus of lesson. The students gave themselves mostly fours on this lesson.
Reflection

What I did well?

The comprehension questions went well, however the students are becoming more comfortable with taking risks with their answers. I am building student confidence by praising students when they get the question right. The students are pretty confident in the literal questions that I ask and are getting them right 95% of the time. With the inferential and evaluative questions, that require the students to put more thought into the question, the students are taking more risks, and aren’t afraid to raise their hands and try to guess. I like that they aren’t afraid to give the question a try and they are guessing things that make sense.

I am providing the students a large amount of wait time, which is hard for me to do because it is often awkward to stand up in front of the class when not many students are raising their hands, but as a wait longer and longer, more students are raising their hands. I also try restating or repeating the question. That helps a lot of the students who need the question reworded or repeated. Sometimes just hearing the question for a second time helps the student really understand what I am asking of them.

What was challenging?

There were a couple challenges in this lesson. The first was that I had planned for almost fifteen minutes for writing time, which is plenty of time for the kindergarten students. With the students acting out and having to stop and having to remove the students, we lost almost ten minutes. There wasn’t enough time to do writing, which was frustrating to not only me, but to other students. I am glad that I still got to use the same question with the students; however, I would’ve liked to see what they would have written on their paper. It is becoming really frustrating with the domain and CCSS and time management. By the end of the lesson, there is
very little time for writing. It shocks me that writing isn’t even written into the listening strand domain, I am the one who has to add in writing. I know they are only in kindergarten but they still need to practice their writing skills.

The behavior was another challenge I had to deal with today. I know that is not something I can always control, and some things are out of my hands, such as when the students are going to get upset and start crying or start acting out. Well, those four students decided that ELA was going to be that time. This was a challenge because it took away from other students’ ELA time which is crucial to their learning. The other two girls who cried later because we weren’t writing ended up being okay after I talked to them.

The last challenge of the lesson was the echo without having it posted on the SMART Board. Although this was a challenge at the beginning, the students grappled through it. I expected the students to struggle at first because this was their first time not seeing the nursery rhyme posted on the SMART Board while repeating it after me. It was something that I wanted to try with the students. After the first couple lines of struggling, the students got a hang of it and were able to get through the nursery rhyme.

**What will I do differently?**

For the next lesson, I will continue the echo of the nursery rhyme with the students listening to me say a line and then repeating it after me without seeing the rhyme on the SMART Board. Although the students grappled with this during this lesson, I think the more the students practice this, the better they will become at repeating and echoing. I will make sure the student’s 100% have a writing portion for the next lesson. Even if they write for a five minute period, I just want to make sure the student’s get some type of writing done.
The ELA lesson for today was reading the nursery rhyme “Humpty Dumpty.” I told them that today’s focus was to predict what would happen in a picture I would show them and then to think about their favorite part of the nursery rhyme. Students looked at a picture I showed them on the SMART Board (a picture of Humpty Dumpty falling off the wall) and they were going to make a prediction of what they thought the nursery rhyme was going to be about. I asked some students to share their predictions.

One student, Samantha said, “The egg is falling off a wall.” That is a great guess.” I called on another student to share their prediction, Justus said, “Humpty Dumpty falls.” I responded, “Great prediction!” I called on one more girl who said, “I think the thing falls off a wall.” I told the students to listen to the nursery rhyme to see if their predictions were correct or not. I read “Humpty Dumpty” twice, showing student’s the pictures that came with the CCSS domain to match the nursery rhyme. After reading the nursery rhyme to the student’s, the students were told it was time to do the echo. Again, they were going to echo without the words on the SMART Board. I read each line one at a time, and had the students repeat the line after me. The students did much better with the echo today than they did yesterday. After doing the echo with the students we moved onto the comprehension questions.

I asked the students to be honest with their predictions. I had the students give me a thumbs up if their predictions were correct or a thumbs down if their predictions were wrong. I explained that it was okay if they were wrong, because that just means that you made an educated guess that wasn’t correct and you learned from that and that we are all wrong at some point in our life, and that I am even wrong sometimes. Three-fourths of the class had their thumbs up and were shouting out saying they were right. I reminded students, “You are only
showing with your thumbs if your prediction was right or not. You are sitting quietly.” The students sat back down quietly and showed me with their thumbs if their predictions were correct or not. After predictions we moved onto the comprehension questions.

I asked students the first literal question, “What is Humpty Dumpty?” One student shouted out, “An egg!” I reminded students that we don’t shout out and that we raise our hands. All the students raised their hands. I called on a girl, Daja, “An egg.” She said with a smile on her face. I moved onto the next literal question, “Where is Humpty Dumpty sitting?” I called on a boy, “A wall” he said. I responded, “Well done! What happens to Humpty Dumpty after he is sitting on the wall?” All the students raised their hands again. I called on a girl, Taylor. She said, “Well of course he fell off the wall!” I laughed and said, “You go girl!” I then told the students, “Now because you boys and girls are so smart I am going to make the questions a little bit harder, do you think you can handle it?” The students nodded with smiles on their faces. I asked the students and inferential question, “What does it mean to say that Humpty Dumpty had a great big fall?” About half the class raised their hands. I called on a boy, Matthew, “Well…he fell really hard.” I asked the rest of the class if they agreed. The students nodded, had their thumbs up and said, “Yep!” Then I told Matthew that I agreed with him, “That Humpty Dumpty took a hard fall and that he fell hard on the ground.” The last question I asked the students was an evaluative question, which required the students to really put thought into the answer and use multiple steps in the thinking process. I asked the students, “Why couldn’t the king’s men put Humpty Dumpty back together again?” Only one student raised his hand. So I waited another minute. In that minute of wait time, two more students raised their hands. I restated the question for the students, “Why couldn’t Humpty Dumpty be put back together by the king’s men?” Six more students raised their hands. I called on Simon. He said, “Well, let’s see here. Humpty
Dumpty is an egg. And if I know correctly. Eggs can’t be put back together. So Humpty Dumpty ain’t going back together.” I repeated back to the students what Simon had said, “Yes Simon, Humpty Dumpty is an egg and we know that if an egg cracks, you cannot put the egg back together.” After answering the comprehension questions I told the students that we had plenty of time for writing today.

I went to a blank page on the SMART Board and posted the question, “What is your favorite part of Humpty Dumpty?” I told the students they were just going to think for a minute and then they were going to write on their own paper. I gave each student their own piece of paper and sent them to work in their “writing spots”. The students who struggled with writing stayed on the carpet with me and the students, who didn’t need the extra support, went back to their tables with the other teacher.

Some student’s got right to writing, other students sat there for a moment looking out the window, or at the wall. I walked over to Frank who was looking out the window. I asked Frank, “Frank, what was your favorite part of Humpty Dumpty?” “Well Ms. A I didn’t really have a favorite part because I didn’t like any of the nursery rhyme.” He said. “Well I am sure there has to be something you liked in the story. What about when he fell off the wall? Wasn’t that part funny to you?” Frank laughed and said, “Yes I mean I guess that was funny when an egg fell off the wall.” “Well let’s write about that part then. How do you think we can start your sentence?” I said. Frank looked at me with hesitation. “Ummm, my favorite part is…” he said. I responded back, “Yes, now how are we going to write that? Remember to use our word wall for words that you might get stuck on!” He looked at the word wall for the word “My.” When he found it he wrote it on his paper. “My.” Then he started writing the word “favorite.” He sounded out the word favorite beginning with the “f” sound. This is what he wrote on his paper, “fvrt.” Next he
moved onto the word part. He wrote on his paper, “pt.” I told Frank that he was doing a great job and that I was going to let him do the rest on his own. I reminded him to use the word wall as a guide for words he may not know. He smiled with confidence and began writing. I told him I would check back in five minutes. I walked away and went to work with Daja. On her paper she had, “m f p i e o t w.” I asked her to read me what she wrote, she said, “My favorite is egg off the wall.” I told Daja that was my favorite part of the nursery rhyme too!” I told her to draw a picture to match the words. I went and worked with Simon who was just sitting and drawing scribbles on his paper. I sat next to Simon on the carpet and I asked him what he was writing. He said, “My favorite part.” I asked what his favorite part was. He said, “When Humpty Dumpty broke.” I said, “Okay, can you read me your sentence you wrote?” Simon said, “My favorite part is when Humpty Dumpty broke. The end.” Simon had only scribbles on his paper. I showed Simon how to write the letter “M” and then I had Simon copy what I wrote. He got really excited when he had written the letter “M”. Then I wrote the letter “y”. I had Simon copy down the “y” next to the “M”. I showed Simon how he wrote the word my. He was so happy. I told him to look at the word wall and I showed him how the word we wrote matches the word on the word wall. I had Simon repeat the word after me, MY. Simon said, “My.” Then I told Simon to draw a picture to match his sentence. After meeting with a couple students I had all the students come back together on the carpet and I choose a couple of students to share their sentences. John read his sentence, “My favorite part is when Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall.” All the students clapped. I had John show his picture that he drew to match his sentence. I said, “Well done John, your picture of Humpty Dumpty matches your sentence!” I called on Raniaha to go next. She showed her picture to the class and read her sentence in a loud voice, “My favorite part of the story was when Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall.” The kids laughed and clapped. Jason yelled
out. “That was my favorite too!” I quietly reminded Jason that we don’t yell out and if we have something to share, then he needs to raise his hand. I told Raniaha she did a wonderful job and I told the students we had time for one more. I called on Jackson and he read his sentence aloud to the class. “My favorite was when they tried putting Humpty Dumpty back together.” He said. He showed his picture to the class and they clapped. I wrapped up the ELA lesson by having the students do a quick self-check by doing a fist to five. A one meant they didn’t understand the lesson at all. A five meant they completely understood the lesson and could teach it to other students in the school. Most of the students gave themselves fours and I had some students give themselves threes and two students gave themselves fives.

**Reflection**

**What I did well?**

Overall this lesson went really well. I was successful at reintroducing predictions to the students. Students revisited making predictions and were able to decide whether or not their predictions were correct. The students seemed to really enjoy this because they hadn’t done predictions in a while.

Students also did much better with the echo, and not seeing the nursery rhyme on the SMART Board. In the last lesson they struggled with the echo at first, this time they did really well and were able to listen to me say a line and then repeat it after me.

The biggest success of the lesson was writing. I was very ecstatic that we had fifteen minutes for writing in this lesson. I had modified the lesson to add a writing prompt that fit the needs of the students. I think they really enjoyed this writing prompt because the students seemed motivated to write and were able to write and draw a picture that matched their sentence for an extended period of time. I did not have to remind students at all to get back on task. One
student I was working with, Daja, only wrote the first letter of each word in her sentence. She is at the early transitional stage of the emergent writer. She is able to have one letter represent an entire syllable or word. She is aware of her spacing of letters. She is also aware of directionality when reading the sentence back to me. When I was working with Simon who had only scribbles on his paper, he was able to read back to what he wrote even though they were only scribbles. He was also able to point at each “scribble” and say what he thought was the word for the scribble. I saw a teaching moment when I was working with Simon and I showed him how to write the word “my”. Even though he may not remember how to write the word, I felt that he was at the point where he could take advantage of learning how to spell a word and also boost his self-esteem. I was right. Simon was extremely happy and proud of himself when he wrote the word “my” on his paper. Simon is still in the beginning stage of scribbling but he is able to point to the words while he is reading. Although he is behind in grade level he is make progress towards his writing.

**What was challenging?**

There were not many challenges in this lesson and I felt very accomplished throughout the entire lesson. The only thing I would say was a challenge was that some students forgot what a prediction was at first, so some students began shouting out. However, I quickly brought the students back together and one student told the other students that it was a guess. I wasn’t aware that the students hadn’t done predictions in a while. I thought they had done predictions in a recent lesson. This was my own mistake, I should have reviewed predictions with the students before starting the lesson, instead of just assuming the students knew what a prediction was. Other than that, the lesson went really well.
What will I do differently?

For the next lesson, I will continue with nursery rhymes, except the listening strand domain begins introducing students to fables. I will introduce the students to *The Lion and the Mouse* and I will still ask the comprehension questions at the end of the fable. I will stick with asking students their favorite part of the fable. The students seemed to really get into that part of the lesson and I saw a lot of students motivated to write. Even my reluctant writers were on task with writing. It is interesting to see that writing prompts can affect the attitude of many students. Again, I will make sure that I leave enough time for the students to have ample amounts of time to write.

November 14, 2013- *The Lion and the Mouse Fable*

I began the ELA lesson by explaining to the students that the lesson was going to be a little bit different. I told the students that we were still going to be following the same format however our nursery rhyme was now going to be a fable. I asked the students if they had ever heard the word fable before. One student Nasir raised his hand. I asked him to explain what a fable was to the class. He said, “Well, let me see how I can put this, it is another kind of nursery rhyme that teaches all of us a lesson.” I responded with a smile on my face, “You got it dude! That is exactly what a fable is. It teaches us a lesson in the story.” I told the students, “Today we are going to listen to a fable called, *The Lion and the Mouse.*” I told them our focus of the lesson was to listen to find out who learns a lesson in this fable.

I read the fable to the students once and then I reminded the students to listen again for the lesson in the story. I read the fable for the second time. After reading it a second time I began asking the comprehension questions. I asked a literal question first, “Who are the characters in
“What was the lesson of this fable?” Half the class raised their hands. I called on Frank. He said, “That animals can’t talk.” I said, “That’s a great guess but that is not something we learned from the fable. That is something we already knew. What is a lesson that we learned from reading this fable?” I called on John. He said, “A mouse can help a lion.” I said, “John you are on the right track. What kind of animal is the mouse?” He said, “A little one.” I prompted him to the right answer, “Yes. And what kind of animal is the lion?” He replied, “A big one!” So what can we say about little and big animals, instead of just saying mice and lions?” He got a smile on his
face and said, “OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH! Little animals or little friends can help big friends or animals.” “Yes John, little friends, no matter what size can always help out bigger friends. So even if you are smaller than someone you should always try and help someone out!” I told the students. The students clapped with excitement.

I went to a blank page in SMART Notebook. I told the students that because they did such a remarkable job with their writing prompt yesterday, I was going to give them the same one. The students clapped again. I wrote the question on the SMART Board, “What was your favorite part of the fable?” I asked students, “Should you spell the word favorite wrong?” They all yelled, “NOOOOOOOO!” I said, “How come?” They said, “Because you wrote it on the board Ms. A.” I said, “Oh, okay! So I should use things around the room to help me spell words that I put on my paper?” They nodded their heads. I told the students they only had twelve minutes to write today, so they weren’t going to have as much time as yesterday, but still a good chunk of time. I gave each student their paper and sent them off to write in their designated writing spots.

I waited to see who got right to work and who hesitated. Everyone except Ky was beginning to write. I walked over to Ky, who was just sitting there and asked him what was wrong. He said, “NOTHIN” in a very angry voice. I said, “Well something must be bothering you if you aren’t doing what I asked you to do. Did I do something to you?” He said, “No.” I said, “Well did the paper do something to you?” He smiled a little bit and said, “No.” I said, “Well do you think that maybe together we could find your favorite part of the fable and write it together?” He only nodded his head and didn’t say anything. I asked Ky what his favorite part of the fable was. He said, “When the lion was caught in the net.” I said laughed and said, “Okay so how can we start that sentence?” He said, “My favorite part is…” On his paper he began writing
the words, “my favorite pt iz” I said, “Nice job so far Ky. You spelled the word favorite right because you copied it right from the SMART Board like I said during the read aloud. I also liked how you looked at the word wall for the word my.” Ky smiled with confidence. I asked him how he thought he could right the next part of his sentence. He wrote, “wn ta lin gt kot” I asked Ky to read me what he had just written on his paper. He read, “When the lion got caught.” I smiled and said, “Wonderful job Ky! You have a word written for each word that you read.” I asked Ky if he could read his whole sentence together. He smiled with excitement and said, “YES!” This is what was written on his paper, “my favorite pt iz wn ta lin gt kot” I clapped quietly when he finished reading because Ky had read so confidently and I was very impressed with his writing and reading skills. I complimented him on his hard work and then asked Ky to draw a picture to match his sentence. I walked around the room some more glancing at the students writing. There was only three more minutes left for ELA. There wasn’t enough time for me to work with another student, however all the other students were finishing up their sentences or on the drawing. I walked over to a student, Samantha who was just finishing up her sentence. On her paper she had written, “mfa pt s ml h niyn” I asked Samantha to read me her sentence. While gliding her finger from left to right, she said, “My favorite part was when the mouse helped the lion out of the net.” I said, “Wonderful job. I liked how you started the beginning of the sentence and ended at the end of your sentence.” I told the students that it was time to share their sentences and drawings with the rest of the class and that it was time to come to the carpet. All the students joined on the carpet.

There was time for three students to share their writing and drawing. I called on John. He read his sentence aloud, “My favorite part was when the lion was stuck in the net.” This is what it said on his paper, “my favorite pt ws wn ta lin ws stk in ta nt” Then he showed his picture to
the class. The students clapped and laughed at his lion stuck in the net. I called on the next student Frank. He had only scribbles on his paper. He I asked Frank to read what he wrote. He pointed to the scribbles (writing) and read, “My favorite part was when the mouse helped the lion, they were friends in the end. The end.” Then I asked Frank to turn his paper so the class could see his picture he drew. The students clapped. I called on Sherry. She read her sentence aloud, “My favorite part was when little friends can help big friends.” On her paper she had written, “mi favorite prt ws wn ltt fns c hlp bg fns” She showed the students her picture of a lion and mouse being friends. The students clapped and some students said, “Aww.” I asked the students to do a fist to five self-check on this lesson. Everyone except Simon and Frank gave themselves fours; those two students gave themselves twos. The students are very honest with the self-checks.

Reflection

What I did well?

The ELA lesson was successful as a whole. I am becoming more and more confident in teaching the listening strand domain lessons with the students. Kindergarten was a new territory for me and I honestly was very nervous about teaching kindergarten. I have become more confident in my teaching and the different writing strategies to use with students when they begin to struggle with writing. I have used many teaching moments with different students to motivate them to write. For example when Ky was upset about something I went up to him and sort of joked around for a couple seconds to find out what was bothering him and then he moved on passed it and started writing.

Using the different anchor charts around the room has also helped the students with their writing, especially the word wall in the room. The other teacher and I have really stressed the
importance of the word wall and using it to help them when the student’s don’t know how to spell a word. All the common words we use are on the word wall as well as all of the students’ names and important vocabulary terms.

By seeing students work through the struggle of writing and become successful writers, I have learned more about emergent writers. The students in the classroom are in varying stages of the writing scale. Simon and Frank are at the scribbling stage. They scribble all their letters. I am unable to read anything they write, however if I ask them what they wrote they can tell me everything they wrote. I think it is so interesting! There are a handful of students who are at the emergent and experimental stage. These students are going from mock letters to real letters, however they are writing the letters in random order or long strings of letters. Stage 2 or emergent/ experimental writers can also read back their own writing and have directionality in control. Some of the stage 2 students include, Samantha, Rebecca, Janiya and Matthew. The rest of our students are in stage 3 or transitional writing. These students have a letter for each syllable. A lot of students in the class do this. They don’t always have the spacing down perfectly but they do space their letters often. Sometimes these students put in punctuation. Some of these stage 3 students include Daja, John and Sherry. By learning about each of the stages, I am able to put students into the different groups and allow the students to work with each other or individually based on their needs and strengths as writers.

During the writing part of ELA, I like to walk around and work with students because that is my time to help the students who are frustrated or struggling with their sentence. I am able to talk them through the sentence or just get them going.
What was challenging?

There are some challenges I am facing with just being in a kindergarten classroom. Students in kindergarten often struggle with basic letters and sounds. Being a substitute teacher is often hard because I do not know what the students have already learned and not learned. Also not having much experience with kindergarten, I have to keep reminding myself that these students are just starting out in school for the first time. Most of these students have never been in school. There are times when I am working with a student and I will assume that student knows how to spell the word or knows how to write that letter, when in reality that student doesn’t even know what sound that letter makes or what letter I am even talking about. This has definitely been a challenge for me being in kindergarten but it has opened my eyes to how students struggle in the emergent writing stages. This lesson did not have challenges in itself; there have just been overall challenges in being in kindergarten.

What will I do differently?

In the next lesson I will continue with reading a fable and then asking the students follow up comprehension questions from the CCSS listening strand domain. I am going to continue with modifying the writing prompt, however because all fables have lessons I may change the writing task to have the students write what the lesson was in the fable. I am not sure if this may be too hard for them or not, however if we talk about the lesson learned as a whole group before and then the students just write their sentence I think the students will be set up for success. I will be sure to put students in groups based on strengths and needs for the writing task to ensure minimal frustration.
November 15, 2013- The Dog and his Reflection Fable

For today’s ELA lesson, I had brought in mirrors because the fable I read to the students was called “The Dog and his Reflection.” I wasn’t sure if the students’ had ever seen their reflections in the mirror before or knew what a reflection was. I felt the easiest way to explain a reflection would be to bring in a bunch of mirrors and have the students look at themselves in the mirrors and see their own reflections. For the engaging part of the lesson, I passed out a bunch of mirrors to the students and had them take turns looking at themselves in the mirrors and then I had the students share out what they saw in the mirror. Rebecca said, “I see myself!” Simon said, “Me too, it’s me!” Justus said, “Ms.A, it is me in the mirror!” I said, “Boys and girls you are all right, you are all seeing yourselves in the mirror. Do you know what that is called when you see yourselves in the mirror?” Ky raised his hand. He said, “A picture?” I said, “That is a great guess, but not the answer I am looking for.” No one else raised their hand. I told the students that what they saw in the mirror was a reflection. I had them repeat the word reflection after me. I told the students that they would be listening to a fable called “The Dog and his Reflection.” I told the students it was about a dog that sees his reflection. I reminded the students that the fable has a lesson in the story and that the focus of our lesson today was to find out what lesson the dog learned in this fable. I read the fable to the students twice, and showed them the matching images that the listening strand domain provided to go along with the story. After reading the fable twice we moved on to the comprehension questions.

We began with the literal questions first. I asked the students if the character was a person or animal. All the students raised their hands. I called on Jeremiah. He said, “The character is a dog, which is an animal Ms. A.” I responded, “Thank you Jeremiah!” The next question I asked the students was, “What do you think the dog is excited about in the beginning
of the story?” Most of the students raised their hands. I called on Samantha. She said, “The man gave him a bone.” I said, “Your right, does anyone remember what they called that man?” I called on Sarah. “A butcher?” She asked. “Yes Sarah! A butcher is a person who sells meat to people.” I asked the students an inferential question next, which required the students to take something from the text and then use some background knowledge to put together an answer. “In the fable, the dog crosses a stream on a bridge. What happens while the dog is crossing the bridge?” Five students raised their hands. Then three more students raised their hands. I asked the question one more time. “What happened when the dog crossed over the stream on the bridge?” About half the students had their hands up in the air. I called on Jason. He said, “The dog saw it’s reflection in the pond.” “Yes Jason, the dog saw its reflection in the stream.” I repeated and corrected back to Jason. “What else happened when the dog saw his reflection in the stream?” I prompted the students. Most of the students raised their hands. I called on Janiyah. She said, “He thought the reflection was another dog so he went to take that bone from the other dog and then dropped his bone.” I said, “Oh my gosh Janiyah! The poor dog lost his bone. How do you think the dog felt when he dropped his bone in the stream?” All the students raised their hands and even jumped up off their bottoms. I had reminded the students to sit back on their bottoms and I would only call on students who were sitting quietly and raising their hands quietly. I called on Simon. He said, “The dog was prolly sad that he had no bone left.” I responded to what Simon said, “Yeah I agree Simon. If I had a bone and I was walking along and I thought I saw another bone that was better, so I dropped my bone and went after the better looking bone and then it turns out the better looking bone was just a reflection and not real. I would be pretty sad and upset.” The students nodded in agreement. “What is the lesson of this fable?” I asked the students. A couple students raised their hands. I waited another minute. Then
I asked the question again, “What is the lesson learned in this fable?” Eight total students had their hands raised. I called on Daja. She said, “That if you want too many things, you will end up with nothing.” I said, “Daja, I agree with that. Do you know what it is called when you want a lot of things but are never satisfied?” She shook her head no. I looked at the rest of the class to see if anyone else knew the answer. I said to the students, “It is called being greedy. Greedy is when you want things, even though you already have something. For example, the other day when I was handing out candy to you guys and some of you said ‘can I have some more?’ I told you not to be greedy because I was already giving you candy in the first place.” I asked the students, “How was the dog in this story being greedy?” Most of the students raised their hands. I called on Veronica. She said, “Because the dog wanted another bone even though he already had one. He should have just kept the bone he had and been happy.” I smiled and said, “You got it girl! The lesson learned was don’t be greedy, because you might lose everything you have.” As soon as I finished that sentence the fire alarm had gone off. By the time we came back inside the students had to go to library. We were unable to do writing for the day.

**Reflection**

**What I did well?**

This lesson has helped me with my own teaching practices and taught me more about the importance of wait time and restating questions for students. I observed the other teacher during a math lesson in the classroom provide a full minute and half for students to process the question before she allowed anyone to answer. She would often ask the question again or reword the question. This was always hard for me to do because it can be uncomfortable standing in front of students just waiting, however just giving students an extra 30 seconds to process the question is
more important than just calling on the same students over and over, just to get the lesson over with.

I have noticed that I am calling on all different students and then if a student gets the question wrong, I am prompting them in the right direction if I know they can get it right, or telling them that I like how they attempted the question.

Although we did not get to writing because of a fire drill, I felt that for me personally, I had a successful lesson. The students comprehend the lessons learned in the fables even though they aren’t familiar fables.

**What was challenging?**

The challenge in this lesson was that we did not get to writing. It has been a struggle throughout my substitute assignment in kindergarten. I know the Common Core State Standard listening strand domain requires little writing for kindergarten, however because my focus is on writing and because I think writing is extremely important, I would like to see the students writing daily. However, because of time and other instruction throughout the day, daily writing is not always plausible. I have done my best to have the students attempt to write daily and they have seemed to enjoy writing when we do get to the writing task.

I have helped the students who have struggled with writing, whether it was because of lack of motivation or because of not knowing how to begin writing their sentence, or just because they were a stage 1 emergent writer. Being in kindergarten has been a challenge in itself for me and I have overcome many challenges, but I have learned a lot about emergent writing and how scribbling is a form of writing. I have helped many students who are at a stage of writing where they write one letter, representing a whole word. When I ask the student to read me their sentence, they are able to read me the entire sentence and know exactly what it says.
Having a word wall in the room is a great idea. The teacher and student’s refer back to it all the time. The teacher is always adding new content and basic vocabulary words to the wall all the time.

**What will I do differently?**

I have enjoyed my time in kindergarten and I look forward to my next substitute assignment.

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**November 18, 2013-Paragraph writing**

I was assigned to a familiar 4th grade classroom for the day. The sub plans were very structured and I knew the students very well because I had most of the students the year before when I did a long term substitute assignment with them. Looking around the room there were anchor charts for writing. One anchor chart showed students what belonged in a paragraph but the anchor chart was shaped like a cheeseburger.
The bun was the topic sentence, the cheese, lettuce and tomatoes were the details, the meat was
the body of the paragraph and the bottom bun was the conclusion. Another anchor chart I saw for
writing was one that said, “What makes a writer successful?” On the chart there was a bulleted
list of things the students thought make a writer successful. Some of the things on their list were,
planning our writing, editing our paper, taking our time, expanding our vocabulary, not getting
frustrated while writing, writing neatly so people can read our hard work, do our best writing at
all times, being specific and use good grammar. The anchor charts were located where students
could easily see them from their seats.

For the past couple ELA lessons the students in 4th grade had been using a graphic
organizer to take notes as readers on the Iroquois. The lesson I did today followed the module
from the Common Core State Standards and focused on using that graphic organizer to plan as
writers. I began the lesson by going over the learning targets with the students. The first one was,
I can write clear and complete sentences from my notes. The second one was I can write an
informative/explanatory paragraph that has a clear topic sentence, a body, and a conclusion. I
asked the students to take out their graphic organizers from yesterday and to share them for two
minutes with the people at their tables. After two minutes, I had the students share out what they
talked about on the graphic organizers. I called on Nazier. He said, “The main idea is that
Iroquois people used natural world to meet their needs.” “Great job Nazier!” I said back. I then
asked the students, “Who has supporting details to match that main idea?” Several students
raised their hands. I called on Mia who said, “Growing food.” I responded, “Yes that is one thing
the Iroquois did, what else?” I called on Tyler next. He said, “They hunt and cook their food that
they catch.” I responded back to Tyler, “You got it dude, they hunted fish and deer and then
cooked their own food that they caught for dinner. I’ll take one more supporting detail for natural world.” Almost all the students’ hands were up. I called on Marissa. She said, “The Iroquois use logs and things in the natural world to build their shelter.” “Exactly Marissa! They use things in the natural world to survive!” I asked the students who could share what they had for the last box on the graphic organizer. Every student had their hand up. I said, “I am going to pick a stick because everyone wants to answer, so that it is fair! I love how you are all so awake today!” I picked Lydia. She said, “The Iroquois rely on the natural world for food and shelter and they need the natural world to survive.” I told Lydia, “That is absolutely perfect! You concluded that reading perfectly!”

After going over the graphic organizer I explained to the students that they were going to writing an informative/ explanatory paragraph. I asked the students if they knew what informative/ explanatory meant. Most of the students raised their hands. I called on Melasia. She said, “It contains information and it explains or tells you something.” I told Melasia that she was correct and then I went on to point out the anchor chart in the room that explained the parts of a paragraph. I had the students take turns reading the parts of the anchor chart aloud, beginning with the topic sentence. I asked the students what a topic sentence was. Robert said, “A sentence with the main idea.” I asked the students, “What is a body?” I called on Cyrus. He said, “A bunch of sentences that contain details that support the main idea.” I restated what Cyrus had said. “Exactly. The body has several sentences, not just one and they must support the main idea.” The last part I asked the students was, “What is a conclusion?” Khaled said, “A sentence that wraps up the paragraph.” “You got it dude!” I said back. I reread the learning targets for the day, “I can write clear and complete sentences from my notes and I can write an informative/ explanatory paragraph that has a clear topic sentence, a body, and a conclusion.”
The teacher had modified the module and wanted me to have the students write a paragraph independently based on this graphic organizer that we just talked about, instead of what the module said which was to read a new section of their text and create another graphic organizer. I told the students to get out a blank piece of paper and to put their name on the top. I told the students they would be using the graphic organizer we just discussed to write an informative/explanatory paragraph. I pointed to the anchor chart on the wall and told the students, “Remember to include all the parts of a paragraph when you are writing.” The students got to work. I walked around and monitored the students writing, but the teacher wrote in her plans to specifically not help students unless they had questions about the directions. She wanted to use this paragraph as an assessment for the students. The students were focused on their writing. Only one student seemed to get frustrated at one point. He was sitting there stabbing his pencil on the paper. I walked over and rubbed his back a little and asked what was wrong. He said, “I don’t know what to do next.” I asked, “What do you have done so far?” He said, “The topic sentence and supporting details.” I responded back, “Look at your graphic organizer and see what boxes you have left and look back at the anchor chart on the wall to see what you still need on the cheeseburger, that may help you.” He looked at me, smiled and said, “Thank you Ms. Aldinger!” As I continued to walk around the room I saw students looking back and forth at their graphic organizer and then writing on their paper. I saw one student, Derek, even check off each box as he wrote a sentence on his paper. I walked around the room for the next 45 minutes while the students finished their paragraphs. I collected their paragraph writing.
Reflection

What I did well?

I felt the ELA lesson was successful. I am glad the teacher modified the lesson for the students because the students ended up taking longer to write the paragraph than expected. There never would have been enough time to read a new part of the text, do a whole new graphic organizer and then write a paragraph. I am glad that the students shared their graphic organizers in their groups first, because they were able to refresh their memories on what they had been working on for the last couple days and because it was a Monday, the students definitely needed a refresher.

The group discussion I had with the students about what they had filled in for their graphic organizer, I had only picked one topic sentence and then had the students share supporting details and a conclusion for that one, even though not all the students had that same topic sentence. I didn’t know if that was going to work, however I thought I would give it a try. It ended up working really well because most of the students chose the topic sentence, Iroquois people used the natural world to meet their needs. Even the students who didn’t pick that topic sentence were able to participate in the lesson because they had all read about the Iroquois and knew how the natural world helped the Iroquois survive.

Another useful part of the lesson was having the paragraph anchor chart in the classroom. I referred back to the chart several times in the lesson. I also reminded the students to use it while they were independently writing. While I was monitoring the students independent writing I saw students constantly going back to their graphic organizers and making sure they had all the components of the paragraph (topic sentence, body, and conclusion). The students were on task the entire time and were very focused.
What was challenging?

The challenging part of the lesson was that I had not read the text the students were using to write the paragraphs. I had some background knowledge on the topic of the Iroquois and luckily the topic sentence/main idea that Nazier had given me was something I knew about, otherwise I would have had to wing it. That is the challenging part about substitute teaching. I don’t always know the topics the class is working on. I wish the teacher would have given me some example main ideas that the students might have come up with because then I could have had some background knowledge on the topic, or she could have left the *Iroquois* text for me. In the end the ELA lesson turned out to be successful.

What will I do differently?

If I were to teach this lesson again I would give the students a new reading and let them grapple the complex text and then with a small group fill in the graphic organizer with the main idea, supporting details and concluding statement. I would then discuss what they filled in as a whole class. As their closing assessment I will have the students write an informative/explanatory paragraph.

November 19, 2013- *The Blind Men and the Elephant*

Today my substitute assignment was in an inclusion second grade classroom. The ELA lesson that I did was from the listening and learning domain of the Common Core State Standards. I read the domain ahead of time and became familiar with what I was going to be doing with the students. There was no writing in the lesson. I asked the special education teacher in the room why the students aren’t writing during the ELA block. She said because there isn’t enough time for writing and the listening and learning strand domain does not always require the
students to write. She said the students have a writing prompt that they do when they walk in the room in the morning. I guess that would be what I would have to work with, since the students would not be writing during the ELA block.

The writing prompt the teacher left for me to write on the board was, “If you could have any career as an adult, what would it be and why?” As the students came into the classroom, I greeted them with a smile and since they already knew who I was from being in their classroom before, they gave me hugs and said, “Hi Ms. A!” “Your back Ms. A!” “Yayyyyy! Ms. A!” The students came right in, got their breakfast and began working on their writing prompt on the board. I walked around and monitored students’ writing. I had to remind a couple students to begin writing because they were chatting with friends. Two boys were too focused on their breakfast, and not writing. One boy, Brad, was playing with his cereal and milk. I sat down in the seat next to him. “Brad, what do you want to be when you grow up?” I said to him. “Hmm. I don’t know. Maybe an astronaut.” He said. “That would be cool. You could fly to outer space. You could see if people live on Mars. You would be able to go inside a rocket ship!” I said. Brad laughed and said, “Yeah, the rocket ship would be the coolest part of it all. Flying out to space in that rocket and counting down to take off!” I smiled. “Brad, you have great ideas and a great dream ahead of you, now get those ideas on that paper!” He said, “Okay, Ms. A!” He picked up his pencil and began writing immediately. I saw another student Ajalynn writing then erasing, writing a sentence, and then erasing it. I went and kneeled down next to her. I asked her what was wrong with her writing. She said, “I don’t like what my writing looks like.” I said, “Well I think you have beautiful handwriting. Can you read me what you wrote?” She said, “Yes. When I grow up I want to be a teacher because I have two of the best teachers…” I said, “That is a great start and I know your teachers would be proud to hear that you want to be a teacher
because of them.” She smiled. I said, “Your handwriting looks so nice and neat and I can read exactly what you wrote, just remember the important part is getting all your ideas down on the paper.” Ajalynn said, “Yes, Ms. A that is right!” The students only had one more minute to write before breakfast was over and it was time for morning meeting. Most of the students finished writing, a couple of the students who came in late were unable to finish their writing. The teacher said that if students come in late, they don’t get a chance to finish their writing unless they have a chance later in the day. I didn’t agree with this since this is the student’s only chance to really write throughout the day.

When it came time for ELA I brought the students to the carpet where the SMART Board was. I began by telling them that the poem I was going to read was based on an old fable from India and one of the characters was an elephant. I then showed the students a picture on the SMART Board and asked them to describe the elephant in the picture. I called on students to share. One student said, “Big.” Another student said, “Strong.” Brad said, “Gray.” I said, “Yes you are all correct.” Then I asked the students, “How were you able to describe the elephant? What did you use?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Joelle. She said, “Our sight.” “Yes, you are right. You used your sense of sight to describe the elephant.” I told the students that besides the elephant, there are six blind men in the poem. I told the students that the men have never met the elephant before and they are trying to discover what the elephant is like without asking the elephant. I told the students, “Make a prediction for how the blind men might describe what the elephant is like.” I called on five students to share their predictions aloud and I wrote them on a piece of chart paper. Ajalynn said, “That the elephant is fat.” The students laughed. Another girl said, “That the elephant is tall.” A boy, Jerome said, “The elephant is big and tall.” I called on, Adam, “The elephant has a long nose.” I called on one more student,
Alissa, “The elephant has big feet.” “Great job boys and girls, these are all great predictions and if you had different predictions that is okay too. Today our focus is to listen to the poem to see if your prediction about how the blind men describe the elephant is correct or not.”

I read the poem aloud to the students showing them the pictures on the SMART Board as I went along that were provided by the listening and learning strand domain. The second time I read the poem aloud, the students acted on what the six blind men were doing. For example when the blind men were feeling the side of the elephant, the students had to stand up and pretend they were feeling the side of the elephant. The students enjoyed acting out the poem because they were able to get up and moving and almost see what it was like to describe an elephant without being able to actually see it. After the second read aloud with students acting out the poem, we moved onto the comprehension questions provided by the listening and learning strand of the domain.

I asked students to look at the chart where I wrote down the five student predictions at the beginning of the lesson. I went through each prediction about the way the six men would describe the elephant and had students give me a thumbs up or down if the prediction was right or not. After saying if the student’s predictions were correct or not, I asked the students the next question, “Touching which part of the elephant made one blind man bawl, or cry, that the elephant resembled, or was like, a wall?” Five students raised their hands. I restated the question, “What part of the elephant’s body resembled a wall?” Almost all of the students raised their hands. I called on Shaniah, “His body.” “Nice job Shaniah.” I said. “What part of the body made another blind man think the elephant resembled a spear?” Two-thirds of the class raised their hands. I called on Ramirez, “His tusk.” “You got it dude! What part of the elephant made another blind man think the elephant resembled a snake?” All but one student raised their hand. I called
on a boy, Jackson. He said, “His trunk!” “Yes, you are right; his trunk resembled, or looked like a snake.” I said to the students. “What part of the elephants made another blind man think the elephant resembled a tree?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Travon, “His knee.” “Yes!” I said to Travon. “What part of the elephant resembled a fan?” Nine students raised their hands. I waited a minute. A couple more raised their hands. I called on Mariah, “His ear.” “You are right. His ear was kind of big and flappy and was sort of like a fan. So the blind man thought his ear looked and felt like a fan.” I said. “Which part of the elephant made the last blind man think the elephant was like a rope?” I asked. I called on George, “His tail is like a rope.” “Yes you are right.” I said.

Because of time I asked the students one more question, “Turn and talk to your neighbor about what the men could have done to get a more accurate observation of the elephant?” I gave the students four minutes to talk to their neighbors then I called on students to share out. I called on Star, “The men should have talked with one another about what they thought the elephant looked like.” I asked the students, “Yes, I agree. What do you think would have happened if all six men talked about what they thought the different elephant parts looked like?” The majority of the students raised their hands. I called on Eli. He said, “The men prolly could have come up with a real elephant and not a rope and fan and other weird things.” “Yeah you are right!” I said. I called on Brad, “The men could have used their eyes.” “Well Brad, they would have used their eyes, however remember the men were blind so they could not see.” I said. “Oh yeah!” He said. I concluded by telling students it was important for the blind men to use their other senses, such as smell, hearing, and touch to figure out what the elephant was.
Reflection

What I did well?

I think I did a great job at working with students during the writing prompt in the morning. When Brad was distracted by his breakfast and not writing, I sat in the chair next to him and just had a conversation with him about what he wanted to be when he was older. I was able to have a low key conversation and he was able to tell me he wanted to be an astronaut. At first I wasn’t sure if I should have Brad write as we were talking, but then I decided to finish my conversation with Brad and then have him write because he seemed to be motivated and engaged in our conversation. After our conversation he went right to writing.

I also enjoyed working with Ajalynn even though she struggled with perfecting her handwriting. I told her the most important thing is getting her ideas on paper. I struggled with this situation because I know handwriting is important to some students and some students can be perfectionists. Ajalynn wanted her handwriting to be perfect; however she wasn’t getting all her ideas on paper. I was able to work with her to make sure she got all her ideas about her career in her notebook and not worry so much about her handwriting.

What was challenging?

I was unable to see the students write during the listening and learning strand of the domain. I would have liked to see the students write something connected to *The Blind Men and the Elephant*. Even if they wrote about the question I asked them for the think, pair, and share. However due to time, and the teacher not having it in her plans I was unable to have the students write. The other teacher said the student’s usually only write in the morning, unless the listening and learning strand of the domain requires extra writing.
What will I do differently?

If I were to do this lesson again I will modify the listening and learning strand of the domain and have the students answer one of the questions in a writing prompt form. This will allow the students to put their answers on paper and grapple through the writing process. This also will allow me the opportunity to work with students and get a chance to see how students work through the writing process.

November 20, 2013- Building Background Knowledge

Today I was in a general education fifth grade classroom. For the ELA block the students were beginning a new topic. The teacher left the Grade 5: Module 2A: Unit 1: Lesson 1 from the Common Core State Standards ELA Curriculum for me as a guide. In her sub plans she told me to get to whatever I could today and to stick to the module, but not to feel like I have to read right from the paper.

I began the lesson by introducing the students to their new notebooks they would be using. I told the students, “The notebooks are to record notes, like scientists do. It is a way to keep track of your thinking.” I told the students to open to the first two clean pages and create a (Know already, what I Want to know, Learn) K-W-L chart that is big enough that they can add to it over the course of the module. I demonstrated for the students on the SMART Board how their notebooks should look. I told the students to put their pencils down when they finished creating their K-W-L chart. One student started filling in the K column and I asked him why he was filling it in. He said, “Because I thought we were supposed to.” I said, “Do you even know what the topic is yet?” He just put his pencil down. Then I read one of the learning targets/ focuses for the day: I can listen effectively to my partner when sharing. I asked students, “What does it mean
to listen effectively?” I called on a student, Starazia. She said, “To listen closely and carefully and pay attention when other people are talking.” “Exactly! You shouldn’t be talking when others are talking, you should give the speaker your full attention.” I said. I then told the students, “Independently brainstorm things you know about living things unique to the rainforest and record your ideas in the K column of the K-W-L chart you just created in your notebooks.” I reminded students to think about plants and animals. After five minutes of brainstorming I had the students share with a partner their ideas. After five minutes I had the students share out their ideas and I recorded them on the SMART Board. I called on Mendon, “There is a rainforest called the Amazon.” “Yes, you are right Mendon!” I added that to the K column. I called on a girl who said, “Parrots and toucans live in the rainforest.” I added that to the K column. I called on a boy who said, “There are many layers and levels to the rainforest. I just don’t remember the names!” “That is okay! You are going to learn about the different layers of the rainforest at a later date, but at least you know there are different layers!” I said. I called on one more student Roger. He said, “There are monkeys that swing from trees.” “Yes, there are.” I said.

I told students that throughout this module, they would be building their skills as readers and writers and that as they study the rainforest, they would learn more about how to read information text and write effectively. I also told the students that they would become researchers and scientists in order to learn more about the life that exists in the rainforest. I told students, “Before you put away your K-W-L chart, I want you to think about what you WANT to know and questions you have about the rainforest. Make sure you put what you WANT to know and your questions in the W column.” After five minutes I had the students share with a partner and then we shared as a class. I recorded the student’s questions on the SMART Board.
The next part of the ELA block was a gallery walk. A gallery walk is where I have posted images and text around the room and students are observing silently the images and text. They do not touch the image or text or talk with group members. They just observe. I asked students to turn to a new page in their notebooks and title it: Notices and Wonders- Scientific Research in Rainforests. The learning targets/ focuses for this section were: I can record what I notice and wonder about during a Gallery Walk and I can compare and contrast texts and images about rainforests. I asked students to tell me what it means to notice and wonder. I called on Shay. She said, “I can see things and ask questions about what I see.” “Exactly. You are going to notice things in the pictures and text and you are going to wonder what is going on in the images and texts.” I said. I asked the students, “What does it mean to compare and contrast?” I called on Bobby who said, “Tell the difference and similarities between the two things.” I smiled and said, “You got it dude!” The students laughed. I asked the students to raise their hands and remind me what should happen during a Gallery Walk. All the students raised their hands. I called on Bree. She said, “No one is talking. We are just walking around quietly and looking at the pictures and things that are on the walls and thinking about what is in the picture and words and then asking ourselves questions.” “Bree. I couldn’t have said it better myself.” I said back. I told students that while they are doing the Gallery Walk they should be recording notices and wonders for the images and texts they see around the room. I modified the module because it said to give the students five minutes for this activity; however the students needed about fifteen minutes. After the gallery walk I had students share at their tables notices and wonders they had found about the images and texts, instead of sharing out.

I introduced the next learning target/ focus of this part of the lesson: I can explain how scientists communicate their work about the rainforest. I told students, “With the person sitting
next to you, you are going to pick an image from the Galley Walk and describe and explain that image in great detail. Pretend that you are describing it to someone who wasn’t there.” I told the students to talk about the image they chose for a couple minutes. After four minutes I got the students’ attention by raising my hand. Then I told the students, “Now you are going to write your description in a paragraph with your partner. Use your notices and wonders to help you. Make sure you have lots of details. Remember you are trying to explain and describe this image to someone who wasn’t there or can’t see the image.” I walked around and monitored students writing. Two boys were writing about the picture provided by the module below:

On their paper they wrote, “this grup of people are looking for birds and other animls in the rainforest. The people are looking high into the rainforest. They are taking notes on a clipbord. The men could be reserchers.” I told the boys they were doing a nice job so far but I said, “What if I couldn’t see your picture, how would I know the men were in the rainforest? How would you describe the background to me?” The boys got excited and started writing, “There are tall trees
that are green.” I went and worked with another group. Two girls were focusing on the picture provided by the module below:

![Image](image-url)

The two girls hadn’t started writing yet. I asked them what they were thinking about. They said they didn’t know what to write about. I said, “Well what is going on in this picture?” They said, “Well there are five people kneeling and bending and standing around something.” I said, “Good. Do we know what the people are looking at?” We all looked closer at the picture. “The girls said, “It looks like they planted something and are researching it, kinda like when we were in first or second grade and we planted seeds and had to watch them grow into plants.” “Exactly.” I said, “The researchers are doing research on plants and other types of trees to maybe see what grows in different environments.” I said. The one girl said, “The one man looks like he is writing down information while the other people observe.” “You are right. Where do you think
these people are?” I asked. Both girls said, “The rainforest.” I asked them, “What makes you think that?” They said, “The green trees and they are tall and it’s kinda dark in there.” “Yeah I would have to agree with you. See girls you do know what to think. Now you just have to get the ideas on paper. Just write exactly what we discussed!” I said to them. “Thanks Ms. A!” They said. There was only fifteen minutes left for writing, which wasn’t enough time for all the students to finish their paragraphs. So we were unable to finish this lesson.

I wanted to have time to wrap up the lesson, even though we weren’t going to finish it. I wanted the students to do a fist-to five on today’s focuses. So I went through each learning target and focus and asked the students to rate themselves one through five on how well they thought the lesson went. One being terrible and they need a lot of help and five being awesome, they totally got the lesson, and they could teach it to someone else. For the focus about listening effectively to their partner when sharing, all students rated themselves a five. For the focus on recording notices and wonders during a Gallery Walk, two-thirds of the students gave themselves a four, two students gave themselves a three and the rest were fives. The focus on comparing and contrasting texts and images about rainforests, the majority of students gave themselves a three; a couple students gave themselves a four. The focus of I can explain how scientists communicate their research about the rainforest. All the students gave themselves a three. I told the students thank you for being honest and that honesty only helps them and the teacher because then I can tell their teacher where to go from there.
Reflection

What I did well?

I felt that I was able to support student’s writing during this lesson. Two girls were just sitting there for at least six minutes not having anything written on their papers. I went over to the girls and asked them why they didn’t have anything on their papers and I had noticed while walking around that they seemed stumped, they weren’t fooling around. The writing task was to write a paragraph explaining and describing what was going on in the picture, using the notices and wonders from the Gallery Walk activity. The girls seemed to almost over think the writing task. Once I started asking the girls questions about what was going on in the picture and to describe to me what the five people in the picture were doing, they went off with ideas and were able to explain and make connections to the picture. I was able to support the students by just asking them simple questions, “What do you see in this picture?” “What are the people doing in this picture?” I also asked the girls how they knew it was a rainforest. Adult support can sometimes be all a student needs to get their ideas onto paper.

I also was able to keep students engaged throughout the entire lesson. Students were actively participating and I was moving throughout the room when teaching the lesson. I had students discuss in partners for many parts of the lesson which allows for great conversations. I also brought the conversation back as a whole which allows other students to hear what their peers had to say.

I liked how the students were using a K-W-L chart and writing in many different forms for this lesson and the main focus was building background knowledge. Students were able use a K-W-L, a Gallery Walk and their classmates to build background knowledge on the rainforest. Students wrote in the beginning of the lesson in their notebooks for the K-W-L. Then I had them
write for the Gallery Walk for their notices and wonders. Then they partner wrote for their paragraphs.

**What was challenging?**

Not getting to the last part of the lesson, which was defining what an informational text is. I think this was an important part of the lesson, however there was no time. The lesson was jam packed and by the end students would have been burned out if I even tried to rush through that part. In the module it says that part would have taken five minutes, however when reading it, I know it would have taken at least fifteen-twenty minutes. With the Gallery Walk, the module said it would take five minutes. The challenging part was that there was no way I would have wanted students to rush and not get the full effect of the images and text in five whole minutes. I would have rather taken fifteen-twenty minutes like I did and let the students take their time and really understand the images and text and write notices and wonders.

**What will I do differently?**

If I teach this lesson again I will actually keep everything the same except create the K-W-L on chart paper so students can refer back to it throughout the day while they are learning about the rainforest. I actually went back while the students were at lunch and transferred what I put on the SMART Board onto a piece of large chart paper. I would also like to extend the ELA block if that is possible so the students could have more time to fit everything in.

**November 21, 2013- Reading and Talking with Peers about Frogs**

Today I was in a third grade classroom. I laughed when I saw the lesson and module the teacher had left for me. It was very similar to the one I had done in the fifth grade the day before. It was Grade 3: Module 2A: Unit 1: Lesson 1. I had some students sitting on the carpet and other
students sitting at their tables. I knew these students because I had subbed in their classroom before and they are often a chatty group. By separating them and spreading them out before the lesson began, I was avoiding minimal distractions. I still had to have students sitting near each other because they were going to need to talk with one another. I wrote the learning targets/focuses on the SMART Board: I can talk with my partner in order to record what I notice and I wonder about pictures and I can ask and answer questions about a text. I asked students, “What does it mean to notice and wonder?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Jorge. He said, “To see and ask questions.” I restated and added to what Jorge said, “Yes, when you notice something, you are seeing what is going on in the picture and observing. When you are wondering, you are asking yourself questions and thinking about something.”

I told students that I would demonstrate or show them what we would be doing today. I showed them this image:
I asked the students, “Raise your hands and tell me what you notice and see when you look at this picture?” I called on a boy, he said, “There is a green swampy area.” I recorded his idea on a Notices and Wonders Chart I created. I called on two more students to share aloud and recorded their ideas. Then I asked the students, “What do you wonder about this picture?” I called on Jasmine. She said, “What animals live in that swampy green stuff?” “That is a great question!” I said. The module made it clear not to give it away that the students were learning about frogs. I called on two more students to share their wonderings and I wrote them on our chart. I did one more example as a class. I showed the students the text: “Ever so slowly, the heron stalks its prey. His neck is pulled back and he is ready to make a swift, killing stab. The heron moves slowly closer to unsuspecting.” I read the text aloud to the students. I paused for a moment after reading to allow students a minute to process the text. I asked students, “What do you see in this text? What mental picture does it put in your mind?” I called on Marcey. She said, “Some type of animal eats another animal.” I responded back, “What part of the text makes you think that?” She said, “Well I know that prey is something that eats another thing and that it says it pulls its head back ready to make a killing stab.” “Okay, so it is getting ready to eat something.” I said. I wrote that under the notices column on my chart paper. Then I called on Ben. He said, “I notice the one heron, which is a bird is going to attack its prey.” “Yeah Ben, you can picture the heron getting ready to attack the other animal.” I said. I wrote Ben’s notice under the notices column on my chart. I asked the students, “Do you see how even if there is no picture, you can still do the notices column, you just have to try and put a mental picture in your head?” The students nodded their heads. I asked the students, “What questions do you have after reading this text and what do you wonder about this text?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Tyreek. He said, “Does the other animal that the heron attacked die?” The other boys in the class moaned. I
asked, “Is that what you guys were going to say?” They nodded their heads. I said, “That is a great wondering, because I actually wondered that too!” I added it to the wonders side of the chart. I called on another student to share out and added their idea to the chart.

After modeling the two examples of notices and wonders together, I pointed out the text and images around the room. I explained to students that when they arrived at each image or text, they were to first look at the picture, then talk with their group about the details in the picture or text, then talk about the questions and wonders they had. I told the students that after they had discussed with their groups then they can use their group marker to add their notices and wonders to the chart paper at their group. I gave each group their colored marker and I assigned the students to a poster and image to start at. I told students that I would tell them when they were to switch and that they would stay at the group until I said it was time to switch. This procedure was very similar to a Gallery Walk except in third grade they don’t call it a Gallery Walk; they call it a carousel protocol. This ended up taking the students thirty five minutes instead of fifteen minutes because it took the students a while to read the text and look at the picture on each poster and then a while to write on the chart paper. I wanted the students to get a chance to get to each picture because it was important for them get the whole concept.

I gathered students back to the carpet and told them that we would look at the pictures and text again later. I told students we were going to be looking at an excerpt from a poem. I showed students on the Doc Camera for the SMART Board, which I put the paper under and it displays the paper on the SMART Board, the paper they would be completing for the next part of the ELA block. I told students they would be working in partners to complete the paper. I explained the whole paper to the students so they understood what they were supposed to do. I told the students that maybe some of them have figured out what the next module is going to be
on and maybe some of them haven’t and that’s okay. I told the students that if they knew, not to say anything. I showed the students how the next paper had text and quotes. I told the students, “Do your best to read the text. Underline words you don’t know. If you underline a lot of words, that is okay! After you read the text, write down any questions you have about the text you just read.” Then you and your partner can move onto the next question. There are excerpts for you and your partner to read and ask questions from. Find a partner, come get a paper and GO!”

The students were off to working. I walked around and monitored students reading and asking questions. Most of the students were doing a great job working. One group of boys were fooling around and I warned them once to stop chatting so much and focus on their work. They got back to work. A couple minutes later I looked over and they were bending over their chairs. I walked over to the two boys and asked, “Why, ten minutes into this activity do you have nothing on your paper?” The two boys shrugged their shoulders. I told them to separate and now they were going to do the activity independently. They complained for two minutes but then they got right to work. After about twenty minutes the students were finishing up and beginning to lose interest, so I brought them back together on the carpet.

I wrote this sentence on the SMART Board, “I see many ________, so I think we might study __________.” I told the students that when I picked their “stick” with their name on it they had the choice of completing the sentence if they knew what they would be studying or passing if they didn’t want to share. I went through the entire class and two-thirds of the class said frogs. Some students said reptiles and three students said lizards. I asked a student who said frog, “Why do you think you’re going to be studying frogs?” A girl said, “Well the one quote said, “It is green and it leaps.” “Yeah I would agree with that. There are other animals that leap, but we know frogs can be green and leap.” I said. I asked another student who said frog, “Why
do you think you’re studying frogs?” He said, “Because it said it had a bulging throat. And frogs have those big throats.” “Yeah! They have those big throats that say ribbit!”

I modified the module a little bit. I made the final writing piece an exit ticket. Due to the fact that we had just talked about the last question, I told students that their part three question was their exit ticket, which is a tool that the teachers use to gauge student learning. The question was: What do you think these texts are mostly about? Use evidence from the text to support your thinking. Before I sent the students off to write, I reminded them to use the evidence from the five quotes they just read and remember the discussion we just had about what they would be learning about. The students completed the exit ticket independently and then turned it in.

Reflection

What I did well?

I was able to have the students write more than once throughout this lesson. The students were able to write on the chart paper when doing the carousel of the pictures and text with their group members. They didn’t have to worry about spelling or grammar because the notices and wonders aren’t in complete sentences; they are just jotting down ideas. The students also wrote on their own papers with a partner when reading and asking questions about excerpts and text. Finally, the students wrote independently for their exit ticket, explaining what they think the texts are mostly about and then using evidence to support that idea. I am glad I had the students writing throughout the entire lesson and also in a scaffolded way.

I am glad I modified the module to make the part three question an exit ticket. Sometimes students need an independent writing task that is a simple one question, to show what they know. This is a great way to show the teacher what the student learned in the lesson and to see how much support the student needs in the next lesson.
What was challenging?

I should have picked partners for the students. This was difficult for me because even though I had been in the classroom before, I wasn’t very familiar with the students. By letting the students pick their own partners, this opens the door for students to pick their friends and often times, a partner they might not get the most work done with. When I separated the two boys, they complained at first and then they were able to get their work completed.

I also think I should have gone over the text and quotes from the student worksheet. Some of the students had great questions on their papers when I was walking around. However, there would not have been enough time to go over each text and the student questions. The overall focus of the lesson was introducing images and text, reading and talking with peers and trying to figure out what the students would be studying in this module. I am glad that I went through to each student and asked them what they thought we would be studying and had them prove to me why they thought that. That helped them with their last question.

What will I do differently?

Next time I will continue to follow the module as a guide. I think the modules are a great tool and have a lot of great support and information for students. I just think that teachers should modify them to fit their students’ needs and not follow them as a script. However, when a teacher says I need to follow it exactly, then that is what I need to do. Next time, I would modify this lesson to go over the student questions, and maybe even cut out one of the questions. I think the students need to hear what their peers have to say. I think they will also hear more about why they will be studying frogs and not lizards. I will also explain why they aren’t studying lizards. I never explained or asked the student why they thought it was a lizard.
November 22, 2013- *The Yellow and the Yangtze Rivers*

I was back in the second grade classroom. I began the ELA lesson by giving students some background knowledge on China. I told students that over the next several days they would be hearing stories about ancient China. I pointed to China on the map. I told students they would hear about early Chinese civilizations. I told students that today’s read aloud is about two important rivers, the Yellow River and the Yangtze River. I told students, “Your focus for today is to listen carefully to find out why the Yellow and Yangtze rivers are so important.”

I read the read aloud from the Common Core listening and learning strand of the domain to the students. I shared the pictures with the students that went along with the read aloud. After reading we moved onto the comprehension questions. The first question I asked was, “What two rivers did you hear about in today’s read aloud?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Ramirez. He said, “The Yellow and Yangtze rivers.” “Yes, you are right.” I said. I asked the students the next question, “Where are the rivers located?” All the students raised their hands again. I called on Brad. He said, “China.” “You got it dude!” I said. I asked the students, “What makes the Yellow River yellow?” Ten students raised their hands. I called on Travon. He said, “It travels through mountains and when it rains the dirt and sand washes into the river, making it a muddy yellow color.” “Exactly, rain and wind wash the soil, sand and clay from the mountains into the river, making it a muddy yellow color.” I said. I showed the students the picture of the Yellow River and its yellow color. I asked the students, “Why have the Chinese nicknamed the Yellow River “Mother River and “China’s Great Sorrow?” I called on Jackson. He said, “Well, first the river is really good for farming and crops. But when the river floods it is really bad for all the people and it can destroy the whole city.” “I couldn’t have said it better myself.” I said. I asked the students, “What do the Chinese call the Yangtze River?” All the students raised their
hands. I called on George. He said, “China’s Rice Bowl.” I asked the students, “What kind of jobs do you think people had along the Yellow and Yangtze rivers?” Five students raised their hands. I waited another minute. A couple more raised their hands. I called on Mariah. She said, “Well they could be farmers, or build houses.” “Great!” I said. I called on Ajalynn. She said, “Stonemasons.” “Ajalynn that is a great idea!”

I modified the lesson for the next part. I had the students answer our focus for the day. I wrote the question on the SMART Board. “Why are the Yellow and Yangtze rivers important?” I told the students they were going to write a sentence or two explaining why the Yellow River and Yangtze River are important, based on the read aloud I just read. The students fifteen minutes to at least get started on their writing. I left the question on the SMART Board and sent the students off to work around the room. I was able to walk around the room and support students. I saw Brad playing with a piece of paper. I went and sat next to him. I asked him to start writing the restate of the question (the students are very familiar with how to do this). Brad wrote, “The yellow and yangtze river are important because” Then I asked him how the two rivers are important. He said, “Well they both help with farming and giving food to people.” I said, “Perfect, now add that to the rest of your sentence.” I walked around the room to see how the other students were doing. The students were all restating the question, which the teachers have drilled into the student’s brains. They all know that is the first thing they do when they have a short answer question. I walked up to a girl who only had the restate on her paper. I asked, “How are the two rivers important?” She said, “Well they can give people jobs right?” “Yeah, we talked about how they provide jobs for people and help people. Great ideas!” She wrote on her paper, “The Yellow and Yangtze Rivers are important because they give people jobs to make a living.”
I brought the students back together and I had four people share their writing with their peers on why the rivers were important. One student said, “The Yellow and Yangtze rivers are important because they help with farming.” Another student said, “The Yellow and Yangtze rivers are important because they make the land fertile.” Brad read his to the class and said, “The Yellow and Yangtze rivers are important because they both help with farming and giving people food.” The last student read hers and she said, “The Yellow and Yangtze rivers are important because people can have jobs by the rivers.” The students did a nice job with the writing and instead of discussing the question they were able to write the answers.

**Reflection**

**What I did well?**

I was able to modify the lesson to incorporate writing and to meet the student’s needs. We finished the read aloud and comprehension questions early so I figured why not have the students write for the last fifteen minutes? The students were able to write one or two sentences explaining why the two rivers were important. The comprehension questions helped support the students for this question. I was able to support students in a positive way during the writing lesson by sitting with the students and talking them through the writing task. I asked Brad how he would begin his restate. He knew exactly how to do that. Then he asked him how the rivers were important. He answered me right away. He just needed to be refocused. Ajalynn just needed to be supported and talked through the writing task.

I was able to also able to walk around and monitor all the students during the lesson because they were all on task and working hard on their writing. I did not have to worry about student behavior.
What was challenging?

Not working with more students is always a challenge for me because I am not able to see all the students’ writing and meet with all the students. I was walking around monitoring the students but during the fifteen minutes I met with two students and then we had to come back to share at the end. So I only had about six minutes to walk around and monitor student writing and support the other students. Although the students were on task and had words on their paper I was unable to see if all the students actually wrote the correct answers.

What I will do differently?

If I were to do this domain again I will modify the lesson the same way and have students write the focus question. I think this helped students really understand why the two rivers were important to the people. I think I will add why the river was bad for the people as well. The students could write about the flooding of the river and all the damage it would cause to the people and the cities. I will continue to make sure students have time to share their writing with their peers.

November 25, 2013- Close reading of Bullfrog at Magnolia Circle

I was substituting in the same third grade classroom I was in the other day. I was reading over Module 2A: Unit 1: Lesson 3 that the teacher left for me. As I was reading it over I realized the teacher didn’t leave me the answers or the responses the students should be giving. I had not read the text, Bullfrog at Magnolia Circle so before the students arrived I quickly skimmed the pages the students would be reading for the lesson so I would understand the lesson a little bit better.
For the ELA lesson I used the module as a guide to support the students because the teacher that I was subbing for doesn’t use the module as a script. I reminded the students that for the last couple days they have been learning about bullfrogs and how bullfrogs survive. I asked the students, “What does the word adaptations mean?” Two-thirds of the students raised their hands. I called on Jacob. He said, “It means when something adapts.” “You are on the right track Jacob. Who can add to that?” I said. I called on Reese. He said, “When an animal adjusts to their environment.” “Exactly. The animal has to adapt and adjust to their environment to survive.” I told the students, “Today you are going to read more of the text, and focus carefully on the main idea and detail. Make sure you pay attention to the illustrations and words to the author chooses to describe the bullfrog.”

I passed out the recording form for the students to fill in with a partner for pages 4-7 and 12-15 of their text, *Bullfrog of Magnolia Circle.* I told the students the form is the same one they started the other day. I said, “Look at the illustration on pages 12 and 13. What do you see?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Faris. She said, “A frog jumping through the grass.” I said, “Yeah, that is what I see too Faris. Now listen to the specific word choice the author uses to describe the frog jumping in this picture.” I read the first two sentences on page 12, “Rain cascades from the sky, soaking the earth. In distance, by the large screened porch, huge oak trees covered by Spanish moss sway in the warm, heavy air.” I told the students to think about that for a minute. I wrote this sentence on the SMART Board, “I saw/ heard ____________, so I think the frog lives ________.” I told the students to talk with a partner about what they heard and saw in their minds and where they think the frog lives. The students talked for a couple minutes, and then I had some of the students share out what they thought. I read the learning target/ focus for that part of the lesson to the students: I can identify words or phrases the author chose for effect.
The next part of the lesson focused on answering text-dependent questions. I posted the next three learning targets/focuses for that part of the lesson: I can answer questions using specific details from pages 4-7 and 12-15 of Bullfrog at Magnolia Circle, I can explain why I chose specific details to answer questions about the text, and I can define the scientific concept of habitat. I asked students what they thought the word habitat meant. Half of the students raised their hands. I called on Ben. He said, “A home.” “Yeah, it is where an animal lives. Nice job!” I said. I reminded the students that they have already heard pages 4-7 and 12-15 several times so they should be very familiar with the text. I said, “Now you are going to be answering text-dependent questions based on those pages. This means you need to use the text to answer these questions. The answers aren’t coming from your brains, they come from the book. Make sure your answers are in complete sentences.” The students were already placed in groups from the previous lesson, so I didn’t have to worry about behavior this time around. I walked around the room and monitored students working on the text-dependent questions. Some students needed help finding where to find the answer in the text. I guided the students towards the right pages and together we read the pages over to see where the answer was. One group of girls were struggling with filling in the chart about vivid words and phrases. I went and sat with them to support them. The girls were on page 12, and they read the two sentences that I read aloud to the students in the beginning of class. After they read the sentences together as a group, I asked them, “Why do you think the author chose those words?” The girls didn’t say anything. I said, “Why didn’t the author just say, the frog lives by tall trees?” One of the girls, Janelle said, “Well because the author wanted you to picture tall oak trees and a porch outside.” Exactly.” I said. “The author wants you to put a mental picture in your mind and be able to see the rain falling
from the sky and the porch outside, and tall oak trees. Not just any kind of trees.” I told the girls to write that in the box next to the sentences they chose.

The teacher made a note on the module that they already did the vocabulary lesson the previous day for this part so I didn’t have to do it. I skipped down to the sentence strip part for vocabulary in action. I put students in groups of three based on the groups the teacher left me. I passed out the sentence strips to the groups of three. I explained to the students, “One student is the narrator, who reads all the sentences, the other two students act out the sentences.” I gave the students six minutes to practice their skits on their sentence strips. I had the groups of three perform in front of the class and at the end I asked the students, “How do the skits help us understand how bullfrogs survive?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Yavar. He said, “The bullfrog does different things to adjust to the earth, like he bulges his throat, he sings to call a mate and he emerged from the muddy winter.” “Exactly Yavar. The bullfrog has to adapt to different habitats to survive.”

Because the skits took thirty minutes, for the debrief I had the students turn and talk to a partner about something they learned today, whether it was a new vocabulary word or anything else they learned about bullfrogs. The students turned and talked to the partners for two minutes and I called on two students to share. I called on Jen. She said, “I learned a habitat is the bullfrog’s home.” “Yes! Habitat is a home, it isn’t just a bullfrog’s home, and it can be any animals home.” I said. Next I called on Nazier. He said, “I learned that authors put certain words in the text to make you picture the picture in your mind. They put big fancy words for a certain purpose.” “Exactly Nazier. The authors have a purpose for putting in specific vocabulary and word choice. They want the reader to mentally picture the text and see what is going on.” I had the students put their papers in their ELA folder.
Reflection

What I did well?

I was able to engage the students by beginning with a question about vocabulary and what the word *adaptation* meant. Between two students and me adding in some words, we were able to come up with a definition for *adaptation*. I felt this sparked their interest for what we were going to be doing during the lesson that day.

I was also able to restate the questions for the groups of students when they were doing the text-dependent questions. The one group of girls were unable to understand why the author chose specific words for the vivid words and phrases chart. The girls were able to find a vivid phrase in the text and I helped them understand why the author chose those vivid words instead of just saying, “tall trees with rain pouring down.” I was able to sit with the girls and restate my question to them a couple times because when I asked them the first time they didn’t understand what I was asking. I had to restate the question for them to understand that authors don’t always like using plain, boring vocabulary, they often like to help the reader’s picture in their mind what is going on.

I learned from the students by doing this lesson. I enjoyed watching the students do the skits, even though the skits were all the same I was able to see the students learning how the bullfrog adapt in their environment to survive. I enjoyed helping and supporting the students throughout the entire lesson because they even taught me things about frogs that I didn’t know.

What was challenging?

The challenging part for me in this lesson was not having all the knowledge the students had on frogs. The students were more knowledgeable than I was on frogs. Even though I skimmed through the pages quickly before the students got to class that morning, I wasn’t able to
fully read all the pages in depth. I was able to read with the students and learn with the students as we went along and that was a great experience for me because it was interesting for me to learn about frogs.

**What will I do differently?**

Next time if I were to teach this lesson, I will change up the skits. I wouldn’t have all the students doing the same skit. After the first two groups went, the students started getting bored with the skits. I wanted all the students to get a chance to perform, so I let all the students perform, however, they were all the same skits.

I will also like to go through each question for the text-dependent questions and then each part so students understand what they are supposed to do. I should have explained the vivid words and phrases chart because some students struggled with that part. Next time if I were to teach this lesson I will go through each part and make sure all the students know what is expected of them.

**November 26, 2013- Figurative Language and Word Choice**

I was substituting in an inclusion sixth grade classroom today. I was going to be teaching ELA the special education teacher in the room would be supporting me during the ELA lesson. The learning targets and focuses for today were for the students to determine the meaning of figurative language in *Bud, Not Buddy* and to explain how the author’s word choice affects tone and meaning in the novel.

I began the lesson by engaging students from their homework they did from the night before. The night before they had to begin reading *Bud, Not Buddy* and find “rules” that Bud lives by in the novel. I told students that Bud’s rules fall into two different categories: survive or
thrive. I asked students, “What does it mean to survive?” Fifteen students raised their hands. I called on Kamra. She said, “It means to stay alive and not die.” I said, “Your right, to survive means you’re trying to stay alive and not die.” I asked the students, “What does it mean to thrive?” Five students raised their hands. I called on Jessie. She said, “To be proud.” I responded, “Well it doesn’t quite mean to be proud but that is a great guess.” I called on Raven. She said, “To be successful and grow.” I said, “Yeah, to thrive means to grow, develop and be successful at something.” I told students that in Chapter 2 that they read last night they came across rule number 118. I asked for a volunteer to read the rule aloud. One student read the rule. I asked the students whether they thought the rule was a survive or thrive rule. No one raised their hands. I waited a minute. One student raised their hand. I told the students to turn and talk to the person next to them about whether the rule was survive or thrive. After two minutes of talking I asked the question again, “Is rule number 118 of Bud, Not Buddy a survive or thrive rule?” All the students raised their hands. I smiled and said, “That’s more like it!” I called on Harry. He said, “I think it’s survive because he protects the things that he has taken from him.” “Nice job Harry!” I called on another student, “I think it is survive too because Bud is protecting himself to stay alive.” I said, “Great job guys! With the rules, it does not matter what side you choose as long as you have evidence to back yourself up.”

I told the students that we were moving onto the figurative language part of the lesson. I asked students what the word tone meant. Most of the students raised their hands. I called on a boy. He said, “Someone’s feelings in a story.” I said, “Your close!” I added to what the student said, “Tone is how the narrator feels toward a character in the story.” I asked students who the narrator in this story was. All the students raised their hands. I called on Raj. He said, “Bud.” I asked them, “So who is going to be displaying the tone is this story?” They all shouted out,
“BUD!” I had the students open their books to page 1 as I read a sentence aloud, “All the kids watched the woman as she moved along the line, her high-heeled shoes sounding like little firecrackers going off on the wooden floor.” I asked the students, “How does Bud describe the woman’s walk in this sentence?” The majority of the students raised their hands. I called on a girl. She said, “Bud says she sounds like fireworks going off.” I asked the girl, “Is Bud comparing the woman walking and her high heels on the ground to fireworks going off?” The girl said, “Yes.” I said, “Exactly. Bud uses the fireworks because we all know the sounds that fireworks make and we can visualize what kind of sound her shoes are making when she walks.” I modified the lesson by not handing out the graphic organizer yet, the students and I were having such a great conversation I didn’t want to disrupt it. I asked the students, “Were the woman’s’ high heels actually fireworks going off?” All but two students raised their hands. I called on Jareese. He said, “No, a person can’t really have their shoes going off as fireworks.” I said, “Your right.” I asked the students, “Well then what did Bud literally mean, or actually mean by, her high heeled shoes sounding like little firecrackers going off on the wooden floor?” Twelve students raised their hands. I called on Margaret. She said, “Well, her shoes could be making a loud noise when she walks, like that tapping sound that heels make when they hit the ground.” “Yeah, exactly!” I said. I was wearing high heels that day to school and I showed the students the sound it made when I walked across the room in complete silence. I asked the students, “How do you think Bud’s feelings or tone were towards this woman? Was it is a positive or negative feeling?” Eight students raised their hand. I waited for a minute. A couple more students raised their hands. I called on Audrey. She said, “I don’t think Bud likes her because she said that she was walking and sounding like fireworks. That doesn’t sound like something nice.” “I would agree. He could have said she walked gracefully like an angel.
However, Bud chose specific words to talk about how this woman walked like her high heels sounding like fireworks. That sounds pretty negative to me.” I said to the students.

I distributed the figurative language graphic organized to students. The teacher had a copy scanned into the SMART Board, so I was able to fill the same one in with the students. In the first column we wrote the figurative language from the text, “All the kids watched the woman as she moved along the line, her high-heeled shoes sounding like little firecrackers going off on the wooden floor.” In the second column we wrote what the quote meant literally or actually. I told the students, “We just had a discussion about what this quote literally meant and what Bud meant when he said her shoes were like fireworks. What did Bud literally mean?” I called on a student to share their response and we filled that box in. Then we moved onto the third column, which said, “What does this show me about Bud’s tone?” I reminded the students that we had also already talked about this question. I told the students to fill in this column on their own. After they filled that column in I told them to put this paper in their ELA folders because they would need it at a later date.

I asked the students to open their books to page 4 and follow along as I read an excerpt aloud, “It’s at six that grown folks don’t think you’re a cute little kid anymore, they talk to you and expect that you understand everything they mean. And you’d best understand too, if you aren’t looking for some real trouble, ‘cause it’s around six that grown folks stop giving you little swats and taps and jump clean up to giving you slugs that’ll knock you right down and have you seeing stars in the middle of the day.” After reading the excerpt from page 4 of Bud, Not Buddy, I asked the students, “What is Bud explaining in this excerpt?” The majority of the students raised their hands. I called on Dan. He said, “It talks about how when Bud was little he didn’t get beat up so bad but at six Bud got beat up a lot worse.” I said, “Yeah Bud talks all about being six
in this excerpt.” I asked, “What does the words *swat* and *tap* mean?” All but four students raised their hands. I called on Jeremiah. He said, “Swat and tap mean light hits, not like hard punches.” And he showed me with a light swing of the hand what a light hit would be. I said, “Yeah, I would agree with that. A swat and tap are like a tap on the head for not doing the right thing.” I asked the students, “What does the word *slug* mean?” All the students raised their hands. I called on George. He said, “A slug is when you really punch someone hard. Like you bruise them.” I said, “Yeah, like you slug someone in the arm.” I showed the students a motion of slugging someone by swinging my fist really hard. I asked the students, “Why do you think Bud specifically chose to use these words in text, instead of words like hit or punch?” I told the students to turn and talk to a neighbor for a minute. After a minute I called on a couple students to share. We came up with a consensus about why Bud chose the specific words, *slug, swat and tap* in the excerpt on page 4. The students said, “Using those specific words allow the reader to get a visual of what the beating was like at the different ages in Bud’s life. When he was younger he got a light beating. When he got to age six he was beaten badly, which prolly left bruises on his body.”

The next part of the lesson the module said for the students to complete selected response questions in small groups. The teacher wanted the students to complete them independently so that she could use them as a quiz grade. I told the students to use their books to help them with the questions. I handed out the questions to the students. She specifically wrote in her plans that I was not to help the students with the questions, unless it was to read them a part of the question or to restate the question for them. The students completed the questions in fifteen minutes.

The closing for the lesson was an exit ticket that students are very familiar with. The students complete exit tickets to show the teacher what they have learned throughout the lesson.
The exit ticket focused on interpreting figurative language in chapter 2 of Bud, Not Buddy. The teacher scanned in a copy of the exit ticket into the SMART Board so I was able to show the students what it looked like. One student shouted out, “It looks like the graphic organizer we did earlier in class!” I said, “Yes, it is the same one, just with a different quote from the text.” I explained to the students, “You would be getting a new quote from chapter 2 and you will need to read it and explain the literal or actual meaning of the quote. Then you will need to explain how the quote reveals or shows Bud’s tone or feelings.” I asked if any students had questions. No one raised their hands. With the exit ticket, I am not allowed to help because it is supposed to show what the student has learned. I can only answer clarifying questions. I walked around the room and monitored the students. It made me happy because I could tell the students were understand the figurative language and interpreting what Bud meant literally in the quote. The tone was a little bit harder for the students to understand, however some of the students were getting it. I collected the student’s exit tickets and the students moved onto the next subject.

Reflection

What I did well?

I felt I was able to give positive feedback to the students throughout the lesson. During the lesson when the students would answer a question, I was able to either add onto what they said, or give them feedback on what they said. I never said, “Yeah your right” and just ended the conversation. I always added more to what I said, either by restating what they said or by giving an example or calling on another student for their opinion. I think by giving student’s feedback and having a more in depth conversation and not just saying, “Yeah you’re right or no you’re wrong.” I am allowing students to deepen their understanding of the topic.
I liked how I modified the lesson, mid-lesson. It was a spur of the moment decision that felt right to do. In the middle of the lesson the module wanted the students to receive the graphic organizer on figurative language and then have a discussion. However, the students and I were already having a discussion about the quote and what the quote meant and how Bud felt about the woman. I think by continuing our conversation students stayed focused and on task rather than getting distracted by the graphic organizer and having to refocus and remember where our conversation was. The students and I were able to finish our great conversation and then I passed out the graphic organizer and we filled in the information we had already discussed.

**What was challenging?**

I did not like that I was unable to support and help students in this lesson. I understand that the teacher wanted to use the questions in this module for a quiz grade, so helping them would technically be cheating, however I wish I could have supported the students a little bit more. I felt for the last twenty minutes or so, I wasn’t doing anything except walking around and monitoring students. I was only able to restate questions for students. I wasn’t able to help them out with anything else.

I also noticed on the exit ticket when I was walking around that several students were struggling with the tone section of the graphic organizer. I hoped I would have provided or made up another example for the students to see how tone is shown in the quote. Tone is not always an easy thing to figure out, however if I would have done another example from chapter 2 in class with the students, maybe they would not have struggled on the exit ticket. *Bud, Not Buddy* has a lot of figurative language I could have found a quote really quick and had the students find the literal meaning and how the quote shows the Bud’s tone.
What will I differently?

Next time if I were to teach this lesson, I will add another example for a quote of figurative language for the students to do during the classwork before they go to the selected response questions. This may help with some of the students who struggled with the column about tone.

I will also not make the selected response questions a quiz grade so that I will be able to support the students who struggled with the questions. Some students struggled by not going back to the text to find the answers, they just tried to guess at what the answer was, instead of finding it and proving their answers.

December 2, 2013- Analyzing Figurative Language and How the Author’s Word Choice Affects Tone and Meaning

I was in the same sixth grade classroom that I was in yesterday. I was doing a very similar lesson as the day before, except with chapter 3 of the novel, Bud, Not Buddy. To engage students and get their brains flowing I had them get into small groups and talk about Bud’s rule they found in chapter 3 for homework the night before. I told the students, “Talk about whether the rule was survive or thrive and why?” I walked around the room and listened to the discussions the students were having. One group said rule number 328 was survive because Bud had been in a situation where he was fighting to defend himself. Another group said rule number 328 was thrive because he was protecting himself but doing it to better himself, not to stay alive. I told both groups they were right because as long as they were able to back up their opinions with evidence they was no right or wrong answer.
We moved onto the learning targets and focuses of the lesson. I read them aloud to the students: I can explain how the author’s word choice affects meaning and tone in the novel and I can determine the meaning of figurative language in *Bud, Not Buddy*. I handed out a graphic organizer that had three columns labeled: word choice/text details, feeling/meaning and tone. I told the students, “We are going to do the first text detail together and then you are going to work in small groups to complete the rest of the graphic organizer. The teacher had scanned in the graphic organizer into the SMART Board so I was able to write in the graphic organizer with the students. I called on a student to read the text detail aloud, “There was a gray gas can in one corner next to a bunch of gray rakes and a pile of gray rags, and a gray tire next to some gray fishing poles.” After the student read the text detail aloud I asked the students, “What is the meaning of the word gray in this quote?” I called on one student. He said, “I think it is boring because they keep saying gray.” I said, “Well it is boring but what does the word gray mean in this quote?” She said, “I feel like the shed is really dark, because Bud keeps saying gray over and over.” I said, “Yeah, Bud doesn’t just say the shed is dark. He describes everything in the shed as gray. Next to the gray fishing poles, next to the gray rags…” I wrote that in my graphic organizer and had the students copy me. I asked the students, “What mood or feeling do you get after reading this quote?” Most of the students raised their hands. I called on Molly. She said, “Frustrated that everything is gray.” “I would have to agree with that. I think I feel that everything is monotone, which means everything is the same. Bud uses the same word over and over to describe the shed.” I said. I wrote frustrated in the last column on the SMART Board and had the students copy me. I said, “Now you are going to do the same thing for the next three text details. I gave the students ten minutes to finish in small groups. I walked around and monitored the students’ progress.
With four minutes left of working time, one group of boys had only one text detail done. I went over to their group and asked them if they were confused or needed help. They looked at me confused. I said, “Well it seems you must be confused or stuck on how to do this because you only have one text detail completed and every other group is on the last detail.” They looked at me and said, “Oh.” I said, “You boys need to stop fooling around and get to work because you only have three more minutes before I am collecting this work.” They began working seriously when I walked away. I walked over to another group who seemed like they may be stuck on the last text detail. The text detail was, “I eyed where the bat was sleeping and revved the rake like I was going to hit a four-hundred-foot home run.” I asked the students what they were stuck on. They said, “Well we think the meaning is that Bud tried to wind up and swing the bat really hard.” “Yeah, revved means that he was getting ready to do something, so in this case Bud was getting ready to swing at the bat that was hanging down from the shed.” I asked the students, “What kind of mood or feeling do you think Bud was in at this point?” The students started getting excited and all talking at once. One student said, “Anxious.” Another student said, “Nervous.” The other student said, “Ambitious.” I said, “Great job boys and girls! Those are all acceptable words that Bud could have been feeling at the time.” After the students finished we quickly went over the graphic organizer and I had students share out what they had for the meaning and then one or two words to describe the tone. Students had very similar answers and to check each other’s answers, after someone would share their meaning I had students give a thumbs up or down if they agreed or disagreed with that student’s response.

The next part of the lesson was called a carousel of quotes, where students went around the room and looked at each quote from chapter 3, which was specifically figurative language and had to write what the literal meaning of the quote was then how the figurative language
revealed Bud’s feelings. I told the students what they would be doing and that this was the same thing they did yesterday just with new quotes and a new chapter. I had the quotes already written out on chart paper and I gave each group a different color marker. I told the students that when they got to the poster they were to read the quote at the top first and then fill in the graphic organizer underneath with the literal meaning and tone. I modified the lesson by not having the students write it on their own graphic organizer because I thought it would take too long. I decided I would write the answers for the students since the students would most likely come up with similar answers and then copy them for the students. I did not want students wasting their time writing and copying quotes on a graphic organizer on their own paper. I would rather have them take the time and learn and discuss the literal meaning of the quote and the tone. The students spent six minutes at each poster and then rotated. There were a total of five quotes.

At the end of the carousel of quotes I wanted to debrief so we came back together as a whole class and discussed what the students learned. One student said, “I liked doing this activity because I was able to get more practice and see what other students wrote first and it made me see the quote from another perspective.” “That is a very good point!” I said. Another student said, “This was fun because we weren’t just sitting, we kept moving around the room and practicing with figurative language.” Jeremiah said, “I understood tone is the mood or feeling that the author or Bud has and this quote thing we did helped me understand that better than yesterday.” I said, “Yeah I would agree that after seeing you guys do this activity today compared to yesterday, you seem to understand literal meaning and tone much better than yesterday. Do you agree?” The students all shook their heads and said, “YES!”

**Reflection**

**What I did well?**
I was able to modify in the middle of the lesson by not having the students write on the worksheet. Instead I just had the students write on the chart paper for the carousel of quotes. I thought it would take up more time to have the students write on the posters and their own worksheets. I also made the executive decision to not have the students write on worksheets because I felt that it would take away from the lesson and their learning. I felt the students would be rushing to just copy down answers, instead of having a discussion with their groups and really learning what literal meaning and tone mean.

I was also able to keep students on track. One group of boys I noticed was fooling around and only had one text detail done. I walked over to their group and asked them if they were stuck or confused. They said they weren’t. I then proceeded to ask why they were so far behind compared to everyone else. The boys then caught on to what I was getting at. They realized they need to stop fooling around and get to work. I didn’t have to argue with the students or say anything else.

**What was challenging?**

I was not able to have the students write sentences independently today. What the students did write was in graphic organizers. However, I felt they took more information with them today than they did yesterday. It is challenging to me to try and fit everything in in one day. There is no way to do reading, writing, math, science, social studies and the students special activities. Although the students wrote during ELA today it was the form of writing I would have liked to see.

**What will I do differently?**

I honestly don’t think I will change anything about this lesson except for permanently taking out the graphic organizer for students to fill in on their own during the carousel of quotes.
I am glad that I modified that spur of the moment and I will definitely do that again if I teach this lesson.

December 3, 2013- Analyzing Documentary Videos

I was substituting in a general education fifth grade classroom today. The teacher left Grade 5: Module 2A: Unit 1: Lesson 7 from the Common Core State Standards. I read through the lesson to get an understanding of what I was going to be doing for the day.

I began the ELA block by engaging students and explaining to the students that they were going to be learning about research in another rainforest, the Great Bear Rainforest. I pointed to British Columbia, Canada on the world map in their classroom. I asked the students, “In comparison to Hawaii, what direction is Canada?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Bobby. He said, “It is north.” “Yeah, British Columbia is north to Hawaii.” I asked the students, “What have you noticed about where the rainforests are located around the world?” Nine students raised their hands. I called on Shay, “Well the rainforests we studied before we closed to that line in the middle of the map going across. But that one in Canada is way up at the top.” “Shay, your right. Most of the rainforests you studied are near ‘that line’; however the rainforest in Canada is not. Who knows the name of ‘that line’?” I said. Two-thirds of the class raised their hands. I called on a boy. He said, “The equator.” “Yeah, your right. It is the equator. The majority of the areas that receive rainfall in the world are close to the equator, but not all of them are.” I said.

We moved onto the learning targets/focuses for the lesson. I had one of the students read them aloud, “I can explain the main idea of a documentary video on researching in the rainforest. I can determine the meaning of new words from context in a documentary video about researching in the rainforest. I can analyze the features of a documentary video as informational
text. I can compare and contrast the features of an interview, an article, and a documentary video.” I asked the students, “What do you think we are going to be doing today?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Starazia. She said, “Well I definitely think we are going to be watching a documentary video because they said that like 100 times in the learning targets. But seriously, I think we are going to be learning about a rainforest and doing a close read protocol using the video.” I said, “You rock girl, we are kind of going to do a close read, where we find the main idea, and determine words we don’t know and then find the meaning of those words, and then analyze the video.”

I walked over to the information text anchor chart the teacher had hanging up in her room. There was a list of types of informational texts on the chart. I asked some of the students to tell me some kinds of informational texts. I called on a girl. She said, “Interview.” Another student said, “Article.” I said, “Those are great examples of informational texts.” I told the students, “Remember to make something an informational text, it must have facts.” I asked the students if they thought a documentary video was an informational text. Five students raised their hands. I waited a minute and a couple more students raised their hands. I called on Roger. He said, “Yeah, because a documentary video shows real places and things. It isn’t like a regular Disney kind of video, it’s like real people and things where you learn from.” “Yeah Roger, in documentary videos, people are sometimes filming themselves and the experts in the video are sharing what they know with you so you can learn.” I said. I added documentary video to the informational text anchor chart hanging up in the fifth grade classroom.

I reviewed the learning target: “I can explain the main idea of a documentary video on researching in the rainforest.” I asked the students, “What is the main idea again?” All the students raised their hands. I called on a girl. She said, “Well another word for gist, or the
summary of that part.” “Yeah it’s the whole idea for that part. Gist is a great word!” I said. I explained to the students that we were going to be learning more about the work of scientists in the Great Bear Rainforest. I told the students, “We are going to watch the documentary video on the rainforest several times, just like you do with your reading, you don’t just read it once and then you’re done. You will watch the video several times for different purposes. The first time we watch it will be for finding the gist of the video or the main idea.”

I played the documentary video of the Great Bear Rainforest for the students for the first time. I had to stop at several points throughout the video so that students could write gist statements in their journals. I modified the lesson by letting them work with a partner to write the gist statement. The lesson wanted the students to write the gist statements individually and then talk with a small group afterwards, however I felt that would have taken too much time and it was easier for students to just work in partners from the start. I stopped the video for two minutes each time and they wrote a gist statement with a partner next to them. Then I started the video again for the next chunk. Then I would stop it and they would write the gist for that chunk of the video. The video was a total of seven minutes. The students had a total of six gist statements in their journals. As a group we went over the six gist statements quickly and I had one student read their statement aloud and the other students would give me a thumb up if they agreed or thumbs down if they disagreed.

We moved onto the second viewing of the documentary video. I reviewed the learning target/ focus for this section, “I can determine the meaning of new words from context in a documentary video about researching in the rainforest.” I reminded the students they have used this learning target before, just with written text. I asked the students, “How is this learning target similar to the other learning target you had with written text?” All the students raised their
hands. I called on a Mendon. He said, “Well it’s the same because we are just finding words we
don’t know and then figuring them out.” “Yeah, this is just unknown vocabulary and then using
context clues to figure out those words. Make sure that you are using parts of the word to help
you figure it out or breaking apart the word.” I said. I told the students, “I am going to play the
video again, listen carefully for words you don’t know. I will pause the video again at certain
points and you should write down specific words you don’t know in your journal underneath the
gist statements.” I played the video again, pausing it at the same points as the first viewing for
students to write down words they didn’t know. After playing the whole video I told students to
work with the same partner as before and try and figure out what the words meant that they
wrote down. In the lesson it said the whole second viewing should only take 15 minutes. We
were already 20 minutes into the second viewing and the students had just started working with
their partner. I modified the lesson, after ten minutes of working with their partners, trying to
figure out the words, I called the students back together whole group. The lesson did not call for
the teacher to go over the words with the students, however I felt the students should have the
correct definitions. I called on a couple students to share out some of the words they came up
with and I was going to help them figure out the word. I felt that students were working hard and
they were actually coming up with pretty good guesses about what the words meant, but I
wanted to make sure they had the right definitions in their journals. I called on one student to
share a word they had and what they thought it meant. He said, “Engineer and I think it means
someone who builds machines.” “Yeah that is a great guess and your actually pretty close, an
engineer is someone who develops and designs things for machines and other products. So they
are the person who comes up with the plan. But you were super close!” I told the students to
write that under gist statement one. I called on another student. They said, “Superb means super
or awesome.” I said, “Yeah it’s just another word for excellent or awesome. Great job!” I told students to add that word under gist statement two. Another student said, “Nifty means neat or cool.” I said, “Yeah it’s a fancy way to say the cool thing about something.” I called on another student who said, “Infrared means invisible.” I said, “It is a type of radiation and special camera technology that scientists and other special people use when they are trying to research something. It is a red kind of lighting that is on the camera lens that shows where something is when it is dark. So in this video they are trying to see where the animals are when it is dark. So the researchers and scientists put this special infrared lens on their camera and they can see in the dark where the animals are.” I had the students add infrared to their sixth gist statement in their journals.

I reviewed the learning targets for the third view of the video, “I can analyze the features of a documentary video as informational text and I can compare and contrast the features of an interview, an article, and a documentary video.” I asked the students, “What does it mean by features of a video?” The majority of the students raised their hands. I called on a boy who said, “What a video sounds like.” I said, “Yes that is one part. What else?” I called on another student who said, “What a video could look like.” “Yes that is another part.” I said. I asked the students, “What other features does a documentary video have?” Only a couple students raised their hands. I called on Bobby. He said, “Well in this video it could be how the scientists share the information with us, like in books it is how the information is shared with us through graphs and diagrams. In the video it could be how the scientists share the information with us.” I said, “Yeah Bobby, in the video you are going to see ways that the scientists and researchers communicate. Look for that when we watch the video for the third time. I will not stop the video this time. So make sure you are looking for the features.”
I played the video for the third time. I modified the lesson by having the students write down the different features they noticed throughout the video. In the module it said for them to wait until the end of the video to discuss, however I didn’t want them to forget something they saw in the beginning. At the end of the third viewing I had the students turn and talk to the same partner they had been talking with the entire time, the partners seemed to be working really well together. I had them talk about the features they noticed in the documentary video and what oral and visual clues in the video helped them understand what scientists were trying to communicate. After giving the students eight minutes to talk with their partners I heard many students struggling with the second part of the task I asked them to do. I called the students back together and I asked the questions aloud. The students were able to tell me the text features were that there was a lot of video footage in the video, the students could hear what the experts were actually saying rather than reading the words and the students could see what the animals were doing. I told the students those were all great features. I then asked the students, “What oral, meaning what can you hear and visual, meaning what can you see, clues in the video helped you understand what the scientists were trying to teach you?” I could almost see light bulbs going off in some of the student’s brains. It was like they understood what I was asking from them at that point. I gave the students another minute to talk to their partner and then we came back as a group. I called on two students to share aloud because we were out of time. One student said, “I could actually see the animals in real life moving around in the video, they weren’t cartoon animals.” “Yeah, the scientists weren’t just talking about the animals, they told you about them and then they actually showed you the animals in real life on the video.” I said. The other student said, “The scientists said important information for us to know and they said it more than once, like they wanted us to really know it and remember it.” “Yeah I would agree that is a feature of
the video because you heard the scientists saying it orally and they were communicating the information to you. Nice job with this boys and girls!”

I was unable to get to the debrief part of the lesson because of time. The lesson wanted the students to go back to the K-W-L chart in their journals and add to the L column of what they learned about the Great Bear Rainforest or about rainforests in general. I left a note for the teacher saying we never got to that part.

Reflection

What I did well?

I think the lesson as a whole was a success. Students were engaged throughout the three viewings of the documentary video. I was able to modify the lesson quite a few times on the spot, which is not always easy.

The first time I modified the lesson was when the students had to write gist statements. The module lesson wanted the students to write the statements individually and then talk in small groups. I felt that was going to take up too much time. I had the students work with the partner sitting next to them to quietly write the six gist statements for the video. This worked out really well because then they did not have to talk about the statements afterward. Each statement took about one to two minutes to write. I am glad that I modified that because students seemed more confident in their gist statements when we quickly went over them as a class and the class agreed they liked doing them with a partner.

The second time I modified the lesson was during the second viewing of the video when the students were listening for unknown words. The students were able to write down the words they didn’t know and they were able to attempt to figure out what they meant. However, some of the students got stuck after that. Some of the students were not able to figure out what all of their
words meant. With a video it was hard because I played it for them at that point twice, however it wasn’t like a text where they could go back and keep reading. I made the decision to bring the class together as a whole and call on students to go over their words. I wanted the students to tell me what they thought the word meant first and then I would give them the real definition. I felt this was the best way to encourage students to try and figure out unknown words; however I still wanted the students to have the right definition in their journals.

**What was challenging?**

In this lesson I was challenged by the fact there was not enough time to complete the debrief. I was unable to have the students write what they learned in the lesson. I would have liked to have them go back to their K-W-L charts and record their learnings in the L column and then I could have had them each share one thing they learned about rainforests and that could have been their “ticket” to lunch.

As much as the modules are “scripted” I feel they provide a nice support for me. Especially when I am coming into a new class each day, or every couple days, it is a great way for me to keep on track with where the students are. I like how I am able to follow the lesson in the module as a guideline and it helps prompt me with student responses that I can use as feedback for the students. I do not always know a lot about the topics the students are learning about and the lessons provide some details to support myself as well as the students.

**What will I do differently?**

Next time if I were to continue on with this lesson, I will have the students start by writing what they have learned in their K-W-L chart about rainforests. I think the students would be engaged by this opening activity and the students would get their brains flowing about what we did in this lesson with the documentary video.
If I were to teach this same lesson again, I will make sure the students are very clear about the question for features of a documentary video. I think the students were confused about that question and once I restated the question for them, the light bulbs in their heads went off and they understood what I was asking.

December 4, 2013- Interpreting Figurative Language

I was in the same sixth grade class again that I was in the other day. I was familiar with the format of the lesson because it was similar to what I had done the few days before. I was following the module lesson the teacher left me from the Common Core State Standards, Unit 1 of Module 2A, Lesson 4. To open up the lesson, I had students get into their small groups they had been working with for the last couple of days (the teacher wrote on the paper that the students should know what groups they were in) and I told the students, “In your groups for five minutes, talk about what Bud did to the character Todd in chapter 4 of Bud, Not Buddy?” I walked around and listened to the students talk and laugh about what happened to Todd. One student said, “Todd got water dumped all over him when he was sleeping.” Another student said, “Bud made it look like Todd peed the bed.” Another student said, “Todd looked like a big ole bed wetter HAHAHA.” After five minutes I called the students back together and had a couple students share out what happened to Todd in chapter 4. I modified the lesson by not giving the students the entrance ticket the module provided, I decided to wait and use it as an exit ticket, because we just discussed what happened to Todd and I wanted to make sure that we got through the entire lesson.

I showed the students the learning targets/ focuses for the lesson for the day on the SMART Board. I had a student read them aloud, “I can explain how the author’s word choice
affects tone and meaning in the novel and I can determine the meaning of figurative language in *Bud, Not Buddy.*” I asked the students, “What do you think you are going to be doing today?” I laughed afterwards because these were the same learning targets from the other day when I was in the classroom. The students laughed because they had been working with these same learning targets for a couple days now. I called on one student who said, “Well we are going to probably get a text detail and figure out the literal or actual meaning of the quote. Then we are going to find out how that quote affects the mood or the feelings of Bud in the quote.” I said, “I couldn’t have explained it any better myself.”

I told the students to take out their figurative language graphic organizer. The teacher had already scanned one in the SMART Board, so I was able to show the students what it looked like. I handed students a copy of the two quotes they were going to analyze today for the figurative language. I also wrote the quotes into the column of the graphic organizer labeled “text details.” I waited for students to catch up and have their graphic organizers look the same as mine. I wanted to make sure the students fully understood how to do this because the quotes were on a separate piece of paper. I walked around the room to make sure all the students were putting the quotes in the right column. Once that was complete we quickly went over what each column was again, the literal meaning and what this quote tells you about Bud. I told the students to work in their small groups for ten minutes to complete the graphic organizer for the two quotes. I walked around to monitor students writing and filling in the meaning for the figurative language form *Bud, Not Buddy* and what the quote tells us about Bud. The students were all on task and didn’t need the full ten minutes. It seemed like they really understood the concept of figurative language. I called on students to share what they filled in for each box for the quotes. I
wrote what the students shared in my graphic organizer on the SMART Board and I told the students as long as they had something similar that was fine.

The next part of the lesson was completing the selected-response questions. The module said for me to read an excerpt of *Bud, Not Buddy* aloud and then have the students complete the questions based on that excerpt. However, when I was reading over the questions, I noticed the students have to read the same excerpt on the top of their selected-response questions. I chose to modify the lesson again and not read the excerpt aloud. I chose to let the students work with their small groups and read the excerpt together and then answer the questions together. I walked around and monitored the students working on the questions. They were all working really hard and keeping their focus. One group of girls were struggling with a question about what the word *torturing* meant in the excerpt. I told the students, “See if you can use words around the word *torture* and see if you can figure it out.” They said, “Well he talks about being unhappy.” The question was multiple choice. I told the girls, “See if you can cross off some of the choices based on the text they gave you.” The girls crossed off, two of the choices. I said, “Well do you think Bud is talking about punching anyone in this text, even though we know him and Todd got into a fight?” The girls said, “No.” I said, “Or does this text talk about pain and suffering and how it is painful to live without knowing who your mother and father are?” The girls smiled and said, “Yeah, it’s pain and suffering that is what torturing means.”

After the students finished the questions I collected them for the teacher and handed each student the “entrance ticket” that I changed to the exit ticket. I told the students that their teacher was going to use it as a grade, so they needed to take it seriously. The question for the new exit ticket was, “What would you title Chapter 4 and why?” I was not allowed to help the students
with the exit tickets because it is showing what they know and seeing if they can take what they learned and apply it independently.

Reflection

What I did well?

I can confidently say I am able to modify the lessons without becoming flustered or feeling like everything is becoming chaotic. The modifications I make to the lessons are often minor but I feel like they make a big difference. For example when I modified changing the entrance ticket in the beginning to the exit ticket, I felt the students would have been over bored and over worked on what happened in chapter 4 because we had just had a long discussion about what Bud did to Todd. The class discussion was great and all the students participated, however I felt that moving the entrance ticket to the end, brought the whole lesson back together.

The second modification was having the students read the excerpt in their small groups instead of me reading it aloud. After looking back on the lesson I am not sure this was as successful as I wanted it to be, however I felt because of time it was more convenient for students to read the excerpt in their small groups and then answer the questions, rather than me reading it aloud and then the students reading again in their groups.

I am also becoming more confident in my interactions with students. I feel that when students are struggling with reading or writing, I am able to sit with the student or students and work through the text or question with them. I don’t just say, “Well try and figure it out on your own.” I like working the questions out with the students because often times the text is new to me and the questions require me to read the text a couple times to figure out the answers.

What was challenging?
The challenging part for me was trying to keep moving to the different groups. Even though all the groups were on task and doing the right thing, I still like to at least stop at each group and ask them how they are doing with the questions or the figurative language graphic organizer. This allows me a chance to see where the student is with their writing/reading progress. By stopping at each group I am also able to see what each student is doing in the group. I like to make sure all the students are participating and not just sitting there copying off each other’s papers. With this lesson, the students finished the figurative language graphic organizer so quickly, I was unable to get to each group and check in with their progress.

**What I will do differently?**

Next time if I were to teach this lesson I would have students talk in their small groups about what Bud did to Todd in chapter 4. Then I would have students do the figurative language graphic organizer the same way this lesson had the students do it. I would provide students with two text details and have the students find the literal meaning and then what this quote tells us about Bud. I would then move onto the selected response questions and then I would also collect them for a grade. The part I would modify would be having the students get a different exit ticket that had a new figurative language graphic organizer on the front with one text detail and the students would have to find the literal meaning and what the quote says about Bud and on the back of the exit ticket would be what they would title chapter 4 and why? I feel this would incorporate all parts of the lesson into the exit ticket.

I felt the exit ticket only incorporated the homework and if students didn’t do the reading for homework then they are at a loss. At least if the students pay attention during class they would have a chance to do well on this new exit ticket.
December 5, 2013- The Body’s Superhighway

Today I was in a first grade classroom. The teacher left the listening and learning strand 5A domain from the Common Core State Standards for me to follow. I began by introducing the read aloud by reminding the students what they had already learned in previous lessons. I read a short rhyme from previous read alouds and had the students share one fact they learned from that body system. I read about the skeletal system and all the students raised their hands. I called on one student who said, “The skeleton protects the organs.” I said, “Yeah if we didn’t have strong bones to protect our insides, then the inside of us wouldn’t get wrecked and ruined.” I read a rhyme about the muscular system. I called on a student to share a fact about that system. They said, “We have like 650 muscles in our body.” “Wow! I didn’t even know that. That is crazy!” I said. I read about the healthy body. I asked the students, “Who can share a fact about being healthy?” The students all raised their hands. I called on a boy to share. He said, “We need to eat lots of fruits and vegetables and exercise to have strong bones and a healthy body.” I said, “You got it dude!” I told the students, “Today you are going to be learning about a new body system.”

I began the read aloud and read about the body’s circulatory system. As I read each section of the read aloud, specified by the listening and learning strand domain, I showed the students the pictures that went along with the reading on the SMART Board. After the read aloud I asked students comprehension questions that were provided by the Common Core domain. The first question was, “What does the circulatory system circulate or move around the body?” The majority of the students raised their hands. I called on Francine. She said, “Blood.” “Yeah, the blood circulates in your body.” I said. I asked the students, “How does blood travel through the body?” Two students raised their hands. I waited a minute. Three students total had their hands up. I reread the part about blood traveling through the body. I asked the question again after
reading, “How does blood travel through the body?” Fifteen students raised their hands. I called on Frank. He said, “Through the blood vessels.” “Yes you are right.” I said. I asked the students, “What is the name of the muscle that pumps blood into the blood vessels?” Two-thirds of the students raised their hands. I called on Becky. She said, “The heart.” I said, “Yes! And what happens when the doctor puts the special tool called the stethoscope to your chest? What is s/he listening for?” Three students raised their hands. I waited a minute. Four students total had their hands up. I reread the section about using a stethoscope to hear the heartbeat. After reading I asked the same question again, “When the doctor puts a stethoscope to your chest, what is s/he listening for?” The majority of the students raised their hands. I called on a boy who said, “He is listening for your heartbeat and the sound of your heart pumping blood.” “Yeah your heartbeat is when your heart is actually pumping blood.” I said. I asked the students, “Why is blood important to your body” Eight students raised their hands. I called on a boy who said, “It brings the nutrition all over the body to keep you from dying.” “Your right. You blood brings the nutrients and oxygen all over your body to keep you alive and healthy.” I said. I asked the students, “What are some ways that you can keep your heart healthy and strong?” All, but three students had their hands up. I called on a girl who said, “Eating vegetables and fruits.” Another student said, “Exercising a lot.” Another student said, “Playing outside and inside at recess.” The last student I called on said, “Don’t eat a lot of junk food.” I asked the students what junk food was. They said, “Like potato chips and candy and pop.” “Yeah, food that is processed or has a lot of sugar in it is junk food.”

For the last five minutes of ELA I modified the lesson by having them turn and talk to a neighbor about ways they keep their heart healthy. I gave the students an example of how I keep my heart healthy. I said, “Every day after school I go to the gym for an hour and workout by
doing many different exercises, that is how I keep my heart healthy and strong.” I listened to the conversations the students had. One pair said, “I keep my heart healthy by chasing after my dog every day.” The other partner said, “I keep my heart healthy by doing 5-2-1-0, Be a Healthy Hero.” One student said, “I keep my heart healthy by choosing carrots at lunch and not chips.” Another student said, “I have a healthy heart because I love apples and eat them all the time.” The students were able to give several examples of how they were able to keep their hearts healthy. We were unable to share out ways to keep their hearts healthy because we ran out of time.

Reflection

What I did well?

I felt the students were having trouble comprehending this text so I was able to recognize that and go back and reread the parts that the students needed to hear again. When the students were struggling with the comprehension questions I still provided wait time to the students and then reread the section that corresponded with that question. I was able to support the students by guiding them through the questions and not just waiting and waiting.

I am glad I modified the lesson at the end by having the students answer the question about what they are doing to make their own heart healthy. I think this brings the whole lesson back to them. Although one of the comprehension questions was very similar, I was surprised to hear many students giving very different and unique answers about themselves. The students were saying things like, “I chase after my dog.” “I run at recess.” “I play outside with my little sister.” They were things that we hadn’t said during the lesson. I was able to use what they learned about a healthy heart during the lesson and apply it to the real world.

What was challenging?
The challenge for me was at first recognizing that students were struggling with the comprehension questions and realizing that I needed to go back and reread the sections that corresponded with the specific question. At first I was going to reread the whole read aloud, but then it didn’t make sense for me to read the whole thing when the students only needed one answer for that part.

The other challenging part for me was running out of time and not getting to the word work section of the listening and learning strand domain. I felt the word work section had some activities to do with the word heart that the students may have found beneficial.

What will I do differently?

If I were to teach this lesson again, I will go through the read aloud a little bit more thorough. I will ask some guiding questions of my own throughout the read aloud to make sure students comprehend the text. In my opinion the content is difficult for this grade level; however I think the content is very interesting and engaging. The students seemed intrigued by the pictures and the information, but it was overwhelming at times. I will make sure I stop after each section and check for understanding by asking some type of guiding or supporting question.

I will also include word work and a writing activity related to the heart. The students could write about ways they are heart healthy and then maybe create a poster for the classroom about being a heart healthy class! I will encourage writing to be incorporated into the lesson.

December 6, 2013- Analyzing an Interview with a Rainforest Scientist and Comparing and Contrasting Texts

I was in the same fifth grade classroom that I have recently been in. The students were completing the end of unit 1 assessment from Module 2A: Unit 1: Lesson 9 of the Common Core
State Standards. Before beginning the assessment I read the learning targets/ focuses to the students, “I can determine the main ideas in informational texts about rainforests of the Western Hemisphere. I can compare and contrast the features of different informational texts about rainforests. I can express my opinion about types of informational texts in writing. I can use details to support my opinion. I can reflect on my learning about informational texts and the rainforests.” After reading the learning targets aloud I reminded the students that they had worked with all of the learning targets before and that their focus today was going to be an end of the unit assessment where they would be showing everything they learned in one assessment.

I asked the students, “What does the word express mean?” All the students raised their hands. I called on one student who said, “Sharing my ideas.” I said, “Yeah and when you share your ideas where are you going to put them today? Are you going to shout them out during the assessment?” The students laughed. One student said, “No we share our ideas in our writing.” “Exactly.” I said. I asked the students, “What does the word opinion mean?” The students all raised their hands. I called on a boy who said, “Well we each have our own opinions in that we have our own ideas and what we think about things.” “Right, each person is entitled or has their right to their own opinion or feelings about something.” I said. I asked the students what details were. One boy Fred said, “Specific ideas that support the main idea or claim.” “Wow that is perfect. Did everyone hear what Fred said?” I said. The students nodded. I asked the students if they had any last minute questions before they began the assessment. They said no. I explained the assessment to the students, created by the Common Core State Standards module 2A. I told the students they would be reading an excerpt from the second part of the “Live Online Interview with Ever Nilson.” I told the students they were going to respond to some questions about the interview, as well as questions about the informational text they read and viewed throughout the
unit so far. I told the students I had good news for them. Their eyes lit up. I told them, “This was an open book assessment meaning, you can use any resources you have written on and used about rainforests up to this point, including your journals, notes, other texts and all the anchor charts in the room.” I told the students to take full advantage of this opportunity because it doesn’t happen often. I handed out the end of the unit assessment to the students and told them to begin independently. I told them they had 35 minutes to complete the assessment.

I walked around the room and monitored the students. I was able to answer questions about the directions, however I was not able to help students with what words said, or how to spell things for students. I was very happy to see the students focused and hard at work. I saw a lot of the students using the anchor chart that I wrote on a couple days ago about features of informational text. That anchor chart helped the students with figuring out what kind of features are used in the informational texts.

While walking around I noticed students struggling with the question about what the word *depletion* meant. Even when I was substituting a couple days before, the students struggled with figuring out unknown vocabulary. Some students during the assessment were on that question for eight minutes or so. I had to walk over to one student and tell her to move onto the next question because she was going to run out of time.

I modified the lesson by giving the students 20 extra minutes because only one student was done after the 35 minutes. I felt the students should have a chance to finish and the module did not provide an ample amount of time for the students to finish a long assessment.

After I collected the assessment, I gave students the “tracking my progress: reflecting on learning” form. This form was for the students to rate themselves on the learning targets and on how well they think they have done on the learning targets for this unit. The students had to
provide evidence to support their reasoning for why they thought that way about themselves. I
gave the students ten minutes for the self reflection and then I collected that part of the
assessment. As a wrap up I asked the students to give me a thumb up if they thought the
assessment was easy a thumb in the middle if it was fair or thumb down if it was hard. Most
students said it was fair.

Reflection

What I did well?

Since I was unable to actually interact with students, I felt I did a great job at monitoring
students and observing their writing behaviors. I supported students beforehand and set the
students up for success the best I could before the assessment.

I also felt that modifying the lesson was a good decision on my part by giving the
students more time to finish. By giving students more time, it allowed most of the students to
finish the assessment and get all of their thoughts and ideas on the paper.

What was challenging?

I was unable to work with student’s one on one or in small groups because of the
assessment. Although this was a good learning opportunity for me because I had been in this
class quite a few times and worked with these students so it was nice to see what they learned, it
was hard for me to sit back and not support the students when they needed it.

The hardest part was when the students struggled with the same concept they struggled
with a few days before. I had written the teacher a note about the students struggling with the
unknown vocabulary in hopes she would do more practice with it. A lot of the students still
struggled on that question. Hopefully in the next unit, if I am in this class I can focus more on
that concept.
What will I do differently?

I do not think 35 minutes is enough time for the end of the unit assessment. It took me 5 minutes alone just to pass out the materials and get the students all ready to go. I felt the students needed more time, especially since they were using resources, so they had to look through things to make sure they had the right answer. If I were to give this assessment again I will make sure the students have all of their papers in order ahead of time and that the students get extra time for the assessment. When I told the students it was open note, some students didn’t even have all of their resources. I really enjoyed working with the 5th grade on the rainforest.

December 9, 2013- Getting the Gist

I was in the inclusion sixth grade classroom again, except this time the students were beginning to work with a new text in class. I read the Lesson 6 module the teacher left for me to read over and I got excited because the students were going to listen to part of the Steve Jobs commencement speech. I felt the sixth graders would be able to relate to what Steve Jobs was referring to in his speech, love death and pursuing his dreams.

I began the lesson by distributing the entrance ticket to the students which was for them to give chapter 6 of Bud, Not Buddy a title and explain why they gave it that title. This got the students thinking about the novel and the homework from the night before. After the students completed the entrance ticket, I collected it.

I read the learning targets/ focuses to the students for the lesson, “I can get the gist of paragraphs 6-8 of the Steve Jobs speech and I can identify the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary from the context.” I asked the students what they thought we would be doing for the lesson today. Five students raised their hands. I called on one student who said, “Well learning about
Steve Jobs.” I asked the students, “Does anyone know who Steve Jobs is?” Only two students raised their hands. I told the students to turn and talk to a neighbor about who they thought he might be. After one minute, I asked the students again, “Does anybody think they know who Steve Jobs is or what he did?” Eight students raised their hands. I called on one girl who said, “I think he invented Apple.” “Yeah, he was the creator of Apple, which is the kind of phone most of you have, the iPhone.” I showed the students a bunch of pictures on the SMART Board of the products that Steve Jobs created such as, the iPhone, the iPad, the Mac computer, Apple products and Pixar. I asked the students what they thought we would be doing with the Steve Jobs speech. One student said, “I think we are finding the gist and then unknown words.” “Yeah, we are finding the gist, which is the main idea, and then unknown vocabulary.” I said. I told the students, “We are going to listen to part of his commencement speech, and then focus on three of the paragraphs for the gist and vocabulary.”

I passed out the Stanford University Commencement Address: Steve Jobs to the students. I read the introductory paragraph aloud to the students while they followed along, “I am honored to be with you today at your commencement from one of the finest universities in the world. I never graduated college. Truth be told, this is the closest I’ve ever gotten to a college graduation. Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That’s it. No big deal. Just three stories.” After reading the introduction I asked the students, “What does the introduction tell you?” The majority of the students raised their hands. I called on one girl Raven who said, “Well it says that Steve Jobs never went to college and that the college he is talk at is good.” I said, “Steve Jobs never went to college. Your right. He also did say that Stanford is a great college. What else do we learn in this introduction?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Virginia. She said,
“That he is going to tell us three stories.” “Yeah, Steve Jobs is going to tell us three stories throughout this speech.”

I told the students that they were going to listen to the first part of the speech, paragraphs 1-8. I told them to follow along in their speech, while they listen. I played the speech aloud for them while they followed along. After listening to the speech I asked the students how we find the gist. All the students raised their hands, which made me happy. I called on Ben who said, “We read a paragraph and write one sentence summing up what we read.” “Wow! I could not have said it better. Yes. You are going to focus on paragraphs 6-8 and find the gist of each of the paragraphs.” I told the students. I showed the students on the SMART Board what three paragraphs they were focusing on and had the students turn to that page in their speech. I had the students work in their small groups that they had been working with for the last couple of weeks, which prevented any conflict or confusion. While the students were writing the gist statements for paragraphs 6-8 I walked around the room and supported the students in writing the statements. I walked over to a group who looked like they were just sitting there and not working. I asked the students, “What were they doing?” They said, “Trying to write the gist.” I asked the students, “What was the paragraph mostly about?” They said, “Well in the paragraph Steve went to class.” I said, “Yes, what kind of class did he take?” They said, “A calligraphy class.” “Right! The paragraph talks all about Steve Jobs taking a calligraphy class in college.” I said to the students. After the students finished the gist statements for paragraphs 6-8 I called on students to share what they had and I recorded their gists on the SMART Board.

After the gist statements I moved onto the unknown vocabulary. I modified the lesson by having the students go back to the paragraphs 6-8 of the Steve Jobs speech and circle at least two unknown words in each paragraph. The lesson module did not require students to find a specific
number of unknown words. I gave the students nine minutes to circle unknown words and then try and figure out what the words meant. I called the students back together and went through each paragraph one by one, which the module lesson also did not do. I asked the students which words they circled in paragraph 6 and then I had them try and tell me what they thought each of those words meant. After the student told me what they thought the word meant, I told the student what the word actually meant and had the student write the definition on the speech. I did the same thing for paragraphs 7 and 8. This allowed for the students to have all the definitions for the unknown words.

Due to time constraints, I posted the learning targets from the beginning of the lesson on the SMART Board and had the student’s rate themselves on how well they think they did during the lesson, using a fist to five scale which the students were familiar with. One, being they were totally lost during the lesson and five, being they completely understood the lesson and could teach it to another student. Most of the students gave themselves fours and fives, which tells me they understood the lesson.

**Reflection**

**What I did well?**

I was able to recognize when students were struggling during the gist statement task. I went to a group who seemed to just be sitting there and I asked how I could help them and support them. I was able to pry more information out of the students by asking more detailed questions, which led to a gist statement.

I modified the lesson by showing the students pictures of things Steve Jobs had created such as, Pixar, the iPhone, the Mac computer, the iPad and the Apple company. By showing the students pictures of these products they were able to relate and make a connection, rather than
just hearing about the products. I modified the lesson to meet the student’s needs by telling them they needed to find a specific number of unknown words. The module lesson did not tell the students a specific number and in that case some of the students may have only found one or two words for the entire three paragraphs. By requiring students to find two words in each paragraph, they are forced to reread each paragraph and find words that they may have seen before but might not know the definition of.

I felt this lesson was well rounded and very engaging for students. The students were writing at the beginning about the novel, *Bud, Not Buddy*. Then I engaged the students by showing them pictures of Steve Jobs’ products he created. We moved onto the first part of the speech. The students were able to listen to the speech and follow along. I could tell the students were engaged because after the first part of the speech they moaned when it was over because they wanted to keep listening for more. The students worked in small groups to find the gist, and then individually for unknown vocabulary. I brought the lesson back together by doing a self-reflection using the fist to five. I felt the students were able to find the gist statements as well as find and determine the meaning of unknown vocabulary.

**What was challenging?**

When reflecting on the lesson I felt that this lesson wasn’t as challenging as other lessons because the text was new to everyone. I was able to introduce the Steve Jobs speech and it was an interesting text. Usually the challenging part for me is that I am new to the text, while the students are familiar with the text.

The only challenge would be that near the end of the lesson the students were unable to talk about the rules that Steve Jobs lives by in paragraphs 6-8. Time has been a consistent
challenge throughout all the module lessons. However, I do not want to rush through the lessons and lose the content of the lessons or lose the students.

What will I do differently?

If I teach this lesson again I will teach the lesson the same way I taught it this time. I would add one thing at the end. I would have the students write their self-reflection on what they rate themselves based on the learning targets and why. I think this would help me self-reflect on my own teaching practices and what I need to focus on, whether it was the gist statements or the unknown vocabulary.

December 10, 2013- The Magic Paintbrush

I substituted in a second grade classroom today. The teacher left me the listening and learning strand of the Early Asian Civilizations domain to complete with the students for the ELA block. I planned on doing lesson 10 with the students which was a read aloud, comprehension questions and word work.

I began the lesson by reminding the students what they had already learned so far. I said, “You have already read the folktales, The Tiger, the Brahman, and the Jackal, which was associated with India. The folktale we are reading today is associated with China.” I asked the students what a folktale is. Two-thirds of the students raised their hands. I called on George who said, “It is a made up story that someone told a long time ago and they keep telling again and again and again and again.” “Exactly!” I said.

I told the students that we were going to read a folktale called, The Magic Paintbrush. I asked the students, “How do you think a paintbrush could be magical?” All but three students raised their hands. I called on one girl who said, “Well maybe the paintbrush paints itself?” I
said, “Maybe.” I called on another student who said, “Maybe the paintbrush can talk.” The other students laughed and said, “Yeah maybe it talks!” I said, “Maybe.” I called on another student who said, “Maybe the paintbrush draws really pretty pictures all by itself.” I said, “Maybe.” I told the students that the focus of the lesson was to listen to find out how the paintbrush was magical.

I read *The Magic Paintbrush* to the students. After reading the folktale to the students I began asking the students the comprehension questions provided by the listening and learning strand. I asked the students, “Was your predictions correct about the way in which the paintbrush was magical?” The students didn’t raise their hands. I asked the students “Remember when I asked you why the paintbrush was magical?” The students nodded their heads. I said, “Well how many of you were correct?” Three students raised their hands. I said, “How many of you were not right? And that is okay if you were not right, we were just making predictions.” I asked the students, “Who were the characters in the folktale I read today?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Jackson, who said, “Ma Liang, his teacher, the emperor and the old man.” “Exactly.” I said. I asked the students, “Where did the folktale take place?” All the students raised their hands again. I called on a girl. She said, “India.” I said, “That is where the other folktales took place that you have been reading, but what about today’s folktale?” She said, “Oh, China!” “Yes!” I said. I asked the students, “At the beginning of the story, what does Ma Liang want to do?” Ten students raised their hands. I called on a boy who said, “He wants to paint but he can’t.” I asked, “Why can’t he paint?” I called on Tyler. He said, “Because he has no money for painting things.” “Yeah Ma Liang is poor so he can’t buy products and painting supplies.” I said. I asked the students, “Even though Ma Liang doesn’t have a paintbrush he starts to use twigs and other things to paint pictures. Do people like his paintings?” The students nodded their
heads yes. I asked the students, “How do you know they liked his paintings?” Eight students raised their hands. I called on Marissa. She said, “Because people were saying nice things to his paintings and noticing him.” “Exactly. People were walking by and giving him praise and noticing his paintings.” I said. I asked the students, “How does Ma Liang get a paintbrush?” All the students raised their hands. I called on a girl who said, “When he is sleeping an old man gives him one.” I said, “Right when Ma Liang is sleeping, he receives a paintbrush.” Then I asked the students, “How is Ma Liang’s paintbrush magical?” Half of the students raised their hands. I called on a boy who said, “Because whatever he painted it turned into real life.” I said, “Exactly!” I asked the students, “Why does the emperor want the magic paintbrush?” I called on a girl who said, “The man is mean and wants money and to be rich. He wants to paint gold for himself.” “Yeah, the emperor wants to be greedy and make himself richer.” I said. I asked the students, “What does Ma Liang do to outsmart the greedy emperor?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Shannon. She said, “He paints a boat with the emperor in it and then makes it windy and makes the emperor wash away and never come back.” I said, “Right, the emperor gets washed away to an island, which is a piece of land surrounded by water, and the emperor goes to the island and never comes back.”

I modified the lesson by not asking the last question aloud and discussing it. I chose to use it as a writing prompt. I wrote the last question on the SMART Board, “If you had a magic paintbrush what would you paint?” I read the question aloud to the students. I gave each student a piece of paper and sent them to their seats. I reminded the students that they needed punctuation, capitalization and details. I walked around and monitored the students writing. One boy was writing his sentences very fast and said he was done after one minute. I was unable to read anything he wrote, so I asked him to read me what he wrote. He said, “If I had a magic
paintbrush I would paint superheroes because I always wanted to be one. I would paint superman because he flies around the world saving people and being cool.” I told the student he needed to go back and rewrite his sentences slowly and neatly so that I was able to read his awesome sentences. The student started getting mad and upset. I told the student there was no need to be upset; I just wanted to be able to read what great work he wrote. I told the student that he still had eight more minutes to write and that the other students still were not done. I told him that sometimes I have to write my writing over and over and over. He was upset, but he wrote his writing again, neater. The other teacher in the room told me that they always make him rewrite his writing because it is sloppy and that he is constantly reminded to write slow and neat and that he just rushes through his work.

I went up to a girl who had said she was done. This is what was written on her paper, “if i had a magic paintbrush i would paint princess becase they are prtty and pink and i like pink and purple and princess and i would want a real princess” I told her I love princesses too. Then I asked her what belongs at the beginning of every sentence. She said, “A capital let ter.” I said, “Yes!” I said, “Can you make the beginning of your sentence capital.” She fixed the beginning of her sentence. Then I asked her what was special about the letter I by itself? She said, “It is capital when it is by itself.” I pointed to each letter I that she didn’t capitalize. She said, “Oops.” She erased each one and made it capital. Then I asked her what goes at the end of each sentence. She said, “Ummm, I think a period.” “Yeah, because otherwise I won’t know your sentence is over and I will think you’re going to keep writing.” I said. She added a period. She reread her sentence to me and I smiled and said, “Much better!”

I went to a couple more students and had them read their sentences to me and reminded them to add periods at the end of their sentences or capital letters at the beginning of their
sentences. To wrap up the ELA lesson, I had the students come to the carpet and I called students by random by picking their names out of a cup the teacher had and having them read their writing to their peers.

Reflection

What I did well?

I was able to modify the lesson and incorporate writing into the lesson. Instead of asking the last comprehension question to the students and only having five students answer, I felt it was best for all the students to answer by having them write out their answers. Even the other teacher in the room liked that I modified the lesson. Although the students didn’t have a lot of time to write, the writing prompt was not difficult and the students only had to write two or three sentences.

I was able to support students who struggled with writing. One girl struggled with conventions in her sentence. She also struggled with a run on sentence, however instead of focusing on the run on sentence; I felt it was more important for her to fix her conventions. She knew what belonged at the beginning and end of a sentence when I asked her. I was able to guide her through the process of editing her sentence. I felt the most important thing was capitalizing the letter I when it is by itself because she used it a lot in the sentence and because by second grade students should know that.

I was also able to support a student who was struggling with handwriting. It was a challenge at first because he argued with me about rewriting his sentences; however I stood my ground and told him that there was plenty of time for him to neatly rewrite his writing. I was able to convince him to rewrite it neatly and he did.

What was challenging?
The challenging part was when the student who wrote his writing very sloppy didn’t want to rewrite his sentences started arguing with me and getting upset. I was able to calm him down and reason with him about rewriting his sentences to that I could read his great piece of writing. The student was still crying when he was rewriting his sentences, however he rewrote the writing prompt very neatly and legible and it looked beautiful and I complimented the student on how neat his writing looked.

The other challenging part of this lesson and mistake I made was before I started the lesson, in the introduction when I asked students what they thought it might mean for a paintbrush to be magical, I never referred to those as predictions. At the end of the folktale, when I was asking the students if their predictions were correct, the students had no idea what I was talking about. I had to restate the question I was asking because in the beginning I never told the students they were making predictions. This was my mistake and it made the comprehension questions a little bit more challenging, however I just made a slight adjustment.

**What will I do differently?**

If I were to teach this lesson again I will make sure that I refer to student guesses as predictions so that students understand they are making predictions. I would also keep the writing prompt at the end because I think students enjoyed writing about what they would paint. This was a chance for all the students to write and express themselves, instead of just having four or five students share what they would paint. If there is time next time I will have the students draw or paint a picture to match their writing.

In reflecting on my teaching practices I will continue to support students in their writing and work with student’s one on one or in small groups. I think by working with students on their writing one on one, I am able to give students the most attention and support they need. By being
I substituted in a kindergarten classroom today. The teacher left me the listening and learning strand to complete with the students for the ELA block. She wrote in her plans that the ELA block would only be 45 minutes because the students had yoga today and that cuts into their ELA time.

I began the lesson by reminding the students they have been learning about their senses. I asked the students, “What sense have they already learned about?” All of the students raised their hands. I called on one student who said, “Our eyes to see.” I said, “Yes you use your eyes to see, but does anyone remember what sense that is called?” The majority of the students raised their hands again. One student was standing up, another student was yelling out. I reminded the students to sit on their bottoms quietly. I called on a boy who said, “Sight.” I said, “Yes your sense of sight is what you use your eyes for.” I told the students, “Today’s focus is on the sense of hearing and the sounds we hear.” I asked the students, “Do you know what body part we use to hear things?” All the students raised their hands. I called on a girl Erica who said, “Our ears.” “Yes!” I said.

I read the read aloud about the sense of hearing to the students. After reading it aloud to the students, I asked them the comprehension questions provided by the listening and learning strand. I asked the students, “What was the focus of today’s lesson?” All but four students raised their hands. I called on a girl who said, “Using a sense of hearing to hear things.” I said, “Yes!” I asked the students, “How does the sound travel through the air?” Seven students raised their
hands. I called on Ramaha who said, “I think it is through the waves.” I said, “Your close, they are called sound waves.” I asked the students, “Can you see the sound waves in the air?” The students all shook their heads no. I said, “Right, I can’t look up in the air and see the sound waves, we just know they are there because we can hear people talking.” I asked the students, “Can you stop the sound waves from coming to your ears?” Nine students raised their hands. I called on a girl who said, “No, but when you cover them up like this it gets hard to hear things.” I said, “Right, when you cover up your ears it becomes quieter and muffled.” I asked the students, “What should you do to keep your ears safe?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Jackson who said, “Make sure you don’t put anything in them like pennies or money.” I laughed and said, “Right you don’t want to put anything in your ears because that is dangerous.” “What else can you do to protect your ears?” I asked the students. I called on Frank. He said, “Cover them up if you are going to be near something loud and don’t play your music too loud.” I said, “Exactly. If you are going to a loud show, like a concert, you should wear ear plugs to protect your ears. You should also keep your music low when you listen to it.”

The last question was a think pair share question where I ask students the question aloud and then they turn and talk to their neighbor about the question and then they share the answer aloud. If there was more time I would have had the students write about the question. Because we had ten minutes left, which wasn’t long enough for the students to write independently I chose to modify the lesson a little bit. I had the students turn and talk to a neighbor about the question, “How does the sense of hearing help us learn about the world around us?” I gave the students four minutes to talk to their neighbors about the question. Then I chose students randomly by their class “sticks” which has the students names on it and had the students come up to the SMART Board to write a couple words that they talked about with their partner. Some of
the words the students wrote on the SMART Board were, “kp us sf (keep us safe), we cn tk to pepl (we can talk to people), tak (talking), hrcrs (hear sirens).” I told the students they did a nice job with the sense of hearing topic and that concluded the ELA lesson.

Reflection

What I did well?

I was able to modify the lesson to meet the needs of the students. I felt the students didn’t need to just share out the answers to the questions, I felt that the students should be able to come up to the SMART Board and write what they talked about with their partner on the SMART Board. I was also able to keep the students focused throughout the lesson. The ELA block is 45 minutes, which is a long time for kindergartners to sit and listen to a read aloud and then answer questions. I was able to keep the students focused throughout the entire lesson. I had worked with the students for two weeks in the beginning of November and this may have helped.

What was challenging?

Although I modified the lesson to add a quick writing portion on the SMART Board, not all the students were able to write, and I was not able to work with each student and talk about their writing. It was frustrating to me to have to follow what the teacher leaves for me and then be restricted to specific time constraints and guidelines for ELA. I am glad that I was able to allow some students to come to the SMART Board and write what they talked about with their partners because it allowed me to see their writing; however it wasn’t the writing that I wanted and anticipated on doing.

Knowing this group of kindergarteners I thought I was going to be able to work with the students on their writing or see some of their writing, however I didn’t and that part was challenging and frustrating to me.
What will I do differently?

If I were to teach this lesson again in my own classroom I will engage the students by incorporating actual sound into the lesson. I know the students know what sound is but it would be engaging for students to hear different sounds throughout the lesson to make the lesson more interactive. I will also make sure the students all have a chance to write on the SMART Board, or at least one of the partners, or have the students write the answer to the question on a piece of paper.

December 13, 2013- China’s Great Wall

I was substituting in the second grade classroom that I was in a few days ago. The teacher left plans for me to continue with the listening and learning strand of the Early Asian Civilizations domain from the Common Core State Standards. I was going to be teaching from lesson 12: China’s Great Wall. The lesson consisted of a read aloud, comprehension questions and word work.

I began the lesson by reminding the students that they have learning about many Chinese contributions thus far: silk, paper, seed drills and plows. I told the students that today they were going to hear about an important contribution to China that wasn’t a tool, but a wonder of the world. I told the students, “Today’s focus of the lesson is for you to listen to find out about a Chinese contribution that began as a useful tool for the Chinese but is now a wonder of the world.”

I read China’s Great Wall to the students. After reading it to the students I began asking them the comprehension questions. I asked the students, “What contribution did you hear about in today’s lesson?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Brad. He said, “The Great
Wall of China.” “Yes.” I said. I asked the students, “Can anyone describe what the Great Wall of China looks like?” Eleven students raised their hands. I called on a girl who said, “Well it is big and I think it is four thousand miles long.” I said, “Yes it is four thousand miles long and it spreads along the northern part of China.” I asked the students, “Why was the Great Wall of China first built?” I called on a student who said, “So the Chinese could protect themselves.” I said, “Yeah it was a way for China to protect themselves from attackers.” I asked the students, “Did the wall always protect the Chinese?” All the students raised their hands. I called on Shaniah. She said, “No. Sometimes people broke down the wall.” “Right, there were times when nomadic invaders were able to break through the wall and rule the Chinese.” I said. I asked, “Who helped build the Great Wall of China?” Nine students raised their hands. I waited a minute. Two more students raised their hands. I called on George. He said, “Soldiers, workers, peasants, people.” “Yeah all those people helped build the wall and donkeys and goats were used to transport materials back and forth.” I said. I asked, “Why were there watchtowers at certain points throughout the Great Wall of China?” Five students raised their hands. I waited a minute. Three more students raised their hands. I called on a boy who said, “So they could keep an eye on the wall and so they could see if people were coming to attack the wall or China.” “Yeah, by putting up watchtowers, they were able to see if someone was coming.” I said.

I modified the lesson because I decided to have the students write their answer on paper for the last question instead of asking the question aloud. I wrote the question on the SMART Board and told the students they were going to write their answer on a piece of paper. The question was, “How is the Great Wall of China important?” I gave students ten minutes to work on writing their answer.
After each student got their paper I walked around the room and monitored and supported the students. One student was not writing. He was stabbing his pencil into the paper. I asked him why he was doing that. He said, “Because I hate writing and I don’t want to write.” I told him, “Well right now we are writing a short response to the question about the Great Wall of China. Would you like me to help you?” He just looked at me. I sat down next to him and turn his paper around to face the right way. I said, “Okay so what do you know about the Great Wall of China?” He just looked at me. I said, “Well I know that it protected the Chinese because…” He interrupted me and said, “Because it was so long and big, it was four thousand miles long.” I said, “Right, and because it was so long and big, the enemy wasn’t able to get into China that easily.” He nodded. I smiled. I asked the student if he could write that on his paper because that was extremely important. He nodded yes. On his paper he wrote, “The great wall of china is important cuz it is big and is 4000 miles long and protects the enemy from entering into china.” I said, “Great job, now see if you can come up with another reason why the Great Wall of China is important.” He nodded and smiled and said, “Okay I can do that.” I walked away and saw him writing another sentence. I saw the same student from the other day who I had made redo their writing because it was sloppy, already done with their writing. I walked over to him and saw that his writing wasn’t neat again. I asked him why he didn’t write neatly. He said, “I did.” I said, “Well I can’t really read what you wrote here.” He didn’t respond. I said, “You are going to have to rewrite this again.” He started crying. I said “Well unfortunately if you took your time the first time and wrote slowly and neatly like I know you can do, you wouldn’t have to do it for a second time.” He crumpled up his paper, went and got a new one and started rewriting again, neatly.
After meeting with another student, I had the students come back to the carpet, and I had five students share their writing with their peers on why the Great Wall of China is important. One student said, “The Great Wall of China is important because it protects the enemy from attacking.” Another student said, “The wall is important because it doesn’t let the enemy come in because it is four thousand miles long. There are watchtowers to see if the enemy is approaching too.” Another student said, “The Great Wall of China is part of Chinese history and people still visit the wall today.” Another student said, “The Great Wall of China is a wonder of the world and people still talk about the wall today. It is part of Chinese history and is four thousand miles long.” The last student said, “The wall is important because it was built by a lot of people and took a long time to build. It protected the people of China and is now a part of Chinese history and is a wonder of the world.” I had the students put their writing pieces in their ELA folders and that was the end of the ELA block.

Reflection

What I did well?

I was able to modify the lesson to incorporate writing and the focus of the lesson into the writing. The students were able to incorporate how the Great Wall of China is a contribution today and how it is useful and important. I think it is important for students to write daily in the classroom and with the listening and learning strand of the Common Core Standards, the students are not always writing. By using parts of the comprehension questions and turning them into writing prompts, I was able to allow the students to write and then share out their responses.

I was able to support a struggling writer during the writing portion of the lesson. The one student who was stabbing his paper with a pencil and saying that he didn’t want to write was a student who disliked writing. I asked him if I could help him with the writing task since I wasn’t
giving him a choice on whether he could do the task or not. When the student didn’t respond I sat
down next to the student and began asking the student questions, the student started to become
responsive to my questions and soon enough we were having an engaging conversation about the
importance of the Great Wall of China. By talking with the student and sitting with the student, I
was able to support the student through his first sentence. Then I let him write his next sentence
independently.

I was also able to talk with the same student from a couple days ago about his illegible
handwriting. I told the student that I was still unable to write his handwriting and that the other
day I saw how well he could write and that he should be writing the same way again. I told the
student that he should have taken his time and wrote neatly the first time and he wouldn’t have
had to redo it. He got upset at first but then he redid the writing and was happy with his
handwriting and how neat it looked.

When reflecting on my teaching, I am firm with the students and don’t give in, however I
am very supportive with the students. I am always encouraging the students to do their best and I
work with the students throughout the entire ELA block. When doing the comprehension
questions I am able to restate questions for the students, or provide an ample amount of wait time
for students when needed.

What was challenging?

I challenged with not having time to fit in word work with the students, however I wanted
the students to write and have enough time to meet with students and finish their sentences and
be able to share out their sentences.

I also think I should have asked more questions about what the students did before I
started the lesson. I think that may have helped probe the students thinking and understanding. I
always challenge to meet with the time limits and constraints because there is never enough time
to get through everything the listening and learning strand has planned, so I never read exactly
what is on the paper, but I think in this case, it would have helped me understand more about
what the students were learning about before the lesson, but it also would have helped the
students with their background knowledge of the Chinese culture.

What will I do differently?

If I were to teach this lesson again, I will make sure to include the same writing prompt
for the students because I think it was nice to bring the whole lesson back together with the focus
and about why the Great Wall of China was important. I will also make sure the students activate
more of their background knowledge by reading more of the beginning information from the
listening and learning strand. I also think that if I didn’t have time for the word work, that I
would move it to the afternoon or the beginning of the lesson of the next day. I believe the word
work is important and by always skipping it, the students aren’t getting the full affect of the
lesson.

I would also like to meet with more students during the writing portion of the ELA block.
This would allow me to see different writing strategies that students are using and what they
need support with.
Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

As a substitute teacher I go into classrooms each day and support students, many of whom who struggle with writing. Therefore I had to be prepared to use writing strategies with students to help them.

The findings from this self-study illustrate ways I motivated students who were struggling with writing as well as ways I support all students. The results also revealed the importance of my use of encouragement to support students’ confidence while writing. The implications of this self-study could provide teachers with information that could help them with their literacy instruction. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for other researchers and teachers for future research studies.

Conclusions

Throughout this self-study, I researched the question how I could support and motivate students who struggle with writing.

Modify the Common Core State Standard Modules and Domains

I conducted a self-study in order to reflect upon and refine the teaching practices I used to support and motivate students who struggle with writing. Not all the lessons I did with the students had a writing component. I often had to incorporate and modify my own writing component into the lesson. For example, on November 22, 2013 I modified the Common Core domain by adding a writing prompt about how the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers are important. There was no writing prompt for the students to write about and the students were only discussing. I had modified the lesson to allow for a writing task. On December 10, 2013 I
modified the Common Core domain and used one of the comprehension discussion questions as a writing prompt for the students. There was no writing task for the students that day during their ELA block so I chose to have the students write out one of the discussion questions as their writing prompts. As a teacher research, I conducted my research in different classrooms I was substituting in, in order to fully explore my research question and to improve my teaching of the standards and domains.

As part of my research, I read literature on methodology related to incorporating writing activities with the Common Core State Standards for writing. Through my use of a research journal, I was able to carefully analyze and reflect upon my observations of students and my interactions with them to adjust my teaching practices. Every day I reviewed the module from the Common Core State Standards that the teacher left for me to teach. The teachers never left written sub plans; there was always the module right from the engageny.com website. Not all the lesson plans incorporated writing, especially in the younger grades. However I believed it was important for me to make sure the students were writing. Each day I reflected on how my instruction went and considered ways I could make sure the students were benefiting the most from my writing instruction.

The two weeks I spent in kindergarten I incorporated a small writing task into the Common Core listening and learning domain. This enabled the students to write with the read aloud and comprehension questions.

In the intermediate grades, students wrote throughout the lessons and in many different ways. For example, in fifth grade, I had the students complete a K-W-L chart in their notebooks, and answer text dependent questions that included short answers where they had to go back to
the text and find the answer. Students also had to find unfamiliar vocabulary and then write the definition.

Students did not write whole essays or writing for a long period of time, but in the intermediate grades they were writing in many different forms and for most of the ELA block. The sixth grade students wrote more often and for longer periods. They often had “exit tickets,” which required students to write a paragraph about something they learned that class period or about something from the homework the night before.

It seemed that in the intermediate grades I was able to writing into the ELA block more effectively than in the lower elementary grades. During my substitute teaching in the lower elementary grades, I made sure that as often as I could students were writing daily, even if it was short sentences.

**Individualize Instruction**

The results of this study show that I was able to support students who were struggling with writing by using a variety of individualized approaches.

In one situation on November 4, 2013, I supported Samantha who struggled with handwriting. I asked Samantha what were some things that she wondered about, and she told me she wondered about, “Why we have to come to school? Why my mom makes me do chores? Why it snows here?” I chuckled a little bit because her wonderings were cute for a five year old. I asked Samantha to state her wondering in a complete sentence and to spell each word the best she could and that I would write the sentence for her. She said, “i wudr y we hv to cm to skol” I then had Samantha trace over the sentence I wrote. After she did this she smiled and said, “Thank you Ms. A!”
I was able to support Samantha through the writing process by first asking her to tell me her thoughts orally. I then write the sentence for her, which provided a visual model of her thinking. I then asked her to trace over the writing as a way to physically support Samantha with the development of her fine motor development.

On November 16, 2013 I provided students with a visual aid: an anchor chart. The students were able to use the chart to see how to organize their paragraph. I believe the use of the chart supported students more effectively than if I had just explained orally what they needed in to include in a paragraph: topic sentence, details and conclusion.

**Use Words if Encouragement and Personalize Tasks**

I recognize that I was able to motivate students in many ways throughout my self-study. I discovered I could help them be successful if I gave them encouragement. For example on December 2, 2013, I was working with students in the sixth grade classroom to complete a graphic organizer. The students were not coming up with the correct answers for the question I had asked and they seemed to be getting frustrated. I restated the question and talked with them about the content of the question. I gave them encouragement and positive praise when they answered the questions correctly which seemed to help the students who were struggling with completing the graphic organizer. I recognize that by encouraging students to keep trying their best and keep working towards the correct answer, they would meet their goal of completing the graphic organizer and their writing task.

While I was in kindergarten for two weeks the Common Core State listening and learning domain did not integrate writing into the lesson plan. I modified my lesson plan to incorporate writing. I specifically motivated the students by making a more relatable and
engaging writing prompt, “What was your favorite part of the story?” I noticed that the students were more motivated to write when they were asked to write about their favorite part of the story. The students seemed more engaged and interested in the writing, than when I asked them to write about a specific part of the text. I was able to motivate them by providing a different writing prompt. On November 13, 2013 one student chose Humpty Dumpty breaking as his favorite part of *Humpty Dumpty*. When the students were sharing their favorite parts of their writing with their peers they were able to hear what the other students chose as their favorite parts.

**Implications for Student Learning**

**Positive Attitude**

I noticed a change in the students’ attitude toward writing when I was encouraging students to keep trying their best and to not give up. During the ELA block and specifically during the writing tasks, I fostered a supportive and flexible environment for the students’ to learn in. I believed all students, including those who were struggling with writing were eager to learn. I was able to provide students with positive encouragement such as, “Keep going, you’re doing great!” “Don’t give up, you’re almost there!” “You can do it!”

**Daily Practice**

Students benefited from writing daily because they built their writing stamina. In the upper elementary grades, third through sixth, students wrote throughout the entire ELA block. Students wrote in many different forms, graphic organizers, exit tickets, answering text dependent questions and completing a carousel of quotes (where they go around the room, read a quote and discuss with their group members what the quote means and then answer a question).
In the lower grades, kindergarten through second grade, students were not writing daily. In most of my lessons, I modified the content to incorporate a writing prompt or writing task for the students to complete. I believe it was crucial for the students to write every day in order for them to develop their skills and abilities as writers.

**Implications for My Future Teaching**

**Teachers Should Keep an Open Mind When Choosing a Writing Topic**

The students thrived when they were able to write about their own favorite parts of the story and they had more freedom with their writing. When the writing tasks were more structured with the modules and domains, the students were not as motivated to write. In the younger elementary grades, when the students were able to write about their favorite parts of the story, the students added more details to their stories and elaborated more on what happened in the story. I was also able to have conversations with the students about their writing and this allowed me to get to know the students. Knowing our students as educators is important. When the writing prompt is less structured and more open-minded the students’ writing becomes more authentic and meaningful.

For example, in kindergarten the students were reading a nursery rhyme called *Diddle, Diddle Dumpling*. There was no writing prompt in the Common Core State Standard ELA domain so I made up my own writing prompt for the students. I had the students write about what they would wear to bed, if they could wear anything they wanted. The imaginations of the students were amazing. The students were motivated and eager to write.
Explore the Roles of Motivation in the Writing Process

In my future writing instruction, I plan to continue exploring ways to support and motivate students who struggle with writing. I have learned that does not work the same way with every student. Some students do not respond the same way to extrinsic motivation. I want to learn more about intrinsic motivation because it could have a lasting effect on how students view themselves as writers. This self-study has made me aware that students struggle with writing in many different ways and always are motivated in many different ways. It is up to me to find which way I can meet the students’ needs.

Explore How to Use Instructional Time More Efficiently

While conducting this self-study, I read professional literature, reflected upon my educational philosophies and observed and analyzed my own teaching practices. Prior to this study I did not realize how much time is required to complete an ELA lesson. During the study I discovered that I never had enough time to finish a lesson. I also had to cut lessons short or I felt rushed to hurry up and finish a lesson. I modified some lessons to add a writing piece in.

I think the modules of the Common Core are structured in a logical way and are rigorous for the students. A goal for my future instruction is to learn how to provide enough time for the students to complete all the tasks they want them to do.

Increase the Communication with My Colleagues

In order to become a more effective substitute teacher I would like to communicate with my fellow colleagues more often. I see them on a daily basis, but I often don’t check back in with the teacher after I have subbed in their classroom. I always left a note about what happened
that day, but then I never went back and checked in with the teacher. I feel that my repertoire
with the staff community would improve if after every day I checked in in person with the
teacher about what happened the day they were out. I think this is a simple thing that would help
the teacher fully understand where I left off that day and how the students behaved and what not.

I think some teachers also feel that they could be open-ended with their sub plans because
they knew me and the fact that I was more familiar with the school and with the students..

**Recommendations for Future Research**

**Explore the Content of the Common Core Domains and Writing Instruction**

At times during the self-study, I wondered if the content of the Common Core domains
was too complex and rigorous for the Kindergarten through Second grade students. There were no
writing prompts for the students to engage in. The Common Core domain required students to
simply listen for at least thirty-five minutes and then engage in comprehension questions that
were read aloud by the teacher.

**Explore One or Two Groups of Students Who Struggle**

During my self-study I had opportunities to work with a variety of students at different
grade levels. This made it challenging for me to fully understand how specific students were
struggling as writers and how I might tailor my instruction to maximize their development. As a
result I think it might be interesting to focus on one or two specific groups of students and find
classroom ways to support and motivate them when they are struggling with writing. Focusing
on just one group of students may allow the researcher to understand and get to know the
students’ writing needs and strengths.
Final Thoughts

In chapter one I shared two different scenarios of students who struggled with writing. Jorge was frustrated because he did not like to write and he wrote as little as possible the first time and just wanted to be done writing. After talking with him about his writing and finding a solution, he added more detail and improved his writing. He went back after our discussion and added reasons why students should wear uniforms to school. I was able to support Jorge’s development as a writer by conferencing with him about his writing. We discussed how he could add more details and make his point more clearly. We went through the writing process together. Sarah was a student who struggled for a different reason. She was highly motivated, yet she struggled with the conventions of writing.

Throughout my self-study I came across students who were very similar to Jorge and Sarah. I was able to work with the students and support their writing by providing visuals, scaffolding them through the writing process, using a graphic organizer to help students put their thoughts in an organized way. I saw students who initially struggled with the writing process achieve success.
References


