

The Relationship between Mentor Texts
and Student Motivation and
Engagement in Writing

By

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A Master's Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science in Education -- Reading Specialist

Advisor's Name

Date

University of Wisconsin- River Falls
2019

Abstract

Motivation and engagement play a key role in the success of students. This, in turn, influences students' perceptions about school and about themselves. This action research study examined how mentor texts could be used to motivate and engage students in writing. Mentor texts are any text that is used to guide students' learning of a specific writing genre and/or a specific writing trait. Mentor texts were used in this study to aid students' comprehension of the qualities and structure of opinion and narrative writing. Mentor texts were further used to build students' understanding of writing with comparisons and adjectives. Results indicated that mentor texts can be used to improve student engagement during direct teacher instruction and the independent opinion writing process, but may or may not improve the independent narrative writing process.

Keywords: mentor texts, writing, engagement, motivation, student confidence, action research, narrative writing, opinion writing

Teaching writing has consistently been an area of discomfort as a second grade teacher. I personally have always enjoyed writing assignments, journaling, and consuming books by authors with great writing style. However, teaching writing to seven and eight year olds often feels difficult. I spend time reviewing curriculum writing expectations, adjusting my plans to better meet my individual students, and consulting with my grade level colleagues. I teach the lesson and recognize myself starting to feel disappointed, frustrated, or feeling as if we are at a stand-still. My students are either struggling to grasp the concept of the lesson, or appear to be unmotivated to write, and disengaged in the writing process. How can I get more of my students to love writing? How can I get more of my students engaged and motivated to write? How can I get my students to better understand the structure of a paragraph? How can I get my students to better understand descriptive words, word choice, hooks, repetition, writing style, etc?

Mastering writing genres and traits is difficult in second grade as some second graders are still working to correctly form letters and write in complete sentences. Letter formation is a kindergarten standard, and writing in complete sentences is a first grade standard. However, many students struggle to master these standards within the given time frame. In my district, it is not uncommon for fourth or fifth grade students to still be struggling to independently and consistently write in complete sentences. While I could tackle helping students successfully write in complete sentences during my school's Response to Intervention (RTI) time, I was still struggling to help my students become better writers overall.

After recognizing that I needed to better engage and motivate my students during writing instruction and help them better understand and apply the concepts being taught, I began to think through literacy best practices that were being taught in my graduate level courses. I also began

discussing current writing practices with my fellow graduate classmates. One writing practice that showed up as both a best practice, and a highly recommended way to teach writing, was mentor texts. In my graduate level courses, I had briefly studied mentor texts. I knew the basics and understood the gist of teaching with them. One of my fellow graduate classmates strongly recommended that I try teaching writing with mentor texts, as it had been greatly successful for her and her students for the last couple of years. She stated that mentor texts increased her students' engagement and understanding of writing. She also stated that mentor texts had helped to make teaching writing more enjoyable for her as the teacher. After considering her recommendation, I decided to further research mentor texts and then conduct action research in my classroom. The action research would help answer my question: In what ways, or to what extent, do mentor texts impact motivation and engagement in writing?

Review of the Literature

The Importance of Student Motivation and Engagement

“In general, academic motivation declines from the onset of schooling through high school” (Pressley & Allington, 2015, p. 414). Teachers in the primary grades are more likely to include motivation as a general practice in ensuring student success in comparison with teachers in secondary and higher education. However, motivation continues to be a vital tool in education. Student motivation and engagement play an important role in student success. When students are motivated and engaged academically in the classroom, they are more likely to maintain a positive attitude, remain on task, and experience positive affections about school and learning. When students are motivated and engaged socially in the classroom, they are more likely to make deeper connections with peers and staff, form closer relationships, have a deeper sense of

belonging, and a stronger sense of self-confidence. These “...engagements lead not only to social affiliations and the social and emotional support they provide, but also to great involvement in learning activities and the learning they produce” (Tinto, 2012, p. 5). Students who experience engagement and motivation in school essentially learn more and experience more success. Mentor texts may be a way to increase student motivation and engagement in student writers.

What are Mentor Texts?

Using mentor texts in the elementary classroom is a commonly used practice to strengthen student writing. Most teachers have likely heard of the term mentor texts and have a general idea as to what it means. Simply put, mentor texts are any form of text that teachers and students use to learn from and guide student writing. They are a way to support students throughout the writing process. A quick Google or Pinterest search brings multiple examples of mentor texts for different genres or writing traits. However, teaching with mentor texts is a structured best practice that requires a more in-depth study in order to be adopted in the elementary classroom.

Culham (2014) defines mentor texts “...as any text, print or digital, that you can read with a writer’s eye” (p. 31). Her book, *The Writing Thief: Using Mentor Texts to Teach the Craft of Writing*, looks at how mentor texts can be used to enrich important areas of writing, such as different purposes of writing and the different traits of writing (p. 30-31). As an educator who has been using mentor texts for nearly 20 years, she claims that it just makes sense to use texts to study reading and writing (p. 30-31). In comparison, special education teacher Moser (2017), states that “mentor texts are a window into complex writing for struggling students. A strategy that was overwhelming and inaccessible, when presented from a text the student knows and

understands, is suddenly doable” (p. 371). She writes that with struggling readers and writers, using books that the students are familiar with enables them to feel comfortable and more successful with the task at hand (Moser, 2017). Mentor texts let writers view texts from a different angle. As readers study mentor texts, they are studying the author’s technique, purpose, structure, etc to better understand the text. This expands the students’ writing options and choices.

Laminack (2017) considers the role of mentor texts when stating that “...a mentor text can be any text in any form or genre that you can learn from as a writer” (p. 754). However, if teachers are not careful mentor texts can enable students to learn how to implement a specific move without truly understanding the reason for implementing that specific move at that specific time. Instead of students truly learning and understanding the different writing features, traits, or genres, they would simply be copying the mentor text. He states that “...learning how without understanding why leaves our students not knowing when to employ the moves that they have learned” (p. 754). While he understands that students may imitate the mentor text in the early stages of learning how to use mentor texts, it is essential for teachers to continuously blend the how and why of each move together, so that students are able to successfully master each move (Laminack, 2017). Mentor texts are not just a tool for students to use to help guide their writing, they are also an effective teaching tool for teachers to illustrate the why and how of various writing skills or traits.

Why use Mentor Texts?

When considering why teachers should use mentor texts in the classroom, the following questions emerged: When considering writing styles, how do writers learn to do something new?

Do they perform a quick Google search? Watch a Youtube video? Or perhaps they ask a friend, teacher, or colleague to guide them. Do they seek out models, examples, or finished products of what they are trying to achieve? By finding a model, example, or finished product of the writing style that the writer is trying to achieve, the writer is essentially finding mentor texts. Mentor texts provide writers with something to look at, read, and study. They give writers a guide to follow. It seems only logical that students of all ages are given the same opportunity.

Gallagher (2014) demonstrated a similar example when he discussed that people learn something new by watching someone else do what they are trying to achieve stating that, “If we want our students to write persuasive arguments, interesting explanatory pieces, or captivating narratives, we need to have them read, analyze, and emulate persuasive arguments, interesting explanatory pieces, and captivating narratives” (p. 29). When teachers ask students to write a particular way and in a style that is new to them, it is important for teachers to provide them with a strong, well-written example of what is being asked (Gallagher, 2014). Crawford, Sobolak, & Foster (2017) are in agreement, stating that “mentor texts provide strong support for writers because they exemplify characteristics of genre and style that may be difficult to explain, but that can be clearly recognized when readers have the opportunity to actually observe their use in print” (p. 82). It simply makes sense to give students mentor texts to guide them in the learning process.

Another factor to consider when integrating mentor texts into writing instruction is the use of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). According to Culham (2014) the CCSS are “leading the way toward an integrated approach to teaching reading and writing” (p. 17). Mentor texts can be used as a tool to help teachers better teach reading and writing from a more

integrated approach (Culham, 2014). In her work, Culham made a side-by-side comparison of CCSS reading and writing standards, in which she noted the similarities of four different reading anchor standards and their writing partners. Just within a few standards there are many ways that reading and writing can be integrated together. Culham (2014) noted these similarities:

...close reading of multiple texts to see how writers began similar pieces. They compare and contrast the styles of fiction leads to nonfiction leads. They develop a resource list of possible types of leads: flashback, fascinating fact, shocking statistic, dialogue, provocative phrase, and so forth. They sort them into leads that work better for fiction and those they might use for nonfiction writing. (p. 17)

After viewing mentor texts, students will then take what they learned about writing styles and apply it to their own writing. Blending reading and writing instruction together allows students to learn more by analyzing mentor texts in comparison to studying these disciplines in isolation (Culham, 2014).

Mentor texts can be used effectively throughout the curriculum, in addition to English language arts. Pytash & Morgan (2014) also discussed the use of mentor texts to better teach writing in science and social studies curriculum with the disciplinary literacy in mind. They discuss the rigorous demands from the CCSS and the writing required within each of the content areas (2014). Pytash & Morgan (2014) state that:

...the purpose of using mentor texts in disciplinary writing is to expose students to the genres and writing practices that are situated in particular disciplines.

...students get firsthand opportunities to study how authors within those content areas use language to craft their message and how they structure their texts.

(p. 94)

The CCSS writing demands in the content areas differ in that disciplinary literacy is specific to content areas. Mentor texts in core content areas offer students a way to study and learn from the authors directly, allowing them to see examples of the different kinds of writing within each content area (Pytash & Morgan, 2014). Students are asked to produce content specific writing, such as lab reports, newspaper articles, speeches, informative writing, etc.

How to use Mentor Texts

Mentor texts can be used in multiple different ways to help students better understand how to write, what to write, and different writing techniques. The same mentor texts can be read multiple times to students for different purposes. For example, the first read of a mentor text might be used purely for enjoyment. The second read of a mentor text might have the teacher and students asking questions and starting to analyze or identify things that they notice. The third read might have students looking explicitly at certain skills, techniques, or purpose in the text. The number of reads depends on the teacher and the level of instruction and skill required. After multiple reads and time spent studying the skill that they are trying to master, students may begin writing. The mentor text can and should be accessible for students to reference as they are writing. In fact, Gallagher (2014) stated that, “mentor texts are most powerful when students frequently revisit them throughout the writing process...” (p. 29). Other authors (Hodges & Matthews, 2017; Marchetti & O’Dell, 2015) have also stated the importance of children being able to revisit a mentor texts multiple times.

Crawford, Sobolak, & Foster (2017) have identified that mentor texts “...can be used at a broad macro-level to teach elements of genre, at a more focused level to teach different traits of

writing, and finally at a micro-level to teach specific writing features” (p. 82). When studying elements of genre, teachers can use different mentor texts within the same genre to teach the genre specific elements. Together the students and teacher can record or list things they are noticing about a specific genre, while also beginning to note how each author uses their own flair or craft within a specific genre. When studying traits of writing, teachers can use different mentor texts to focus specifically on topics ranging from ideas to voice to different writing conventions. Lastly, when studying specific writing features, teachers can use mentor texts to help students notice things such as repeated lines, sentence flow, or use of comparisons.

In the primary grades, mentor texts can even be broken down into mentor sentences. As students move into the upper elementary grades, mentor texts can be taken to the next level. At all levels, students can recommend books that they think would be good mentor texts for the class. In the beginning, mentor texts are taught by scaffolding. Teachers scaffold mentor text instruction, so that students can learn how to use a mentor text to understand different writing moves. Then students are taught not only how to use the writing moves, but when and why they should use them (Laminack, 2017). The scaffolding continues to be removed until students are comfortable owning the responsibility of finding and assessing their own mentor texts for independent use (Rodriguez Kerr, 2017).

Picture books make great mentor texts. They are shorter and easier to read multiple times. Fletcher & Portalupi (2001) note that picture books “...have a lovely transparency that often makes it easier for kids to grasp the elements of writing- lead, setting, shape of the story, climax, ending- than it does when you read a long, complex novel” (p. 76). Mentor texts can truly be any type of text. Remember that, “...perhaps the best mentor texts are those books that children and

teachers love” (Crawford, Sobolak, & Foster, 2017, p. 85). Books that teachers and students are familiar with can be wonderful mentor texts. Class favorites have earned their spots in hearts because of great writing. It is often effective for teachers to take time to notice the elements of the genre, traits, or specific features and use the class favorite text to help students write.

Conclusion

Mentor texts are an important tool to model writing for both adults and children. They aid students in all different developmental stages of writing. It makes sense that, “young writers are strongly supported in the composition process when they are steeped in print-rich environments and have deep exposure to mentor texts that provide models of engaging, high-quality writing across a variety of forms and genres” (Crawford, Sobolak, & Foster, 2017, p. 82). Through mentor texts writing tasks that seemed unmanageable before, suddenly become manageable to students when they have mentor texts to guide them (Moser, 2017).

With many students struggling to develop strong writing skills and many schools lacking “...a scope and sequence or a set of materials and strategies that outlines a core writing curriculum for each grade and across grades” (Culham, 2014, p. 12), we should be asking why not use mentor texts? Since mentor texts help students think and read like writers, why not embrace mentor texts to help students navigate the writing process, writing traits, and writing modes? If teachers decide to make productive use of mentor texts in the writing classroom, they will discover a new and useful tool in helping students write.

Methodology

Participants and Setting

I completed this action research study with the hopes of determining how writing instruction with mentor texts affects student engagement and motivation in writing. The following research question guided my study: In what ways, or to what extent, do mentor texts impact motivation and engagement in writing?

This action research study was completed within the context of my daily classroom instruction. I teach at a small kindergarten through fifth grade school in the rural Midwest. We have approximately 180 students enrolled in the entire elementary school, with two sections of each grade. We are a Title 1 school, with access to one Title 1 teacher to serve all students kindergarten through fifth grade. Special education services are not offered at our school site. Students who need special education services have the opportunity to be transported approximately sixteen miles into the other elementary school in our district. There are speech and language services offered on site, in the afternoon, two days a week. We share our specialist teachers with the other elementary school in our district.

The students participating in this action research study are the fourteen students in my second grade class. The class has seven females and seven males between the ages of seven and eight years old. 100% of the students are caucasian. Since the school setting is small, these students have been in class with each other frequently since kindergarten. Eleven out of fourteen students attend the same local church and participate together in activities outside of school. The culture amongst the students is naturally competitive. As a whole, the students in this school care about their learning and how they perform in school. The classroom setting is also fairly unique. Students sit at tables rather than desks on the outer edges of the room. The classroom has many flexible seating options, with the center of the classroom being a u-shaped community seating

area of futon couches, rocker chairs, and bench seating. Whole group lessons typically start on the floor, followed by students breaking out to work in places of their choosing. Students have successfully adapted their work routines with their flexible seating choices. The classroom setup affects where students work as they are writing their drafts, editing, revising, and publishing during our class writing time with mentor texts.

The class is composed of students with a range of writing abilities. Students will be identified using numbers. Real student names or identifiable information will not be used in this study. Student 10 and Student 12 are part of the Gifted and Talented Program (GT). Students 1, 4, 7, 11, and 13 are identified as near “at-risk” writers. An at-risk writer is a student who is performing two grade levels below writing expectations. The students listed above are performing approximately one grade level below second grade writing expectations. Student 1 works with the Title 1 teacher for intervention in sound identification and decoding skills. Student 1 is currently working with the Title 1 teacher in the Barton Reading and Spelling System, which is influenced by Orton-Gillingham techniques for teaching reading. It emphasizes a multi-sensory, direct, structured and sequential system to teach the rules different sounds make, as well as decoding, and reading words. Student 1 also receives speech services. Even with intense intervention, Student 1 still struggles to master sounds, especially short vowel sounds, during writing and reading activities. Student 13 also works with the Title 1 teacher for intervention and support in reading at grade level expectations. Student 13 is currently working with the Title 1 teacher in Early Reading Empowerment (ERE) and guided reading. Student 6 is an on level writer, but often struggles with phonemic sounds and rules in her spelling.

Materials and Procedures

This action research study took place as part of our regular school day with my general education class of second graders. The study took place over a six week period. Writing lessons were typically done in the mornings, three times a week, for twenty-five to thirty minutes. A total of eight writing lessons were conducted throughout the six-week period. In addition to the eight lessons, students also had work days as a whole group, small group work time when needed, and time designed for completing prewriting activities, drafts, editing, revising, and publishing their work.

To successfully conduct this action research study, I used a variety of materials for the writing with mentor text lessons. I accessed mentor texts and materials such as: picture books, anchor chart paper, markers, planning/draft outlines, and writing formats that students would use to publish their final writing. I also accessed the internet, as some of the books that I used for mentor texts were found in read aloud formats on the web. This also provided a way to project the books for students to listen and watch.

The research started with obtaining parental permission by sending home a formal letter and consent form (Appendix A). Once I had gotten consent for the students to participate in the study, I began with a pre- and post-survey (Appendix B). I modeled this survey off of other motivation surveys, which took into consideration what information I was seeking to discover about my students. The pre- and post-survey is ten questions long. In the first nine questions, students are read statements about writing and then asked to rank the statements on a frequency scale. The scale goes from “never,” “not normally,” “sometimes,” “most of the time,” to “almost always.” Students were instructed to be thoughtful and honest about their responses. Following

the instructions, I displayed the survey on the SMARTboard while reading aloud each question and giving students time to respond thoughtfully. The tenth question was a free response question in which students were asked to further share their comments about writing. Many students were confused by this question as there was no easily identifiable “right” answer. Some students chose to leave the tenth question blank, while others restated a statement from the survey.

For the structure of the lessons, I broke the six week study into two different genres. The first genre that we explored through mentor text was opinion writing. For our first day of opinion writing instruction, the students and I worked together to create an anchor chart to help students better understand what opinion writing was and the opinion writing structure we would be using in our class. For opinion writing, I chose to use the OREO structure, which stands for: Opinion, Reasoning, Example, Opinion (Appendix C). I added a bit more to the generic OREO structure by saying that our “Oreo” was double stuffed. Instead of having just one reason and one example, we added a second reason and second example. The OREO became OREREO (Opinion, Reasoning, Example, Reasoning, Example, Opinion) to enable students to write a full paragraph with complete ideas.

I used many mentor texts in my study (Appendix D). Our first mentor text was *In My Opinion* (Bird, 2015). It was added to the first lesson to allow students to build their understanding of what opinion writing was and how opinion writing might sound. Students were instructed to listen closely for the different parts of OREO and give a thumbs up if they heard it. We stopped and noted the parts of OREO whenever students gave a thumbs up. For the second lesson, students listened to a reading of *I Wanna New Room* (Kaufman Orloff, 2010). In this

lesson students were able to hear a humorous example of opinion writing. Following the book reading, we added notes to the anchor chart of possible sentence starters. The next day was a student work day, in which we reviewed the anchor chart, brainstormed possible opinion topics, and began the first draft. Students were allowed to pick any opinion writing topic they wanted. This was done in hopes of building student excitement and ownership of their writing. For the third lesson, students reheard *I Wanna New Room* (Kaufman Orloff, 2010) this time listening for what specifically made her writing so interesting. Students picked up on the humorous comparisons and we jotted them down on the board. Students revised their first draft in small groups with me and edited in a comparison of their own. Finally, students were ready to complete their final copy of their writing and publish it with an illustration of their own.

The second genre that we explored through mentor texts was narrative writing. We began this genre similar to the previous genre; by creating an anchor chart of what narrative writing entails and what structure we would be following. We also used the book *Thunder Cake* (Polacco, 1990) to explore how narrative writing could sound. After reading the book, we recalled each structural piece of narrative writing. We checked to make sure that the author had followed the same structure that we would be following. We also took notes of what we had observed. For example, students picked up on onomatopoeias written in capital letters and the use of dialogue.

In the second narrative lesson, we read the book *Fireflies* (Brinckloe, 1985). Following the reading of the book, students noted parts of the book that flowed well. Specifically they noticed the use of descriptive writing. For the third narrative lesson, we reviewed our anchor chart and verbally brainstormed some different topics for narrative writing. Students were asked

to write about something that had happened to them, or that they had been a part of. Before beginning their narrative web (Appendix E), we listened to a reading of *Ralph Tells A Story* (Hanlon, 2012). This book was about a boy named Ralph who was struggling to write a narrative story, because he thought that nothing ever happened to him. By the end of the story, Ralph realized a perfect narrative story to write.

After reading *Ralph Tells A Story*, students were encouraged to begin their narrative writing. Students then had a few work days to complete their webs and first drafts of their narrative writing. The next lesson had students rereading *Fireflies* (Brinckloe, 1985) and noticing, in detail, the descriptive writing. Students set a goal to add at least four adjectives to their writing through peer editing with their predetermined partner. I gave them a specific work partner to best compliment their personalities and academic successes. Students revised their first draft in small groups with me and checked to make sure their adjectives made sense and flowed with their writing. Finally, students were ready to complete the final copy of their writing and publish it with an illustration of their own.

Most of the lessons were done in whole group format, but there were times when students needed to work in small groups with me, or one-on-one with me or the assistant. Small groups were used as a form of support for students who needed additional help with their web, writing their drafts, or editing and revising. During small groups, we would share what each student had written and then the other students or the “readers” would ask the student who wrote the paper or the “author” to further explain parts of the writing that the readers had not understood. This helped students take on the role of author and get an outside perspective on their writing from the audience. It was also a great way to give students additional help that was more student-led than

teacher-led. Occasionally, some students needed support beyond the small group setting. For those students, they worked closely with me or with the assistant in making sure that their writing had all of the different parts and was coherent. All students were able to independently publish and illustrate their opinion and narrative stories.

I collected two forms of data during the mentor text lessons. The first form of data that I kept consistently throughout the lessons was a teacher journal (Appendix F). After each lesson, I would record my overall observations, how the lesson went, and the engagement and motivation of the students throughout the lesson. The other form of data that I kept periodically throughout the lessons were the checklist observations (Appendix G) on the focus students. The checklist observations were used during four different mentor text lessons: two opinion writing lessons, and two narrative writing lessons. The checklist observations were used during the writing of the students' first draft of opinion writing, as well as during the lesson where students edited their opinion writing and added in comparisons. Then the checklist observations were used for the narrative webs and first drafts, as well as when students were editing their narrative writing with peer reviews and adding adjectives. The observation checklists had six different elements to observe about the four focus students. I observed if the students wrote the whole time, participated in the lesson, were actively engaged in the lesson, asked questions, asked for help, and if the students helped others. I also had a box left open for any notes that I wanted to record.

I picked four students to study more closely throughout the action research study. The focus students included a high performing female (Student 5) and male (Student 2), as well as a male (Student 7) and female (Student 1) who typically struggled in writing and were in the near at-risk category. I planned to more closely analyze the focus students' writing samples, survey

results, and included them as the four students who I would be observing for the observation checklists and exit interviews.

To wrap up the mentor text writing lessons, I conducted exit interviews and students completed the post-survey questions. The post-survey questions were the same as the pre-survey questions. The exit interview (Appendix H), asked the focus students five questions. The questions were designed to tell me more about how students felt about writing, what they did and did not like about writing and writing instruction, and gave their opinions on the mentor text lessons. Students were asked to tell me how they feel about writing and why, if they like to write during class time and why or why not, to tell about a writing lesson or project that they enjoyed from first or second grade and why, what they thought about our writing lessons with books and why, and finally if they would they want to keep learning writing skills with books as mentor texts. The focus students were interviewed independently. They were informed that their answers were being recorded, but that their identity was not being used.

Finally, I collected data and analyzed information. The main data that I analyzed consisted of the pre- and post-survey results. For each student, I entered their pre- and post-survey results, so that each student's pre- and post-responses were directly next to each other. Then, I went through and assigned a point system for each response. The response "never" was worth zero points, "not normally" was worth one point, "sometimes" was worth two points, "most of the time" was worth three points, and "almost always" was worth four points. I was then able to go back through the responses and collect the total points each response received per question for all students. This concluded in pre- and post-point totals (Appendix I) for each question, that I then compared and further analyzed for growth or regression.

Findings and Results

The majority of my data was qualitative data, in which the students and myself gave our opinions about our work with mentor texts. In the teacher journal, I wrote down what we did for each lesson and my opinion about student engagement during the lesson. On the observation checklist, I used my judgement to evaluate the focus group of students against the engagement statements. In the exit interviews with the focus students, I asked the students what they thought of writing in general and what they thought of writing with mentor texts. I recorded each student's opinion. The final piece of my data, the pre- and post-survey, was qualitative in that the students gave opinions on nine statements about writing. However, it became quantitative when I analyzed it and assigned each student response a number value. Below are my findings and results of each source of data.

Teacher Journal

The teacher journal notes were helpful in recalling the different mentor texts lessons that we did and how students had responded to them. When I reviewed my journal notes, I circled any time that students were showing engagement. These were shown through teachers notes that said: "very attentive," "extremely engaged," "on task," "students were laughing at the book," etc. I made a box around any comment that showed that students were less engaged. I was able to determine that students were especially engaged during whole groups lessons for opinion writing. They were able to write their first draft in much less time than I had anticipated. This was evidence that students were attentive during lessons, because they knew what to do for the first draft and were able to do it in less time than normal. Writing of their first draft took approximately ten minutes. Usually it takes students at least thirty minutes to write their first

draft of a story. I noted that students were only “mostly engaged” during the publishing of their opinion writing piece. Four out of fourteen students hadn’t completed their published pieces in the time allowed and needed additional time to complete their writing.

It was interesting to review the teacher journal notes for the narrative writing lessons. Again, I circled times that students were engaged and made boxes around comments that signaled that students were possibly less engaged. There were comments that said that students “were pulled right into the book the whole time and laughing,” “laughing at a few different parts,” and that “students worked well.” These comments came from lessons where students were reading the mentor texts. There were also comments that showed a lack of understanding with the narrative writing and adjectives. These comments stated that, “this seemed like a little bit of a harder concept for students to see and understand” and “students were focused, but this writing seemed like it was a lot more difficult.” Students also took a lot longer to complete this work than they had when completing the opinion writing. Most students needed an additional week of writing to complete their stories.

Observation Checklists

In the checklists, I was able to more closely examine the engagement of the four focus students during the writing lesson work times. Student 1 typically received three marks for participating in the lesson, being actively engaged in the lesson, and asking for help. Student 2 received the most amount of marks consistently. He usually received four to six marks for writing the whole time, participating in the lesson, being actively engaged, asking questions, occasionally asking for help, and occasionally helping others. Student 5 consistently received four marks mostly for participating in the lesson, being actively engaged, asking questions, and

asking for help. Student 7 received anywhere from three to five marks for occasionally writing the whole time, participating in the lesson, being actively engaged in the lesson, and occasionally asking questions and asking for help. The note section of the observation checklist loosely recapped what each student had been doing throughout the lesson.

Exit Interviews

The exit interviews were very enlightening to me as a teacher and as a researcher. The exit interviews were performed on the four focus students. Sometimes the students' answers contradicted what they had marked in the pre- and post-survey. In the first question, students were asked to tell how they felt about writing. Student 1 stated that she felt happy about writing because it was fun and she liked telling stories. Student 2 stated that he felt good about writing because it was kind of fun. When asked to elaborate, he stated that sometimes it wasn't fun, but it was fun when they got to write like the author. He said that it was not fun when they had to make up their own story. Student 5 stated that she didn't like writing because she felt like she had to write and write and write. Student 7 stated that he didn't feel so good about writing, because he wrote messy and his hand got sore.

In the second question, students were asked if they liked to write during class time. Student 1 stated that she didn't like to write during class time because she forgot the stories that she heard. Then she felt like she couldn't write and she wasted her time thinking about what the story had been and not writing. Student 2 stated that he sometimes liked writing in class. He said that he liked to write on the board with the teacher for the web, but that he didn't like writing in the drafts because he had to write more sentences. Student 5 stated that she liked to write during journal time, but that she didn't like to write the paragraph in the morning, because she didn't

feel up to it and she was tired. Student 7 stated that he liked to write during class time because after he got going it was fun.

In the third question, students were asked to tell of a writing lesson or project that they enjoyed from first or second grade. Student 1 stated that she couldn't think of a writing project that she had enjoyed, but that it would be fun to write a story on a gingerbread boy. Student 2 stated that he enjoyed writing his narrative story, because he knew a lot about it and it was easy to write about. Student 5 stated that she liked to write the picture that went with her final story because she liked to draw. Student 7 stated that he liked writing about sloths in first grade because he thought that sloths were cool.

In the fourth question, students were asked what they thought of the writing lessons with books to teach writing skills. Student 1 stated that she liked the mentor text writing, because the books helped her think of good stories to write. Student 2 stated that the mentor text writing was fun to do, because they helped him with his writing ideas. Student 5 stated that she liked writing with mentor texts, because the books gave her ideas. Student 7 stated that he liked writing with mentor texts, because he felt like he could sort of copy what the book said.

In the final question, students were asked if they wanted to keep learning their writing skills with mentor texts. Student 1, Student 5, and Student 7 all said that they would like to keep writing with mentor texts. Student 2 stated that he likes both ways of writing, but that writing with mentor texts was more helpful.

Pre- and Post-Survey

The pre- and post-survey results (See Appendix H) were turned into numerical quantities to easily compare. It is important to note that in the post-study, students increased their rating of

how much they liked to write from a score of 24 to a score of 26. Students increased their rating of how much they enjoyed writing from a score of 28 to a score of 39. Students also increased their rating of how much they liked to write during writing class from a score of 17 to a score of 22. Finally, students increased their rating of writing being fun from a score of 22 to a score of 30. Some of the scores remained the same, while others actually decreased. Students decreased their overall rating of writing in their journal, which did not pertain to the study. They also decreased their rating of their belief in themselves as good writers from a score of 26 to a score of 23, their opinions about the importance of being a good writer from a score of 53 to a score of 43, and their enjoyment in sharing writing with others from a score of 26 to a score of 13.

Discussion

Let's consider in what ways, or to what extent, do mentor texts impact motivation and engagement in writing? Through each aspect of my research study below, a clear impact is seen in regards to student motivation and engagement when writing with mentor texts.

Teacher Journal

The teacher journals were a useful tool in recalling each lesson, how the lessons went, and my opinion as a teacher of student engagement during the mentor text lessons. Through the analyzation of the teacher journals, I was able to note that student were engaged and performed above expectations during lessons and work time for the opinion writing. Students were able to produce their opinion first draft in only ten minutes, opposed to the thirty minutes it usually took students to write a first draft. As stated before, "young writers are strongly supported in the composition process when they are steeped in print-rich environments and have deep exposure to mentor texts that provide models of engaging, high-quality writing across a variety of forms and

genres” (Crawford, Sobolak, & Foster, 2017). Due to the strong mentor text examples, as well as the OREO writing structure, students were able to experience success in the writing lessons in the form of motivation and engagement.

The teacher journals also exposed some student comprehension of narrative writing, or structure difficulty during the narrative lessons. In these lessons, a higher number of students had struggled to complete their first draft in thirty minutes. Some students had needed extensive one-on-one work with me to properly develop their story. There are some possibilities as to why this happened. Students may have been less engaged during the narrative writing lessons, or had been more easily distracted. Students may have been more distracted due to the complexity of writing in detail a story about an experience that was unique to them. Or perhaps, I had been expecting students to “...learning how without understanding why...” (Laminack, 2017, p. 754) in terms of the narrative genre itself.

Another possibility is that students may have had a lack of understanding of the narrative writing model we were attempting. Narrative writing can be more complex for young students due to the vast possibilities of structure within narrative writing. Opinion writing can be taught more concretely to students with the OREO structure. Narrative writing, on the other hand, is a story, and great stories can be crafted in endless possibilities. It could also have been due to the fact that several students wrote longer pieces for narrative writing than they did for opinion writing. The expectation in second grade for any genre of writing is that students write a complete paragraph of at least six sentences. Some students felt the need to write more than six sentences in order to be able to tell their experiences in full. Despite the extended time students needed to complete their narrative writing, the end results were superb.

Observation Checklists

The checklists that were completed on each of the focus students helped me hone in on the exact performance and use of the work time in different students. Student 1 and Student 5 consistently struggled to write for the entire work time they were given. This is not new information to me. At this point in the year, I am very familiar with my students and which students struggle to stay on task. It had been my hope that teaching with mentor texts would have enable more students to maintain focus. Student 1 and Student 5 were able to write the whole time for the lesson, in which they were editing adjectives into their work with peers. It is possible that Student 1 and Student 5 benefited from doing collaborative editing with their predetermined partners. Student 2 and Student 7 were consistent in their focus and ability to write for the duration of the work time. Again, this is not surprising information to me as both of these students are typically dedicated workers and early finishers.

However, none of the students had been able to write the whole work time during the lesson for adding comparisons into their drafts. As a whole, the students had to spend time quietly thinking of the comparison they wanted to include in their writing, as adding comparisons was both a new and complex skill. Many students worked in small groups with me to create their comparisons. It is possible that this lesson needed more structure for how students should go about adding comparisons into their drafts, or perhaps students needed more time brainstorming possible comparisons to use. Despite students slow production when creating comparisons, I believe that using mentor texts for comparisons allowed students to access a once inaccessible skill (Moser, 2017).

Pre- and Post-Survey

The pre- and post-survey of the class as a whole was the second most helpful tool for gauging the change in student motivation and engagement with mentor text lessons. When I first started comparing the pre- and post-survey results by each student, I was surprised that more students had not scored writing higher in the post-survey. Despite some challenges with the narrative writing, students had overall seemed more engaged with writing and were producing higher quality writing pieces. However, there was not a dramatic increase in their individual positive perceptions about writing. After analyzing the pre- and post-survey of the entire class by number values, I was relieved to see that three specific writing statements had increased from pre- to post-survey. Students had increased their scores related to the following writing statements: “I like to write,” “I enjoy writing,” “I like to write during writing class,” and “writing is fun to me.”

As stated before, when reading and writing instruction are blended together students are able to learn more by analyzing mentor texts rather than studying these skills in isolation (Culham, 2014). Students were also able to experience the full effects of mentor texts as “mentor texts are most powerful when students frequently revisit them throughout the writing process...” (Gallagher, 2014, p. 29). The increase in these statements on the pre- and post-survey, showed me that, overall, the students enjoyed learning writing with mentor texts.

The following writing statements decreased: “I think I am a good writer,” “I think it is important to be a good writer,” and “I like to share my writing with others.” There were no changes made in how we share our writing with others. All year long we had posted our published work outside of our classroom. It’s possible that the decrease in these statements was

related to students' changing perceptions as they aged and became more conscious of those around them. It is also possible that the decrease in these statements was due to the change in students' perceptions of their writing. Perhaps after students were exposed to high quality writing and made more aware of what good writing sounds like, they became more conscious of their work. Students may have also decreased their writing perceptions, because writing with mentor texts pushed them outside of their comfort zone and into their maximal growth zone, which can be a difficult transition for students who typically complete assignments with ease.

Exit Interviews

The exit interviews with the focus students were the most helpful tool throughout the study. The interviews allowed me to get an inside perspective on how some of my students perceive writing and the reason behind their perceptions. It was interesting to learn that students may dislike writing because of the time of day that writing class took place, the amount of writing that was required from them, the act of writing made their hand sore, or that having to think of their own ideas was sometimes difficult. None of these reasons are due to the way that writing was being taught. However, when asked specifically about the mentor text lessons, students stated that they enjoyed the lessons for a variety of reasons. They enjoyed learning writing with mentor texts because the mentor texts gave them ideas, were helpful, and were enjoyable.

Collectively, the focus students stated that they would like to continue writing with mentor texts. These perceptions were possibly a result of the enjoyment students experienced as they listened to the mentor texts, and the effects the mentor texts had as a guide to their writing. As stated before, instead of students being just the reader, they studied the author's technique

and structure to better understand the text. This gave the students more writing options and choices.

Limitations

With every study there are limitations that may affect the findings. The limitations that I experienced during my action research study were due to the following: time and curriculum constraints, student absences, events such as fire drills and all school meetings, as well as a small pool of participants.

When I had originally planned my study I had wanted to focus on only one genre: opinion writing. However, due to time constraints with curriculum that needed to be met by the end of the year, I modified the study to include both opinion and narrative writing. Instead of going deeply into opinion writing and having students truly master the second grade opinion writing expectations by way of multiple written pieces of mentor text opinion writing, students received a broader understanding of both opinion and narrative writing. The action research study was our second time learning about and practicing both opinion and narrative writing.

Student absences, a fire drill, and an all-school morning meeting interrupted student work time, therefore contributing to the extension students needed to complete their final writing pieces. It would have also been beneficial to have recorded the lessons, student discussions, and student work time to have access to more genuine student voice as they were learning and working through each genre of writing. This would have provided me with further insight into their engagement levels.

Finally, the reliability of my study could be improved with a larger pool of participants. My study was limited to the fourteen students within my classroom, with a focus on four

individual students. Increasing the participant pool from a variety of backgrounds may have helped improve the reliability of my study.

In what ways, or to what extent, do mentor texts impact motivation and engagement in writing? Mentor texts enable students to more deeply learn writing genres and skills through quality writing examples of exactly what they are trying to achieve. Through writing with mentor texts, students' writing increased in skill level and students were cognitively more motivated and engaged with their work resulting in higher quality writing.

Implications and Conclusion

Overall, students improved their writing skills with mentor texts and were more engaged during direct teacher lessons. My findings correlate with the research in that “mentor text provide strong support for writers because they exemplify characteristics of genre and style that may be difficult to explain, but that can be clearly recognized when readers have the opportunity to actually observe their use in print” (Crawford, Sobolak, & Foster, 2017, p. 82). For the opinion writing genre, they were also more motivated during the independent writing process. Students enjoyed learning with mentor texts and this enjoyment in learning increased student motivation and engagement. As stated before, mentor texts allow for more student growth and motivation by providing a direct model that students can learn from.

Further research is needed to determine a deeper effect of the impact mentor texts have on student engagement and motivation. Additionally, more research is needed in finding an effective tool for evaluating student motivation and engagement during direct teacher instruction and independent writing time, since the teacher journal and checklist observations did not deeply capture student motivation and engagement. Moreover, research should be done to

“...consistently pair why and how so our students will gain control over when and where each move has power in their writing,” (Laminack, 2017, p.754) to enable students to truly understand each genre and writing skill. This would eliminate the mentality that mentor texts are a tool that can be copied in student writing.

In future studies with mentor texts, I would more closely consider student work samples, specifically pre- and post-writing samples. The writing samples have the ability to show true student motivation and engagement, especially if students are able to take what is taught in class and apply it to their writing. I would also change how I assess student motivation by no longer marking students as unmotivated or unengaged if they are not writing the whole time. Students who are engaged and motivated in the work may not write the whole time, as they need think time to process and apply the writing skill being taught.

This study has the potential to impact education broadly. Teachers need to be continually seeking tools to foster and develop student motivation and engagement in writing. Motivation and engagement is a key piece of student success both academically and socially. Far too many writers are at risk and disinvested in writing. Mentor texts can be a tool used to motivate and engage writers in the task of writing.

This action research study was a unique first experience for me in using mentor texts in the elementary classroom. The format of an action research study propelled me to try a new to me, research based practice in an area of need within my teaching. As a teacher who is passionate about rich content, and skilled instruction delivery, I can foresee action research studies becoming a steadfast tool as I seek to continually refine my effectiveness as an educator.

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doi:10.5204/intjfyhe.v3i1.119

Appendix

Appendix A

Formal Letter and Consent Form

Dear Students and Families,

I am currently working to obtain my Master's Degree in Reading at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. As part of the program, I will be conducting an action research study on *The Relationship between Mentor Texts and Student Motivation and Engagement in Writing*. I am seeking your help and support in this study. The study will be part of our regularly scheduled writing time, and will not require any additional time, nor will it take away from our curriculum or student learning standards.

Please take a minute to review the attached information and informed consent form. At the bottom of the informed consent form you will find a place for you and your student's signature. Please sign the bottom of the consent form and return ASAP. All students will participate in the lessons as part of our regular school day. The consent form enables me to use your student's data in my reports (see section 4). I greatly appreciate your consent. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sarah Tobisch

Informed Consent

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this action research study is to study how teaching writing with mentor texts may affect student motivation and engagement. All students/participants will engage in writing instruction and assignments as part of the regular school day. Your consent allows for the use of your student's data. Student names will not be used, nor will any identifiable information. The information that results from this study will only be shared in educational settings.

2. Procedure:

Participants will complete measures related to writing. Participants will complete pre/post writing survey, pre/post writing sample, weekly free writes, and some students will participate in individual interviews. The researcher will plan and conduct writing lessons based around mentor texts. The researcher will also observe participants and record field notes. Throughout the study, the researcher may record (write) class conversations, and collect student work.

3. Time required:

All students/participants will engage in writing instruction and assignments as part of the regular school day. Participants will complete the above procedures during the regular school day. The study will take over a six week span in the spring of 2019.

4. Risks:

Participants will be encouraged to actively engage in writing instruction and assignments. The researcher will observe students, but they will not be singled out. Interviews will be done individually, during the 4th round of our guided reading groups. Students already meet one-on-one with the teacher during the 4th round of guided reading groups. The researcher will select a variety of students to interview. Student names will not be used, nor will any identifiable information. The information that results from this study will only be shared in educational settings.

5. Your rights as a subject:

(i) The information gathered will be kept confidential. Data or summarized results will not be released in any way that could identify your child or you.

(ii) If you want to withdraw from the study at any time, you may do so without penalty.

Participation or

non-participation in the study will in no way affect your relationship with the instructor, the researchers, or any personal or academic standing you have. The information collected from you up to that point would be destroyed if you so desire.

(iii) At the end of the session, you have the right to a complete explanation (“debriefing”) of what this

experiment was all about. If you have questions afterward, please ask your experimenter or contact:

Dr. Todd Wilkinson

Dept of Psychology, CSH, UW-RF, 715-425-3576, Todd.Wilkinson@uwrf.edu

Also, once the study is completed, you may request a summary of the results.

6. Contact information for concerns:

If you have any concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, please call or write:

Diane Bennett, Director, Grants & Research, UW-RF,
 River Falls, WI 54022 telephone: 715/425-3195 email diane.bennett@uwrf.edu

This research project has been approved by the UW-River Falls Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, protocol # H2018 - T187.

***I have read the above information and willingly consent to participate in this action research study.**

Parent/Guardian:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Student/Participant:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Writing Motivation Survey/ Pre and Post Survey

Read each statement. Put a check in the box that communicates your feelings about writing.

Pre & Post Survey	Never	Not Normally	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Almost Always
1. I like to write					
2. I enjoy writing letters.					
3. I like to write stories.					
4. I like to write during writing class.					
5. I like to write during journal.					
6. I think I am a good writer.					
7. Writing is fun to me.					
8. I think it is important to be a good writer.					
9. I like to share my writing with others.					

10. Is there anything else you would like to share about your writing?

Appendix C

Opinion Anchor Chart

Opinion Writing

Purpose: so people know how you feel / about your opinion / what you think

Structure:

- O** ① State your **O**pinion clearly
- R** ② Tell your **R**eason for your opinion
- E** ③ Give an **E**xample to support your opinion
- O**^{last} Restate your **O**pinion

Sentence starters:

- In my opinion...
- I think that....
- I feel that....



Appendix D

Opinion and Narrative Mentor Texts

Opinion Mentor Texts:

Bird, D., & Alves, J. (2015). *In my opinion*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

doi:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYtt_CS4o8o

Orloff, K. K., & Catrow, D. (2011). *I wanna new room*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons

Narrative Mentor Texts:

Brinckloe, J. (1986). *Fireflies*. Aladdin Books.

doi:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHXABa21HJc>

Hanlon, A. (2012). *Ralph tells a story*. Las Vegas, NV: Amazon Children's Publishing.

Polacco, P. (2013). *Thunder cake*. Boston, MA: National Braille Press.

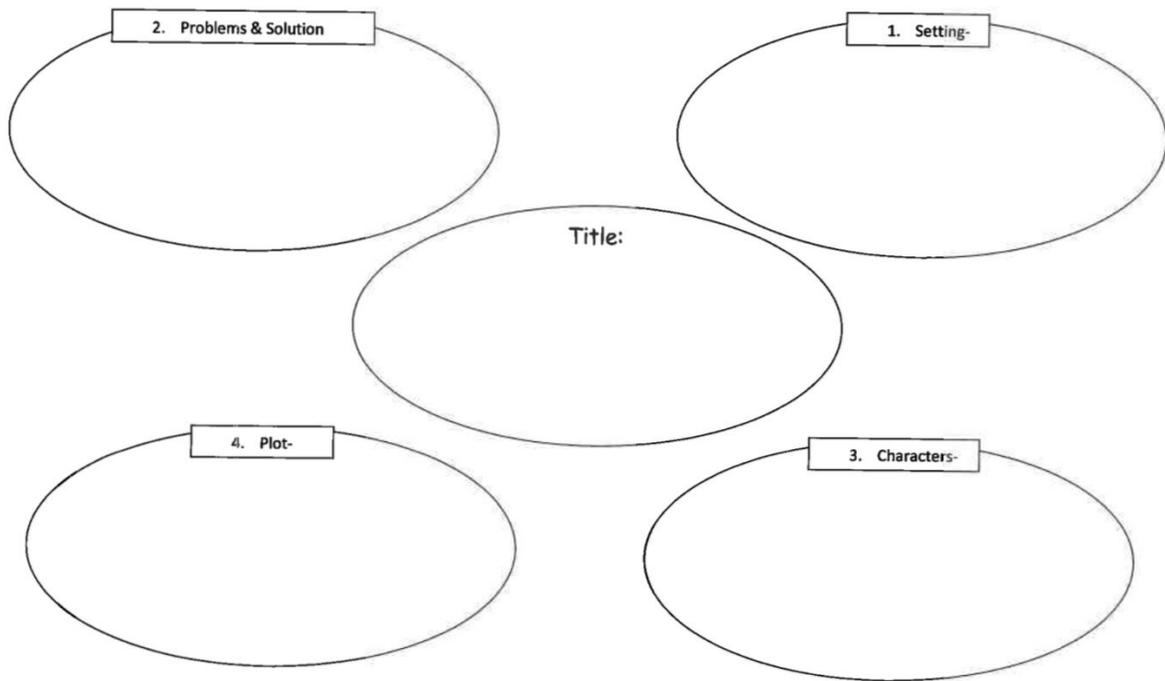
Appendix E

Narrative Web

Narrative Paragraph- Web (Planning)

Title: _____

Author: _____



Appendix F

Teacher Journal

Date:	Lesson	Teacher Journal Notes
3/6	Introduction and survey	Introduced that we were going to try teaching writing by using picture books to help us write a certain way. Then students took the survey on their current feelings towards writing the old way that it was taught.
3/7	What is Opinion Writing? Anchor chart “In My Opinion Read” Aloud: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYt_t_CS4o8o	Created anchor chart with students on what opinion writing is. We used the OREO structure of opinion writing to help organize our writing and drew pictures on the anchor chart in attempts to make the information more concrete for students. Students were very attentive during the anchor chart creation and during the book read aloud, and then adding more notes to the anchor chart.
3/8	Read book: “I Wanna New Room” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJCxFB9dOdY Add what we notice to the anchor chart	Students were extremely engaged for this lesson! They LOVED the book and were laughing at the parts where the boy compared his little brother to an animal. We added notes onto the anchor chart of what we noticed and possible sentence starters. Students were on task for the whole lesson.
3/12	Review chart and book notes, then determine structure for opinion paragraph and plan, and do first draft of opinion paragraph	We reviewed the notes, and added a drawing of an extremely stuffed oreo. Together we created an outline for the students to use to write their first draft. The outline correlated to the anchor chart and oreo drawing with the different parts of opinion writing. We brainstormed some ideas and wrote them on the whiteboard. Students then picked an idea in their head and pair shared their idea and 2 reasons with a partner. Then they started on their first draft. Students were very engaged throughout the lesson, and also wrote almost all of the first draft in 10 minutes, which I was very impressed by. Normally they take a lot longer and need a lot more assistance. They were fairly independent with their writing.
3/13	Re-read book to focus on adding comparison trait into our writing. Revise first draft, and conference with teacher	Students were very engaged with the 2nd read. We stopped any time there was a simile- using like or as and wrote it on the board. Students thought that the similes that were comparing the little brother to animals was especially funny. When conferencing with the teacher, we referred

		back to the similes on the board, and created one for their own paragraphs. Students were engaged and on task with this.
3/14	Rewrite and publish	Students were mostly all engaged while they were rewriting their stories. 4/14 students did not complete their work in the time provided and needed extra time.
3/19	What is Narrative Writing? Anchor chart & Read Aloud: "Thunder cake"- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhtKGCsAyY&t=318s	This lesson was a bit difficult for me as a teacher- my prep time was taken away and I was unable to prep like I normally would have for this lesson. Students were engaged, but could have been more engaged if my energy would have been where it needed to be. Students loved the book, "Thundercake." They were pulled right into the book the whole time and laughing at the onomonopias. We took note of the dialogue and onomonopias and added them to our chart. We also tried to see how good the writing was by identifying the different parts of narrative writing- took notes on the board as we identified the different parts of narrative writing that we noticed in, "Thundercake."
3/20	Read book: "Fireflies"- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3puKdzS6qs Add what we notice to the anchor chart	Students were engaged during the reading of the book. After we added to the anchor chart what we noticed- the use of the descriptive language and use of adjectives. 80% of students were engaged. This seemed like a little bit of a harder concept for students to see and understand- adding some kind of a visual to this lesson may be helpful in the future. As a teacher, I did not end up liking this book as much as I had originally thought. I think that there are probably some better choices for teaching adjectives in narrative writing.
3/21	Review chart and book notes, then determine structure for narrative paragraph. Plan and begin first draft. "Ralph Tells A Story"- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5ss8RTyzrw	After reviewing the anchor chart with the students, we planned our structure for our narrative writing. The students really enjoyed watching the video recording of <i>Ralph Tells A Story</i> . They were laughing at a few different parts. I was also able to take the lesson that Ralph learned- that there is a story everywhere and encourage students with their writing. We preplanned with a web. In the different parts of the web students had to state the characters, the setting, the plot, the problem, and the solution. They had to make sure that their ideas were in order. This took longer than just one class. Students needed time outside of writing class to finish up their web. A few students needed one on one help in organizing their story and forming sentences.

<p>3/26</p>	<p>Write 1st Draft</p>	<p>Students used this time to finish their webs and then write their first drafts. Students were focused, but this writing seemed like it was a lot more difficult for students. They were writing narratives of actual events in their life, but they still struggled with writing a cohesive story with nice flow.</p>
<p>3/27</p>	<p>Re-read book to focus on adding adjectives into our writing. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3puKdzS6qs Revise first draft by peer reading and editing with a predetermined partner</p>	<p>For this lesson we reread Fireflies and focused specifically on the adjectives the author uses to create pictures in the reader's mind. Students noted different adjective examples and we wrote them on the board. They also noted general descriptive writing and I added those examples to the board as well. Next students were given the task of working with a predetermined partner to try to add one adjective to every sentence if the adjective helped the sentence, and still allowed the sentence to have a nice flow to our ears. Students worked well in their partner groups. The majority of students were on task and were able to add 3-4 adjectives into each partner's paper. This lesson went well overall. Next time I would give the partners a certain color pen to add the adjectives with. I think this would help them with focus in more on their work. Students were also references their pink writing handbook from the beginning of the year because we sent happy, sad, and mad on vacation! So they were busy looking up alternative adjectives for these words.</p>
<p>3/28</p>	<p>Rewrite and publish</p>	<p>Students needed help in editing their first draft to make sure that the stories were told in detail. Many students were missing parts of their stories resulting in stories that were choppy and did not make sense. We began working in small groups this day with some students working with me and some students working with an assistant. However, students will need next week to finish up this writing and then publish it.</p>
<p>4/2-4/9</p>	<p>Rewriting and publishing</p>	<p>Students needed to work through this week to rewrite and publish their stories. The fact that they needed this extra time, signals to me that they were not as on task and engaged with the narrative writing. We also had added interruptions- fire drill, all school morning meeting, and some student absences.</p>
<p>4/9-4/12</p>	<p>Post survey, and exit interviews of focus group</p>	<p>The rest of the week was used for the post surveys, exit interviews of the focus group, and for the last few students to finish up publishing their work.</p>

Appendix G

Checklist Observations

Checklist Observation: 1 First Draft of Opinion Writing

Date: 3/12/19	Student 1	Student 2	Student 5	Student 7
Writes the whole time		X		X
Participated in lesson	X	X	X	X
Was actively engaged in lesson	X	X	X	X
Asked questions		X	X	X
Asked for help	X	X	X	X
Helped others		X		
Notes	Student had a hard time getting going-wanted one on one assistance.	Had a few questions about the structure and then was able to work independently.	Student struggled with focus when it came to independent writing time. Needed one on one assistance to get going.	Student worked hard, but needed help in checking the structure and flow of his writing.

Checklist Observation: 2 Adding Comparisons into Drafts

Date: 3/13/19	Student 1	Student 2	Student 5	Student 7
Writes the whole time				
Participated in lesson	X	X	X	X
Was actively engaged in lesson	X	X	X	X
Asked questions			X	
Asked for help	X			X
Helped others		X	X	
Notes	This skill was a bit outside of all of their comfort zones. We did some practice creating them together as a class. After the practice student 1 still worked one on one with me to create her comparison.	After we did the practice creating some example comparisons together as a class, student 2 and 5 were able to work independently for the most part.	No student wrote for the whole time during this lesson. Students spent time staring off as they were thinking of their own comparison. They also spent time listening as other students generated theirs, which helped them form their own comparison.	Student 7 worked one on one with me to create his comparisons. We would generate ideas together and then he decided which idea he liked the best and used it in his writing.

Checklist Observation: 3 Webs and First Drafts of Narrative Writing

Date: 3/26/19	Student 1	Student 2	Student 5	Student 7
Writes the whole time		X		X
Participated in lesson	X	X	X	X
Was actively engaged in lesson	X	X	X	X
Asked questions		X	X	
Asked for help	X		X	
Helped others				
Notes	Student 1 struggled to write the whole time- she was distracted by others and had difficult in thinking through the plot, and problem and solution of her story.	Student 2 wrote the whole time while stopping to asking clarifying questions about problem and solution for his specific story.	Student 5 was often staring off and struggled to begin writing her story. With prompting and extra work time she was able to complete her web and begin the draft.	Student 7 wrote the whole time, and didn't stop to ask questions. I made sure to go over by him and check in on the flow of his writing and make sure his story was making sense. He had to add more to the plot after talking with me.

Checklist Observation: 4 Peer Reviews and Adding Adjectives

Date: 3/27/19	Student 1	Student 2	Student 5	Student 7
Writes the whole time	X	X	X	X
Participated in lesson	X	X	X	X
Was actively engaged in lesson	X	X	X	X
Asked questions				
Asked for help				
Helped others		X		
Notes	<p>All students were engaged the whole time and happily working with a partner to add adjectives. Not all adjectives were quality adjectives or helped with the flow, but I was impressed at their ability to add adjectives.</p>			

Appendix H

Exit Interview

Post Interview Questions- Student 1

1. Tell me how you feel about writing? Why do you feel this way?

Happy because it is fun. I like telling stories.

2. Do you like to write during class time? Why or why not?

No, because I forget the stories that I hear. Then I can't write it, I waste time. I spend time thinking what it was and not writing.

3. Tell me a writing lesson or project that you really like from 2nd grade or 1st grade. Why did you like this project?

I know one we could do. We can shape a writing paper like a gingerbread boy and then we could write something on it. We could write what we do in school.

4. What did you think about our writing lessons that used books to teach us the writing skills?

Why do you think this?

They helped me think of good stories like that. I liked them.

5. Would you want us to keep learning our writing skills with books for example?

Yes, because it helped us have good stories.

Post Interview Questions- Student 2

1. Tell me how you feel about writing? Why do you feel this way?

Good, because it's kinda fun. Sometimes it's not. It's fun when we get to write like the author. It's not fun when we have to make up our own story. Because you don't get to look out of the books.

2. Do you like to write during class time? Why or why not?

Sometimes, I like it when we write on the board with you- like a web. I don't like writing in them boxes (drafts) because you have to write more sentences.

3. Tell me a writing lesson or project that you really like from 2nd grade or 1st grade. Why did you like this project?

Writing about when we got Daisy (narrative), because I knew a lot about it. It was easy to write about that.

4. What did you think about our writing lessons that used books to teach us the writing skills? Why do you think this?

They were fun to do, because they would help you with your writing ideas.

5. Would you want us to keep learning our writing skills with books for example?

I like both ways of writing. Writing with the books was more helpful.

Post Interview Questions- Student 5

1. Tell me how you feel about writing? Why do you feel this way?

I don't like it, because I have to write and write and write.

2. Do you like to write during class time? Why or why not?

Sometimes, I like to write at journal time, but I don't like to write our paragraph in the morning. (Why don't you like to write it in the morning?) Because I don't feel up to it- I'm tired.

3. Tell me a writing lesson or project that you really like from 2nd grade or 1st grade. Why did you like this project?

I like writing the pictures to the story. (Publishing the writing with illustration).
Because I like drawing pictures.

4. What did you think about our writing lessons that used books to teach us the writing skills?
Why do you think this?

Good, because we used a book. The book gave me ideas. I liked writing that way.

5. Would you want us to keep learning our writing skills with books for example?

Yeah, because I'm used to it.

Post Interview Questions- Student 7

1. Tell me how you feel about writing? Why do you feel this way?

Um, not so good. Because I write messy and my hand gets sore.

2. Do you like to write during class time? Why or why not?

Yeah because after you do it for a little bit it is fun. It's not fun in the beginning because you aren't used to it but in the middle you are. I like to write during centers because you get good details. Like you have good answers. I like word study because it tells you what to write.

3. Tell me a writing lesson or project that you really like from 2nd grade or 1st grade. Why did you like this project?

Writing about sloths in first grade. Because they are cool.

4. What did you think about our writing lessons that used books to teach us the writing skills? Why do you think this?

Good, because then you can copy what the book says. You couldn't copy it exactly, you had to put some better words into your writing thing that you're going to do.

5. Would you want us to keep learning our writing skills with books for example?

Yes.

Appendix I

Pre and Post Survey Comparison

Survey Statement	Pre-Survey Total	Post-Survey Total
I like to write.	24	26
I enjoy writing.	28	39
I like to write stories.	24	24
I like to write during writing class.	17	22
I like to write during journal.	31	29
I think I am a good writer.	26	23
Writing is fun to me.	22	30
I think it is important to be a good writer.	53	43
I like to share my writing with others.	26	13