IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WRITING PORTFOLIO IN A FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT


Teachers need an assessment tool for writing that yields more than a single score such as that produced by a standardized test. The assessment tool needs to reveal a range of skills and understandings, support instructional goals, and value student and teacher reflection. It needs to show growth and change and provide continuity in education from one year to the next. The purpose of this study was to introduce the writing portfolio assessment concept to a class of first graders to determine if this assessment tool would meet this criteria and be effective in a primary classroom.

The strategies used in the assessment were observation, interview sheets, journals, and collaboration with the children in the editing and revision of their writing samples. Parent communication was also involved in the procedure.

Writing portfolios proved to be effective in the growth of skill, knowledge, and confidence with the children's active participation in the evaluation process.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Many professionals (Smith, 1986; Stice & Call, 1987) have questioned the ways in which we have collected and reported information about students' strengths and weaknesses in the writing process. There appears to be a need to sample students' performance that is more closely related to instruction. Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests appear not to be satisfactory.

Past emphasis on norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests seems to be inappropriate; therefore, assessment programs should be reviewed to reduce the need for standardized testing (Jett-Simpson, et al., 1990). It is also difficult to find a group-administered standardized achievement test that is appropriate for kindergarten and first grade students, if indeed, there is one.

Assessment must reflect the individual's growth in the writing process. The information provided by assessment should be used to shape instruction and guide individual student growth. Assessment should also accommodate individual cognitive, cultural and motivational differences.

More detailed classroom observation appears to be necessary, yet is largely ignored by classroom teachers in the writing process because "test-like reading and writing activities take up so much classroom time that teachers rarely have an opportunity to simply observe children reading and writing" (Harmon, 1990, p. 115).

In this classroom action research, portfolios will be investigated as a viable alternative to standardized tests in the evaluation of the writing
process. The study will also describe a portfolio assessment plan used in a first grade classroom and how it was applied as an ongoing process.

Statement of the Problem

The basic components of assessment are the knowledge that students have grown in what they know and are able to do, as well as student awareness and documentation of growth which should lead to changes in instruction (Roettger & Szymczuk, 1990).

The problem is that many teachers just test and do not assess. Testing usually involves a limited number of standardized tests administered throughout the year while assessment is multi-dimensional. Assessment involves observation, talking with students about what they are doing, how they are thinking through the process, the type of errors they are making, what else they need to learn, and the type of practice they still need. With a portfolio system, all of these things do take place (Roettger & Szymczuk, 1990).

There are classroom teachers who are unfamiliar with portfolio assessment, and there are teachers who are familiar but who are afraid to rely on their own judgements. There is an assumption that the outcome of instruction is learning and that learning is testable in an objective fashion. Results of tests are what provides the type of information that teachers use for grades.

In many places, standardized tests have become the curriculum. What is taught in school is aimed at good test scores. There is the assumption that good test scores reflect real learning. Schools want to produce numbers by which children can be ranked, labeled, and com-
pared (Smith, 1986; Stice & Call, 1987).

In the case of writing evaluation, not only are standardized tests used, but in daily work "the most common method of evaluating student writing includes the following steps: the student hands in a final copy; the teacher, without any discussion with the student, marks the faults in the paper, makes some terminal comments and assigns a grade; the teacher returns the paper to the student" (Finningame, et al., 1978, p. 4). The grade is final and tells the student nothing about his or her strengths and weaknesses in writing.

According to John C. Bertrand (1991), the reality of today is that school personnel make judgements about children with little or no input from the people who know the students best: the teachers, parents, and the children themselves. School personnel look at grades, standardized test scores and behavior to label and to place children.

Prepackaged, program-driven curricula are increasingly coming under fire for not meeting the needs of children. Influential educators (Glasser, 1990; Finn, 1990; Shanker, 1990) are calling for schools to empower teachers and students and to give context and meaning in daily activities. They feel that evaluation must be meaningful and under the control of teachers and students.

**Need for the Study**

There is a need for a form of assessment to fit the classrooms of today. Most traditional forms of assessment of literacy learning in today's classrooms are inadequate. This is particularly true of primary (K-2) students who are emergent and beginning readers. Most traditional
forms of assessment test children's knowledge of subskills which is not compatible with the whole language classrooms of today. There is a need to develop a means of assessment that is ongoing, pupil-centered, and representative of the things being taught in the classroom (Jett-Simpson, et al., 1990). One of the assessment tools that meets this criteria is the portfolio.

The investigator for the present study examined the portfolio assessment process in a first grade classroom to determine if the procedure could be used both as a method of shaping instruction and of assessing the writing products of the children.

Limitations

This observation was limited to twenty-one white, middle-class first graders in a small midwestern city. Results may not be generalized to other classrooms that are not of this nature. All procedures carried out in the classroom were done by the teacher who was also the investigator for the study. No outside observers were involved. In this regard, this does not provide for the collaborative aspect which is often present in classroom action research.

Explanation of Terms

Action research - Research which is aimed at studying a specific, local problem in order to apply the findings immediately. Less formal than applied or pure research.

Anecdotal records - Informal observational notations that describe language development in terms of the learner's attitudes,
strengths, weaknesses, needs, progress, learning styles, skills, strategies used, or anything else that seems significant at the time of observation.

"Author's Chair" - Time set aside for the children to share the stories or pieces they authored with their peers, including feedback from their peers.

Criterion-referenced tests - Relate test performance to absolute standards (the performance of the one tested is compared to a predetermined criterion).

Ecological assessment - Combines authentic text and tasks so that students are involved in activities which real readers and writers do.

Norm-referenced tests - Relate test performance to relative standards (the performance of the one tested is compared with that of the norms in population).

Portfolios - A purposeful, integrated collection of student work documenting student effort, progress or achievement in one or more areas.

Standardized tests - Formal, published tests which come with norms for interpretation. Used to describe the achievement of a group of students.

Validity - Refers to the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure.

Whole Language - "A philosophy which refers to meaningful, real and relevant teaching of learning. Whole language respects the
idea that all the language processes (listening, speaking, reading and writing - including spelling and handwriting) are learned naturally and in meaningful context as a whole, not in little parts" (Routman, 1991, p. 26).
CHAPTER 11
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Historic Background of Testing

Testing is a very old concept. The ancient Chinese tested knowledge of the classics to determine who could enter the civil service (Phillips, 1968) and students in the United States were given performance tests on spelling, composition, grammar, and handwriting during Colonial times (Hodges, 1977).

Students in the United States have always been tested. Some testing was oral and some written. "The belief that learning can and should be tested has not historically been given much challenge" (Bertrand, 1991, p. 18). Teachers have always been expected to periodically grade students on their performance and that grading has been based on tests of some sort.

Controversies have centered around the types of testing to be used, not whether to use them or not. Phillips (1968) reported a study conducted in 1900 where copies of the same geometry test were given to 116 teachers to grade. The grades given the test ranged from 28 to 92. This led to demands for more objective forms of testing.

As early as 1845, Horace Mann suggested the use of examinations with large numbers of questions and the standardization of answers. The Regents' Examinations were in place in New York in 1878 and by 1900, the College Examination Board was organized. It provided questions to about 1000 colleges as part of their entrance requirements.
Michaels and Karnes (1950) reported that the first standardized tests born out of the statistical work by Thorndike came into being in the field of arithmetic in 1908 and handwriting in 1910. By 1944, 20 million people were administered over 60 million standardized tests.

In the late 1920's, state-wide testing began. Today, every state in the United States maintains departments of educational testing (Bertrand, 1991). There is probably not a student in the country who has not had a commercially-made achievement test administered to him or her. Certainly, every student has taken teacher-made tests.

**Why Standardized Tests are so Popular**

One wonders why standardized tests are so popular. Of course, one obvious reason is the profit reaped from the sales of the tests, scoring services and data reports, which is estimated by the national Commission on Testing and Public Policy to cost taxpayers well over 100 million dollars a year (Paris, Lawton, Turner and Roth, 1991). A second reason for the demand for standardized testing is the public faith in quantitative comparisons (Paris, et al., 1991).

"Test scores have the aura of scientific respectability, whereas teachers' judgements seem subjective and open to multiple sources of bias. There is also the ability to compare them to national percentiles (even if those standards are misleading)" (Paris, et al., 1991, p. 13).

There has been such a demand for accountability that our educational system appears to be obsessed with standardized testing—norm-referenced at the national level, criterion-referenced at the state level, and teacher-made tests at the classroom level (Bintz & Harste, 1991).
Standardized tests also allow parents to make comparisons between schools and districts.

"Standardized testing is theoretically-based, driven by a set of assumptions about the nature of literacy and literacy learning. Several of these assumptions include that standardized tests are valid instruments, that standardized testing informs classroom practice, that outsiders not closely involved in learning can assess that learning, and that standardized testing measures learning outcomes. Over the years, these assumptions have come to represent common sense, taken-for-granted knowledge, and as a result have also come to be immune from, or at least insulated from, serious interrogation. It is high time to question these assumptions" (Bintz & Harste, 1991, p. 224).

The future of standardized testing will probably not be limited to education. If testing companies have their way, we will become a complete testing society. There are already tests for use with teachers, supervisors, soldiers, and police officers.

Over the years, standardized testing has become valued for its efficiency, sophistication, and objectivity, as well as for its utility and accountability. Today, it enjoys such popularity, prestige, and power that it isn't likely to be replaced soon (Bintz & Harste, 1991) even though many educators are questioning the validity of such tests.

**Purposes of Testing**

Why are we testing so much? "Throughout the 1980's, there was a proliferation of achievement testing in America to promote and assure the effectiveness of educational reforms" (Paris, Lawton, Turner, Roth, 1991.)
Paris, et al. (1991) pointed out that achievement testing is a "high-stakes" affair because of the profound consequences it can have on the participants. Test results can be used to determine districts' funding, teachers' promotion, and students' assignment to educational programs.

Haladyna, Nolen, & Haas (1989) listed 29 possible uses of standardized tests. These uses ranged from policy analysis at the national level to parental review of their child's achievement at the local level. The United States Department of Education uses test scores to rank states. Government officials use them to assess the effectiveness of education in states and school districts. Newspapers rank school districts by test scores to bemoan the failure of education. School district personnel use them for merit pay recommendations and for other personnel decisions. Even real estate agents use test scores to rate neighborhoods.

In school, test scores are used to group students for instruction, evaluate and modify school district curricula, plan instruction, diagnose achievement deficits, place students into special programs and help parents understand the general achievement levels of their children.

With the "age of accountability", there is a perceived need to evaluate all units of analysis — individuals, classes, schools, school districts, state and even the nation (Haladyna et al., 1989).

Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991) list the following reasons for testing in schools: making policy decisions, evaluating a program's effectiveness, assessing whether or not students are achieving certain standards, informing curricular decisions, rewarding or penalizing certain groups, giving students feedback, having an opportunity to collaborate with students.
Controversy has always surrounded the use of tests. Tyler & White (1979) list four major uses and four major criticisms of tests:

Major Uses of Current Tests
1. Tests are used to hold teachers, schools, and systems accountable.
2. Tests are used to make decisions concerning individual students.
3. Tests are used to evaluate educational innovations and experimental projects.
4. Tests are used to provide guidance to teachers in the classroom.

Major Criticisms of Current Tests
1. Tests do not reflect the full range of student cultural backgrounds and thus lead to decisions that are unfair to minority students.
2. Current standardized tests have only limited value for holding teachers, schools, and school systems accountable for the quality of education.
3. Tests exercise a limiting effect on classroom teaching.
4. Tests are too narrow in scope to provide for fair evaluation of new approaches to teaching (pp. 7-11).

Farr & Carey (1986) point out that the question of whether or not to use tests in school is not the issue because they are as much a part of the educational makeup of schools as “death and taxes are to citizens” (p. 13). Rather, the issues are how to make better use of tests, which
may reduce the amount of testing, and eliminate the misuse of tests and test results, and to develop an alternate strategy for collecting information needed for decision making in our educational systems.

Effects of Standardized Testing on Teachers

Most teachers experience negative emotions as a result of the publication of test scores and will often do what is necessary to avoid low test scores.

Mary Smith (1991) points out the effects of testing on teachers. She states:

1. The publication of test scores produces feelings of shame, guilt, and anger in teachers and the determination to do what is necessary to avoid such feelings in the future.

2. Beliefs about the emotional impact of testing on young children generate feelings of anxiety and guilt among teachers. Among elementary teachers particularly, the belief is widely held that the Iowa (Test of Basic Skills) is "cruel and unusual punishment" for young children.

3. Beliefs about the invalidity of the test and the necessity to raise scores set up feelings of dissonance and alienation.

4. Testing programs reduce the time available for instruction. Time required for the ITBS and the state-mandated criterion-referenced tests and the time teachers elect (or principals require) to prepare pupils to take the tests amounted to about a 100-hour bite out of instructional time in the schools studied.
5. The focus on material that the test covers results in a narrowing of possible curriculum and reduction of teachers’ abilities to adapt, create, and diverge.

6. Because multiple-choice testing leads to multiple-choice teaching, the methods that teachers have in their arsenal become reduced and teaching work is deskilled. Take away the publishers’ trappings, and one would be hard pressed to distinguish an ITBS item from a question on a typical work sheet (p. 8).

In addition to the negative reactions from above, district administrators will often use test scores as tools to standardize and control what teachers do.

Standardized tests or even teacher-made tests place the responsibility for evaluation in the instrument (Cockrum and Castillo, 1991). They go on to say that "this can result in a teacher being upset with a child's score on an exam because the teacher 'knows' the child performs at a much higher level in class. A whole language kid watcher trusts his or her evaluation of a child because he or she is a part of the child's language use" (p. 74). It is pointed out that this evaluation process is also less stressful for the child and the teacher.

If a teacher is only to teach fragmented subskills as dictated by the objectives of a standardized test, then that teacher is basically an unskilled worker, but if a teacher is the reflective practitioner that the empowered teacher of the 90's should be, she/he will use evaluation strategies such as those proposed by the use of a portfolio assessment instrument.
Impact of Standardized Testing on Students

As students progress through school, they are exposed to an enormous amount of various testing. It is estimated by Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991) that a large percentage of children in this country receive more than 2,000 test items every year, including standardized tests, basal tests and teacher-made tests.

Not only does it appear that an inordinate amount of time is spent on testing that could be spent on instructional time, but Paris, Lawton, Turner, & Roth (1991) feel that evaluators fail to consider the cumulative impact of repeated testing on students' attitudes and motivation. Their surveys of students in grades 2-11 revealed that by adolescence many students became suspicious and cynical about tests. They also found that a large number of students, especially low achievers, became anxious about tests, cheated, tried half-heartedly, or used poor test-taking strategies. This probably undermined the validity of test scores and discouraged genuine learning.

"The 'surprise' nature of many test items, the emphasis on objective knowledge, the once-over and one-time nature of most exams—all offer students lessons that are destructive to their capacity to thoughtfully judge their own work: (1) assessment comes from without, it is not personal responsibility; (2) what matters is not the full range of intuitions and knowledge but your performance on the slice of skills that appear on the test; (3) first-draft work is good enough and (4) achievement matters to the exclusion of development" (Wolf, 1989. p. 35-36).

Students, themselves, have concerns about testing in that they feel
that tests and how they are graded do not reward experimentation or getting in to new ideas and that the teachers want it their way and are not so interested in the student (Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991). Furthermore, it was found in observations by Tierney, et al. (1991) that students viewed most tests as anxiety-producing, relatively non-informative, and of questionable validity. "In our analysis of students' views of tests and their assessment of themselves we found that most students have a restricted view of their strengths and weaknesses, goals, and achievements, and predominately tend to have a negative view of themselves" (p. 33).

When students feel that external forces such as test scores rather than their own efforts control success, they show less interest in academic work and are more apt to show less persistence and take shortcuts (Diener & Dweck, 1978). It was also found that successful students in the classroom feel competent and approach tests with far more confidence and motivation than do less successful students.

Students can become anxious, worried or even ill during testing. It was found that some students cannot mark answer sheets correctly: some become so frustrated that they quit before the test is over, and there are others who cannot understand the language (Paris, Lawton, Turner & Roth, 1991).

Research during the past 20 years in cognitive, instructional, educational, and developmental psychology of discrete skills indicate that the motivation and purpose of the learner, as well as the content and setting of the task, have strong effects on learning. Thus, performance on tradi-
tional tests cannot be considered an accurate or complete indication of a student's accumulated knowledge and academic achievement (Wiggins, 1989).

In summary, traditional tests are skills-based and appear to have a negative effect on students' learning and motivation. The redesigning of assessment to serve the needs of the students seems to be a priority that is long overdue.

Effects of Standardized Testing on Parents

The question of evaluation is difficult. It's impossible to happily satisfy parents, teachers, administration, government and students. Farr and Carey (1986) state that evaluation is never an easy task and its reporting can sometimes become overwhelming. It can cause teachers and parents to dread parent conferences.

"Teachers often feel like they are about to suffer the fate of the 'messenger of bad news' and parents often feel that they are being judged as inadequate" (Flood and Lapp, 1989, p. 508). It often seems to parents that their child has not shown any progress year after year. It is a matter of interpretation and understanding on the parents' part, but even after what seems to be an adequate explanation by the teacher, the parents will often still be disappointed.

A single score, whether it is a course grade or a percentile score from a norm-referenced test, cannot accurately report a student's overall progress. However, sometimes the problem can be more of a misunderstanding than of measurement or evaluation (Flood & Lapp, 1989). Flood and Lapp (1989) gave an example of a student receiving a straight C in a
year long advanced mathematics course. Even though the student continued to learn all the subsequent class work satisfactorily, the score did not change. The parents perceived this as a failure of their child to improve; that the child learned no more than he learned in the first quarter of class.

Traditional standardized tests do not involve parents in the assessment process. This is frustrating to many parents.

Call for Change

There is a feeling among educators that there is a need for change in assessment techniques. Many teachers feel that their schools are doing too much standardized testing.

In the past, the standardized test has been universally and uncritically accepted as a valid measure of educational accomplishment (Haertel & Calfee, 1983). However, in a study reported by Judy Lambert in the WSRA Journal (1991), over one-half of the teachers responding to questionnaires felt that their school did too much standardized testing, over three-quarters of the teachers felt dissatisfied with standardized testing, and even more felt a need to change from standardized testing to more informal methods of assessment.

Testing has been a means of providing and denying opportunities for many years. Two movements have emerged in the traditional classroom in the 20th century. Most teachers have relinquished the use of judgment and qualitative evaluation of students in favor of measures based on objective testing methods, and both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests have gained huge importance as they relate to the
evaluation of both individuals and groups of students.

In many places, as noted earlier in this study, standardized tests have become the curriculum. The paramount aim of many schools is to get good test scores. Also, as noted earlier, the standardized test is used in ranking, comparing and labeling children. Teachers have become further and further removed from the evaluation process of their students.

Berglund (1987) states that traditional evaluation is for the general public and legislators and does not serve to put the child's recognition of his or her progress first as the reason for evaluation. He points out that just as whole language has demanded a fresh new look at teaching and learning, it should also demand a whole new look at assessment and evaluation.

According to Tierney, Carter and Desai (1991), both teachers and students paint a bleak picture about formal tests and how they relate to their goals. The teachers feel that items on tests do not relate to what is taught, and that they are not representative of the work the students do daily. The students feel that they are not rewarded for experimentation nor are they interested in them as students.

David Dillon (1990) feels that there is still a tremendous preoccupation with evaluation as an end to itself rather than an ongoing, integral part of teaching and learning. Dillon (1990) also feels that the learner is being left out of the evaluation process.

Haladyna, Nolen and Haas (1989) challenge the way schools prepare students to take standardized achievement tests and feel that unless there is serious reform, test results will continue to misrepresent Ameri-
can public education and its accomplishments. Haladyna, et al. (1989) point out that researchers, other educators and policy makers must work together to develop means of evaluating educational effectiveness that accurately represent a school or district's progress toward a broad range of important educational goals.

According to Pikulski (1989), the following seem to be very important areas of needed change: the nature of the procedures and materials used for the assessment must be broadened significantly, tests and other assessment material and procedures must be chosen and interpreted in light of the purposes for which they are being used, assessment must be shifted from being test-centered to being teacher- and pupil-centered, and the forms of assessment must reflect the goals of instruction.

Assessment no longer seems to fit the classrooms of today. Most traditional forms of assessment are rarely consistent with teachers' goals and do not assess what we now know about literacy learning. Assessment should be ongoing, should provide reflection on learning and serve as an instructional guidance for teachers.

There is a growing agreement among researchers, teachers and teacher educators that new assessment strategies need to be used more widely in our classrooms to assure that children's creativity, self-confidence and enjoyment of learning are not sacrificed to drill and practice to improve standardized test scores (Harmon, 1990).

Perrone (1990) points out that the matter in which tests have constructed, namely the pencil-and-paper multiple choice format, is not a good assessment for judging children or guiding their instruction. Perrone (1990) states that the tyranny of these tests needs to end.
"Ecological assessment combines authentic texts and tasks so that students are involved in activities which real readers and writers do. No one uses standardized test multiple choice formats in real-life applications except to learn how to take tests to be more test-wise when required to take another multiple choice test" (Jett-Simpson, et al., 1990, p. 19).

Ecological assessment does not occur at the end of instruction as it does when using traditional tests for assessment. It is occurring simultaneously with instruction through teacher observation. Ecological assessment also guides instruction by indicating what the next steps will be from careful observation of the learning that has already taken place. Above all, ecological assessment also guides instruction by indicating what the next steps will be from careful observation of the learning that has already taken place. Above all, ecological assessment respects teacher judgement of the observations she has made.

Valencia (1990) argues that instead of improving what standardized tests test, an increasing number of educators are developing portfolio approaches as an alternative. The argument is that this ecological approach to assessment better functions as a tool for teachers and students to document and monitor learning over time.

Portfolios

What is a portfolio and what does it do? A portfolio is more than just a collection of "stuff". It is a carefully crafted portrait of what a student
knows or can do. It becomes a focal point for the student, teacher, parent, outside evaluator and others. "By portfolio, we mean a purposeful, integrated collection as guided by performance standards and includes evidence of student self-reflection and participation in setting the focus, selecting contents, and judging merit. A portfolio communicates what is learned and why it is important" (Paulson & Paulson, 1991, p. 1).

Roettger & Szymczuk (1990) define a portfolio as "a collection of evidence used by the teacher and student to monitor the growth of a student's knowledge of content, use of strategies, and attitudes towards the accomplishment of goals in an organized and systematic way" (p. 3).

To avoid the danger of the portfolio becoming an unfocused collection of meaningless documents, the teachers must think clearly about the purpose of the portfolio (Johns, 1990). Steps also need to be taken to help teachers accept portfolios or they will not succeed as an innovative form of literary assessment.

Roettger and Szymczuk (1990) list the characteristics of a portfolio in a classroom setting as: (1) goal-based; (2) showing reflection between what the student was to accomplish and what he/she is accomplishing; (3) a container of student's work, projects, anecdotal comments, and tests; (4) and evidence of student's growth which has been collected collaboratively. It essentially builds a data bank.

Roger Farr (1991) states that language arts portfolios should:

1. have value to both teachers and students
2. require students to construct responses rather than recognize correct answers
3. require students to apply their knowledge
4. pose problems requiring use of multiple resources
5. present students with tasks that have realistic focus (p. 2)

Some argue that since portfolios play a major role in instruction, evaluators should not use them as sources of data for assessment. However, portfolio assessment at the state level is becoming a reality (deWitt, 1991).

A survey conducted by Judy Lambert (1991) in the WSRA Journal indicated that teachers are willing to see change and be active participants in the change. Although all the teachers in the study were not familiar with the term "portfolio assessment", many were already using some type of informal assessment techniques. The study included 87 individuals, five represented by both elementary and secondary teachers. It was encouraging to note that the majority of teachers were willing to change, are expecting to use portfolios in the future and want to find out more about them. The majority of the teachers cited difficulty managing and evaluating portfolios as the major challenge.

Wolf (1989) points out some drawbacks to using a portfolio. Portfolios can be messy and teachers risk losing every paper put in them. There needs to be organization so that this does not happen. Another drawback is marking the report card. Teachers will no longer be able to mark with letter grades. Report cards may have to be altered to fit the portfolio concept. Wolf (1989) says that the greatest challenge is to get school board members, administrators, and parents to accept the portfolio system rather than the concrete scores provided by standardized tests.
A strong case for the necessity of portfolios has been made by noting the inherent authenticity of the tasks involved, the emphasis on process, and collaborative effort by student and teacher (Valencia, 1990).

The portfolio can be adapted to different grade levels and ability levels. The portfolio gives the student more freedom, flexibility, and responsibility for his/her own learning. It can be a more positive instrument of reporting than a report card and give the parents a more visual proof of their child’s progress more than other assessment instruments. The “portfolio documents growth and risk taking and makes assessment more effective and efficient” (Krest, 1990, p. 29). It also provides the teacher with an instructional guide.

In summary, “Portfolios are about a teaching philosophy. What you believe about the processes of reading and writing, what you believe about the autonomy and uniqueness of the individual learner, and what you believe about assessment are all mirrored in a portfolio” (Heiden, 1991, p. 5).
Kemmis and McTaggart (1990) state that there are "Four fundamental aspects of the action research: to develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening; to act to implement the plan; to observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs; and to reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed action and so on, through a succession of cycles" (p. 6). In this chapter, the action research model is reflected in the methodology used to carry out the study.

Description of Classroom Before Portfolio was Introduced

The first step in action research requires the development of a plan to improve what is already happening. In this section, a description is provided to illustrate what already was happening in writing in the first grade classroom involved in this study before the writing portfolio was introduced.

The room involved in this study was a whole language classroom consisting of twenty-one first graders. This was the second year the teacher had used the whole language method of teaching. The teacher was cognizant of the fact that the combination of reading, writing, speaking and listening were important to the learning success of each child. The teacher tried to make sure that at least part of each day was spent working in each of the four areas of language arts.

The teacher was pleased with the whole language concept as it was developing in the room, but had concerns with the writing process. The
children had journals, but did not write in them often after the initial excitement when the journal was introduced to them.

There was no standardized testing of writing in this room. Each grade level in this district had developed its own report card. There were no letter grades on the first grade report card. There was only one category related to the writing evaluation process (Appendix F).

There was a great deal of writing going on in the room, but not much of it was beyond classroom requirement. Although the teacher encouraged the children to do their own editing and revising, it did not seem that much of that was going on. The teacher found herself doing most of the editing.

It was disturbing to the teacher that there was little versatility, little risk-taking and little exploration in the writing process. There was no self-evaluation. There were no ongoing goals on the students' part. In fact, the children had no idea how to set goals of their own. Many questions arose in the teacher's mind. How could she get the children to pick their own subjects to write about? How could she know they were making progress in writing? How could she give parents more specific information and more reassurance about their children's progress in writing? How could she give feedback to the children about their abilities and accomplishments? What could she do to improve the situation? Was there a better procedure?

After attending a workshop on portfolios, the teacher decided that a possible solution to her questions would be the implementation of the writing portfolio. She outlined the goals she would like to achieve in the course of the 18 weeks of experimentation with the portfolio assessment
process. She wanted a positive environment where the children were not afraid to take risks; she wanted the children to have ownership of their work as she felt that would foster excellence; she wanted a student-centered approach to writing assessment; she wanted the parents to be active participants. Above all, she wanted the children to become lifelong learners. With these goals in mind, she set about introducing the portfolio system to the class.

Initiating the Writing Portfolio Concepts

This section details how the portfolio concept was introduced to a classroom of twenty-one first graders. The teacher of the class was the investigator for the present study; all methods and procedures were personally conducted by the classroom teacher.

The intent of the portfolio was to build, over time, a complete record of effort, needs, achievement, and a reflection of accomplishments of the children.

A portfolio from a young person who was aspiring to become a movie actress was shared with the class. The portfolio included many photos of the girl and many of the plays she had been in throughout high school, college and her internship on a soap opera set in Hollywood. The meaning of a portfolio was explained to the children. It was then explained to the children that they would be creating their own portfolios which would represent their thoughts, efforts and achievements.

Standards were set and shared with the students at the beginning of the second semester at which time the portfolio system was introduced. The teacher discussed the mechanics and styles of writing which are
noted on the checklist (Appendixes A, B, C) over a period of several days so as not to overwhelm the children.

She also shared with the children the writing behaviors that she felt should be targeted: 1. to write for communication 2. to write in a wide variety of modes such as journals, poems, fiction, expository, letters, informational and personal narrative 3. to write for an audience 4. to be able to edit and revise.

The students were encouraged to put all drafts and finished pieces in their portfolios for an entire quarter. It was felt that, at first grade level, the students would need help to evaluate their first writings. Conferences between teacher and student at the end of the quarter would be utilized to help students compare and contrast their works and make a selection of the best pieces in the portfolio.

The teacher felt that six pieces would be a reasonable number of samples to select at the end of the quarter to keep in their portfolio. The children would present a clear rationale of why they selected the pieces they did.

**Fostering Ownership**

At the beginning of the year students had been given certain subjects to write about, but as the portfolio system was developed, it was recognized that the portfolios needed to become the property of the students. They needed to express their own thoughts and feelings; and the portfolio couldn't become just another assignment to them or it would lose its effectiveness. Therefore, even though it sometimes seemed like a monumental task for first graders, the children were encouraged to write about
their own subjects and thoughts. They had to have control of their own work. They needed to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses through the use of a portfolio.

The teacher also had to learn to give up control and give ownership to the students. She had to learn to collaborate with the students in the assessment process.

The key to establishing ownership had to begin with the introduction of the portfolio concept. A bin with a folder for each child was set up in a corner of the classroom where it was accessible to every student. The teacher tried to make the children aware that these were their folders and did not belong to the teacher. The children were responsible for keeping the portfolios in alphabetical order and for dating each piece of writing. It was then emphasized that the students would be free to choose their own topics to write about in the majority of cases and that they would eventually choose their own showcase work in collaboration with the teacher.

Individual, small group, and casual conferences were held throughout the semester. Again, the student and teacher acted as partners to each other. The teacher tried not to force her ideas upon the student. This was a learning process for the teacher also.

Work Samples

In this section, the collection of writing samples will be discussed. It was the decision of the investigator to implement a writing portfolio only. While it was realized that in a whole language classroom, reading and writing are seen as an integral part of each other, it was a question of
management. The portfolio system was implemented at the beginning of the second semester and it seemed to be an overwhelming undertaking to include both reading and writing in the portfolio assessment for the length of one semester.

The students were encouraged to put everything they wrote into the portfolio for an entire quarter. It was important to get a wide variety of samples to represent different aspects of writing pieces such as poems, fiction, expository, journals, letters and informational and personal narrative. Approximately every two weeks the folders were reviewed by the teacher and checked for accuracy and completeness. The teacher could then intervene with the children who seemed to be having difficulty. After the first quarter, the students searched through their folders and picked out a half dozen of their best works.

Reflecting on Writing Portfolios

An opportunity to share writing samples with peers is an important facet of the portfolio concept. "Author's Chair" was introduced at the outset, giving the children a chance to share stories every day. Each child who had a story ready was encouraged to read his/her story to the class. The listeners were encouraged to make constructive comments about their peers' writing. The teacher tried to make comments to broaden the students' thinking and to provide insights about style and mechanics.
The portfolio conference was initiated by the teacher asking the student to share his/her portfolio with her. The child was asked to choose a sample writing he or she would like to share with the teacher.

Reviewing the portfolios with students can be time consuming, so it was decided by the teacher to hold one individual conference each day. The conference was limited to fifteen minutes. If it was found that more time was needed for the conference, the next day was used to continue the conference.

The student was asked what the strengths of his/her portfolio were. The teacher then pointed out what she felt were the positive aspects of the child's portfolio. It was found to be particularly important to point out the aspects that both student and teacher were in agreement on in the evaluation process. As was stated earlier in this study, it was important that the student retain ownership of the portfolio, so the teacher was very careful not to force her ideas on the child.

As was noted previously, individual, small group, and casual conferences were held throughout the semester. A writing checklist was used during the conference to help measure progress and to help the child establish ownership (Appendix A, B, C).

At the end of the conference the students discussed what they felt were their strengths and weaknesses. Together, teacher and student created the goals for the student to accomplish during the next month. If a child accomplished the goals by the next conference, new goals were established.
Anecdotal Records

"Anecdotal records are dated, informal, observational notations that describe language development as well as social development in terms of the learner's attitudes, strengths, weaknesses, needs, progress, learning styles, skills, strategies used, or anything else that seems significant at the time of observation" (Routman, 1991, p. 309). These records help to build up a store of knowledge of the child's literacy development.

C. Jean Church (1991) suggests that record keeping should (1) help students make self evaluations, (2) construct a history of the learner's development, (3) guide interactions and instruction and (4) serve to communicate with parents and other stakeholders.

Regie Routman (1991) states that before adding anecdotal records to your routines, it's important to look at where you are in your teaching. She also states that while the need for such record-keeping seems essential, few teachers actually keep such records. She goes on to say that most teachers need about five years to feel ready to handle the additional responsibility. The exception is kindergarten teachers who have been doing it for years.

Each time the children were involved in a writing activity, anecdotal notes were taken. The teacher also made notes during the writing conferences with the students. The teacher's goal was to draw conclusions about the learner's attitude and his/her development of written language. The notes were for the teachers personal use to focus on during individual portfolio conferences and during parent conferences.
Evaluation Process

The evaluation process was explained to the students. The teacher displayed the notebook where she would be keeping the anecdotal records and explained what the records would consist of. She explained that anecdotal records would be kept on a daily basis, although she would not be recording something about every child every day. There would be notes of both their strengths and their weaknesses and their growth and development.

Conferences were to be held on a regular basis. Besides informal conferences which would be taking place whenever the writing process was occurring, one individual formal conference would be scheduled each day. Group conferences would take place from time to time, involving two, three, or four children. A target of involving the parents of each student in a conference each report card grading period was made.

Report cards were discussed. While there are no grades required on the first grade report cards in this district, check marks are used to designate to the parents if the children are successful, have some success, or are not successful at this time (example of report card, Appendix F). In addition, there is a section to record comments. The report card was explained to the students at the time of the introduction of the portfolio, so that the children would understand that their writing growth and development would be recorded on the report cards.

In summary, the portfolio assessment process consisted of individual, group and casual conferences with the children; conferences with par-
ents; anecdotal records; teacher comments written on samples of writing in the journals and on portfolio writing samples; report card grading and comments; and in addition, a summative report placed in each portfolio at the end of the year.
In the model set up by Kemmis & McTaggart (1990), the last two steps of the action research process are to observe the effects of the research and to reflect on these effects. In this chapter, the investigator's observations about the implementation of the portfolio process will be detailed and actual student products will be discussed as evidence of learning and growth.

Anecdotal Records

Observation was a very important part of the portfolio system. In the first grade classroom involved in this study, the teacher made observations whenever the children were involved in the writing process. She jotted down notes as often as possible, being careful not to let the recording of events interfere with student contact. The greatest concern was not to let record keeping dominate the teacher's time.

It was difficult to devise a manageable system of recording anecdotal records. The teacher used a loose leaf notebook with several pages designated for each student. Post-it notes were tried, but they were difficult to keep track of and some were lost. A clipboard with sheets of paper was tried, but the teacher felt it interfered with instruction. Finally, the teacher used stick-on labels that she carried around in her pocket and placed in the loose leaf notebook at the end of the day. This eliminated copying the notes over into the notebook and they were much easier to keep track of than post-it notes.
The teacher was careful to note positive behaviors along with the deficits and needs of the child. (See Appendix E). During individual conferences with the children, the teacher jotted down notes of whether or not the students' entries were up-to-date in their journals, noted strengths and needs, and provided instructional suggestions during the session.

The anecdotal records were particularly valuable during parent-teacher conferences. The parents appeared to feel that the teacher knew their child very well and it was useful to the teacher to recall the events of the weeks since the last contact with the parents. Many things were jotted down that the teacher would not have recalled later had she not written them down.

Conferences

Individual Conferences. One individual conference with a child was held every day for no more than 15 minutes. If the conference needed to be longer, the next day was designated to finish it. Two times during the semester a conference had to be finished the following day because of the length.

A checklist was used to begin each conference. (See Appendixes A, B, and C). As teacher and student were reviewing the checklist, it was revealing to listen to Amber edit one of the stories she elected to share with the teacher. As she read through the story, she realized that she had not used a capital letter at the beginning of a single sentence throughout the entire story. Each time she came to a new sentence, she
exclaimed, "Uh, oh." and changed the small-case letter to a capital letter. She was very proud of herself for noticing this without it being pointed out to her.

During each conference, the student was asked what the strengths of his/her portfolio were. The teacher then pointed out what she felt were the positive aspects of the child's portfolio. It was found to be particularly important to point out the aspects that both student and teacher were in agreement on in the evaluation process. It gave the children more confidence in what they were doing and it showed the teacher that the children were becoming better evaluators. As was stated earlier in this study, it was important that the student retain ownership of the portfolio, so the teacher was very careful not to force her ideas on the child. (See Appendix G for student conference transcribed from tape recording).

One of the written pieces that a little boy named Matt chose to share with the teacher at one of the first conferences was an information article on polar bears. The article read:

Polar bears are white and live where it is cold and they eat seals and fish and they are endangered and they are good swimmers and have webbed feet.

The teacher asked him to listen as she read the article to him. She then asked him if he thought it would sound better without the "ands" and read it to him without all the "ands." Matt said he preferred the article the way he had written it. Again, it was important that Matt retain ownership of his writing. The teacher was careful not to force her ideas on him, but
the teacher did suggest that maybe Matt would like to take out the article at some later date and see if there were any changes he might like to make.

A lesson was developed the following day focusing on run-on sentences. It wasn't until the following conference several weeks later that Matt pulled out the polar bear article and commented, "This should be changed. It has some run-on sentences." The rewritten article read:

Polar bears are white and live where it is cold. They eat fish and seals. They have webbed feet so they are good swimmers. They are on the endangered species list. I like polar bears.

He was very proud of his new article.

At the end of each conference, the teacher and student collaborated in filling out a composition profile or scoring guide (Appendix D).

Peer Conferences. Peer conferences were experimented with, but not with the success that was hoped for. There were three or four children in the peer group. The conference would begin with the teacher asking a question, such as, "How do you decide what is good writing? What makes one piece of writing better than another piece of writing?" or "When you write, do you ever get stuck? What do you do then?" The children weren't as willing to have evaluative conversations in the small group situations as they were during "Author's Chair" with the whole class participating. The peer group conference will be tried again next year.
Parent Conferences. Parent conferences were held once each report card marking period and whenever the teacher felt a need for one. Parents were encouraged to comment on the children's writing. (See Appendix H for conference feedback from one set of parents transcribed from tape recording). Weekly newsletters were sent home to inform parents of activities which were happening in the classroom during the week, including special writing projects. Several parents commented on how proud their children were of their portfolios. "Young Author's Night" was held in February, with 17 of 21 parents attending. Each child had written a showcase book as near to perfect as he or she was capable of doing. A sheet was put in the book and the parents were invited to write a positive comment about the book on this sheet. No negative criticism was allowed. The parents were so proud of their children's work that it is doubtful that they would have written anything negative if they would have been allowed to do so. Needless to say, the children were beaming when they and their parents left that night.

"Author's Chair"

"Author's Chair" was a time set aside for the children to read their writing samples to their peers. It was held every morning after opening exercises for fifteen to twenty minutes. At first, only one or two children would get up to share their writings. As the semester progressed, more and more children contributed each day. The listeners were encouraged to make constructive comments about their peers' writing. Since the children were six and seven years old, at first their comments seemed to be limited to compliments, such as "You wrote a good story, Ryan." or
"Boy, Jennie has become a good writer." Once in a while, a student would come up with a true criticism of the quality of the writing such as, "That's a good sentence," or "I like the way the story ended."

As the teacher felt that modeling can be a powerful instructional tool, she would make comments to try to broaden the students' thinking and to provide insights about style and mechanics. As the semester went on, the children began to become aware of different features of the stories their classmates wrote and would discuss them. For example, one child always wrote about his family. A child in the class made note of this one day. The writer's response was, "There's nothing else interesting to write about." The teacher noted that he always brought interesting things to share with the class for show and tell. She asked the class if there was something that Brock had brought for show and tell that they would like to hear about during "Author's Chair" time. As a couple of things were suggested, Brock agreed that maybe he could try writing about something other than his family. Although he was hesitant at first, he made an effort, and was soon writing about many different subject areas. One subject he became very interested in was endangered species.

Work Samples

At the end of each quarter, the children were asked to pick out six of what they felt were their best works to keep in their portfolios. The rest of the samples were sent home. First graders are new writers and they like everything that they write down. The first graders in this study found it very difficult to choose their best works. The teacher collaborated with the children in the selection process, but the students made the final
decision. At the end of the first quarter, four of the children who were slower writers still did not have six samples in their portfolios. The teacher had a conference with the parents of these four children to give them an opportunity to look at the samples the children did have completed in their portfolio and to discuss their children's growth and development in the writing process. It should be noted, however, that all of the children brought some form of writing home from time to time.

By the end of the first quarter, the students were beginning to understand how to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their writings and were able to be more selective in the collection of their writing samples. (See Appendix J for Writing Samples).

A summative report was sent home with each student's portfolio of writing at the end of the year (Appendix I). This report was a paragraph or two written to the child summarizing the growth the teacher had seen in his or her writing during the course of the year.

The children became very possessive of their portfolios. They were very proud of themselves for being able to write the date in numerical form and loved using the words, 'my portfolio'.

These portfolios became a powerful tool for self-assessment and for documenting evidence of development by the classroom teacher. It helped the teacher to compare earlier pieces that the children had written with current pieces. It helped her to find patterns of errors which would help her to guide instruction. For example, the article of the polar bears led to the lesson of run-on sentences. Another piece written by a child led to a lesson on fragmented sentences. Still another, provided a lead-
in to a lesson on past and present tenses. Above all, the fact that this process is adaptable to all abilities and interests made it especially valuable in a heterogeneous classroom.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to introduce the portfolio assessment system to a classroom of twenty-one first grade students to determine if this tool could show growth and change and could reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the children's writing skills and if it could support instructional goals.

Conclusions

Results of this study support the portfolio approach as a viable alternative to traditional assessment. The portfolio approach encourages a sense of ownership. It involves the parents far more than traditional assessment. The use of portfolios proves to be collaborative, with the student and the teacher doing the evaluating of the samples. It proves that children can become perceptive judges of their own work and can discuss the strengths of their own work. It shows that they can establish goals for becoming better writers. The portfolio approach fosters growth in skill, knowledge, and confidence by allowing students to be active participants in the evaluation process.

Recommendations

The writer believes that the following suggestions are appropriate for making use of a portfolio system of assessment in a first grade classroom.
1. Move slowly. Take the first few weeks of the school year to introduce procedures and expectations. After all, first graders are new writers.

2. Organization is a key factor in the success of the portfolio. Make sure there is an accessible area in the room for the portfolios. Explain to the children how to alphabetize them, how to write numerical dates on each written piece and how to care for their portfolio so as not to lose written pieces.

3. Periodically go through students' writing folders to watch for emerging patterns. Watch for patterns that indicate child development and make comments on the writing pieces and also watch for patterns that may need correcting.

4. Children should be asked to formally assess their portfolios at least once a quarter. The instructor may ask them to review it more often if she feels the need and has the time. Have children self-evaluate by identifying their perceived strengths as well as areas for growth. Permit the children to identify their next learning step. Even first graders can set goals. The teacher should indicate her goals for the student and point out the goals that they both share. Older children may write a paragraph to give their opinion of their portfolios; however, it was found by the writer that to have first graders do this was far too time-consuming and tedious to be of value.

5. Keep an anecdotal record book of day-to-day observations.
During writing time the teacher should move around the classroom checking for commitment to task. The teacher may spend three minutes with one child and ten minutes with another, depending on the need. Jot down what is discussed and other observations.

6. Parents are an extremely important component of their child's learning process. Use the first parent-teacher conference as an orientation period for the introduction and as a motivational technique to get them involved in the portfolio process. Allow parents to become important participants in the assessment process. The number of times they are involved in the formal assessment will vary with each classroom. It is suggested by the writer that the teacher have a conference with the parents at least once each report card marking period. Portfolios may be sent home with the children occasionally for the parents to write comments in terms of the effort, achievement and goals but there is a risk that the contents may get lost.

7. Above all, it must be remembered that the children are collaborators, not just participants. They must be allowed to evaluate their own processes and products and their own strengths and needs. Giving the students the opportunity to be collaborators allows the grading system to become a tool for learning and for the development of goals.

8. A summative report should be placed in each child's portfolio at the end of the year.
REFERENCES


Proofreading Checklist for Sentences

☐ The first word of each sentence is capitalized.

☐ The names of people are capitalized.

☐ The names of places are capitalized.

☐ The names of the days of the week are capitalized.

☐ The names of the months of the year are capitalized.

☐ A period, exclamation point, or question mark is at the end of each sentence.

☐ Words in a list are separated by commas.

☐ All words are correctly spelled.

☐ The sentence stands alone and is one complete thought.
Proofreading Checklist for Paragraphs

☐ The first word of each paragraph is indented.

☐ The first word of each sentence is capitalized.

☐ All proper names of people and places are capitalized.

☐ The names of the months of the year and the days of the week are capitalized.

☐ A period, exclamation point, or question mark is used at the end of each sentence.

☐ Commas are used when needed.

☐ Dialogue is set off by quotation marks.

☐ Each sentence is a complete thought.

☐ There are no run-on sentences.
Holistic Writing Evaluation Checklist (Peer)

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Reader’s Name</td>
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Read the following to students and have them place a check mark in the Yes or No column.

1. Does this piece of writing make sense?  Yes ___ No ___
2. Is the beginning interesting?  Yes ___ No ___
3. Is the writing well organized?  Yes ___ No ___
4. Are enough details given to make the writer’s message clear?  Yes ___ No ___
5. Is the ending interesting?  Yes ___ No ___
6. Check one of the following:

   a.  This writer did a very good job. The piece is well written. The message is clear and written in an interesting way.

   b.  The writer should be satisfied with this work. The writing is interesting. However, the message is not always clear. There are a few parts of the work that need improvement.

   c.  The writer should work on this piece more. The message is unclear, and there are many parts that need improvement.
APPENDIX D

GRADE 1

COMPOSITION PROFILE

Pre Level 1

Student

---

CONTENT

13-30

Is this composition written for a specific reason/assignment?
Are all of the ideas related?
Is there enough detail?

---

ORGANIZATION

7-20

Is the main idea interesting?
Is there a beginning, a middle, and an end?
Is there any type of introduction or conclusion?
Is the material logical?
Does the paper make sense?
Does the paper "flow" smoothly?

---

VOCABULARY

7-20

Does the writer use the BEST word?
Do the words say EXACTLY what needs to be said?
Do the words help the reader to understand the paper?

---

LANGUAGE USE

5-25

Is there a variety of sentences?
Do all the verbs convey the same tense, or sense of time? (PRESENT, PAST, OR FUTURE?)
Are the pronouns written clearly?
Are there any run-ons or fragments?

---

MECHANICS

2-5

Are words spelled correctly?
Is the punctuation used correctly?
Are capital letters used correctly?
Are all of the paragraphs indented correctly?
Is the handwriting easy to read?

---

COMMENTS

TOTAL SCORE
1/22 I notice that Jared is not writing anything. He alternately is looking into space and playing with his pencil. I approach him to see if I can help him get started with his writing. He says he doesn't have anything to write about. I make several suggestions. He dismisses each of them, saying, "I don't want to write about that." I ask him, "Is there anything you really enjoy reading that you might like to write about?" His reply is that sharks were very interesting to him. I send him to the media center to find some books on sharks.

1/28 Jared writes his article on sharks. It was short (two lines long), but it was a start. We edit and he rewrites it for his book for Young Author's night. He seems very satisfied with himself. I'm happy. It's the first writing project he has completed.

2/12 I'm feeling guilty that I haven't spent as much time with Jared as I'd like. After his article on sharks, he hasn't produced any writing for his portfolio. Each day, I have tried to get him started, but nothing appeals to him. He doesn't like to do things that are an effort and just the physical process of writing is difficult for him as his muscle coordination is not well developed at this time. Doesn't get belligerent. Smiles all the time. Very pleasant boy—just doesn't like to work at things.

2/18-individual conference. Only one sample in portfolio—the shark article. He's proud of article. We edit it by going though the checklists. Has the beginning of a dog story in his tote. We work on that. Thinks writing is too difficult and not much fun.
2/27 Let's try something new today. I asked media center supervisor to show the children how to write stories on the computer. This appeals to Jared. He writes another story to type on the computer. This article is on sharks also, but it is a little longer than the first one—three lines long.

3/5 We read a story about dinosaurs today. The children are to write a story about dinosaurs, either informational or fictional. Again, his story is two lines long, but I feel it an accomplishment that he finished in one day.

3/19 Still dawdling while others write. Loves to talk, so I sit down and talk to him about his favorite vacation. He says all their vacations are too boring to write about. Suspect he doesn't want to make effort. Find out about one vacation to Minneapolis at Christmas time that he thought was kind of fun. Get him started. 20 minutes later, come back to him. Nothing written since I left him.

3/19 Check journal. Nothing written—just scribbling.

3/24 Parent conference. Parents are exasperated at his lack of effort at home and at school. Jared, baby of family. Older brother-very bright and ambitious. Jared has never had any responsibility at home. Parents adore him and never wanted to make him work. Father-professional, mother-stay-at-home mom who loves doing things for boys. Is willing to do whatever they can to help at home. Have worked with him on reading and math. Jared has been tested—has low average ability according to tests. Tell parents I'm impressed with Jared's oral vocabulary. Have seen great growth in his eye-hand coordination. Can now read his work. Assure the parents that he is showing growth in development, even if slow. Nice, cooperative people. Want best for child.

4/27 Individual conference—4 pieces in portfolio-dog, shark, polar bear
article and vacation story. We edit and revise vacation story for his hard
cover book for the culminating writing activity for the year.

4/28 Read vacation story during "Author's Chair". One little girl said,
"I'm really proud of Jared for writing such a good story". He beamed.
Jared is beginning to respond to school work. With the improvement of
eye-hand coordination, his handwriting is legible. He takes pride in the
work that he does do now. Earlier in the year, it didn't bother him at all
not to have any work done. He is beginning to organize ideas and with a
little help is able to put them on paper. Knows where to use capital let-
ters and punctuation marks. He has a high self-esteem. Has difficulty
with self-evaluation. Hopefully, that will develop as he matures.
APPENDIX F

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF

STUDENT EVALUATION GRADE 1

NAME ___________________________ SCHOOL ___________________________

TEACHER ___________________________ PRINCIPAL ___________________________

MARKING KEY

= Level of Success
IEP = (Modified Program as Written in Individual Education Plan)
IEP Facilitator ___________________________

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<td>6 SUCCESSFUL</td>
<td>HAS SOME SUCCESS</td>
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INTEGRATED LANGUAGE ARTS

Sight vocabulary
Decoding and Word Study
Comprehension
Reads fluently
Shows interest in extra reading
Understands directions
Works accurately
Completes work on time
Prints legibly
Expresses self in writing
Expresses self verbally

MATH

Knows addition facts to 10
Knows subtraction facts to 10
Solves word problems
Works accurately
Completes assignments on time

SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, HEALTH

Understands concepts and processes
Participates

BEHAVIORS and ATTITUDES

Attentive listener
Works independently
Displays appropriate social skills
Stays on task

COMMENTS:

1st Qtr. ____________________________________________________________

2nd Qtr. ____________________________________________________________

3rd Qtr. ____________________________________________________________

4th Qtr. ____________________________________________________________
APPENDIX G
Dorothy picked out a fictional story called, "My Friend, Marissa," as the story she wanted to conference about. After going through the checklists (Appendixes A, B, C) together, we had the following conversation.

Teacher: "Dorothy, what do you think are your strengths in this story?"

Dorothy: "I used a lot of words. It's my longest story. I think I wrote some interesting sentences. I think I had a good ending.

Teacher: "I agree with you, Dorothy. I also noticed some descriptive words throughout your story. For example, I notice that you used a 'beautiful, big gray house' when you were describing Marissa's house.

Do you know what I mean when I use the words 'complete thought'?"

Dorothy: "Doesn't it mean that I made a good sentence?"

Teacher: "Very good! Well, I was very impressed with your sentences. They all had complete thoughts except one. Read through your story and see if you can find the one that isn't quite a complete thought."

Dorothy: "Is this it? 'Because we made a fire'." She changed it to:

The family room was warm because we made a fire.

Teacher: "Do you think there is anything that you can improve in your story?"

Dorothy: "I can write better (handwriting). It would be easier and more fun to read if I colored the pictures."
Teacher: "Do you have any questions about your story?"

Dorothy: "Should I use an apostrophe on Marissa for Marissa's house?"

Teacher: "Does it show ownership?"

Dorothy: "Yes." (She added apostrophe).

Teacher: "Your goal last time was to write longer stories and I think you are coming along nicely with that goal. Should we set another goal for next time?"

Dorothy: "I think I should watch for complete thoughts and have a goal to watch my punctuation more and get better at spelling."

Teacher: "I think those are good goals that you can use as your goals for the rest of the year. I think you have become a very good author. Unfortunately, I didn't keep any of your very first stories from the beginning of the year, but if you have some at home, you can see how much you have improved since the first stories you wrote."

We went through the composition profile together. I gave her a 97 and she was happy with that score. Dorothy is a very happy child with a high self-esteem. She accepts constructive criticism very well. Her parents were worried about her being a discipline problem in school because she was very stubborn at home. It is May, and I have never had to discipline her for anything. She is in the gifted and talented class. Loves to help other children. She enjoys a challenge.
3/20/92  PARENT CONFERENCE  Kristin's parents

Kristin's portfolio contains a piece about dinosaurs, one about polar bears, one about dogs, two fictional stories and a poem.

Teacher: As you look through the writing samples that Kristin has picked out to keep in her portfolio, do you see growth in her writing as compared to the writing you looked at during the last conference?

Mother: Oh, there's no comparison. Her spelling has really improved. At the last conference, she couldn't write any words. If I can remember, you had to read all the stories to us because we couldn't read them.

Father: Her papers were so sloppy. Now, she is making an attempt to make them neat.

Teacher: Do you notice anything about the organization and thoughts of her writing samples?

Mother: Well, yes. Actually, the last time she didn't know how to write a sentence. Now, she has what I would consider complete thoughts. She also has kind of an idea where to use capital letters and punctuation marks, although I see some sentences that she forgot to use them.

Teacher: These are things that we continue to work on. Just remember, these children are new writers and we don't want to sacrifice what we call the mechanics of writing for the thoughts that are being communicated. But you are right, it is something that Kristin needs to become more aware of.
Father: I'm amazed at the poem she wrote. Did you write this with her?

Teacher: No, but we had a lesson on poetry and spent a great deal of time talking about words that rhyme, although I did mention to the children that there are poems written that do not rhyme. The one thing that makes me particularly pleased with Kristin's writing is that she has become more of a risk taker. She writes about different things. At first, Kristin did not think much of herself as a writer and just kind of sloppily wrote something down. Most of the time it did not make sense. Now she loves to share her writing with us. She is beginning to write in her journal and everytime she does, she brings it up to show me. A lot of the writing is about her friends, so that tells me that friends are very important to her.

Father: Sometimes I think they are too important to her.

Teacher: Another aspect that I notice about Kristin's writing is that she is beginning to understand the process of editing and is attempting to edit some of her pieces.

Father: How do you teach her that?

Teacher: Mostly, by modeling. When we write experience stories as a group, we read them over to see if we have complete thoughts, if there are things in the story that we could organize better, if we have used capital letters and punctuation where we should and anything else we need to do
to make a better written story. I also help them to edit some of their pieces. (At this point, our conference time is up).

Mother: Is there anything we can do at home to help Kristin be a better writer?

Teacher: When she brings writing home, take the time to sit down with her and talk about her samples. Be particularly careful not to criticize, but to look at positive aspects of her writing. I'm feeling very pleased with Kristin's development in writing. She has come a long way since our conference in October.
APPENDIX I

Summative Report Elizabeth May, 1992

Elizabeth, you have become a very good writer and are certainly ready to go to second grade. You write about many things, which shows me you are interested in many different things. You do a good job of editing all of your stories. I notice that you use your dictionary a lot to help you spell words when you are writing your stories. Whenever I ask what you want for your next goal, you always have one ready. Many children older than you have trouble coming up with goals. You can be proud of yourself for being able to do this. Your handwriting is beautiful!
I wish some time I was a teacher.
Because I like my teacher. She is nice.

You will probably be a teacher someday. I'm sure you'll make a good one!

1/20/92
My pet dinosaur is named Stacy. She sleeps on the ground. I feed her every day. My dinosaur does not need any help. I love my pet.
Sara and me are best friends.
I call her up.

Elizabeth, I like your story. You did a nice job of editing it. I also like your pictures. Using the words "for example" was very grown-up.
I go over to her house. We play all sorts of stuff. For example, we like to make snowmen.
Then me and sara go inside to get her Dad to take the snowman's picture.
Then it is time to go home.
Then I eat dinner and I go to bed.
Then I wake up and I eat.

Next, I go to school.

Then I come home and I call her.
Me and my Mom are excited. We are going to camp. The name of it is called camp Ehawee. We are going to sleep over. I can tell it is going to be fun.

BYE!

Elizabeth, you learned how to write stories on the computer very quickly!

4/16/92

Elizabeth, d.
The snow can blow.
The ice is nice.

I like your poem!

4/2/92