

Using Dialogue Journals to Improve Writing for English Language Learners

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### Abstract

This study investigated the impact of dialogue journal writing on the writing performance of four fourth-grade English Language Learners at an elementary school in Northwest Arkansas. Writing performance was measured using the *Arkansas State Department Writing Rubric for Fourth Grade*. The intervention involved writing back and forth on various topics of interest between the researcher and the students for 12 weeks. The students who participated in the journal writing showed greater improvement in writing when compared to the other four English Language Learners from the same class who did not participate in the dialogue journal writing. The growth in writing indicates this may be an effective strategy for improving the writing skills of English Language Learners.

*Keywords:* English Language Learners, dialogue journals, writing, 6+1 Traits

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### **Introduction**

The number of students learning English as a foreign language increases yearly in the United States. There are approximately 9.9 million English Language Learners in the U.S. and most of those students are considered Limited English Proficient as well (Francis, M. Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer & H. Rivera, 2006). According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (2010), in the 1997-1998 school year, the Arkansas Department of Education reported an enrollment of 6,717 students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Within 10 years, the number of LEP students had increased to 26,003 while the state's total enrollment had increased by less than 20,000 students. This represents an increase in English Language Learners of more than 287% in 10 years. Within the Northwest Arkansas school district where this study occurred, students' primary languages encompassed 39 different languages (School district website, 2010). English Language Learners comprise a significant portion of public school students today and learning to teach these students is a reality that every Arkansas teacher will face.

An English Language Learner (ELL) is a student who is not yet considered to be fully proficient in English and requires instructional support of academic content, although the student might have passed English Language Proficiency assessments (Ballantyne, Sanderman & Levy 2008). English Language Learners that have not passed these assessments are also considered to be Limited English Proficient (LEP). Educators have expressed concerns over practices and interventions that best assist ELLs, of whom a large proportion struggle with progressing in academic skills, achieving English proficiency and meeting state and national standards (Francis et al, 2006).

One of the greatest challenges for English Language Learners is writing. Although the language barrier affects students' understanding and performance across all subject areas, the area in which students experience the most difficulty is writing. English Language learners score significantly lower than English Proficient students according to *The Nation's Report Card: Writing 2007* (2008), with only 5% of students assessed scoring proficient or higher in writing and 42% scoring below basic.

When it comes to writing, English Language Learners tend to struggle with style techniques, vocabulary and sentence formation. Students often speak English long before they're capable of communicating those same thoughts clearly through writing. Francis et al (2006) contend that although the students may possess basic skills, many lack the skills to effectively meet writing standards. Students spend the majority of their days communicating with others verbally (whether in English or in their native language), however they usually only practice writing occasionally during school. Logically, it makes sense that without continual practice, writing skills will be slow to develop.

There are a number of different strategies and techniques that teachers can use to assist with teaching English Language Learners with writing. Most often, teachers look for strategies they can easily incorporate into the classroom and use with the rest of the students as well as their ELLs. According to Peyton (1990), one of the leading researchers of dialogue journal applications, using dialogue journals is a useful strategy because "dialogue journals are adaptable for use with a wide variety of student populations...[They] need not be limited to language arts or ESL classes. In content courses- science, social studies, literature, and even math- they can encourage reflection on and processing of concepts presented in class and in readings" (p.190-191). Teachers can adapt this method to suit their classroom and students. Rather than target

English Language Learners specifically, dialogue journals present an opportunity for teachers to make writing more involved with all students.

This study took place from October of 2010 to March of 2011 at an elementary school in Northwest Arkansas. The study focused on writing through dialogue journals with a small group of ELLs. This research report is useful in furthering understanding of how dialogue journals can be used to improve writing for English Language Learners.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to determine if, by writing in daily dialogue journals with a teacher and reviewing letters and journal entries that modeled quality writing (i.e. through the letters from the teacher and/or novels written in letter form), the writing abilities of English Language Learners would improve. The researcher theorized that fluency in writing among English Language Learners was slow to develop due to lack of practice and regular feedback from the teacher. The researcher implemented the journal writing with a variety of structured and open writing prompts. The researcher used the 6+1 Writing Traits rubric to measure student progress in the areas of ideas, voice, organization, conventions, word choice, sentence fluency and presentation at the beginning and end of this study.

### **Definition of Terms:**

To facilitate the understanding of this study, the following terms are defined:

1. Dialogue journals are defined by Peyton (1993) as “a written conversation in which a student and teacher communicate regularly (daily, weekly, etc., depending on the educational setting) over a semester, school year, or course” and where “the teacher is a participant in an ongoing, written conversation with the student, rather than an evaluator who corrects or comments on the student's writing” (p. 2).

2. English Language Learners are “those students who are not yet proficient in English and who require instructional support in order to fully access academic content in their classes. ELLs may or may not have passed English language proficiency (ELP) assessments” (Ballantyne, Sanderman & Levy, 2008, p. 2).
3. Limited English Proficient (LEP) refers to English Language Learners who, according to the NCELA, have not achieved proficiency in the English language as determined by each state (2008).
4. Writing performance refers to the extent to which students demonstrate competence and knowledge of skills when writing, according to set standards (McCurdy, Skinner, Watson & Shriver, 2008). For the purpose of this study, writing performance has been operationalized to mean the extent to which students demonstrate competence or mastery of the six traits of writing outlined in the 6+1 Writing Traits Rubric.

### **Organization of the Research Report**

This research report is organized into five sections: Introduction, Review of Literature, Methodology, Results and Discussion. The first section introduces the study, which investigates the effectiveness of dialogue journals in improving the writing quality of English Language Learners and includes definitions of relevant terms. The second section examines current and past literature regarding the academic struggles ELLs face and the use of dialogue journals as an intervention strategy for English Language Learners. Section three explains the methodology for this research investigation, the setting and participants of the study, data collection methods and analysis. Section four presents observations and results of the study. The fifth section concludes this report with a complete discussion of the study, its conclusions, limitations and implications.

### **Review of Literature**

This section provides a comprehensive, yet not exhaustive review of literature on the writing performance of English Language Learners and the use of dialogue journals to improve writing. The intent is to review relevant research and other literature that support the argument that the use of dialogue journals improves the writing performance of English Language Learners. Numerous studies (Alberta Education, 2007; Francis et al, 2006; Ortiz and Pagan, 2009) indicate that ELL writing performance is linked to poor academic vocabulary and unprepared teachers. Other literature (Brown, 1996; Peyton, 1990) and empirical research (Miller, 2007; Nassaji & Cumming, 2000; Werderich, 2002) suggest that the use of dialogue journals with English Language Learners improves writing quality, fluency and student confidence.

### **The Plight of the English Language Learner**

As the number of English Language Learners enrolled in public schools increases, so does the achievement gap between ELL performance and that of their English Proficient classmates. Literature (Francis et al, 2006; Ortiz & Pagan, 2009) addresses the achievement gap between ELLs and English Proficient students, in which ELLs tend to score at or below basic proficiency levels. In a report on the state of ELLs in education, Ortiz and Pagan (2009) suggest that closing the achievement gap between English Language Learners and native English speakers is the most pressing challenge facing today's educators. The authors (2009) cite that between 2004 and 2006, the number of Limited English Proficient students across the country increased by 114%, with several states reporting increases greater than 300% over a 10-year period. Ortiz and Pagan (2009) estimate that within the next 15 years, English Language Learners will comprise 25% of U.S. public school children. Similarly, a report by Francis et al

states that in a national writing assessment from 2005, only 7% of fourth grade ELLs achieved proficient scores compared to 32% of native English speakers. The authors also reported that the percentage of proficient scores among ELLs decreases after fourth grade, suggesting that English Language Learners are at a great disadvantage when it comes to academic success.

Furthermore, experts (Francis et al 2006; Alberta Education, 2007) opine that one of the greatest struggles for English Language Learners is the issue of acquiring academic English. Francis et al (2006) report that the majority of ELLs in U.S. schools today were either born in the United States or immigrated before kindergarten and consequently possess adequate or good speaking skills. Nevertheless, the authors (2006) found that these same students lag far behind academically because they do not possess the fluency with academic English or vocabularies that are sufficient to support the level of academic reading and writing required in schools. A study conducted by Alberta Education (2007) also outlines the qualitative challenges facing English Language Learners, including the fact that English Language Learners struggle to express their knowledge in English making them less likely to pursue new concepts in English. The study (2007) affirms that learning a second language is a much longer and more complex process than acquiring a first language. This study (2007) also notes that English Language Learners are not only expected to acquire the same knowledge and understanding as English Proficient students, but are “expected to express that knowledge and understanding with a level of English language that is comparable to that of their native English-speaking classmates” (p. 6). Furthermore, Alberta Education (2007) found that when students do begin to acquire proficiency in English, they may be faced with cultural, emotional and value conflicts that arise between their home languages and English immersion.



**Dialogue Journals with English Language Learners**

Experts (Miller, 2007; Peyton, 1990) have come to view the use of dialogue journals with English Language Learners as an effective strategy for improving writing quality in the classroom and building fluency. Peyton (1990) largely affirms the effectiveness of dialogue journals on improving writing quality, especially when used with ESL students. Peyton (1990) defines the dialogue journal as a written, regular conversation between the student and teacher in which the student writes on topics of his or her choosing and the teacher responds and comments as a participant in a conversation rather than an evaluator or grader. Peyton's (1990) definition of dialogue journals generally serves as the starting point for research done by later authors on the subject. One of the most important characteristics of dialogue journals, according to Peyton (1990), is the lack of overt error correction. Teachers do not call attention to or correct errors in dialogue journals, but rather model correct English. Miller (2007) also emphasizes the need for dialogue journals to represent a way to speak without having to worry about anxiety or social pressure. Miller's (2007) study focused on the reflective journal writings of 10 high school students who had recently arrived in the country. Miller (2007) found that dialogue journals improve the quality of writing by helping non-native English speakers to establish their identities and voice in English.

Beyond providing a written way to connect to the curriculum, Miller (2007) found that dialogue journals help students develop their written voice while scaffolding the development of language competence without judgment. Peyton (1990) emphasizes that one of the most beneficial qualities of dialogue journals is their adaptability. All students can benefit from the reflective writing practice, including both native and non-native speakers and younger children as well as older students and adults (Peyton, 1990). Students can write on topics of their

choosing or write reflectively over academic content areas, however above all, Peyton (1990) concludes, the journals should create a place where students can freely express themselves as they grow as writers.

Additionally, experts (Brown, 1996; Nassaji and Cumming, 2000; Werderich, 2002) suggest that dialogue journals are versatile and adaptable ways to increase writing in the classroom. Both Brown (1996) and Werderich (2002) implemented dialogue journals as journals between students as well as with the teacher. Brown (1996) found that when students write back and forth with teachers, they have the freedom and privacy to ask teachers questions they might not ask in front of their peers for fear of being ridiculed or laughed at. Brown (1996) found that in dialogue journals, teachers can adjust their own writing to appropriately fit the reading and writing level of each individual student and gradually use their own writing to challenge the students to write at a higher level as the journals progress. Werderich (2002) explains that, in this study, the students each wrote one letter per week to another student and once every two weeks to the teacher. This use of the dialogue journals revealed that student interests (to both the teacher and the other students), allowed the students to make personal discoveries, enabled the teacher to set more suitable challenges for the students and provided insight and feedback teaching strategies used (Werderich, 2002). Brown (1996) points out that one advantage to using dialogue journals between students is that the students see each other as peers and so may feel more comfortable writing to one another than they would feel writing to the teacher. Brown (1996) noted that this strategy also helps to spread cultural tolerance and understanding as students get to know one another better through their writings.

Werderich (2002) and Nassaji and Cumming (2000) used the journals to target students' individual needs as a means of differentiated instruction. Werderich (2002) found that by reading

and responding to the journals, the teacher gained a better understanding of the students and promoted personalized reading instruction that matched each student's need. The teacher was able to see common threads or trends in the students' writing that lead to whole class mini lessons and read-alouds. Nassaji and Cumming (2000) used journal writing as a way for teachers to target the Zones of Proximal Development of non-native English speakers. This study (2000) consisted of a long-term investigation on the uses of dialogue journals to develop a Zone of Proximal Development, where the journals served as a tool of language that established a mutual level of understanding between the student and teacher. The authors (2000) found that through the journals, the teacher was able to prompt more engagement from the student and challenge him to shape the conversations into new directions. Both studies (Nassaji & Cumming, 2000; Werderich, 2002) found that the journals enabled the teacher to establish ongoing communication with the student, create optimal conditions for student learning and lead them to growth. Werderich (2002) emphasizes that the true advantage to dialogue journals is that they offer a way for teachers to effectively accommodate individual differences among students. Nassaji and Cumming's (2000) findings suggest that the continual interaction between student and teacher creates a vehicle for ongoing informal assessment and monitoring, allowing the teacher to continually gauge the student's level.

### **Summary**

Due to the rapid increase of English Language Learners in public schools, research (Alberta Education, 2007; Francis et al, 2006) suggests that meeting the needs of English Language Learners is an ever-increasing challenge in public education today. Other experts (Peyton, 1990; Miller, 2007; Nassaji & Cumming, 2000) suggest that dialogue journals serve as a multifaceted tool for teachers to use when working with students learning English as a foreign

language, creating a non-threatening forum for writing that often leads to improvements in writing fluency among English Language Learners. This research and literature suggest that dialogue journals could serve as an effective method for improving the writing performance of English Language Learners and aid in second language learners' struggles to achieve academic success.

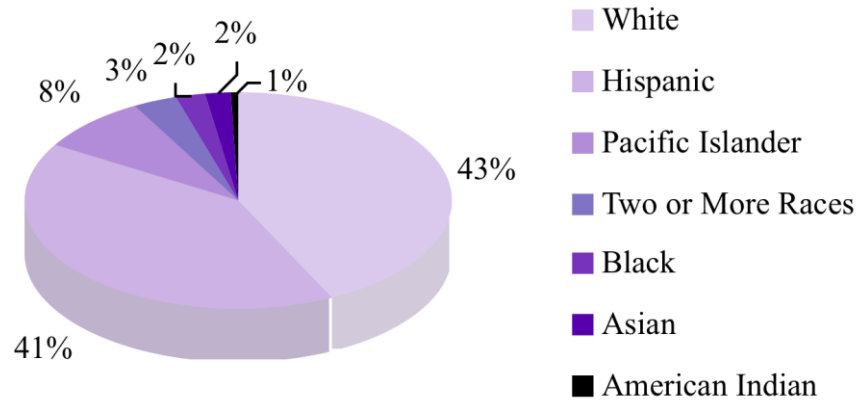
### **Methodology**

This study was designed to determine the effectiveness of using dialogue journals to improve writing among English Language Learners. This study examined the effects of daily dialogue journals between student and teacher on writing fluency and quality. At the beginning and end of the study, students were given released writing prompts from the Arkansas Benchmark writing assessment to judge improvements made after the dialogue journals were implemented. A control group was also used to help determine the effectiveness of the journals in comparison with standard improvements made as a result of in-class instruction and practice. In this study, the students also read the novel, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. This novel was chosen because it consists of journal entries and letters written by an 11-year-old boy. The novel shows the character's progression in writing over time. Throughout the study, special attention was paid to specific areas of improvement.

### **District Setting**

The study will take place at an elementary school in Northwest Arkansas. Demographic information for the school district provided in this section is based on published information from the 2010-2011 school year (Arkansas Department of Education, 2011). The school district serves students from prekindergarten through grade 12. The district in which the school is located has a total number of 18,810 students in 25 schools. There are 9,775 males and 9,035 females. There are 9,428 elementary students, 2,908 middle school students, 2,763 junior high students, and 3,711 high school students. The ethnic breakdown for the school district is as follows: 8,062 White; 7,674 Hispanic; 1,563 Pacific Islander; 438 Black; 352 Asian; 100 American Indian, and 621 students of two or more races (see Figure 1). In this district, there are 1,785 students that participate in the Gifted and Talented program. There are 1,818 students

involved in the district's special education program. There are 12,039 students served by the free/reduced lunch program. There are 9,445 students in this district that are considered English Language Learners. Of these students, 7,948 are classified as having Limited-English-Proficiency.



*Figure 1.* Racial demographics for the school district in which the study occurred

### **School Setting**

The elementary school in which this study occurred has a total population of 622 students. The student population consists of 274 White students, 251 Hispanic students, 48 Pacific Islander students, 21 Black students, 14 Asian students, and 14 Native American students (see Figure 2). According to an interview conducted at the elementary school (“T.G. Smith Elementary”, 2010), this elementary school has 429 students on free/reduced lunch, which is 69% of the student population. Additionally, this elementary school is one of a selected few in the district to implement the Toyota Family Literacy Program, which is a literacy initiative funded in part by Toyota that focuses on increasing literacy among Hispanic families. As a part of this program, interested Hispanic parents attend a class held four mornings per week with lessons and instruction designed to increase their own literacy and English skills while also learning how to help their children improve while at home. The 2010-2011 school year is the

second year for this program to be implemented at this particular school. This school is on Alert due to not achieving Adequate Yearly Progress the previous year. There are two ESL instructional facilitators and one ESL Instructional Aide that pull 50 students for instruction. In addition, the ESL staff serves students in the regular classroom as well. Around 250 students are served with ESL services.

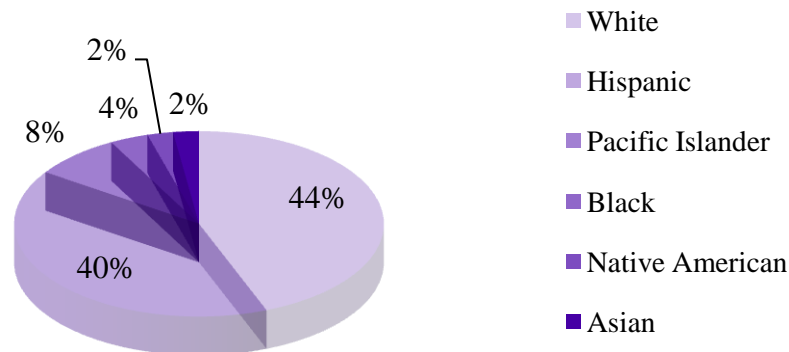


Figure 2. Racial demographics for the elementary school in which the study occurred

### Classroom Setting

The classroom from which the researcher selected the students contained 28 fourth grade students approximately ages nine and ten. Of these 28 students, 10 were English Language Learners. Eight of the 10 English Language Learners elected to participate in the study. Of these eight, six students were Hispanic and two were Pacific Islander.

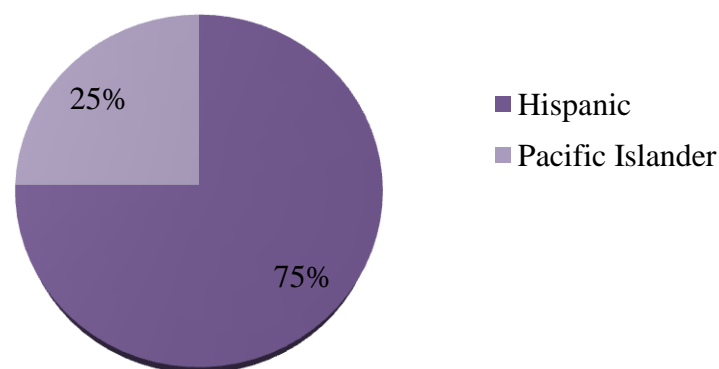


Figure 3. Racial demographics for the students that participated in this study.

**Participants**

This study focused on four English Language Learners from one 4<sup>th</sup> grade class. Ten English Language Learners were assessed at the beginning of the study. Before the intervention was implemented, one student moved out of the school and one student declined to participate. The students were divided up into a control group that did not receive the intervention and an experimental group that did receive the intervention based on the results of the written assessments in an attempt to create similar groups. Before the final assessment occurred, one member of the control group moved and a new ELL arrived. The final groups consisted of four female English Language Learners in the control group, and two females and two males in the experimental group. None of the student's home language was English. Of the eight participants, two students' first language was Marshallese and eight students' first language was Spanish.

**Confidentiality**

Before the study began, permission to observe and interact with the students was granted by the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A). The school principal and classroom teacher also consented to the study and provided input and guidance throughout its entirety along with copies of writing samples from in-class assignments. Each student in the control group and the experimental group received a letter from the researcher and an informed consent form explaining the nature of the study (see Appendices B-C2). Each student's parents provided written consent for the students to participate in the study. In addition to outlining the nature of the study, the parent letter and informed consent established that student participation in the study was completely voluntary and would not directly affect academic grades. The students were able to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. These letters



also established that each student would be given a pseudonym during the reporting of results in order to protect the identity of the participants.

### **Data Collection**

In order to effectively answer the research question, “How does the use of dialogue journals affect the writing of English Language Learners?” data were collected to evaluate the students’ writing, judge improvements made throughout the intervention process and analyze the results upon the completion of the study.

**Evaluation instruments.** To evaluate the students’ writing, the researcher used the 6+1 Writing Traits rubric. This rubric was selected because it is divided into seven areas, allowing the researcher to evaluate each student for ideas, voice, organization, conventions, word choice, sentence fluency and presentation. Each of the seven traits was evaluated with a numeric score ranging from zero to five with a possible total score of 35. In each area, a score of three is considered acceptable. Any score above a three indicates an above average score while scores below a three indicate that the writing is below average. At the end of the study, the researcher evaluated the post intervention assessments according to the rubric and compared the results to those of the control group. The collections of journal entries were also examined as portfolios, revealing specific qualitative improvements the students made throughout the study.

**Baseline data.** In order to effectively judge improvements made throughout the course of this study, the researcher assessed all students before and after the intervention strategy was implemented. The assessments consisted of released fourth grade writing prompts from the 2009 and 2010 Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) as a part of the state Benchmark exam (see Appendices D1-D2). In the pre-intervention assessment, half of the students were given the 2009 writing prompt and half of the

students were given the 2010 writing prompt. The researcher assigned a numeric grade to each writing sample according to the rubric as well as a sub-grade for each of the seven areas evaluated. The students were divided up into the control and experimental groups based on the pre-intervention assessment and suggestions from the classroom teacher.

**Other data collection methods.** Samples of the students' journal writings were copied and analyzed according to the six writing traits. This serves to show the progression of students' writing throughout the intervention process. The journal entries consist of a mixture of free responses, in which the students wrote about any topic they wanted to, and structured responses in which the researcher presented the students with a prompt or selection of prompts.

Additionally, the researcher collected scores from the English Language Development Assessments from previous school years. These scores were not included in the study but rather served to provide the researcher with a general understanding of each student's language background.

**Post data analysis.** For the post intervention data, all students responded to the 2009 writing prompt because the classroom teacher had assigned the 2010 prompt as an in-class assessment just a couple of weeks prior to the conclusion of the study. This prompt was selected so that results from the implementation of the intervention could be related to potential implications for writing performance on the state exam.

### **Intervention Strategies**

The dialogue journals between the four students in the experimental group and the researcher were the only interventions implemented for the purpose of this study. The classroom teacher was the primary provider of literacy instruction for both the control group and the experimental

group. These students also received additional assistive services as a result of the English as a Second Language Program.

The students worked with the researcher about three times a week for an hour each session, although at times this arrangement conflicted with pullout ESL services causing the students to leave early. During these writing sessions, the students would write about anything they wanted to, respond to a letter from the researcher, respond to something they had read from *Dear Mr. Henshaw* or form a written response to a question or prompt developed by the researcher. During the first month of this study, the students were mainly focused on how much they had to write and constantly asked how long the entries needed to be. The researcher suggested that the entries be about a paragraph or two, although the students could write as much as they needed to fully explain themselves. Later in the study, the students would proudly show others how much they had written with comments like, “look I wrote 18 lines!” The students were always welcome to share their writing aloud with the other students however this was not obligatory. The students could also write letters to each other, which they did occasionally.

### **Week One**

During the first week, the researcher introduced the concept of dialogue journals. The researcher only met with the students once this week. Students were told that they could write about anything they wanted to, but also that sometimes there would be a specific topic to write on. The researcher introduced the book, *Dear Mr. Henshaw* and the group read the first eight pages aloud together and each student received a book to take home. In the first few pages, the main character introduces himself to the reader. Consequently, most of the students chose to write a journal entry introducing themselves. The students were also given time to decorate their

journals with markers and stickers. The researcher found that this helped develop a sense of pride and ownership of their writing from the very beginning of the study.

### **Week Two**

During Week Two, the researcher responded to each of the students' entries with a letter. If the students asked questions, the researcher answered them. The students were also asked if they had any Halloween plans. The researcher met with the students three times throughout the week in one-hour sessions. This week, most of the students wrote about Halloween. The students continued reading the novel as a group. Beginning with page 16, the main character begins responding to a list of personal questions asked by Mr. Henshaw. The students were asked to respond to the questions, "What is your family like?" and "Where do you live?" (Cleary, 1983, p. 16-20).

### **Week Three**

The students were given a list of what each journal entry should include in order to better understand the expectations (see Appendix E). The researcher also discussed descriptive writing with the students, explaining that they could use each of the senses to better describe a place or a situation. The students continued reading as a group and responded to the next few questions from the book. The researcher pointed out that when the main character answered Mr. Henshaw's letters, he didn't just say "yes" or "no" but rather fully described his answer in paragraph form. The students noticed that the novel's narrator had begun editing his writing, and initiating a discussion on how each student could edit his or her journal entries as well. Each student received another letter from the researcher in response to his or her entry.

### **Week Four**

Due to schedule complications and assemblies, the group only met once this week. The

students were reminded to write in their journals daily, and were given the option to respond to a question from the novel or to write on a topic of their choosing. The researcher gave the students bookmarks and assigned them to read to page 50 in the novel independently. This could be done at home or when they completed one of the group writing assignments.

### **Week Five**

In addition to responding to letters from the researcher and choosing their own topics, the students responded to a situation from the novel. Most of the students wrote about their favorite places or what they like to do in their free time. The researcher asked the students to write about what they would do if someone stole their lunches just like a bully stole the main character's lunch.

### **Week Six**

Due to Thanksgiving vacation, the researcher only met with the students one time this week. The researcher gave the students new letters and the students responded to them. The students kept their journals to write in over the break and were asked to continue reading from the novel.

### **Week Seven**

This week the students began by describing what they did over the Thanksgiving break. They practiced writing with sensory details to create imagery. The students were asked to read to page 80 of the novel. At this point in the book, the main character feels very disappointed. The students were asked to write about a time when they felt disappointed and a time when they felt excited. The researcher responded to the students' journals twice this week.

### **Week Eight**

This week the students went on a field trip to a nursing home. The researcher asked the students to write about this experience. The researcher gave the students new letters and left the

journals with them to write in over the winter break. The researcher reminded the students to write daily in their journals about anything they wanted to and instructed them to finish *Dear Mr. Henshaw* over the break.

### **Week Nine**

Only one of the students had written consistently over the winter break. The others had only written occasionally. The researcher responded to each entry they had written while away. This week the students mainly wrote about their vacations and holiday celebrations.

### **Week Ten**

The students were asked to write personal reactions to the novel describing what they liked and what they disliked. The students were also asked to compare themselves to the main character of the story. The researchers responded to the students' letters. The students missed a day from school due to snow, so many of the students also chose to write about what they did on their day off.

### **Week Eleven**

The students missed another week of school due to inclement weather. Many of the students wrote about the snow. The researcher responded to the students' letters. This week the students also wrote letters to one another.

### **Week Twelve**

This week the students decided to write letters to their favorite authors as the main character had done in *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. They modeled their letters after his. The students turned in rough drafts to the researcher who explained to each student corrections that needed to be made. The students decorated their final drafts and the researcher mailed the letters. The students were more animated about this writing assignment than they had been about any other. The rough

drafts of these letters were included in the researcher's analysis although corrected final drafts were actually mailed to the authors. The researcher and the students corresponded in final letters, concluding the study.

## Results

The purpose of this section is to provide an analysis of the data collected during the study designed to answer the research question, “How does the use of dialogue journals with English Language Learners affect students’ writing?” The subjects for this study consisted of eight fourth-grade English Language Learners. The subjects were divided equally into a control group and an experimental group. Over the course of this study, the subjects in the experimental group participated in interactive written journals with the researcher. The students met an average of three times per week for one-hour sessions to practice writing. The study took place over the course of 12 weeks. The subjects studied the novel, *Dear Mr. Henshaw* because it shows how an 11-year-old boy progressed in writing through the use of letters and a personal journal.

### Baseline Data

The baseline data were established using pre-intervention writing samples that were evaluated with the 6+1 Writing Traits rubric (see Appendix F). All subjects participated in this part of the study. The students were given released writing prompts from the 2009 and 2010 ACTAAP Benchmark test for 4<sup>th</sup> graders. The researcher analyzed the students’ writing quantitatively by comparing the numeric scores of each writing sample as well as qualitatively through the use of anecdotal records. The results of the writing prompt administered before the implementation of the dialogue journals indicated that the English Language Learners in this class collectively wrote on an acceptable or below acceptable level.

**Pre-intervention results.** All of the students participated in a writing assessment administered before the implementation of the intervention. The students’ scores are divided into the traits measured by the rubric and averaged for both the experimental group and the control group (see Figure 4).



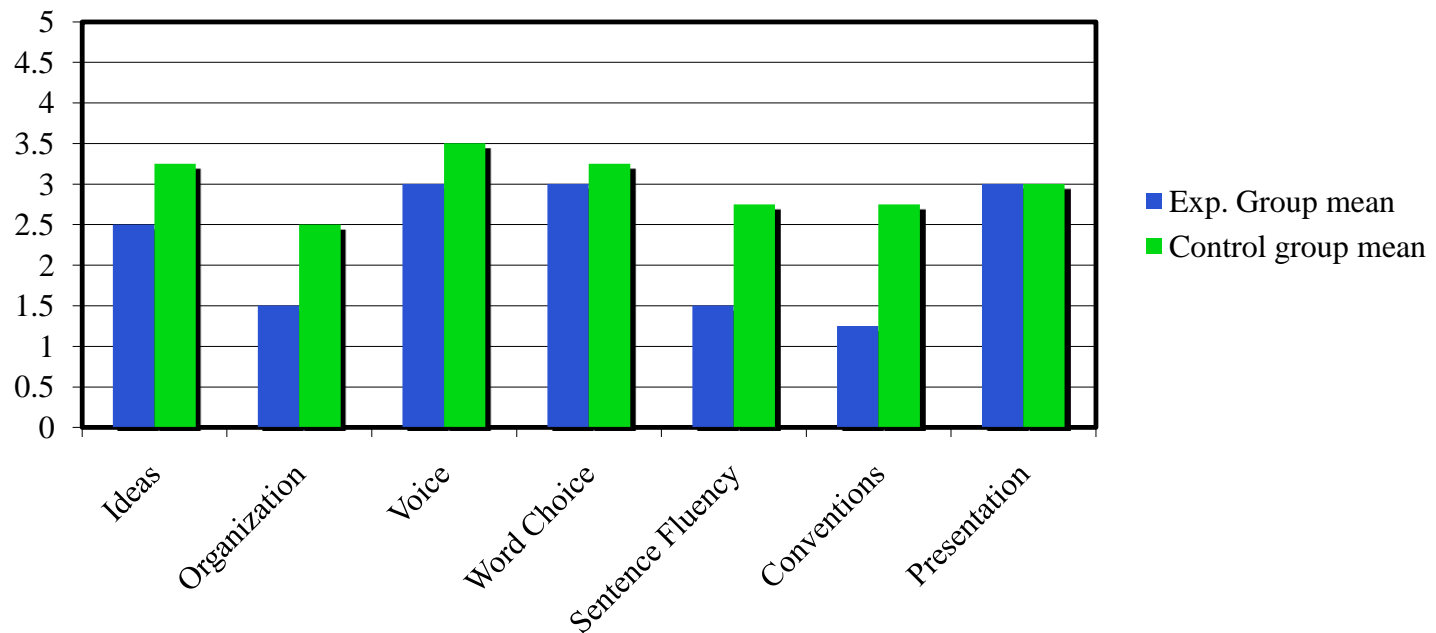


Figure 4. Pre-intervention mean scores, separated by trait

After administering the selected writing prompts to eight English Language Learners, the researcher selected Students 1, 2, 3, and 4 to participate in the experimental group. Initially, the researcher divided the control and experimental groups evenly based on scores from the rubric and recommendations from the classroom teacher. However, due to students moving during the course of the study, the actual control group was at a higher level than the experimental group. Two students from the control group did not participate in the initial writing prompt. Consequently, writing samples from the study began were selected to serve as the pre-intervention data for these students. The control group consisted of Students 5, 6, 7, and 8. The following table is a summary of observations made by the researcher regarding the students' initial writing performance.

Table 1: Initial observations of student writing

Student 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No clear sense of purpose</li> <li>• Run-on sentences</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few transitions</li> <li>• Poor use of conventions/mechanics</li> <li>• Little punctuation</li> <li>• Not well paced</li> <li>• Lacking details</li> <li>• Strong personal voice</li> </ul>
Student 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor use of mechanics</li> <li>• Creative ideas yet lacks introduction and a clear purpose</li> <li>• Awkward pacing</li> <li>• No real sentence sense</li> <li>• Lacks punctuation and transitions</li> </ul>
Student 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biggest problem is clarity</li> <li>• Good ideas and presentation, however organization and sentence sense problems make understanding difficult</li> <li>• Poor conventions and mechanics</li> <li>• Strong personal voice</li> </ul>
Student 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written in Spanish, no English</li> <li>• Circular writing with no sentence sense or purpose</li> <li>• Heavy conventional errors</li> <li>• No real details</li> <li>• Impersonal</li> </ul>
Student 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall good</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused ideas</li> <li>• Logical sequencing</li> <li>• Many details</li> <li>• Ok sentence fluency, some rough areas</li> <li>• Lacks editing</li> </ul>
Student 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No real focus</li> <li>• Ideas are somewhat unclear</li> <li>• Some routine details</li> <li>• Generally good word choice and use of conventions</li> </ul>
Student 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unclear purpose</li> <li>• Many details yet the reader is still left with questions</li> <li>• Strong writer's voice</li> <li>• Fluency, organization and conventions are ok</li> </ul>
Student 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacks sentence sense and organization</li> <li>• Solid ideas</li> <li>• Personal details</li> <li>• Poor organization and sentence fluency</li> <li>• Difficult to connect the ideas at times</li> </ul>

### During Intervention

Throughout the implementation of the dialogue journals as an intervention strategy, data were collected in the form of anecdotal records gathered from the students' journal entries. The following are observations the researcher made throughout the dialogue journal process:

**Weeks 1-2**

At the beginning of the study, most of the students started out writing about themselves, their families and their pets. Student 1's writing during that first month did not show as much marked improvement as some of the other students. He started out just writing short, choppy, factual sentences (see Appendix G).

Student 2's initial entries started out disjointed and unclear. Although the reader could understand the idea, the sentence structure, word choice and conventions errors made the piece difficult to understand. In her first entry on October 22, she wrote, "That my dog that her name is Pollie... When I hit her mouth with spank she started to bites. with her sharp tooth... My brother call her that and Polly. Bonnie is my sweast girl in my life. She poop her own bathroom..." (see Appendix H). When describing Halloween, Student 2 describes the events sequentially yet without elaborating (see Appendix I). Student 2 had trouble making subjects and verbs agree as well as showing possession.

Student 3's writing started out choppy with many errors in mechanics and little exploration of detail. For example, in her first journal entry, she wrote, "I am 11 year old. I like music... I realy miss my gardma she diy. I am realy nice at people" (see Appendix J). She relies on short factual sentences. However, when writing about something that bothered her, Student 3 goes into much more detail and writes with clear emotion (see Appendix K).

Student 4 started out just copying from the novel rather than writing his own thoughts. However, as the study progressed he began to write more and more. The researcher responded to Student 4 in English and Spanish. This was so that Student 4 would fully understand and be able to participate in the written conversations yet he would also be able to see the letters in English.

In an early letter to the researcher, Student 4 wrote that one of his favorite things to do was to write with the researcher because the researcher knew English and Spanish (see Appendix L).

### **Weeks 3-5**

During this time, Student 1 began showing improvement. Some of his journal entries turned into paragraphs accompanied by drawings, although these often still lacked focus or punctuation (see Appendix M). Student 1 did not seem to enjoy writing as much as the other students, however he did seem to like writing about football and about California, his favorite place.

Student 2's writing began to show introductory sentences and inclusion of sensory details and similes. When describing Disney World, she wrote, "It have lot of stuff. Like that there are belonged from the movie that they are at Disney Channel. It look like there are slide, rodercoaster, water fall. It feel like it fun like a playing the world. It smell like a orange like a fruit. It sound like scream like a girl." She also began to show self-monitoring skills by crossing out phrases she knew were incorrect and re-writing them (see Appendix N). This was done without input or suggestions from the researcher.

Student 3's writing was still a little disjointed at times, however she did begin to show self-monitoring strategies (see Appendix O). Generally, her writing began to show more focus on single ideas and providing details for a single topic (see Appendix P).

When Student 4 began writing about his family or his home in Mexico, his writing became much more descriptive and detailed. By this time, he began replacing certain Spanish words with their English equivalents, such as the word "my." In one entry he wrote entirely in English, "My dog is so important" (see Appendix Q).

### **Weeks 6-9**

Student 1's writing progressed somewhat during this period. His entries generally focused

on one topic however at times the writing seemed very rambling and distracted (see Appendix R). Student 1 continued writing in run-on sentences without punctuation or pacing. Student 1 did not write over the winter break.

Student 2's writing showed marked improvement during this time with more coherent descriptions. When describing her Thanksgiving, she wrote, "I went my sister house and she 30-years old and I went to my Grandma and my Grandpa house. My sister house smell like orange. It taste like a beautiful turkey like a chicken. It look like there a red, dark red rose. It sound like chomp when they eat the turkey" (see Appendix S). Later, she began making up titles for her entries and continued to use more details and imagery and self-monitor her writing. Her entries became more personal. She still struggled with using auxiliary verbs and prepositions correctly. Student 2 continued writing regularly over the winter break while some of the other participants did not.

Student 3 began to show a lot of improvement as well. Her sentences varied in structure, flowed much more smoothly and were well paced (see Appendix T). Her writing also displayed less mechanical errors. Student 3 began to show a more narrative, personal style of writing in her journal entries. Student 3 wrote a few times over the break, although not consistently.

Student 4 wrote with much more detail. Although he still wrote in run-on sentences without punctuation, he began to develop a more narrative voice. He wrote, "On Thanksgiving Day it was my family that made all the food and when it was nighttime all of my family arrived and we all passed the night together and afterwards we ate dinner and afterwards we watched a movie...<sup>1</sup>" (see Appendix U). His writing continued to become more personal and he continued to incorporate random English words or phrases into his journal entries (see Appendix V).

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<sup>1</sup> This text has been translated from Spanish to English.

**Weeks 10-12**

Due to weather constraints, the students only wrote with the researcher a few times during these last few weeks. The students wrote to each other as well as to their favorite authors. Many of their letters showed marked improvement. Towards the end of January, Student 1 began showing self-monitoring skills when writing comparisons between himself and the character from *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (see Appendix W).

Student 2's writings continued to progress during this time. She began to include brief introductory and concluding sentences (see Appendix X). Her sensory descriptions began to relate more to the subject as well. For example, she wrote, "When I was a younger kid, my parents, me, my sister, and my brother lived in Texas. Texas looks like a lot of apartments and houses. It was a warm and sunny place... I came outside and it sounded like a very fun day. Because I could hear kids playing" (see Appendix Y).

During these weeks, Student 3's journal entries often began with introductory or topical sentences. She continued to struggle with using verbs in past tenses and word order (see Appendix Z). Towards the end of January, Student 3 began to use "would" instead of "will" in hypothetical or conditional situations (see Appendix AA) Her sentence sense and fluency also continued to improve (see Appendix BB).

Student 4's journal entries began to include more English, especially when writing about his family (see Appendix CC). Throughout the month of December, the entries included random English words in mostly Spanish paragraphs. In January, Student 4 began to write almost entirely in English with some help from the researcher.

All of the students seemed to really enjoy writing to their favorite authors at the end of the study. They seemed to pay more attention to this assignment than to others and as a result, these

letters turned out really well. Overall, the subjects showed much greater fluency and organization when writing these letters (See Appendix DD-GG). For example, Student 1's letter was well structured. Student 2's letter showed a clear thought process and showcased her writer's voice. Student 3's author letter was very well organized and contained only a few errors. With some help, Student 4 was able to successfully write questions to his favorite author and a couple of comments about his favorite book.

### Post Intervention Data

The posttest used was the Released 2009 ACTAAP writing prompt. This was administered to all the participants. Figure 5 shows the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group for each trait.

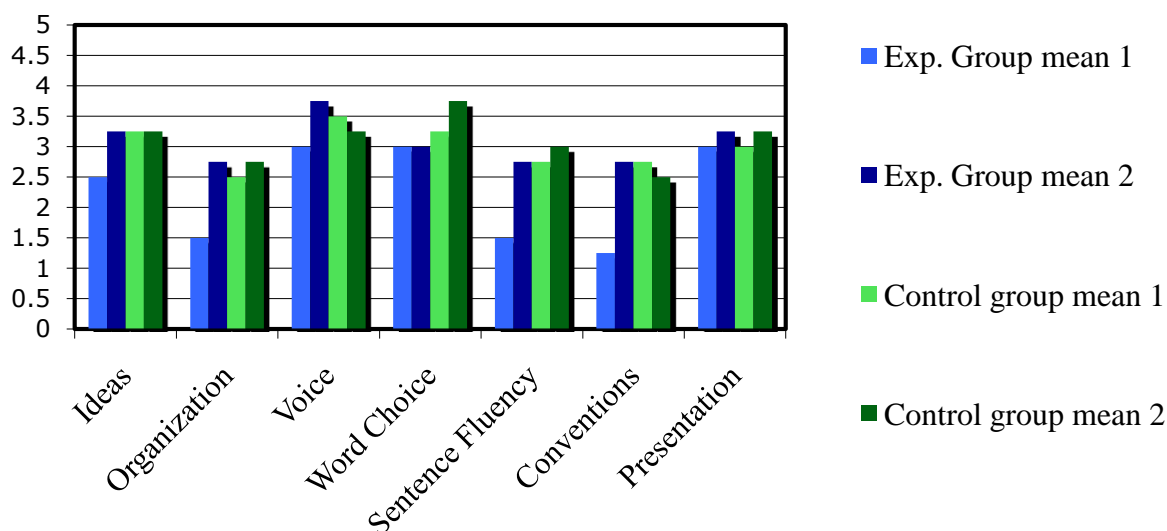


Figure 5. Pre and post-intervention mean scores, separated by trait.

In order to determine the impact of the use of dialogue journals on the writing performance of a group of 4th grade English Language Learners, the pre and post-intervention assessment means for each trait were compared. The results were analyzed using a paired-samples *t*-test with an alpha level set at .05. Table 2 illustrates the results obtained from the *t*-test



comparison of pre and post-intervention assessment data for the writing prompts. The t-test was conducted for the control group and the experimental group to be able to compare improvements made during the course of the intervention. The analysis of the experimental group's data revealed a significant difference between the pre and post-intervention assessments,  $t(6)=2.447$ ;  $t$  Stat: 3.925;  $p0.00775$ . The mean of the pre-intervention assessment was 2.25 and the mean of the post-intervention assessment was 3.0714.

Table 2: Results obtained from the experimental group *t-test* for the 2010 ACTAAP Released Writing Prompt 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Assessment

<u>Pre-Assessment</u>		<u>Post-Assessment</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>t</i> Stat	<i>p</i>
N	Mean	N	Mean			
7	2.25	7	3.0714	2.447	3.925	0.00775
Maximum points possible = 5					$p < .05$	

The analysis of the control group's data did not reveal a significant difference between the pre and post intervention assessments,  $t(6)=2.447$ ,  $t$  Stat: 1,  $p0.35591$ . The mean of the pre-intervention assessment was 3. The mean of the post intervention assessment was 3.107.

Table 3: Results obtained from the control group *t-test* for the 2010 ACTAAP Released Writing Prompt 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Assessment

<u>Pre-Assessment</u>		<u>Post-Assessment</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>t</i> Stat	<i>p</i>
N	Mean	N	Mean			
7	3	7	3.107	2.447	1	0.35591
Maximum points possible = 5					$p < .05$	

Additional t-tests were conducted to determine the significance of the differences between the control group and the experimental group's scores from both the pre-intervention assessment and the post intervention assessment. Table 4 illustrates the results obtained from the comparison of the pre-intervention assessment scores. This analysis revealed that the experimental group's scores were significantly lower than the control group's scores;  $t(6)=2.447$ ;  $t$  Stat: 3.674,  $p0.01040$ . The mean of the control group's pre-assessment scores was 3 and the mean of the experimental group's pre-assessment scores was 2.25.

Table 4: Comparison of Pre-assessment scores for the experimental and control groups

<u>Control group</u>		<u>Experimental group</u>		$t$	$t$ Stat	$p$
N	Mean	N	Mean			
7	3	7	2.25	2.447	3.674	0.01040

Maximum points possible = 5

$p < .05$

Table 5 illustrates the results obtained from the comparison of the post-intervention assessment scores. This analysis revealed that the experimental and control groups' scores were not significantly different;  $t(6)=2.447$ ;  $t$  Stat: 0.2401,  $p0.81817$ . The mean of the control group's pre-assessment scores was 3.1071 and the mean of the experimental group's pre-assessment scores was 3.0714.

Table 5: Comparison of post-assessment scores for the experimental and control groups

<u>Control group</u>		<u>Experimental group</u>		$t$	$t$ Stat	$p$
N	Mean	N	Mean			
7	3.1071	7	3.0714	2.447	0.2401	0.81817

Maximum points possible = 5

$p < .05$

This section has presented an analysis of all data collected for the purpose of measuring the effects of dialogue journals on the writing performance of 4<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Learners. The next section provides a discussion of the results, conclusions that can be drawn, limitations imposed on the research and implications for further study.

### **Discussion**

Through practicing writing on a regular basis, students learning English as a second language are able to make steady improvements with regard to the quality and fluency of their writing. The typical amount of time devoted to writing in the elementary classroom is adequate for native English speakers to develop the skills needed to succeed on the state writing exam. Native English Speakers are generally able to express their thoughts and ideas in writing more quickly and effectively than those who experience a language barrier as well. However, English Language Learners enter the classroom with greater needs regarding language and literacy instruction (Peyton, 1993).

From the results of standardized tests and reports such as *The Nation's Report Card*, educators are finding that the current methods of teaching writing and language are insufficient to achieve success with English Language Learners (Salahu-Din et al, 2008). These students need something more. Dialogue journals provide regular writing practice in low-stress forum where students are able to express themselves freely as well as see models of quality writing. This is a useful strategy for improving English Language Learners' writing fluency and allows for the transfer of these skills into other areas of writing.

### **Review of Results**

Based on the results of this study, the researcher concluded that dialogue journals serve as an effective intervention to improve the writing for English Language Learners. Over the course of 12 weeks, the implementation of dialogue journals produced significant improvements in the writing of four, 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELL students. This study found that the students that participated in the dialogue journals showed significant improvements overall on Benchmark style writing at the end of the 12-week study. Through evaluation of the students' pre and post intervention

writing with the 6+1 Writing Traits rubric and analyzing the overall results with t-tests, the researcher found that the dialogue journals significantly affected writing improvement. The results of the t-tests show that the students that participated in the journals improved significantly whereas the students that did not receive this form of regular writing practice failed to show significant improvement in their overall scores.

Additionally, through examination of the students' writing with regard to the traits measured by the 6+1 Writing Traits rubric throughout the entire course of the study, the researcher noted specific areas in which the students improved. For example, the students on average made the greatest improvements in the areas of organization, conventions and sentence fluency. At the end of the study, the students were able to focus their writing on a single topic or idea and organize their ideas around introductory and concluding sentences. Through practice and seeing grammatically correct writing modeled by the researcher, each student improved his or her use of conventions as well, even though specific corrections were never made.

## **Conclusions**

Based on these results, the researcher concluded that dialogue journals are an effective strategy for improving the overall writing of 4<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Learners. These results are similar to the results of Peyton's (1993) study, which concluded that the dialogue journals built stronger relationships between the students and the person who responded to their writing that allowed for individualized instruction. Peyton (1993) also found that the students' wrote with more detail and description, and that through feedback and writing adjusted to just beyond each student's level, the students wrote more fluently.

**Limitations**

As with any research investigation that occurs in an elementary school setting, there were factors over which the researcher had no control that may have affected the results of this study. One limitation that may have positively affected this study is natural student maturation. As is common with early adolescents, it is likely that the students that participated in the study matured greatly both emotionally and academically from October through February, when this study occurred. It is also possible that the students that participated in the dialogue journals showed greater improvements at the end of the study because they started out on a generally lower level than the students in the control group.

Other factors that should be taken into consideration are scheduling factors. The researcher met with the participants during the last hour of the school day. It is often harder for students to focus academically at the end of the school day and there were many days in which the students' writing time was interrupted or replaced by school assemblies or special testing. Additionally, several weeks were interrupted during the winter months due to inclement weather. During this time, the students did not write consistently or receive feedback from the researcher as often. Due to scheduling limitations and the fact that the study was not conducted by the classroom teacher, the students only wrote in the dialogue journals over the course of 12 weeks. A longer or more integrated study might have produced greater results for the students' writing.

Additionally, the instrument used to assess the students before and after the intervention may have negatively limited the results. The prompt selected came directly from the state standardized test, specifically for the purpose of being able to relate the results to potential performance on this test. However, the prompts from this test generally require students to write narratively over hypothetical situations such as finding a magic carpet. Students tend to produce

higher quality writing when writing expository pieces they can relate to or support with personal experiences. The results from initial and final expository writing samples may have shown improvements that were more significant.

### **Implications**

The results of this study imply that dialogue journals can be used effectively to improve the writing of elementary English Language Learners. Each of the students that participated in the dialogue journals throughout the entire study showed marked improvement in the overall quality of his or her writing, specifically in the areas of organization of ideas, use of conventions, and sentence fluency. This indicates that similar improvements may be gained if this intervention were to be used with English Language Learners in other classrooms. Dialogue journals can be used as a strategy to build writing fluency for English Language Learners in other elementary school classrooms. This strategy can be used with other fourth grade students as well as with older and younger students.

### **Recommendations**

The results of this study can be used for further research on how to maximize the writing improvements of English Language Learners. This study can be replicated with older or younger students to judge the strategy's effectiveness with a variety of age groups. Furthermore, implementing dialogue journals with a larger sample size would likely yield stronger conclusions.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommends that teachers incorporate dialogue journals into their classrooms as a way to improve writing for English Language Learners. Because of the limited time in the classroom schedule, ELLs don't always receive as much writing instruction as they need to make real improvements. Utilizing dialogue journals

throughout the school year provides the students with regular practice and feedback along with examples of quality writing. Due to the prevalence of interruptions that occur at the end of the school day, it is recommended that teachers select a less hectic time during the day to give the students the opportunity to write. This should be built into the schedule just like any other regularly occurring classroom activity and should occur in conjunction with formal language and literacy instruction. Due to the unstructured and individualized nature of the dialogue journals, teachers can implement this strategy with the entire class, ensuring additional writing practice for both native and non-native English speakers.

### **Summary**

In summary, the researcher found that dialogue journals served as an effective intervention strategy for improving writing for this group of 4th grade English Language Learners. Over the course of 12 weeks, the implementation of dialogue journals produced significant improvements in the writing of four, 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELL students. The findings of this and other studies indicate that similar improvements may be gained if this intervention were to be used in other classrooms. Due to the use of dialogue journals, students participating in this study showed significant improvement in the areas of ideas, organization, voice, sentence fluency and conventions whereas the group of ELLs that did not write regularly in the dialogue journals did not improve significantly.



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**Appendices****Appendix A**

October 13, 2010

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Kaitlyn Datzman

Marcia Imbeau

FROM: Ro Windwalker

IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 10-09-117

Protocol Title: *Using Dialogue Journals to Improve Writing for English Language Learners*

Review Type: ☐ EXEMPT ☒ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 10/12/2010 Expiration Date: 10/07/2011

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Compliance website (<http://www.uark.edu/admin/rsspinfo/compliance/index.html>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

**If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 120 Ozark**

**Hall, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu)**

## Appendix B

Dear participant,

Thank you for choosing to participate in this study on “Using Dialogue Journals to Improve Writing for English Language Learners.” My name is Kaitlyn Datzman and I am an undergraduate majoring in Childhood Education. I will be conducting all the research for this study. The purpose of this research is to determine if the use of dialogue journals with English Language Learners is an effective way to improve writing skills. Dialogue journals are journals in which each student writes to the teacher and the teacher writes back. For English Language Learners, fluency in writing may be slow to develop if students aren’t practicing daily and receiving regular feedback from the teacher. It is my theory that by writing in daily dialogue journals with a teacher and reviewing letters and journal entries that model quality writing (i.e. through the letters from the teacher and/or novels written in letter form), the writing abilities of English Language Learners will significantly improve. I wish to prove that this sort of daily practice will increase English Language Learners’ confidence, comfort, and fluency, therefore improving the overall quality of writing more quickly than through the typical in-class writing assignments.

At the beginning of this study, you will be placed into one of two groups. All students will complete a brief writing assignment to be evaluated with a rubric. You may be in the group that will participate in a 12-week experiment to determine if dialogue journals are an effective tool for improving writing quality for English Language Learners. If you are in this group, you will write letters to me each day, and at the end of each week, I will respond with a letter to you. I will meet with you and the other students from this group 2-3 times a week to work on writing. During these times, we will also study the novel, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, by Beverly Cleary. At the end of the 12 weeks, all students will complete another writing assignment.

There are no anticipated risks for this study, however all students will benefit from the additional writing practice and feedback. Other possible benefits include potentially increased confidence, comfort, and fluency in writing and overall improved writing quality.

Once again, I thank you for participating in this study and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Kaitlyn Datzman

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent

*Title:* Using Dialogue Journals to Improve Writing for English Language Learners

*Researcher:*

Kaitlyn Datzman, Undergraduate Student  
Compliance Coordinator  
Marcia Imbeau, Ph.D., Faculty Advisor  
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(479) 575-  
irb@uark.edu

*Description:* The present study will investigate the use of dialogue journals in improving the English writing quality of English Language Learners. You will be assigned to one of two groups and will complete a brief writing assignment. You may be assigned to a group that will participate in a 12-week writing improvement study. Students in this group will work on dialogue journals with the researcher. A dialogue journal is simply a journal in which you will write letters to the researcher each day, and each week receive a letter back. If you are in this group, you will also participate in a reading/writing unit over the novel, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, by Beverly Cleary. All students will complete an additional writing assignment at the end of the 12-week period.

*Risks and Benefits:* The benefits include contributing to the knowledge base of the effects of dialogue journals on student writing quality as well as receiving additional writing practice and feedback. Other potential benefits include increased confidence, comfort, and fluency in writing as well as overall improved writing quality. There are no anticipated risks to participating in this study.

*Voluntary Participation:* Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Your grades will not be directly affected by participation in this study.

*Confidentiality:* You will be assigned a code name that will be used when the results (including writing samples) of this research are submitted. Only the researcher will know your name, but will not divulge it to anyone. All information will be held in the strictest of confidence.

*Right to Withdraw:* You are free to refuse to participate in this research and to withdraw from this study at any time. Your decision to withdraw will bring no penalty to you.

**Appendix C2*****Informed Consent: To be completed by the student:***

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the description, including the purpose of the study, the

(Please print)

procedures to be used, the potential risks and benefits, the confidentiality, as well as the option to withdraw from the study at any time, and I believe I understand what is involved. My signature below indicates that I freely agree to participate in this experimental study and that I have received a copy of this agreement from the researcher.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**To be completed by the student's parent or legal guardian:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the description including the purpose of the study, the procedures to

(Please print)

be used, the potential risks and benefits, the confidentiality, as well as the option to withdraw from the study at any time. I believe I understand what is involved. My signature below indicates that I freely give my student permission to participate in this experimental study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix D1

### PART II Released Writing Prompt—2009 Augmented Benchmark Grade 4

#### Writing Prompt C

**C**

Suppose you are on a flying carpet that takes you anywhere you choose. Think about where you would go and what you would do.

Now write a story about your ride on a flying carpet. Give enough detail so that the person reading your story will understand what happened.

#### Writer's Checklist

1. Look at the ideas in your response.
  - Have you focused on one main idea?
  - Have you used enough details to explain yourself?
  - Have you put your thoughts in order?
  - Can others understand what you are saying?
2. Think about what you want others to know and feel after reading your paper.
  - Will others understand how you think or feel about an idea?
  - Will others feel angry, sad, happy, surprised, or some other way about your response? (Hint: Make your reader feel like you do about your paper's subject.)
  - Do you have sentences of different lengths? (Hint: Be sure you have variety in sentence lengths.)
  - Are your sentences alike? (Hint: Use different kinds of sentences.)
3. Look at the words you have used.
  - Have you described things, places, and people the way they are? (Hint: Use enough detail.)
  - Are you the same person all the way through your paper? (Hint: Check your verbs and pronouns.)
  - Have you used the right words in the right places?
4. Look at your handwriting.
  - Can others read your handwriting with no trouble?



## Appendix D2

### PART II Released Writing Prompt–2010 Augmented Benchmark Grade 4

#### Writing Prompt C

**C**

In your school, you noticed there was a closet door that no one ever opened. One day you opened it!

Now write a story about what happened when you opened the door. Be sure to give enough detail so that the person reading your story will understand.

#### Writer's Checklist

1. Look at the ideas in your response.
  - Have you focused on one main idea?
  - Have you used enough details to explain yourself?
  - Have you put your thoughts in order?
  - Can others understand what you are saying?
2. Think about what you want others to know and feel after reading your paper.
  - Will others understand how you think or feel about an idea?
  - Will others feel angry, sad, happy, surprised, or some other way about your response? (Hint: Make your reader feel like you do about your paper's subject.)
  - Do you have sentences of different lengths? (Hint: Be sure you have variety in sentence lengths.)
  - Are your sentences alike? (Hint: Use different kinds of sentences.)
3. Look at the words you have used.
  - Have you described things, places, and people the way they are? (Hint: Use enough detail.)
  - Are you the same person all the way through your paper? (Hint: Check your verbs and pronouns.)
  - Have you used the right words in the right places?
4. Look at your handwriting.
  - Can others read your handwriting with no trouble?

## **Appendix E**

### **All About the Dialogue Journals**

**You are to write one journal entry every day. We will also write during class, however your homework each day is to complete your journal entry. All entries must be completed before our in-class work time.**

**You may write about anything you want to. Sometimes you will also have a specific topic or question to respond to. Please respond to these topics fully. After you write that entry, you may write another one with a topic of your choice.**

**What you should include in every entry:**

**Date**

**Indented first line**

**Write a minimum of 8 full lines. You may always write more if you'd like!!!**

**If given a topic or asked a specific question, be sure to include the answer in your entry.**

**A capital letter should start every sentence**

**Every sentence should end with a period, question mark or exclamation point.**

**Powerful, descriptive and purposeful words- use words that communicate exactly what it is you want to say. Use words that make your sentences more active and interesting.**

**Before you finish:**

**Re-read your journal entry.**

**Did you fully answer and explain all the questions?**

**Did you complete all your thoughts and ideas?**

**If given a question or a topic, does your response match the question?**

**Check for spelling and punctuation mistakes. These entries are not expected to be perfect and however it is important to re-read your work and fix careless mistakes.**

**When in doubt, write, write, write!!!**

## Appendix F1

## 6+1 Trait® Condensed Scoring Guide

Ideas: The heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, with details that enrich and develop that theme.	Organization: The internal structure, the thread of pattern meaning, the logical and sometimes intriguing pattern of the ideas.	Voice: The unique perspective of the writer evident in the piece through the use of compelling ideas, engaging language, and revealing details.
<p>⑤ <i>This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.</i></p> <p>A. The topic is narrow and manageable.</p> <p>B. Relevant, telling, quality details go beyond the obvious.</p> <p>C. Reasonably accurate details.</p> <p>D. Writing from knowledge or experience; ideas are fresh and original.</p> <p>E. Reader's questions are anticipated and answered.</p> <p>F. Insight</p>	<p>⑤ <i>The organizational structure of this paper enhances and showcases the central idea or theme of the paper; includes a satisfying introduction and conclusion.</i></p> <p>A. An inviting introduction draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.</p> <p>B. Thoughtful transitions</p> <p>C. Sequencing is logical and effective</p> <p>D. Pacing is well controlled</p> <p>E. The title, if desired, is original</p> <p>F. Flows so smoothly, the reader hardly thinks about it</p>	<p>⑤ <i>The writer of this paper speaks directly to the reader in a manner that is individual, compelling, engaging, and shows respect for the audience.</i></p> <p>A. Uses topic, details, and language to strongly connect with the audience.</p> <p>B. Purpose is reflected by content and arrangement of ideas.</p> <p>C. The writer takes a risk with revealing details.</p> <p>D. Expository or persuasive reflects understanding and commitment to topic.</p> <p>E. Narrative writing is honest, personal, and engaging.</p>
<p>⑥ <i>The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.</i></p> <p>A. The topic is fairly broad.</p> <p>B. Support is attempted.</p> <p>C. Ideas are reasonably clear.</p> <p>D. Writer has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.</p> <p>E. The reader is left with questions.</p> <p>F. The writer generally stays on topic.</p>	<p>⑥ <i>The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion.</i></p> <p>A. The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion.</p> <p>B. Transitions often work well.</p> <p>C. Sequencing shows some logic, yet structure takes attention away from the content.</p> <p>D. Pacing is fairly well controlled.</p> <p>E. A title (if desired) is present.</p> <p>F. Organization sometimes supports the main point or story line.</p>	<p>⑥ <i>The writer seems sincere, but not fully engaged or involved. The result is pleasant or even personable, but not compelling.</i></p> <p>A. Attempt to connect with audience is earnest but impersonal.</p> <p>B. Attempts to include content and structure to reflect purpose.</p> <p>C. Occasionally reveals personal details, but avoids risk.</p> <p>D. Expository or persuasive writing lacks consistent engagement with the topic.</p> <p>E. Narrative writing reflects limited individual perspective.</p>
<p>⑦ <i>The paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. The reader must make inferences based on sketchy or missing details.</i></p> <p>A. The writer is still in search of a topic.</p> <p>B. Information is limited or unclear or the length is not adequate for development.</p> <p>C. The idea is a simple restatement or a simple answer to the question.</p> <p>D. The writer has not begun to define the topic.</p> <p>E. Everything seems as important as everything else.</p> <p>F. The text may be repetitious, disconnected, and contains too many random thoughts</p>	<p>⑦ <i>The writing lacks a clear sense of direction.</i></p> <p>A. No real lead.</p> <p>B. Connections between ideas are confusing.</p> <p>C. Sequencing needs work.</p> <p>D. Pacing feels awkward.</p> <p>E. No title is present (if requested).</p> <p>F. Problems with organization make it hard for the reader to get a grip on the main point or story line.</p>	<p>⑦ <i>The writer seems uninvolved with the topic and the audience.</i></p> <p>A. Fails to connect with the audience.</p> <p>B. Purpose is unclear.</p> <p>C. Writing is risk free, with no sense of the writer.</p> <p>D. Expository or persuasive writing is mechanical, showing no engagement with the topic.</p> <p>E. Narrative writing lacks development of a point of view.</p>
<p><b>Key Question:</b> Did the writer stay focused and share original and fresh information or perspective about the topic?</p>	<p><b>Key Question:</b> Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make it easier to understand?</p>	<p><b>Key Question:</b> Would you keep reading this piece if it were longer?</p>

## Appendix F2

Word Choice: The use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader.	Sentence Fluency: The rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which the writing plays to the ear, not just to the eye.	Conventions: The mechanical correctness of the piece; spelling, grammar and usage, paragraphing, use of capitals, and punctuation *
③ Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. A. Words are specific and accurate. B. Striking words and phrases. C. Natural, effective and appropriate language. D. Lively verbs, specific nouns and modifiers. E. Language enhances and clarifies meaning. F. Precision is obvious.	③ The writing has an easy flow, rhythm and cadence. Sentences are well built. A. Sentences enhance the meaning. B. Sentences vary in length as well as structure. C. Purposeful and varied sentence beginnings. D. Creative and appropriate connectives. E. The writing has cadence.	③ The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, paragraphing) A. Spelling is generally correct. B. Punctuation is accurate. C. Capitalization skills are present. D. Grammar and usage are correct. E. Paragraphing tends to be sound. F. The writer may manipulate conventions for stylistic effect, and it works!
③ The language is functional, even if it lacks much energy. A. Words are adequate and correct in a general sense. B. Familiar words and phrases communicate. C. Attempts at colorful language. D. Passive verbs, everyday nouns, mundane modifiers E. Functional, with one or two fine moments. F. Occasionally, the words show refinement and precision.	③ The text hums along with a steady beat, but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical. A. Sentences get the job done in a routine fashion. B. Sentences are usually constructed correctly. C. Sentence beginnings are not ALL alike; some variety is attempted. D. The reader sometimes has to hunt for clues. E. Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading; others may be stiff, awkward, choppy, or gangly.	③ The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions A. Spelling is usually correct or reasonably phonetic on common words. B. End punctuation is usually correct. C. Most words are capitalized correctly. D. Problems with grammar and usage are not serious. E. Paragraphing is attempted. F. Moderate (a little of this, a little of that) editing.
③ The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary A. Words are nonspecific or distracting. B. Many of the words don't work. C. Language is used incorrectly. D. Limited vocabulary, misuse of parts of speech. E. Words and phrases are unimaginative and lifeless. F. Jargon or clichés, persistent redundancy.	③ The reader has to practice quite a bit in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading. A. Sentences are choppy, incomplete, rambling, or awkward. Phrasing does not sound natural. B. No "sentence sense" present. C. Sentences begin the same way. D. Endless connectives. E. Does not invite expressive oral reading.	③ Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage and grammar and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make text difficult to read. A. Spelling errors are frequent. B. Punctuation missing or incorrect. C. Capitalization is random. D. Errors in grammar or usage are very noticeable. E. Paragraphing is missing. F. The reader must read once to decode, then again for meaning.
<b>Key Question:</b> Do the words and phrases create vivid pictures and linger in your mind?	<b>Key Question:</b> Can you FEEL the words and phrases flow together as you read it aloud?	<b>Key Question:</b> How much editing would have to be done to be ready to share with an outside source? • A whole lot? Score in the 1-2 range. • A moderate amount? Score in the 3 range. • Very little? Score in the 4-5 range.
		<b>*Grades 7 and Up Only:</b> The writing is sufficiently complex to allow the writer to show skill in using a wide range of conventions.

## Appendix G

10/27/10

who are you

\* I am a small I and I am in 4th

\* I'm four foot eleven I am  
not that smart.

\* I am 10 years old and

\* I have Black and Brown Hair I have  
black eyes I am a Mexican.

\* I was born in Fayetteville Arkansas.



## Appendix H

About my puppy & My Kittens.

10-22-10

That my dog that her name is Polly. She always bark at people, when she don't know them. When I hit her mouth with spank, she started to bites with her sharp tooth. At morning when I went to school she missed me. When I came back and she was in my uncle room. I came in there, she started to come follow me. My dad told me that I have to walk her outside, so she couldn't pooped and pee inside my mom room. My mom don't like Polly cause Polly always poop & pee on the floor. She always scared my dad cause my dad always spank her butts. She yelled & scare. She is a sweet little puppy. Last time we have a kitten, her name was Bonnie. My brother called her that and Polly. Bonnie is my sweast girl in my life. She poop her own bathroom. We found my big brother outside and my family was there. We thought we lost her & we look her everywhere and we found her at my big brother house at the garage. We got a cage for her and we really lost her, we were at my big brother house and we came back home and my kitten was gone. We tried to find her. She gone, so we got Polly. We were sad about my kitten named Bonnie.

## Appendix I

Yes, I'm going to when it night at a apartment. I going to wear a vampire girl halloween. We going a office in a apartment. It going to start a 6:00-8:00 pm. It was on Saturday. When it was Sunday, a real halloween. We were with my cousin. Mom was crying. We were scare. Guess what, we went to haunted house. We went to it. It was scare. There were scary, scary, and monster. We ran out of gas. We walked and go home.

The End

## Appendix J

I am 11 year old. I like music. I  
really like blue, black, and Hot pink.  
I really miss my grandma she dy.  
I really like to be a mom when I  
grow up. I want to be a dorer too  
but a dorer of teeth. I am really  
nice at people. Tell me some  
thing about you! P.S. Please write to  
me. Thank you



## Appendix K

9. What bothers you?

What bothers me is that my brother because he talk a lot. He is 5 year old and he is in Kindergarten. If he ~~don't~~ don't get what he get he start cry. He get annoying and my dad and mom get so mad at him. I wish he can be a nice boy but no I have to have a annoying brother. He hit me and I hate when he hit me. I hope my brother can be the best brother but no he have to be means. He get my stuff and they are for girl stuff. He act like a girl and my dad don't want him to be a girl. He want everything. Some of my friend dose not like me because I have a mean brother. Now you can feel how that my brother is so annoying. When I playing with my friend and he fell ~~to~~ he come inside and my mom said what happenen to you. Then he said my sister push ~~me~~ me. I don't push him he fell by his-sife. My brother is so so so annoying and I am sorry that I am say that to you brother.  
Your friend

## Appendix L

1 Que quisiera dos de sus libros  
2 favoritos y si lechero un libro  
3 y el otro le gustaba mas que  
4 el que esta leyendo how many  
5 books have you written  
6 is Boyd Henshaw your real name  
7 or is it why do you write books  
8 for children where do you get  
9 your ideas do you have any kids  
10 what is your favorite book that  
11 you wrote do you like to write  
12 books what is the title of your  
13 next book what is your favorite  
14 animal please give

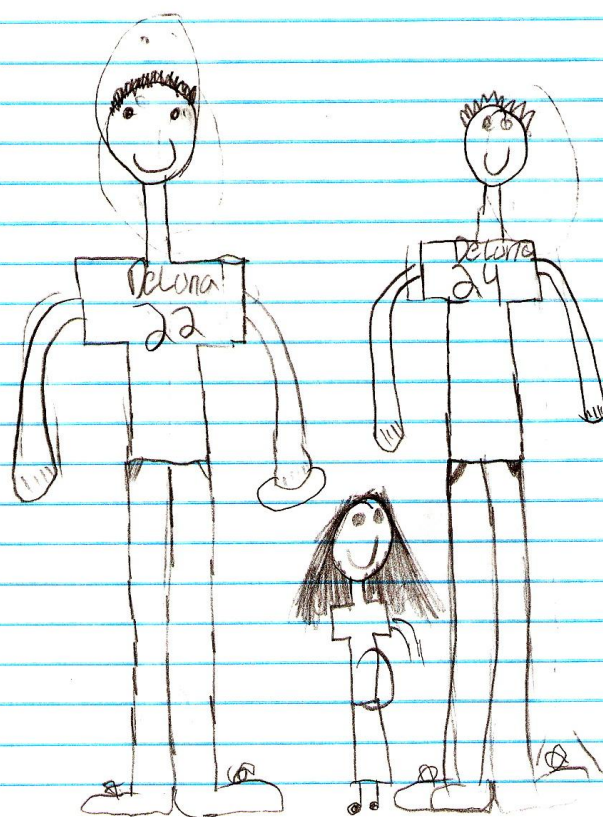
Translation: "what would you do if you had two of your favorite books and you read one book and you liked the other more than the one that you are reading" The student then proceeded to copy from *Dear Mr. Henshaw*.



## Appendix M

nov. 17, 2010

Dear Dazt man  
my favoirite ding to do is play football  
and play with my dog and my sister, me and  
my Dog play Catch and with my Sister I play  
tag and hide and go seek. I play Football with  
my Brother I am Better then him I allways  
win. I make 3 tunch Down and my Broth  
make 1 tunch Down  
Yoor  
Friend



## Appendix N

My favorite world is Disney place in  
the world is Disney. It look like

It have lot of stuff. Like that they're  
are belonged from the movie that  
they're that they are at Disney channel.

It look like they're are

slide, roller coaster, water fall. It

feel like it fun like a playing

the world. It smell like a

orange like a fruit. It sound

like scream like a girl. Cause

I think it fun and I wish there  
when I grow up.



## Appendix O

~~What do I wish?~~

10. What do you wish?

I wish that my ~~gram~~ grandma ~~never~~<sup>never</sup> die because she was the best grandma I every had. I now that my grandma is old, but I feel she is not because I still want her. I will ~~always~~ always have her in my heart because she is my ~~my~~ grandma no matter if she gone I Love her. I ow that ~~my~~ my family still think about her because she is the nice grandma I every had. I will have her in my heart ~~when~~ when I <sup>am</sup> old or if I die. I Wish you can be by<sup>is</sup> me.

## Appendix P

11-22-10

Dear <sup>Ms</sup> Datzman,

Mexico is my favorite places because my mom and ~~dad~~ ~~dad~~ dad was born there and there Parents are there too. I really want to see them. If I was there right now I will see everywhere there also eat some candy from there ~~and~~ and see the difference. Did you like Charlotte, North Carolina? What do you did over there? Do you live with your mother? How many brother or sister you have? Happy Thanksgiving

**Appendix Q**

My dog is so important

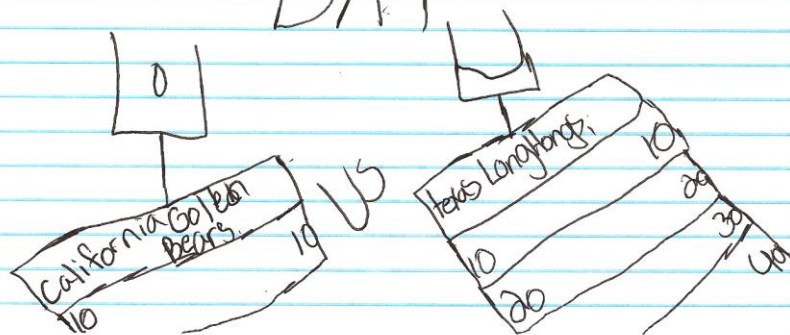
## Appendix R

H-22-10

Someone Steal my lunch I went  
 to the office and told them and  
 she said Just go to lunch about lunch  
 I went to lunch and the teacher said  
 you looking Hunny YES and someone steal  
 it. Steal what she said. my lunch and

I Hit it. The HAPPY  
 THANKSGIVING

DAY





## Appendix S

My Thanksgiving special was that when I went to people's house first, I went to my sister's house and she's 50-years old and I went to my Grandma and my Grandpa's house. My sister's house smells like orange. It tastes like a beautiful turkey like a chicken. It looks like there's a red, dark red rose. It sounds like chomp when they eat the turkey. It feels like wonderful Thanksgiving. Like my grandpa and grandma's house. Cause that's my very best Thanksgiving special.

Love

## Appendix T

12-6-10

~~One day I was disa~~

One day I was disappointed because my grandma was going to Mexico, like I want to go with my grandma but my dad said no. I really like my grandma. I was really disappointed because I want to go so bad. My grandma call us in ~~her~~ telephone. She said that she just landed on Mexico. My dad told me that your grandma want to talk to me. She said in ~~Spanish~~ Spanish — hi sweet heart are you ok, are you still ~~crying~~ crying? No but I am going to, no no ~~don't~~ don't cry. Why not? Because I will still have you in my heart and you have me in your heart. I love you, mija, I love you to abuelita. So I said good-bye. When I ~~was~~ ~~was~~ went to sleep I was dreaming about her. Now I heard that she was ~~die~~ die. I really love ~~her~~ her.



## Appendix U

~~Dear Datzman~~  
Dear Ms. Datzman

El Día de Thanksgiving yo I se mas bien  
 My Familia fue la que I so toda la comida  
 y cuando era noche yego toda my familia  
 y pasamos la noche juntos y Despues  
 comimos y Despues vimos una pelicula y be  
 ves se fueron y el otro dia en la  
 mañana vinieron al mamar y cuando  
 estabamos almorçando abrieron el garage par  
 que el vno se fuera y my hermana  
 la mas chiquita se salio por el garage  
 y Despues los vecinos le abieron al  
 policia y la policia vino a my casa y  
 y Despues salio su papa y Despues  
 la also y Despues policia le pregunto  
 que cual era su nombre y Despues su  
 papa le dio su nombre y Despues el  
 policia se fue y Despues nos metimos  
 para dentro y Despues nos dormimos y  
 ese fue fin

Translation: "On Thanksgiving day I did it even better my family made all the food and when it was night all my family arrived and we spent the night together and afterwards we ate and afterwards we watched a movie and afterwards they left and the other day in the morning they came to eat lunch and when we were eating lunch they opened the garage so that the smoke would leave and my sister the smallest one went out of the garage and after the neighbors talked to the police and the police came to my house and afterwards her dad went out and afterwards the also and afterwards the police asked him her name and then her dad gave them her name and then the police left and afterwards we went inside and afterwards we went to sleep and this was the end"

## Appendix V

cuando me senti emocionado era  
por que dije que por fin y Ba a ver a mis  
hermanos and dad and mom and  
sister and brother and my niece la  
mas chiquita and my nephew and a  
Jaqueline and Estefani and a mis ~~hermanos~~  
tios poro lo que mas me emocionó  
fue cuando oí que y Ba a ver a mi  
I dad and I mom

Translation: "When I felt excited was because I said that at last I was going to see my sisters and dad and mom and sister and brother and my niece the smallest one and my nephew and Jaqueline and Estefani and my aunts and uncles but what I was most excited about was that I was going to see my I dad and I mom"

## Appendix W

\*We Both are Boys.

\*We Both live in USA

\*Leigh Botts live in California But  
I like California.

\*We Both like Reading

\*he is 11 and I am 10

~~I my family is mary But isnt~~  
my and Leigh are alike Because  
we are Both Boys and we live in USA.  
~~What I am different of Leigh is.~~ Because  
he lives in California, but I like the State,  
California. We Both love to write But He is 11  
and I am 10. my family is mary and Leigh  
Botts mom and Dad are not because they  
are in a Divorce.

I think Leigh would be my friend.  
Because I would treat him like  
my Brother.



## Appendix X

We celebrate like <sup>we</sup> went to my grandma house because we about to starting<sup>ed</sup> cooking and celebrate Christmas. My friend's and all my family come in 5 "oclock". The party starting at 9:00 p.m. and it end at 1:00 am. We decorate Christ m/ Christmas light and put frosty the snowman. We came in Arkansas, their were at ~~Hanail~~ Hawaii Hanaili. He went to our aunt and my uncle's room. Because we won't look at our present's. When we came to my grandma house, the house smell like delicious food as a Christmas cookies decoration like sprinkles. He came to the house and it look like a lot of flower like daisy and rose. It ~~fell~~ feel like fun as a playing<sup>a</sup> bubble. It sound like all my family was singing. I like this ~~was~~ way because it was fantastic party.

## Appendix Y

When I was a younger kid...

January 24, 2011

When I was a younger kid, ~~my~~  
my parent's, ~~and my~~ me, my sister, and my  
~~and~~ brother lived ~~in~~ Texas. ~~When I~~  
~~was a younger kid~~. Texas looks like  
a lot of apartments and houses.  
I ~~was~~ <sup>place</sup> ~~feet~~ a warm and sunny ~~day~~.  
It smelled like strawberry perfume.  
I ~~came in Texas but~~ I came  
outside and It sounded like <sup>a</sup> very  
fun day. Because I could hear kids  
playing.

## Appendix Z

We had a party of New Year Eve we dancing, eat and had fun in my Dad brother's house. We had the best food ever my Dad and Mom made it. We started to dancing and it was fun because I dancing with all of my Dad brother's. We waited when 12:00 am and hog again like Christmas. Some people leaves home so we do.



## Appendix AA

the main character

because 1-28-11  
 I like ~~about~~ the book ~~is that he can~~  
 can deliver his letter and he can deliver it  
 to his favorite author. That is fun writing  
 to your favorite author. I did not like  
 some parts of the story was that because  
 Leigh Botts was writing ~~to~~ to Mr.  
 Henshaw and in the end of the letter  
~~he~~ he said bad ~~stuff~~ stuff. That's what  
 I dislike of the story. I would change  
~~one that~~ Leigh Botts doesn't have to say  
 that bad ~~words~~ words. I would change it that so  
 Mr. Henshaw would write to the boy some  
 time. That's ~~way~~ ~~he~~ Leigh would  
 not say ~~that~~ that words. I would show it  
 to my classmates because I think my  
 friend would like it and show them  
 that the boy had a hard time  
 with his family. So that's why  
 I would show my ~~to~~ classmates.

## Appendix BB

I think we are alike because I kind of have little bit of hard time with my family and at my school too. I like to write letters and writing ~~with~~ too my favorite author and he likes ~~writing~~ <sup>to write</sup> writing too. He is a boy and am a girl that ~~what~~ were different. We have some different problems in each other. We live different places. Well yes he would be my friend because I think he is a nice person he is ~~some~~ sometimes nice. I bet he would be my friend like Brian.



## Appendix CC

una cosa que no sepas de  
mi la cosa que no sabe  
sobre mi es que yo  
no soy de arkansa yo  
soy de Mexico and I have  
six nieces and nephews and  
I have <sup>older</sup> three sisters mayores  
that all my  
que todos mis brothers

Translation: One thing that you don't know about me the thing you don't know about me is that I  
am not from Arkansas I am from Mexico...

## Appendix DD

Student 1 Author Letter:

2-14-2011

Dear Sara Lewis Holmes,

my name is [redacted] and I am a 4th Grader at [redacted] Elementary School in [redacted] Arkansas. In my class we read Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary and the kid is writing to his favorite <sup>author</sup> and that is why I am writing to you. I read your book Operation yes. It is a good book because I love it. I am going to tell you a couple of questions

- 1 Where do you live?
- 2 how old are you?
- 3 Do you have <sup>any kids?</sup> Every Kid
- 4 Did you get married?
- 5 why Did you <sup>choose to be an</sup> Just Being author?

I Can't wait to Read your Next Book

Sincerely

[redacted]

## Appendix EE

Student 2 Author Letter:

Dear Mr. Clearly,

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and  
I'm nine years old. My school called  
\_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School.

My favorite book is of your book called is  
*end of the book* Dear Mr. Henshaw because Leigh Botts  
loves to write at the write. Well, I love  
to write like Leigh Botts. I'm  
writing because I'm your number 1  
fan and I'm your favorite author  
in the whole world. When I started to  
read your book, it was famous.  
My other favorite book is Ramona  
and her father because Ramona  
feels bad and then her father came,  
*They* they were drawing and Ramona  
feels good at that time. What's  
your favorite color, book, place, thing  
to do ~~something~~ and movie? I can't  
wait to read your books.

P.s. Happy <sup>other</sup> Valentine Day.

Sincerely \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix FF

Student 3 Author Letter:

Dear Mr. Benton,

Hello my name is [redacted] and I'm writing to you because you are my favorite author. In my 4<sup>th</sup> grade class we read the book Dear Mr. Henshaw. In the book a boy named Leigh Botts is writing to his favorite author. You are my favorite author. I really like all your books. They are really funny and the pictures are weird but ~~it~~ cool. What is your favorite book that you wrote? Do you think it's hard when you write? I hope I can see you some day!

P.S. Please write me back.

Your favorite  
reader.

## Appendix GG

Student 4 Author Letter:

