PEER GROUP EVALUATION: A COMPONENT OF THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

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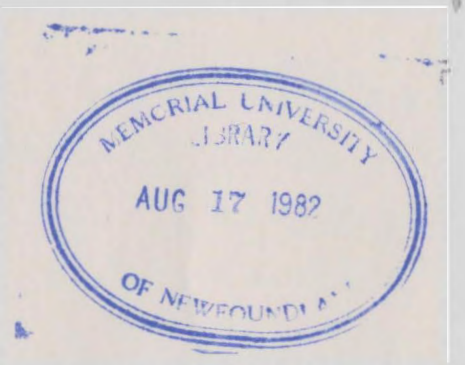

PEER EVALUATION: A COMPONENT OF THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

by

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Abstract

The major purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of guided peer evaluation as a strategy for teaching students to revise their own writing and for providing students with genuine audiences for their written communication. Other purposes of the experiment were to evaluate the effects of such a program on the frequency and amount of writing, the attitudes of students to written composition, and teacher workload.

The subjects for the study were two grade nine classes in a rural high school in Newfoundland.

The data were collected by administering standardized objective tests of writing and by teacher ratings of two essay tests. Additional data were also obtained from a comparison of student writing checklists produced before and after the experiment, and from a student survey.

An analysis of the statistical data showed that there was little or no improvement in the writing of the experimental or the control group as measured by the objective and essay tests. Significant improvement occurred for both groups only on the Mechanics of Writing test. However, the teachers and students involved in the study strongly believed that significant improvement had occurred. A comparison of the student produced checklists suggested that the peer evaluation program did slightly increase student understanding of what constitutes good

writing. Information obtained from the student survey indicated that guided peer evaluation did have positive effects on revision practices, audience awareness, frequency of writing, student attitudes to writing, and teacher workload.

In conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. That teachers of composition require students to revise and rewrite assignments, and that they adopt instructional strategies which will teach students to revise their own writing.
2. That teachers provide students with frequent opportunities for evaluating the effects of their writing on their intended audiences.
3. That there be an investigation of the professional and legal responsibilities of the teacher for any controversial or libellous writing done under the auspices of the school.
4. That more formal procedures be implemented in future peer evaluation programs for conveying student writing to audiences outside the school.
5. That language arts coordinators provide in-service training for teachers in the use of peer evaluation as a strategy for teaching composition.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years some educators and some members of the general public seem genuinely concerned over an apparent decline in the general language competency of high school students and particularly anxious about the decreasing ability of students to write well. The concern over declining standards, whether the decline is real or imaginary, in conjunction with the "back to basics" movement which it has generated, has forced many teachers of composition to reassess the role of writing and to re-affirm its value. Unless the teacher is convinced of the necessity and importance of writing and can communicate this conviction to students, then he has scant hope of developing good writers from students who, living in an era dominated by electronic media, see little or no utilitarian value in writing.

So then, why do teachers teach writing, and why do students write? Is there a coherent, satisfactory answer to this question? Some educators think not; for example, Nancy Sommers (1978) somewhat stridently asserts that the teaching of composition remains a technology without, and not even in search of a science, that we have exalted methodology to the detriment of theory. Therefore, because this present study is an attempt to evaluate a specific teaching methodology, it would appear relevant at this juncture to provide a rationale for the teaching and learning of writing.

Perhaps the major reason for teaching composition is that the process of writing compels us to think clearly and logically through problems and issues and to express our ideas and feelings with accuracy and clarity. The relevance and importance of such writing is eloquently emphasized in a 1976 report on the American National Writing Assessment project.

> In pondering the value of writing, whether to the college bound or the early school leaver, regardless of fancies as to its practical value or the current extent of its use for hire, we should always be mindful of the truth long recognized by scholars of language and thought, that writing is the greatest tool of thinking ever invented by man, that it functions as an extension of self allowing the writer to create a reality of thought no less real for being thought that is unique to verbal language and dependent for its ideational plenitude upon presentation in the written medium. To have achieved a degree of mastery over written language, to have known its production as a durable detached artifact of one's own mind, and to have felt the pleasure of crafting, focusing, and qualifying that artifact is as valuable a learning experience as a human being can have, even if one never again puts pen to paper or earns a dime thereby.
>
> (Mellon, John, 1976, p. 73)

While acknowledging that some students will attach little practical value to writing, Mellon emphasized the powerful force that writing can be for organizing the individual's perceptions of reality and the immense personal satisfaction which may be gained from such an ordering of experience.

In England, the Schools Council Research Project also has formulated a rationale supporting writing which outlines the advantages of writing over speaking.

> 'It comes out when you're speaking'. Yes - sometimes - but talk has no sooner come than it has gone again. It is evanescent and this places a severe limit - a limit connected with the duration of short term memory - on the coherence and organization one can give to an extended passage of thinking. While the process involved in writing is similar in one basic respect, that language comes up continually to mind and the thought is constantly moving on, it is also different in that a record is kept of what happened - footprints in the sand if you like. As a result the writer can stop at any point and look to see where he has come from and get his bearings.
>
> (From Talking to Writing, 1978, p. 4)

Furthermore, the project members postulated that:

> As teachers we are interested not in the development of writers as writers, but in writing as a means of development - cognitive, affective, and social. That writing may be such a means is due to the nature of its two faces: on the one hand it looks to other people and seeks to transfer something to them ... on the other, it can organize more clearly for the writer himself whatever perceptions he has about the world he lives in and his own relations to it ... This process of personal selection, contemplation and differentiation is very important because it changes the writer, he is a different person when he has done it because now he has articulated a feeling or a thought more clearly, or seen how a bit of his experience fits into the pattern which he is gradually building up for himself; in other words, he is becoming more conscious. It is these processes which can go on in writing which can make it so powerful in an educational sense.
>
> (Why Write?, 1976, p. 2)

Since writing is such a potentially effective instrument of learning, one must ask why it seems not to have fulfilled its promise and why, in fact, it is detested by some students and thus an obstacle to rather than a means of learning. If the problem is not in the instrument itself, then the difficulty must reside in its use. Indeed, this appears to be the case. The landmark research of James Britton and others (1975) ascertained that almost half of all school writing was written for the "examiner" audience. What are the implications of this finding? Firstly, it means that writing is being used primarily as a means of testing students in order to evaluate what they have learned. Thus, writing is perceived not as an integral component of learning, but as something which takes place after learning has occurred; frequently such writing is the mere regurgitation of what the student has gleaned from lectures or books and shows little, if any, evidence that the writer has assimilated the knowledge and made sense of the information by making it his own.

Secondly, the research implies that because they are usually telling the teacher what he already knows, the students are not often concerned with making an authentic communication to an interested audience. Frequently the teacher is not perceived as someone who is genuinely enthusiastic about what the students have to say so there is little motivation to become really involved in writing

beyond the perfunctory performance of school writing tasks which the student may see as pointless.

Finally, writing, after learning has occurred, for a teacher-examiner obviously places the primary, if not the sole, emphasis on the product, the assignment itself, on what was written while virtually disregarding the process, the composing, how the student actually wrote what he did. While these two aspects of writing cannot be separated in practice, nevertheless the distinction between them is critical in the teaching of writing because both the process and the product must receive appropriate consideration if a student is to write well.

However, current perceptions of the writing process by many teachers and students would appear to be at variance with the practices of professional writers and with the findings of research. There still exists the school practice of assigning a topic and requiring a student to complete a composition to be corrected and graded by the teacher. A survey of the writing practices of many authors (Emig, J., 1971) and an overview of research revealed that most good writers pursue methods substantially different from the "school" writing practice. The good writer, whether a professional author or a secondary school student, seems to progressively recirculate through various phases in the process of writing until a given composition is completed. While variations occur in the delineations of this process (e.g., Britton, J., et al., 1975; Emig, J., 1971; Stollard, C.,

1974) the phases (or sub-processes) of pre-writing, writing, and revision appear common to most descriptions of the writing process. The phases of the process may occur over varying periods of time - from several minutes to complete a short answer item on an examination to several years to complete a major literary work. Furthermore, the phases of the writing process must be conceptualized not as being rigidly linear, but as being recursive.

In addition to exemplifying almost identical composing processes, good writers also seem to have clearly defined concepts of whom they write for; they have the ability to stand back, as it were, from their work, to imagine how a reader might react to the writing, and then to change their writing if necessary in response to the perceived requirements of the reader. Britton (1975) refers to this ability as the writer's "sense of audience". The inference to be made here is that school writing must somehow cease to be a series of practice runs intended for some abstract imaginary audience which the students know doesn't exist; instead, if students are to mature through writing and as writers, they must be provided with frequent opportunities to communicate meaningfully with real audiences who will be interested in what they have to say.

In addition to the inadequate provision of audiences for student writing, the other component of composing which seems to be overlooked or neglected and which seems to pose most problems for students is the revision aspect of writing.

The experience of the investigator has been that teachers, assuming that students know how to revise their writing, simply request students to "revise" assignments and re-submit them to the teacher. Most often no real revision occurs; in fact, it is questionable whether such practice is authentic revision or mere proofreading for surface errors. Moreover, inadequate as it may be, many students may not be required to do even this minimal kind of revision and re-writing. A survey of the writing habits of American high school students revealed that more than 75 percent of them were not required to revise and rewrite written assignments. Yet it would appear from the testimony of writers and the findings of research that revision is one of the most potent and productive means of improving writing.

Therefore, the major purpose of this study will be to assess the effectiveness of peer evaluation in improving the competency of students to revise their own writing and to consider the requirements of their intended audience.

This investigator believes that peer evaluation of writing may provide a partial solution to the teacher's problems of responding adequately to student writing and of providing a real audience by offering the teacher a strategy which may:

a. allow more frequent writing

b. permit almost immediate reaction and feedback

c. provide practice and guidance in revision

d. create a forum for the discussion of audiences

e. offer a genuine audience of peers

f. allow the teacher sufficient time for individual conferences with students.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were to determine:

(a) if student writing is improved as much by peer evaluation as by teacher evaluation and grading

(b) if peer evaluation improves the student's ability to revise his own writing

(c) if student evaluation alters in a positive manner student perceptions of what constitutes good writing

(d) if student attitudes to composition are changed by peer evaluation so that students will be more confident in their ability to write

(e) if writing for a peer audience or for other genuine audiences rather than for no audience or for the teacher-examiner audience helps students to improve their writing

(f) the implications of peer evaluation for the role of the teacher of composition.

Definition of Terms

(a) Composition -- written communication which follows accepted conventions of organization and mechanics. For purposes of this study, composition will not be limited as to mode; however, each composition must be a minimum of 400 words in length.

(b) Evaluation Guides -- various published composition rating scales, teacher and student prepared checklists utilized to facilitate and focus peer evaluation of compositions.

(c) Peer Group -- relatively permanent, teacher-formed groups of three students each organized within the classroom to carry out the peer evaluation of compositions.

(d) Revision -- the process (a) by which a student examines and evaluates what he has written in order to determine the extent to which the writing reflects the criteria embodied in the evaluation guidelines, and (b) the process by which a student decides what changes or additions are necessary to render his writing more appealing and more meaningful. Proofreading and editing for punctuation, mechanical, and spelling errors would be considered essential, but not the most important, elements of revision.

(e) Audience -- the person or group of persons with whom the student intends to communicate through his writing. Writing assignments were selected so that students will be able to write to genuine audiences both within and without the school.

Hypotheses

1. That the writing of the experimental group will not improve significantly more than the writing of the control group as measured by a comparison of pretest-posttest scores on standardized tests of writing and teacher ratings of student essays.
2. That peer evaluation will not result in any significant changes in the revision practices of the experimental group.
3. That peer evaluation will not lead the experimental group:
   (a) to spend more time on their assignments
   (b) to write more frequently than they had written in previous grades
   (c) to write more frequent assignments than the control group.
4. That practice in writing for specific audiences will not influence how the students of the experimental group will write their assignments.
5. That a comparison of writing checklists produced by the experimental group before and after the treatment period will reveal no significant changes in student perceptions of good writing.
6. That the students in the experimental group will not have more interest in and liking for writing as a result of peer evaluation.

7. That peer evaluation will not reduce the teacher workload nor create more time for meeting with students than traditional teaching.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The impetus for this study stemmed from the researchers' personal dissatisfaction with the traditional "non-teaching" of composition and the desire to find more meaningful and effective methods of helping students to write. The review will discuss (a) the need for the teaching of revision, (b) the importance of a writer's sense of audience, and (c) the utilization of peer evaluation as a component of the teaching of composition.

Revision

The teaching of revision, perhaps the most neglected and least understood aspect of the writing process, is complicated by the confusing array of notions many students and teachers would appear to have of what it means to revise one's writing. For example, revision may mean re-writing an assignment just to make it neater and more legible; to others, revision may denote re-reading a passage to insure that the spelling and punctuation are correct; finally, to some writers revision may entail editing the first draft to eliminate some irrelevant content or to tinker with the structure of a few sentences. Unfortunately for some students and teachers, these differing conceptions, offering only a distorted fragmented view of revision, have retarded the development of a holistic perspective which could enable them to use the

potential of revision to increase writing ability, for while all the proofreading and editing activities are part of the revision process, they do not constitute the totality of revision, nor even its most important elements.

For example, one consequence of emphasizing revision as improving the mechanical aspects of writing is that students may produce flawless, grammatically perfect pieces of writing which are dull and lifeless. An emphasis on the surface polishing of a written product may emanate from a theoretical viewpoint which sees composition as merely the writing down of what one already knows - that you know what you say before you say it. This viewpoint is an abnegation of the concept of writing as a dynamic, creative process which stimulates an individual who has a nebulous, tenuous, tentative notion of what he wants to write to discover and formulate what he really wants to mean and say, through the process of articulating his thoughts in writing. Revision is an integral component of this vital process. "Great writers and teachers of composition agree about very little, but a large proportion of both are fiercely insistent on the need for careful revision" (Britton, J., et al., 1975, p. 46).

How much revision actually occurs in student writing is debatable. Emig (1971) asserted that much of the impetus to revise is lost not only because revision is too narrowly defined, but also because no time is provided for students to engage in any major reconceptualization and reformulation of ideas in writing. Odell and Cohick (1975) claimed that

attempts to improve writing often result in a sense of helplessness and frustration for both teachers and students because students are not taught a strategy which will help them formulate, clarify, and expand ideas and feelings. Don Murray (1978) bemoans the fact that teachers do not appreciate the importance or the excitement of revision. He claims "they teach rewriting - if they teach it at all - as punishment, the price you pay if you didn't get it right the first time." (p. 56)

Because it is crucial to good writing, revision obviously means not just cosmetic editing and proofreading to improve style, but also a re-thinking of what one has said and a reformulation of one's ideas so as to make them clear to oneself and others. Shuman (1975) defined revision as not just editing, proofreading, and rewriting, but also as a re-thinking of the quality and organization of ideas and feelings. He suggested that teachers must see revision as more than the mere capturing of errors if students are to learn to regard revision as a normal and accepted part of the process of developing and clarifying meaning.

Nold (1973) characterized revision as the retranscribing of a text already produced after the text had been re-read and found wanting or inadequate when reviewed against four criteria categories, namely, (a) intended effect, (b) intended meaning, (c) intended audience, and (d) intended persona of the writer. Perl's (1979) definition of revision as "retrospective structuring" is similar to Nold's

concept of retranscribing in that retrospective structuring refers to the re-examination of what one has written in order to ascertain if the writing adequately expresses the intended meaning, and then the reformulation of the writing in the light of this re-examination.

Walshe (1979) elaborated Perl's concept of retrospective structuring by explaining that revision requires more thought by the author, "a detailed reading for meaning".

> You add words to fill out meanings (expansions), you change words to achieve more exact descriptions (specifics), you delete words to tighten your sentences (economy), you sharpen punctuation to make reading easier (readability), and you re-arrange words, sentences, and paragraphs to produce a more convincing order of explanation (logic). (p. 55)

Don Murray (1978) insists that writing can no longer be a matter of rules or exercises. The process of writing is what one does to find out something about himself or something about a subject in which one is interested. "Students, like writers, will be driven to revise - to read and rewrite - in order to find out what they have to say" (p. 57). Murray coined the phrase "inner revision" to refer to the process of seeing what you've said to discover what you have to say.

While describing the process of writing as envisaged by the Schools Council Research Project, Britton commented that the re-thinking, re-structuring, and reformulating is a normal, ordinary aspect of writing:

> It is a common and natural thing in revision to realize that one has got it wrong - that what one has written does not correspond with one's present thinking and that some degree of re-drafting, as opposed to simple correcting is needed... It is true that the writer may not know what he thinks until it is formulated in words, but it is also true that he can tell when the words he has used have not achieved the embodiment of his thoughts sufficiently to provide the satisfaction he must feel before he is prepared to let the completed writing go to the reader. (p. 47)

While the reflective, retrospective element seems to be common to most definitions of revision, there also appears to be an implied recognition by most authors of two dimensions of the revision process. For example, in From Talking to Writing the Schools Council Project recognizes (a) the generative function of revision and (b) the need for the writer to consider the requirements of his intended audience:

> On scanning back he, the writer, can sometimes see connections between things he has said but was not aware of when he said them, and this may modify what he goes on to say. When he pauses he can put himself in the position of a reader in order to judge the effectiveness of the communication and to give himself some feedback. (p. 4)

Moreover, Perl interpreted revision to mean not just retrospective structuring but also projective structuring, "going back to the sense of what one has said in order to discover what one has to say" (p. 28). In addition, Britton stated that revision is also the final stage of the process by which a writer presents himself. "Every piece of writing can be, to some extent, a declaration, a tacit agreement

with the reader, that the writer accepts responsibility for his own creation" (p. 47). Murray's notion of external revision refers to the process writers go through "when they know what they have to say and are revising or editing their work so it can be understood by another audience" (p. 57).

If students are to acquire the attitudes and skills necessary to effectively revise their own writing, then revision must be perceived in its proper perspective to the evaluation of writing. In the past much emphasis has been placed on summative evaluation - the evaluation which examines the end product of a process and determines whether the product (in this instance, a composition) meets previously determined criteria, thereby providing the data to enable the teacher to ascertain how much "learning" has occurred. While summative evaluation has relevance for certain aspects of learning process (for example, promotion), it would appear that just evaluating and grading the final drafts of student writing does little to improve the student's ability to write, and most likely has a negative effect on his writing and his attitude to it. Beach (1979) found that students who were provided between-draft teacher evaluation revised more extensively and wrote better than students who evaluated their own drafts or students receiving no evaluation at all. He stressed that "teachers who want to encourage revision must provide evaluation during the writing of drafts" (p. 119). Thus, if the teacher can provide adequate formative evaluation during the writing of compositions then an increase in the

ability of students to revise their own work would appear to be a logical outcome of such evaluation.

At this point it should be noted that formative evaluation is not synonymous with revision. Formative evaluation refers to the responses, reactions, suggestions, or comments that the writer may receive from varied sources regarding his writing. Revision takes place while writing goes on as the writer makes adjustments to try to achieve his intended purpose. Kirby and Liner (1980) speculate that "in-process revision is hard to observe, probably impossible to measure, and certainly as individualistic as the writer" (p. 42). However, by providing feedback between drafts formative evaluation may offer the student the motivation and guidance he needs to engage in meaningful revision of his own writing.

Several reviews of research have addressed themselves to the problem of providing appropriate feedback to student writing. (Braddock, et al., 1965; Walter, 1976; van de Wegh, 1978). Walter concluded from his review that one approach in particular might be highly effective and deserved further research, i.e., selective, task-related feedback, controlled by measurement instruments and provided by students to themselves and to their peers. Moreover, Walter noted:

> Another implication of these studies is, in hindsight, a simple idea: if feedback or information on performance is to have the desired effect, students have to understand it; it has indeed to inform them.

> When students are trained to give themselves or their peers feedback, it may be more likely that they will understand the information than when they are dependent upon a variety of responses from their teachers, and they are less likely to ignore or dismiss information they have provided. (p. 9)

It would appear that peer evaluation guided by the use of various writing checklists could provide many opportunities for a student to ascertain how others react to his writing and to receive suggestions for improvement. Meanwhile, the student may develop his own critical abilities, and refine his ideas about writing by analyzing and discussing the writing of his fellow students.

Audience

In addition to providing practice in revision, the use of peer groups in composition could also provide the student with a genuine audience for his writing. Too frequently school writing is merely a series of dummy runs, addressed not to an interested or concerned audience but to the teacher-examiner.

> When children write in school they are usually writing for someone who, they are well aware, knows better than they do what they are trying to say and who is concerned to evaluate their attempt to say it. Even when they are writing a story, when the teacher does not know better than they do what they are saying, the response of the teacher is so often to the surface features of spelling, punctuation, and handwriting. So once again the teacher is seen as an assessor and not as someone interested in being communicated with. (Martin, N.; D'Arcy, P.; Newton, B.; Parker, R., 1976)

Furthermore,

> The unspoken conventions of such school writing is that it should purport to be addressed not to the person who is actually going to read it (the teacher), but to a hypothetical public audience (about which nobody has any illusions that it exists); or perhaps not to an audience at all - the writer is just "writing it down", rather than to or for someone. (From Talking to Writing, p. 18)

The distinction between an examining or hypothetical audience on the one hand and a genuine interested audience on the other is crucial because:

> Language flows when students feel they are making a genuine communication - as opposed to a phoney one for someone who doesn't want what you give him, but merely wants to check up on whether you can give it. (From Talking to Writing, p. 13)

A similar argument for providing genuine audiences for student writing is succinctly enunciated in Why Write (1976).

> Writing organizes our picture of reality and, at the same time and by the same process, communicates it to someone else. It is true that for educational purposes the first is more important than the second: we ask children to write so they will organize their world picture, not so that we can learn things from them. But it is a fact of life that we can't have one without the other. Language has two faces and we are well-advised to take account of both. The moral we draw from this, is that if we want writing to be a means of thinking and active organizing, we must make sure the writer feels he has a genuine communication to make and is not merely performing an exercise. (p. 16)

The rekindled interest in the writer's sense of audience can probably be attributed to the research into the development of writing abilities by James Britton and other members of the British Schools Council Research Project. Britton (1975) contended that in order to exercise "communicative competence" (p. 62) a writer must be able to carry out a process of editing, reorganizing, and adjusting his message to his audience.

> The individual must be able to call out in himself the responses which his gestures evoke from others. He begins by being able to internalize individuals and finally internalizes a 'generalized other' who speaks for society at large. This must be close to what the mature writer has to do when he addresses a public audience. We may say then, that a writer's capacity to adjust to his audience is dependent on the degree to which he can internalize that audience. (p. 62)

To develop the ability to internalize an audience, it was assumed necessary for the student to have many opportunities for genuine communication with varied audiences.

However, as part of his research, Britton had developed a series of categories to which school writing seemed to be addressed. The audience categories were:

(a) self

(b) teacher

(c) wider known audience, e.g., peer, member of small group

(d) wider unknown audience, i.e., general public

(e) a named audience, or no audience

Britton reported that during the first year (ages 11-12), forty percent of all school writing was intended for the teacher-examiner audience, and fifty-one percent was categorized as teacher-learner dialogues. In contrast, during the seventh year (ages 17-18), sixty-one percent of school writing was addressed to the teacher-examiner audience, and only nineteen percent involved teacher-learner dialogue. Overall, approximately ninety percent of all school writing was done for the teacher audience.

Because so much writing occurs in a testing rather than in a teaching situation, there has been a re-evaluation of the effects of a sense of audience on one's writing. Kroll (1979a) maintained that only slight, if any, attention was paid to a child's emerging sense of audience, and that where the teacher was the only audience, heavy correcting may create such negative attitudes that the student would not want an audience; therefore, teachers should provide writing situations which require the active use of audience awareness so that the child is forced to consider alternative points of view in order to communicate effectively:

> We need to help children "decenter" - to take the perspective of a reader - by structuring experiences that systematically challenge the child's assumptions that they are taking the reader's view into account ... The writer should be confronted with the consequences of a lack of a sense of audience. (p. 830)

Gardner (1977) explained artistic development by postulating the existence of making, feeling, and perceiving systems which may evolve during an individual's growth to shape a person who is primarily an artist, an audience member, or a critic. In reality, these three roles are different facets of the artistic or creative capacity existing in each of us. Gardner suggests that a person's developmental environment ought to be structured to allow each individual to develop his own potential in each role. Consequently, to write well a student must become proficient in assuming these various roles: thus he becomes an artist or creator when he writes; he is a critic when he assumes an objective distance from his writing and when he considers his audience; finally, he is an audience member when be becomes interested in and enjoys his own writing or that of others.

Similarly, in Why Write, the Schools Council stated that being able to envisage an audience and to shape one's writing in consideration of that audience is partly conditional on the student's general growth out of egocentrism and that such general development may be aided by practice in writing.

That a writer's perception of his intended reader influences how he writes would appear to be self-evident and generally accepted by almost all writers. Therefore, among teachers and researchers today, the issue does not

seem to be whether or not students should be provided with genuine audiences, but rather what pedagogical strategies may be most appropriate in developing a student's awareness of and response to his audience. Unfortunately, the relatively few recent research studies appear to have made little progress towards the formulation of a valid and applicable foundation for developing and assessing a student's audience awareness.

For example, Bracewell's 1978 investigation of the age at which students adopted expository writing to the needs of different audiences, indicated that for grades four, eight, and twelve, realistic communications contained somewhat more audience oriented statements than "classroom exercises" which were less realistic. However, only grade twelve students modified their writing to strengthen to audience appeal. Bracewell noted that more research was needed on developing strategies for teaching audience awareness.

Also, Kroll (1978b) found that grade four students showed very limited skill in explaining a game to another student and that they were not very proficient at adopting messages to their listeners or readers. Surmising that the crucial factors in an investigation of audience awareness were not the salient characteristics of audiences but the constructive processes that operate in the mind of the writer, Kroll concluded that we need more research into the specific cognitive correlates of audience awareness.

Several studies (Crowhurst and Piche, 1979; Richardson, 1980; Rubin and Piche, 1979) used indices of syntactic complexity to evaluate the effect on writing of varying degrees of familiarity with an audience. All three studies concluded that the writing done for a distant audience was systematically more complex than the writing done for an intimate audience. However, some of the findings seem to have extremely limited significance. First, Crowhurst and Piche indicated that a sense of audience was not strongly mediated by the study since the students could have responded to the writing stimulus without considering their audience. Secondly, it would seem in any case that a writer might use longer, more complex sentences when addressing an unfamiliar distant audience, and shorter, simpler sentences when writing to someone familiar to him. Finally, the use of indices of syntactic complexity as research instruments to measure audience effect would appear to be undesirable: (a) from a theoretical viewpoint, because no justification is provided for equating syntactic complexity with writing quality, or for assuming that syntactic complexity is a function of audience awareness, and (b) from a practical viewpoint, because a variety of uncontrolled factors, such as the writer's attitude to the audience or to the writing purpose, the nature of the subject, or the writer's knowledge of the topic, could influence sentence length and complexity.

A second component of the Rubin and Piche study examined the development of audience adaptation in the use of persuasive strategies. An analysis of the writing of selected grade 4, 8, and 12 students, and expert adults found that only expert adults exhibited substantial target differentiation as evidenced by scoring on predetermined categories of persuasive strategies. The conclusion of this study reiterates the general findings of most of the research reviewed here:

> Current composition pedagogy acknowledges that the goal of instruction in writing ought not only to be the manufacture of competent transcribers, but of competent rhetors ... Very likely students can induce certain principles of audience adaptation from exercises similar to those employed in this study. To what extent and in what manner can instructors facilitate student learning with this communication paradigm? Information concerning the course of development in written composition, yet more refined than is presently available, is required in order to engineer such programs. (p. 316)

While there has been much written on the writer's sense of audience, this researcher was unable to find any method which would determine in a valid, objective manner just how an awareness of audience affects writing, and which would be applicable to the purposes of this study. For the moment, it would seem that the writer's relationship to his audience accrues more properly to the art rather than to the science of writing.

While discussing the implications of his research, Britton attested to his conviction that student's can be taught to consider their audiences:

> We emerge, none the less, holding on to the belief that work in school ought to equip a writer to choose his own target audience and, eventually, to be able, when the occasion arises, to write as someone with something to say to the world in general. And we believe many more children would develop the ability if they had more opportunities and a stronger incentive ...
>
> We can derive some evidence from the sample to suggest that writing for a public audience develops out of writing in a teaching rather than a testing situation. (p. 192)

While this study attempted to provide frequent practice in examining and writing to meaningful audiences, the effects of the practice were not evaluated by an objective statistical procedure, but by student responses on an informal writing survey.

Peer Evaluation

The plantive lament of many English teachers is that only on rare occasions is there time or opportunity to respond to student writing so that the feedback would be relevant to the student's needs, readily understood by him, and genuinely helpful in improving his writing. In conjunction with this endemic difficulty, teachers must try to incorporate into their instruction the substantial findings of the research on writing which have emerged during the past decade. Although no panacea for the difficulties inherent in the teaching of writing, there are

several reasons why peer evaluation merits consideration as a viable component of a refurbished writing program.

First, if properly planned and implemented, a program of peer evaluation using small classroom groups would appear to offer many opportunities for the student to receive varied responses to his writing, and for the teacher to discuss writing with individuals or small groups of students. Koch (1975) commented favorably on the use of small groups in the composition class.

> Group members often learn much about themselves and this adds to the pool of knowledge from which to write ... the small group member had an audience from whom to receive honest reactions about his essays. Besides feeling more linguistically secure and being able to write more fluently, the case persons had more confidence in their ability to write and speak effectively. (p. 3629a)

Secondly, it has been this researcher's experience that many students did not really revise their writing because they had not been taught how to revise. Since meaningful revision can occur only when the teacher is able to provide evaluation during the process of writing, not after the writing has occurred, peer evaluation appeared to be a very practical method for teaching revision strategies and motivating students to revise their own writing. In her description of the Writers' Tutorial Service at Carleton University, Aviva Freedom (1980) commented:

> Our strategy is not to teach after the fact but to intervene, during the process of writing, although "intervent" might be too strong a word, for our thrust is always to elicit, probe, provoke, redirect - in short, to help students discover for themselves within themselves the appropriate strategy. (p. 4)

A third element of the composition curriculum which seems to offer opportunities for using peer evaluation is the development of the writer's awareness of his audience. Richard Larson (1970) emphasized the rhetorical goals of composition by stressing that students need to communicate with others effectively in language:

> They have to be able to make themselves understood, to inform others of what they want these others to know, to induce belief in what they say, to change attitudes, to promote action. This rhetorical goal of language differs from the social goal in that the language is judged by what it accomplishes, not by what it is or what it implies about the user. (p. 394)

Thus Larson argues that the teaching of rhetorical writing requires that the student be provided with real or well-simulated audiences.

Peer evaluation could offer a genuine audience for writing, offer an assessment of the degree of success with with a writer has appealed to a specific audience, and create a forum to explore the demands and requirements of the intended audience for future writing.

While only four of the studies referred to in this review found evidence to indicate that peer evaluation improved writing more than teacher evaluation, perhaps the

most salient fact to emerge is that none of the studies indicated that peer evaluation is less effective in improving writing than evaluation by the teacher.

Reporting that he had found no controlled studies demonstrating the effectiveness of peer evaluation, Sutton (1964) initiated an investigation in part to study the effect of peer evaluation on improving the writing ability of first year college students. After analyzing data obtained from objective tests and student essays, Sutton concluded that the research hypotheses were not supported by the experiment:

> Therefore, we must assume that as measured by two different objective tests of composition ability, the experiment failed to demonstrate that experimental and control treatments had significantly different effects on the subjects... Rankings from the essay evaluations revealed a decline in writing performance. (p. 24)

In a one-year study of grade nine students Pierson (1967) directly compared peer correction with teacher correction of writing. Although he found no significant statistical differences between the two methods of correcting, Pierson enumerated several factors which would seem to make peer evaluation the more desirable of the two methods:

(a) the students were able to talk about writing with ability and ease

(b) the classes were livelier and more enthusiastic

(c) the students became more aware of when compositions lacked audience appeal and they acquired a better sense of audience

(d) the peer method is more efficient than the conventional method because between six and twelve times as many hours are needed to correct papers as to compose evaluation guides

(e) the peer method leads to the same measured results as the teacher method and requires much less after hours time.

Pierson also noted several problems:

(a) some students of average ability were unable to edit the writings of classmates usefully

(b) some students displayed a tendency to accept mistaken correction

(c) some students had difficulty correcting mistakes in usage and organization.

In response to the tedious chore of correcting and grading student papers, Kathleen Bouton (1975) implemented an intensive three month comparison of teacher and peer evaluation on the writing of high school students. Five periods per week were devoted to the program which required the writing of an assignment per week. Bouton found that while both groups improved in some areas and declined slightly in others, the peer group had a higher level of improvement overall. What are the implications of this study? Bouton concluded that peer evaluation was preferable to teacher evaluation because in peer evaluation the students were somewhat more interested, they were thorough and constructive in their evaluations, and that students who reacted negatively to criticism from their teachers, accepted it from their peers.

The research of Turner (1970) and Jones (1977) is included because these investigators used somewhat different procedures to evaluate the influence of peer evaluation. Both Sutton and Pierson had speculated that the difficulty in obtaining reliable, valid data may have resulted in the failure of their experiments to show significant differences. Therefore, instead of objective tests and essay ratings, Turner compared grades on examination papers in an effort to determine the efficacy of peer evaluation in comparison to teacher evaluation. While there was some evidence that the experimental group had better final grades, the lack of significant results was again attributed to the difficulty of obtaining statistical proof in the evaluation of subjective material such as written composition. Student comments on an attitude survey were generally favorable.

Jones' inquiry is unique because she conducted an analytical description of how peer evaluation affected the writing within a group of students. During a ten-week program involving senior high school students, she recorded the comments and suggestions made by students on the check-list for each essay, and noted the number and kinds of revisions students undertook. The various data were then arranged and tabulated by computer to produce a profile of revisions. Based on her analysis, Jones observed that

(a) students accepted more criticism than they refused

(b) 72% of the criticisms resulted in improved papers

(c) students corrected about 60% of all errors

(d) females tended to give more criticism, to respond more favorably, and to revise with greater care

(e) students seemed to enjoy writing more and it freed the teacher more, both in and out of class.

Two further studies attained results similar to the findings already discussed in this review. Farrell (1977) found that both group tutoring and peer evaluation did not improve writing more than a teacher lecture method, although the group tutoring approach appeared to have the most positive effects on student attitudes to writing. Myers (1979) concluded that his study of peer evaluation with junior high students produced no significant results because the two-week treatment period was too short to allow growth in writing. He recommended that English teachers judge carefully the two methods (peer and teacher evaluation) as to teaching efficacy and learning effectiveness, because teachers might better devote some of the time and energy spent on correction to the development of instruction and a peer group program with more frequent writing.

The final three reports to be reviewed all provide some degree of research support for the superiority of peer evaluation over teacher correction. The dissertation of Lagana (1972) describes the development of a model for teaching composition based upon individual learning, peer evaluation, and student-teacher conferences. A major

limitation of this study is that the peer evaluation constituted only one of the components in the teaching model. Still, Lagana reported that there was significant improvement in the writing of the experimental group, and that peer evaluation seemed to be more effective than teacher correction. Also, responses on a student survey showed that although they had some reservations about criticizing the work of fellow students, most students worked well in groups, were able to benefit from immediate feedback, and perceived improvement in their writing.

Ford (1973) conducted an eighteen week study of first year college students to analyze the effect on their writing of peer and teacher evaluation. The findings of this study indicate that the system of having students edit and grade each others compositions can cause significantly greater gains in their grammar-usage ability as well as in their composition ability than students whose themes were graded and edited by their instructor. Ford contended that the system could be used as a potential learning device for students and as a means of reducing the teacher's workload.

Finally, Benson (1979) investigated the influence of peer feedback on the writing performance, revision behavior, and attitudes towards writing of junior high school students. The variables tested included word, sentence and paragraph revision, total length and the quality of the writing. The findings showed significant statistical support for the

effect of the peer group on five of the nine variables.

In summary, this review of literature appears to support the following statements:

(a) Peer evaluation is at least as effective as teacher evaluation in improving writing.

(b) Evaluation by his peers frequently improves the student's attitude to writing.

(c) Revision is a critical component of the composition process; students must be taught how to revise and given time to do so.

(d) Peer evaluation provides opportunities for meaningful feedback when it is most required, and it provides for frequent practice in analyzing and revising writing.

(e) The use of peer evaluation allows the teacher more freedom for preparation, discussion with small groups, or conferences with individual students.

(f) Since the development of writing ability requires a communication context, students should be provided with genuine audiences for their writing.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study represents an analytical investigation of the use of peer evaluation in the teaching of composition. While for purposes of analysis and comparison two groups of students participated in the research, the study did not utilize a strict experimental design employing experimental and control groups because it was not possible to randomly select groups, or to control for differences between groups. Although the primary purpose of the study was to evaluate the use of peer evaluation in one class, references are made to a comparison group for purposes of clarification and discussion. Essentially the study reflects the experiences of the teacher/researcher in the use of peer evaluation in a high school composition class.

An analytical study was deemed appropriate for several reasons. First, as indicated in the review of literature, most of the controlled experimental studies had not yielded significant results. Many researchers had concluded that the major difficulty encountered had been the problem of obtaining valid and reliable measurements of growth in writing. Although the findings of this study are based on the observations and experiences of the researcher, and despite the inherent difficulties, in keeping with established research procedures and by incorporating the suggestions of Sanders and Littlefield, objective tests of

aspects of writing and essay tests were used in an attempt to provide some degree of objective measurement of growth in writing.

Secondly, because of the important implications of peer evaluation for the in-class role of the teacher and for the out-of-class workload, it was desirable that the study compare these aspects of the peer evaluation teaching model with the more conventional model of teaching. Hence, the second class of students became involved as a comparison group.

Also, it would appear that an analytical study constituted meaningful research. For example, it has been pointed out that many research problems in the social sciences and education do not readily lend themselves to experimental inquiry. Controlled inquiry is possible but true experimental inquiry is not. (Kerlinger, F.N.; Foundations of Behavioral Research; N.Y., Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.; 1973, pp. 391.) The perennial difficulties with experimental investigations of writing seem to indicate that the measurement of writing is not amenable to such experimental inquiry, and that perhaps an analytical approach might yield more fruitful results.

Finally, it may be argued that the observations and experiences of the researcher in an analytical study constitute worthwhile and valid scientific research. Heinz. Kohut contends that:

> "the criterion is that such an undertaking is defined as analytic if it involves persevering immersion into a set of psychological data with the instrument of empathy and introspection for the purpose of the scientific explanation of the observed field."
>
> (The Restoration of Self. N.Y., International Universities Press, Inc., 1977, p. 308)

Subjects

The subjects for this study were two grade nine classes at a central high school in rural Newfoundland. Of the 29 students in the experimental group there were 18 boys and 11 girls ranging in age from 14 to 16, and having an average age of 14.8 years. There were 27 students in the control group, 15 boys and 12 girls ranging in age from 14 to 17, and having an average age of 15.3 years. An analysis of their grades in English during the previous year showed the range of grades for the experimental group to be from 40% to 60% with an average grade of 51.7%, while for the control group the grades ranged from 30% to 70% with an average grade of 51.9%. There were seven students in the experimental group repeating grade nine, and twelve repeaters in the control group.

Because of constraints beyond the control of the researcher, the groups were not randomly selected nor were the students randomly assigned to their respective groups. The researcher and the cooperating teacher each taught the group assigned by the school principal as part of their regular teaching duties.

The study was conducted for seventeen weeks during a period extending from mid-September, 1980 to March, 1981.

Procedures

The first phase of the writing program, lasting approximately two weeks, involved introducing the experimental subjects to group work and instructing them in the use of the writing checklists. Because the students were unaccustomed to working in small groups, the nature of the writing program, the purpose of the groups, and the rules governing the functioning of the groups were carefully explained. Then, as practice, the students arranged themselves into small groups as designated by the researcher to produce their own checklist of the qualities they thought a good essay should embody. Then the researcher used the next five English periods to explain the checklists and to allow the small groups to discuss and evaluate sample student essays with the aid of the checklists.

During the first five weeks of the writing program, three, 40-minute periods per six-day cycle were allocated to the peer component of composition. The first of these periods, usually on a Friday, was devoted to small group discussion of the assigned topic or the intended audience. Then during the next four days the students wrote the first drafts of their assignments which were subsequently brought to class for the second period, usually on a Tuesday. (The researcher, himself, was taught a lesson in the precise use of language while explaining the procedure to the students. He used the term "rough draft"

and many of the drafts were very rough indeed.) During this second period each assignment was read and discussed by the small groups using the evaluation guidelines to assist the discussion. Errors and mistakes were noted, comments exchanged, and suggestions made. The students then had an additional two days to make any desired revisions to their writing. In the third composition period the peer group evaluated and graded the final version of the essay.

As the first five weeks progressed, two serious problems emerged. First, the researcher observed that the third peer discussion period, meant to be used for assessment and grading, was being misused by the students who used only 10 or 15 minutes of the time for the purpose designated. Also it was noticed that after the first student had read an essay, the other readers usually gave it only a cursory glance and assigned it a grade equivalent to or approximating that of the first reader. Furthermore, many of the students complained that they did not want to grade the writing of their friends. Consequently, it was decided to discontinue the practice of having students grade each other's essays.

The second problem occurred when the students strenuously protested that one major writing assignment each week along with other written work and required readings in all subjects was just too much and that they

could write better essays if they were given more time. They expressed their arguments in a letter to the researcher and convinced him that the complaint was justified. Therefore, for the duration of the study, the students wrote an average of one 450-word assignment every two weeks. The three peer discussion periods were spread over the two weeks. The first two periods were used as before, but the third period was used for additional peer discussion and evaluation to help the student with final revision before passing the completed assignment to the teacher-researcher.

In an attempt to provide meaningful contexts for composition, various audiences were suggested to whom the students could write, or the students chose their own audiences. For the first two assignments, narrative essays relating personal experiences, the students were instructed to write keeping in mind that their fellow students would have to clearly understand and enjoy what they had written. The range of audiences was then widened to include other school audiences such as the principal and the editor of the school newspaper. Finally, the audience was extended to the general public, represented by such people as members of parliament, town councilors, or local newspaper editors. Whether or not the writing was actually read by the intended audience was left to the discretion of the individual student because some students, while willing and

even eager to write, were unwilling to actually deliver their writing to a public audience. Many other students expressed their intentions of sending their writing to their intended audiences, but it would appear that most of that writing went the way of most good intentions.

Students were also given a researcher-prepared guideline for audience evaluation. The guideline consisted of a number of questions intended to help the peer group analyze an audience and select a way of writing which they thought would be most effective in communicating with that audience.

Finally, the students were reminded that the peer groups could also serve as permanent audiences for their writing by acting as sounding boards for ideas, and testing the clarity and probable effectiveness of their writing.

While the students evaluated assignments or discussed audiences, the researcher circulated among the groups asking questions, perusing writing, and providing guidance to groups or to individual students whenever required.

Upon completion each assignment was read by the researcher who made brief notes in his record book on each writer. No corrections or grades were placed on any of the assignments. However, each student was told by the researcher whether or not he was doing adequate work, if he was improving or regressing, and what the major strengths

and weaknesses were in his writing. The only grades assigned to students were the mid-term and end-of-term grades required by the school. The writing portion of these grades was based on the researcher's reading of student assignments done to date.

During the program students in the experimental group each completed eleven, 450-word assignments and four, 350-word compositions.

During the course of this study the control group wrote as directed by their teacher. After choosing a topic or being assigned one by the teacher, the students began writing the first drafts of their compositions. When the first drafts were completed, the students re-read and revised them before writing the final version. No structured revision procedure was used but sometimes the students asked the teacher for suggestions and assistance between drafts. The final versions of the assignments were corrected and graded by the teacher, who also noted five or six of the major problems found in each group of assignments and selected examples from the writing for use in class to bring these problems to the attention of students and to suggest solutions for them.

For two months, January and February, 1981, during this study, those students in the control group who had failed English during the first term were required to attend a 40-minute remedial writing class each week and to produce one extra piece of writing per week.

Throughout the time of this study the control students each wrote ten, 350-word assignments.

Collection of Data

The statistical data for this study were obtained from pretest-posttest scores on two objective tests on student compositions. The objective tests used were the STEP Mechanics of Writing, 2A and 2B, and the STEP English Expression, 2A and 2B. These tests were chosen because they had been used in previous studies (e.g., Lagana, 1972), and because an examination of items in both tests seemed to indicate that they were appropriate measures for the purposes of this study.

In addition to answering questions on objective tests, students in the experimental and control groups also wrote 500-word pretest-posttest essays on assigned topics. Each essay was then rated by three high school English teachers who because of their education and experience were presumed to have the required expertise. The average of the three ratings was then used as the student's score on that essay. Although many previous researchers had questioned the reliability of essay tests when they failed to show significant differences between methods of instruction, it was decided to use essay tests in this study because of their inherent validity, their successful use in some studies, for example, those of Benson and Ford, and because some researchers (Sanders and Littlefield, 1975)

demonstrated that essay tests could be reliable when administered under procedures which reflect the usual conditions of student writing.

T-test analyses were performed to determine if there were any significant differences between scores obtained on the objective tests and essay scores.

To determine if the experimental treatment had altered student perceptions of good writing, the items on a pre-treatment checklist constructed by the students were compared with the items on a similar checklist constructed at the end of the experiment.

Information required to discuss hypotheses related to amount of writing, revision practices, audience awareness, and student attitudes was obtained by administering a questionnaire adapted from similar questionnaires developed by Lagana and by Turner for their research.

The effects of peer evaluation on the role of the teacher were determined by examining anecdotal information from the teacher of the control group and the observations and experiences of the teacher-researcher.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data and the findings relative to each hypothesis. The information will be presented in the following sections: improvement in writing, frequency and amount of writing, revision practices, audience effects, attitudes to writing, student perceptions of good writing, and teacher workload.

Improvement in Writing

Hypothesis One

> That the writing of the experimental group would not improve significantly more than the writing of the control group as measured by a comparison of pretest-posttest scores on standardized tests of writing and teacher ratings of student essays.

The t-test was the statistic used to analyze the differences between scores obtained from the pretests and the posttests.

Mechanics of Writing

A t-test comparison of within-group means disclosed significant improvement in both the experimental and the control groups on the test of writing mechanics (Table 1). The statistic indicated that the experimental posttest mean (41.31) was significantly greater than the pretest mean (34.36), $t(28) = 5.1775$, $p < .01$. The control group post-test mean (37.23) was also significantly greater than the pretest mean (33.96), $t(26) = 3.10$, $p < .01$. However, as

Table 1

Within-Group Comparison of Means

Group	Mechanics of Writing	English Expression	Essays
Experimental			
Pretest	34.46	25.73	60.11
Posttest	41.31	26.23	62.64
t	5.1775*	0.1156	0.2510
Control			
Pretest	33.96	25.92	62.15
Posttest	37.23	27.05	63.04
t	3.10*	0.9787	0.5126

Note: Experimental group (N = 29); control group (N = 27).
*$p < .01$.

shown in Table 2, the prediction that the writing of the experimental group would improve more significantly than that of the control group was not supported by comparisons of the posttest means for each group, $t(26) = 1.5670$, $p < .05$.

English Expression

In contrast to the findings on Mechanics of Writing, the within-group comparison of means for the test of English Expression indicated that no significant improvement occurred in either group. The posttest mean (26.23) of the experimental group was not significantly different from the pretest mean (25.73), $t(28) = .1156$, $p < .05$. In the control group, the difference between the posttest mean (27.05) and the pretest mean (25.92) was not significant, $t(26) = .9787$, $p < .05$.

Also the analysis of the posttest means for the experimental and control groups (26.23 and 27.05, respectively) did not reveal any significant differences, $t(26) = .488$, $p < .05$.

Essay Test

The statistical evaluation of the data obtained from the essay test produced results similar to those obtained on the test of English Expression. The comparison of within-group means (Table 1) demonstrated no significant improvement in either the experimental or the control group. Also the data presented in Table 2 reveal that there were no

Table 2

Between-Group Comparison of Means

Group	Mechanics of Writing	English Expression	Essay
Experimental Pretest	34.46	25.73	60.11
Control Pretest	33.96	25.92	62.15
t	0.2053	0.1250	0.9272
Experimental Posttest	41.31	26.23	62.64
Control Posttest	37.23	27.05	63.04
t	1.5670	0.488	0.2454

significant differences in the posttest means on the essay test.

Student Survey

While the English Expression test and the essay test showed no improvement in writing, the student survey (Q.5) indicated that 88.5% of the students in the experimental group thought they had improved as writers.

On the basis of the statistical data and the information from the student survey it would appear that while there may have been some slight improvement in both groups, there is no evidence to suggest that the writing of the experimental group improved more than the writing of the control group.

Frequency and Amount of Writing

Hypothesis Three

That peer evaluation will not permit the experimental group to:

a. spend more time on their writing this year than previously
b. write more frequent assignments than in previous years
c. write more assignments than the control group

Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 of the student survey (Appendix A) related to the third hypothesis.

In response to Question 4a, 92% of the students reported that they had spent more time writing each assignment this year. This response was supported by a comparison of the replies to Q.'s 1 and 2 which indicated that the

average amount of time spent per assignment by the experimental students increased by almost 100% to nearly 3 hours from 1.5 hours.

The answers to Q.6 showed that 27% of the experimental group wrote "a few more" assignments than in the previous year, and 73% wrote "many more" assignments during the writing program using peer evaluation.

Question 4b asked the students to explain why they had spent more time writing during the experiment. Three students listed reasons such as wanting to pass or working harder because the teacher was a hard marker. However, most of the reasons given by the other 24 students for spending more time on their writing appeared to relate more directly to writing itself. For example, it was stated that more ideas were expressed in the groups and that the groups gave each student more suggestions on how to write. Students also attributed the increase in time spent on writing to the more extensive revision of their work. Perhaps the comments of two students in particular indicate why more time was devoted to writing:

> "I found I was improving and I wanted to keep it up."
>
> "I did not understand why I should write until this year."

Revision

Hypothesis Two

> That peer evaluation will not result in any significant changes of the revision practices of the experimental group.

Survey questions 7 to 14 inclusive directly related to the revision component of the experimental group writing.

Student responses on the survey appeared to indicate that student revision practices were changed by peer evaluation. In answer to Q.7, 30% of the pupils reported that they had regularly revised assignments before, while 70% said that previously they had done no regular revision. Those who had regularly revised their work in the past stated that they had done so by checking rough copies for mistakes, or by having someone else read their work. In contrast, Q.8 revealed that 93% of the students did more revision during the experimental program than they had done in previous years. On Q. 14, student replies indicated that 89% felt more capable of revising their own work. Finally 85% of the experimental subjects affirmed that the peer group discussions had helped them to revise their writing (Q.10).

The comments and explanations given by the students provide additional information. Students reported (Q.9) that in revising their writing they checked paragraph structure, the order of paragraphs in the essay, punctuation, and sentence structure. One student revised by "thinking

exactly what I am looking for and asking myself questions".

Student remarks on their increased confidence to revise their writing centered consistently on four major reasons.

First, the students seemed to recognize the crucial role of revision in writing. Many comments were similar to one student's remark:

> "I now understand its importance and was shown how to do it properly."

Secondly, 23 of the 26 students who answered Q.14 said they were more confident in their ability to revise because they had learned how to revise their own writing. Some typical comments were:

> "I know what to look for and if it's not there I've got to put it in."
>
> "Because I've had help and know what to look for, I think I can do better now."

The third frequently cited factor was the help in revising that the students had received from the writing checklists, and from their fellow students and teacher:

(i) "The checklist made me see if my paragraphs were in the right place and if any necessary stuff was left out."

"The checklist helped me because now I know what to look for."

(ii) "I could fix mistakes found by the group and learn from their mistakes as well."

(iii) "The teacher taught us to use the checklist and taught us how to go beyond the point of just reading the assignments and looking for spelling mistakes, but to go and check the whole assignment."

Lastly, the comments of 22 students indicated that peer evaluation had been important in helping them to revise properly. The following is a sampling of what the students had to say:

> "I was almost sure my essay was all correct when someone found mistakes."
>
> "Friends have many good ideas and can explain what to do."
>
> "We enjoyed it so we helped each other."
>
> "We expressed our honest views and ideas and any mistake wasn't overlooked."
>
> "The group made many positive suggestions for making my writing better."

Audience

Hypothesis Four

> That practice in writing for specific audiences will not influence how the students of the experimental group will write their assignments.

This section summarizes the information obtained from questions 15 to 20 inclusive on the student survey.

Students reported that most of their previous writing had been written for their English teachers (69%) or for no audience at all (15%). An additional 15% said that they sometimes wrote for their fellow students while only one person indicated that the self had been the audience. Students reported writing because they would have been punished if they hadn't or because they knew the writing had to be done for marks and promotion. Only one of the 27 respondents reported writing because it was interesting.

After practices in writing for various audiences, 85% of the students stated that they wrote for audiences other than the teacher. For example, one student said "It's more exciting, writing to politicians and big shot people around our town." Another student commented: "All kinds of people can be my audience. It depends on what I'm writing about." Three students said they did not consider any audience for their writing and no student reported writing for the teacher audience.

Although one student said that his peers had no effect at all on his writing because he "didn't care how they felt", most replies indicated that students, while writing for their peers, were more aware of their audience and that this did affect how they wrote (Q.18). For instance, two students said they tried to write better because they knew their writing would be compared to that of the other students and they wanted to be the best writers in the class. Another student reacted to his audience of peers by trying "to make them sad, mad, or happy". Four students wrote more carefully so as not to seem "foolish" or not to write anything "to make the students laugh at me". However most of the students, 14, wrote comments which collectively indicated their main concern to be improving the clarity and providing sufficient content so that their fellow students would find their writing interesting and easy to understand.

The fact that their writing might have been read by an audience outside the school appeared to stimulate all but two of the experimental students to greater efforts to improve their writing (Q.19). Many students reported working "twice as hard" on the assignments, and getting other students and the teacher to read them to insure the audience would be impressed. Students indicated that they were more careful of what they said, tried to present "good ideas and facts on a subject", and attempted to keep the audiences' attention by making "it (writing) neater and more interesting.

Student answers to Q.20 appeared to indicate that they thought it important to keep in mind a specific audience when writing. Without an audience "your writing would end up being directed to everyone and not making much sense". The writer must continually address himself to an audience "to be sure that these people will read what you write". Another reason given was that a writer needs to appeal to a specific audience because "a writer needs an audience who is interested in and knows what he (the author) is writing about". Finally, several students stated that it was necessary for the writer to consider his audience because his language might offend or because the language might not be suited to that particular audience.

Student Attitude to Writing

Hypothesis Six

> That students in the experimental group will not have more interest in and more liking for writing as a result of peer evaluation.

Responses to questions 21 to 24 inclusive indicated that peer evaluation did have a positive effect on student attitudes to writing. Of the 27 students in the experimental group, 93% answered that they liked the way they had been taught to write. In addition, while only 8% said they did not like the program and still disliked writing, 46% stated they liked writing "a little more" and 46% indicated that they liked writing "much more". Approximately 83% expressed the opinion that they had gained greater confidence in their ability to write. While 3% of the students responded negatively, and some were unsure, 84% said they would have liked to continue the program the next year.

Students gave a variety of reasons why they liked the program:

> "I have been taught to express my ideas more fully, to keep from getting side-tracked, and because I know I want my assignments to be the best."

> "This year I learned to write properly and now it doesn't bother me to write to anyone."

The 83% of the students who expressed more confidence in their ability to write, all pointed to the fact that they had learned to write and that they had the competence to write well if they so desired:

"I know that other people have problems with writing too, and the problems can be solved."

"I think I can do it if I want to."

"I know now that nothing is impossible."

Student Perceptions of Good Writing

Hypothesis Five

That a comparison of the writing checklists produced by the experimental group before and after the treatment period will reveal no significant changes in student perceptions of good writing.

Students listed 31 items on Checklist 1 and 38 items on Checklist 2. For purposes of comparison the items were organized into the following categories:

content
organization
sentences
vocabulary
mechanics
audience (Checklist 2, only).

As illustrated by Table 3 there were five items on the first checklist which did not appear on the second. Two of these items on Checklist 1, handwriting and title page, relate more to the general presentation of the manuscript than to writing per se. Also the meaning of the term "reference" is not clear. Presumably "bad" language refers to profane or vulgar language.

The 10 items listed in Checklist 2 but not in the first checklist would seem to be important qualities generally

Table 3

Comparison of Differences in Checklists

Item	Pretest Checklist	Posttest Checklist
reference (?)	Yes	--
closing sentence	Yes	--
"bad" language	Yes	--
handwriting	Yes	--
title page	Yes	--
knowledge of subject	--	Yes
supporting evidence	--	Yes
effective opening	--	Yes
originality	--	Yes
effective ending	--	Yes
paragraph development	--	Yes
paragraph unity	--	Yes
choppy sentences	--	Yes
sentence fragments	--	Yes
audience	--	Yes

Note: The table lists only those items present in one checklist but not in both.

accepted as characteristic of most good writing. Moreover, the 11 items listed under "audience" on the second checklist constitute a major difference. The complete checklists are presented in Appendix B.

It would appear that the checklists indicated that students became somewhat more aware of the qualities inherent in good writing.

Teacher Workload

Hypothesis Seven

> That peer evaluation will not reduce the teacher workload nor create more time for meeting with students than traditional teaching.

The teacher of the control group reported that during the period of this study his students had written 10 major assignments and that each of these required approximately 3 hours to correct. In addition, extra demands were made on his time by the weekly remedial class and the extra writing it generated.

The researcher was required to spend slightly more than 12 hours to read the 15 major assignments written by the experimental group.

It would appear reasonable to conclude that teacher workload, delimited to the amount of time spent in out-of-class reading and evaluation of student writing, was reduced by more than 50% by peer evaluation.

The cooperating teacher also reported that only sometimes on an ad hoc basis did some students in the control group request teacher guidance in regular class time while the student was engaged in writing the assignment. Additional time for individual help was provided by the lunch hour remedial class. In the experimental group three, 40-minute periods per week were used by the researcher to meet with small groups and individual students. This time was later reduced to three periods over two weeks. It seems that peer evaluation made more time available for meeting with more students.

Findings

Within the limitations of this study, the data would appear to support the following:

(i) while some improvement occurred in both groups, peer evaluation did not improve the writing of the experimental group more than teacher evaluation improved the writing of the control group

(ii) peer evaluation allowed the students to write more assignments than in previous years and to write more frequently than the control group

(iii) the revision practices of the experimental group were significantly improved by peer evaluation

(iv) practice in writing for specific audiences encouraged the students to become more aware of their intended audience and to attempt to adjust their writing to meet the requirements of that audience

(v) as a consequence of the peer evaluation program students developed a much more positive attitude to writing and much more confidence in their own writing ability

(vi) the experimental program did seem to improve the student's knowledge of the qualities inherent in good writing

(vii) teacher workload was greatly reduced by peer evaluation and more time was made available for meeting with individual students.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvement in Writing

This study was not immune to the difficulties and frustrations inherent in attempts to measure improvement in writing ability and to compare methods of instruction in writing. For example, only the Mechanics of Writing test indicated significant improvement in both groups, even though the control group received relatively little formal instruction in improving mechanics and the experimental group none at all. However, both groups were referred to the handbook sections of their text. It seems that student skill in this aspect of writing was improved by sustained practice and that this improvement was measured by the test because such surface features of writing are amenable to reliable measurement.

While the English Expression test showed no differences between the groups and no improvement in either group, the students and teachers involved felt that there had been growth in the ability of students to write sentences generally free from ambiguity and structural errors. In particular students seemed to have moved away from fragmented, rambling construction, to clear, well-formulated sentences. These apparent improvements were not measured by the test presumably because style of

expression would seem to develop in a slow and highly idiosyncratic manner, and because the test focused primarily on errors of agreement and the selection of the best sentence rewrite.

Essay tests have long been used by researchers in attempts to measure improvement in writing, but much of this research has been crippled by the Achilles' heel of essay tests, the difficulty of achieving rater reliability. Sanders and Littlefield found that essay tests could measure writing improvement when the students were allowed to research their topics and follow a writing process similar to the process followed during instruction. During this study students were permitted to research their subjects and revise their writing for both test essays.

Cooper (1977) contended that the main constraints on achieving reliable scores are cooperation and time. These constraints were evident during this study. Each essay was rated by three teachers but because of already heavy workloads, it took approximately six weeks for the three teachers to complete the rating of one set of essays. Cooper had also suggested that to obtain reliable scores at least two ratings should be obtained on at least two pretest and two posttest essays. Obviously, to do this would have placed unreasonable demands on even the most cooperative teacher, even in a study such as this which involved relatively small numbers of students.

Despite the statistical findings, the researcher was convinced that significant improvement did occur in the writing of the experimental group. He noted that as the study progressed that there were fewer sentence errors, that paragraph development and organization improved, and that the overall quality of writing had increased substantially. This improvement was reflected in the student grades. Then too, most of the students believed they had improved, and again this improvement was reflected in the evident pride and satisfaction they gained from having learned to write well. Finally, the teacher of the control group insisted that significant improvement had occurred in the writing of his students.

Therefore, while it cannot be argued from the statistical evidence in this study that the writing of the experimental group improved more than that of the control group, this researcher emerged from this study convinced that peer evaluation had stimulated genuine growth in the writing ability of the students involved.

Frequency and Amount of Writing

The peer evaluation component permitted the experimental group to write 50% more major assignments than the control group while at the same time reducing by more than 50% the amount of out-of-class correction required by the teacher-researcher. Both of these findings have significant implications for the teaching of composition.

Because the teacher can require more writing, the students will usually respond by working harder to produce more good writing. For example, on the survey, one student commented, "The teacher made us work hard but that is the only way to learn." Also students are motivated to write better when less correction means the teacher has a more positive attitude and takes the teaching of writing more seriously.

Furthermore, it has long been axiomatic that no significant improvement can occur in one's ability to write unless there is ample practice. As well, Barbara Kroll has pointed out that many of the skills required for writing are not "skills" but creative processes which must be acquired if they are to be truly under the student's control:

> First language acquisition research demonstrates that children acquire language more by interacting with it than by imitating it.... The writing workshop is one method that directly encourages acquisition: the small group interaction gets the student to focus on generating ideas, clarifying points, and reaching an audience rather than focusing on adhering to rules which block creativity. (p. 89)

Setting aside for the moment the roles of evaluation and feedback, writing itself can be seen as a heuristic process which promotes learning. Peer evaluation would seem to have much potential as a teaching strategy for dramatically increasing the amount of such writing done by students.

Revision

One of the major purposes of this study was to assess the effectiveness of peer evaluation as a method of teaching students to revise their own writing. From the observations of the researcher and the student survey information, it is evident that because of peer evaluation, students spent more time revising their work, and gained the knowledge and confidence necessary to revise their own writing. Admittedly, the constraints of class size impose severe limitations on the amount of student writing for which the teacher can provide meaningful response and evaluation, yet many writers (Weiss, 1969) have stressed the centrality of revision to good writing, and educators such as Murray and Freedom have emphasized the necessity of helping students to revise during writing, not after the writing has been completed. Therefore, the teacher can no longer merely expect students to revise; the teacher must show them how.

During the first weeks of this study the students were hesitant and uncertain while discussing each other's writing. However, as they became more accustomed to group work, and with the assistance of the teacher, students became much more enthusiastic and skilled in evaluating their own writings and suggesting improvements. By the time they had completed the first three assignments, the students were literally demanding opportunities to read

the assignments of other students and the discussions which followed were frequently animated. Also in contrast to the first two weeks when few students asked questions, during the remainder of the program there were only rare times when there was not a barrage of questions to be answered or a host of individual problems requiring attention.

As a result of this study, the researcher is convinced that students can be taught to revise their writing, that teachers must teach them how, and that peer evaluation provides an effective strategy for doing so.

Audience

Although this study did not evaluate the effects of audience on specific examples of student writing, several general observations can be made.

At first, many of the students did not want their writing to go beyond the class and even a substantial minority did not want their fellow students to read what they had written. This was due not only to the natural reluctance of many people to express themselves to a public audience, but also to the students' belief that their writing was inferior and not good enough for anyone to read. When they had gained more confidence in their writing abilities they were more willing to write not only for their peers but for a wider range of audiences. Because of their initial reluctance, the sharing of writing with the general public was left to the discretion of each student.

Secondly, it would seem that writing for genuine audiences motivated students to write to the best of their abilities and made their writing a meaningful communication rather than a practice exercise with no other purpose than to get marks from the teacher. The student survey indicated that when writing for their peers or for the general public, the students took painstaking efforts to improve their work and to present themselves as competent writers offering something worth reading. Another benefit of having to write for real audiences was that the students soon learned that they were responsible for what they wrote and this realization induced greater concern for clarity and accuracy in their use of language. Practice in discussing the requirements of one's intended audience seemed to make the students more aware of the need to consider the audience for which one writes.

Writing for a variety of audiences also changed the student-teacher relationship. The teacher is usually perceived as the "teacher-examiner" by the students, and while it would be naive to suggest that students were not concerned about how the teacher would grade them on their writing, the attitude of students changed from writing because "The teacher told me" or "I need the marks", to writing because "It is important" or "I know how". "Teacher-learner dialogue" became the audience category which perhaps best characterized the student-teacher relationship.

How does one evaluate the specific effects of audience awareness on how a student writes? This question has bedevilled most of the experimental researchers of audience impact which has been conducted during the past three or four years. For example, Nystrand (1977) reported on attempts to develop a "textual cognition" model for use in ascertaining how a student adapted his writing to his audience. None of the research reviewed in this present study made any significant progress in answering the question. A search of the trade publication "Advertising Age" revealed that advertisers use insights, principles and techniques from an array of disciplines to help them analyze the "target market population" - the advertising jargon for "intended audience". On the basis of this analysis advertising campaigns were created to inform or influence the potential audience. However, the success or failure of these ads, the "bottom line" so to speak, was determined by <u>how well they worked</u>, first in pilot studies and then through the reaction of the general public.

And so it would appear with writing - it must be evaluated by how well it works. Larson has pointed out that writing, especially writing in a communication context (i.e., for an audience) must be judged by <u>what it does</u>. Therefore, from the inquiry into audience effects presented in this study, the following conclusions appear warranted:

(a) the use of peer evaluation to provide practice in writing for a variety of genuine audiences is a potent motivation for students to want to write well

(b) the student needs to be provided with frequent opportunities to see for himself how his writing affects his audience.

Attitudes to Writing

One of the most encouraging outcomes of the peer evaluation program was the dramatic change in the attitudes of students to writing. At the beginning, the students were extremely skeptical and frequently complained about the amount of work required. However, as they began to enjoy the group work and to see some improvement they began to write more, and to expect the assistance of their peers and the teacher. At the conclusion of the study, more than 90% of the students said that they liked writing more than they had previously, and 83% were more confident of their ability to write well.

The peer component appears to have changed student attitudes by creating a learning environment where the emphasis was on learning to write rather than on the assessment of their writing. The students came to perceive the teacher not just as someone who would grade their efforts, but as a resource person who could provide help as required during the writing. The peer group also provided

feedback on student writing and allowed the student to see how other people would react to his writing. Peer discussion gave students much practice in evaluating and revising writing so that as their writing ability improved and they became more confident, their attitude to writing also changed. Finally, the students were not subject to bi-weekly bludgeonings of red ink and scrawled "F's". Instead, the teacher pointed out strengths, noted improvements, and suggested specific weaknesses that needed attention. Thus, the student received evaluation on his writing without being constantly told that he was a failure. If marks had been given on every assignment during the first month of the study many students would have drowned in red ink.

It is also worth noting that many of the assignments were collected in binders as a sort of class "book" or "magazine". The students had become so enthusiastic about their own writing that five or six students vied to read the collections whenever one became available from the other students.

The peer evaluation program would have been worthwhile if the changes in student attitudes had been its only significant outcome.

Student Perceptions of Good Writing

It is difficult to interpret the significance of the differences in the two student-prepared writing checklists because the mere ability to list more qualities of good writing does not in itself indicate that students have sharpened their perceptions of what constitutes good writing. For example, it is possible that more of the important qualities were included on Checklist 2 because in the peer evaluation program students had frequently used a variety of checklists so they may have been influenced unduly by this use even though there was no evidence of outright plagiarism. Also during small group discussions and meetings with the teacher, the students had become accustomed to hearing and using the terminology.

Despite these caveats, the researcher concluded that some changing and deepening of student perceptions of good writing did take place. For example, most of the students became adept at evaluating essays for unclear or awkward sentences, improper paragraph arrangement or poor paragraph development, and unnecessary or irrelevant content. As well, the second checklist indicated that from their peer discussions, the students had learned that writing must be appropriate to an intended audience. Finally, the vastly increased ability of the students to talk knowledgeably about their writing would appear to offer some support for concluding that the difference in

the checklists do indicate some positive changes in the students' perception of good writing.

Teacher Workload

Peer evaluation resulted in a substantial decrease in the amount of teacher time required to evaluate student writing. In itself, the mere grading of writing would have saved only little time because an impressionistic reading of a paper would have sufficed for accurate grading. However, no time was spent in marking errors or writing comments on student papers; instead a brief note was made of major strengths and weaknesses. Also less time was needed because the extensive revision during writing eliminated major flaws and most petty mistakes and because the teacher had already read all or parts of most of the assignments. In addition the teacher was able to assign more frequent essays without being constantly pestered for grades which would have no positive effect on how students wrote. In summary, peer evaluation reduced by more than 50% the teacher time spent correcting papers.

The saving of time while having students do more writing also had a positive effect on the researcher/ teacher's attitude since writing was no longer constantly associated with the drudgery of correcting reams of monotonous writing. As a matter of fact, the researcher was pleasantly surprised to find that he really enjoyed reading much of the writing because it was interesting,

personal, and vital in comparison to typical assignments. A further advantage was that from the extensive reading of student writing, the teacher was able to diagnose the strengths, weaknesses and idiosyncracies of individual students much more rapidly and accurately than had been possible by traditional correcting and grading.

The periods spent on peer evaluation also meant other changes in the teacher's role, for during these times it can be accurately said that instead of just telling students how to write, the teacher was actually helping students learn to write. At first the researcher-teacher found the role change a little difficult to accept because until the students became accustomed to the process, at times the teacher seemed superfluous, or he reverted to the role of monitoring groups to insure they worked at assigned tasks. But very quickly the peer groups generated problems and questions which created continuous demands for teacher discussion or assistance.

The utilization of peer evaluation to reduce teacher time spent correcting while allowing more frequent writing would appear to have particular relevance for high school English teachers in the province. The reorganized English curriculum requires that the students in each literature course write five major assignments each year. If these assignments are in addition to regular assignments in language courses then the teacher must find a viable

alternative to teacher correcting and grading or resort to impressionistic grading, which will not teach students to write. The other alternative - less student writing - would be counter-productive as well.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as a result of this study:

1. that teachers of composition require students to revise and rewrite assignments and that they adopt instructional strategies which will permit them to teach students how to revise their own writing
2. that teachers of composition provide students with frequent opportunities for evaluating the effects of their writing on their intended audiences
3. that there be an investigation of the professional and legal responsibilities of the teacher for controversial or libellous writing done under the auspices of the school
4. that more formal procedures be implemented in future peer evaluation programs for conveying student writing to audiences outside the school
5. that language arts coordinators provide in-service training for teachers in the use

of peer evaluation as a strategy for teaching composition.

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APPENDIX A

Student Survey

1. Approximately how much time did you spend writing each of your assignments before this present school year?

   Hours _____ Minutes _____

2. Approximately how much time have you spent writing each assignment this year?

   Hours _____ Minutes _____

3. If you spent less time per assignment this school year, list the main reasons why.

4. If you spent more time writing each assignment this year, list the main reasons why.

5. (a) Do you think you have improved as a writer this year?

   Yes _____ No _____

   (b) If you have improved list the main reasons why?

6. How does the number of assignments you have done this year to date compare to the number of assignments done in previous years?

   _____ a. not as many _____ c. a few more

   _____ b. about the same _____ d. many more

7. (a) Before this year did you regularly revise assignments?

   Yes _____ No _____

   (b) If "Yes", explain how you revised.

8. Did you do more revision this year than in previous years?

Yes _____ No _____

9. Explain how you now revise your writing.

10. (a) Did the small group discussions help you to revise your writing?

Yes _____ No _____

(b) Explain why the groups did or did not help you to revise.

11. How did the various checklists used in class help you to revise your writing?

12. List any difficulties you had in using the checklists.

13. (a) Did the teacher spend enough time teaching you how to use the checklist?

Yes _____ No _____

(b) Explain.

14. (a) Do you now feel more capable of revising your own work?

Yes _____ No _____

(b) Explain why or why not.

15. In previous years, who was the usual audience for your writing?

_____

16. Before this year, why did you usually write?

17. (a) Do you now consider any audiences other than the teacher when you write?

Yes _____ No _____

(b) Explain your answer to part (a).

18. What, if any, effect did knowing that your fellow students would read your work have on how you write?

19. How did knowing that your writing might be read outside school affect how you wrote?

20. Why do you think it might be important for a writer to keep in mind a specific audience when writing?

21. Did you like the way you have been taught to write this year?

Yes _____ No _____

Please explain.

22. Did the method change the way you feel about writing?

_____ a. still hate writing

_____ b. liked it better last year

_____ c. dislike but not so much

_____ d. no change

_____ e. like a little more

_____ f. like it much more

23. (a) Do you now feel more confident about your ability to write?

Yes _____ No _____

(b) Explain why.

24. Would you like to continue this program next year?

Yes _____ No _____

25. List ways in which you think the program can be improved.

APPENDIX B

Student Checklist: Essays (1)

A. Content
   1. Interest
   2. Length
   3. Sincerity
   4. Main Idea
   5. Told in Detail
   6. "Beating Round the Bush"
   7. Details
   8. Point Stressed
   9. Reference (?)
   10. Does the title make the reader want to read it?

B. Organization
   1. Opening paragraph
   2. Opening sentence
   3. Topic sentence
   4. "How he sticks to the topic"
   5. "No jumping from one topic to the other"
   6. Arrangement of ideas
   7. Closing sentence

C. Sentences
   1. Sentences that make sense
   2. Rambling sentences
   3. Run-on sentences
   4. Repetition of sentences
   5. Short sentences

D. Vocabulary
   1. Too much use of the same word in a sentence
   2. "Bad" language

E. Mechanics

1. Spelling
2. Punctuation
3. Neatness
4. Indentation
5. Capitalization
6. Handwriting
7. Title page

Student Composition Checklist (2)

A. Content

1. Are the main ideas clear?
2. Is it clear and understandable?
3. Does the essay show adequate knowledge of the subject?
4. Does the writer give evidence in support of statements?
5. Is the writing fully developed by the use of examples, facts, details?
6. Does the opening get the reader's attention and give him some idea what the essay is about?
7. Is the writing original? Does it use any different ways of writing?
8. Is the content interesting?
9. Is the ending good and suited to the story?
10. Does the title make a person want to read the story?

B. Organization

1. Is there a topic sentence?
2. Are all ideas relevant to the topic?
3. Are the ideas discussed in logical order?
4. Are the paragraphs arranged in their proper order?
5. Are the sentences in the right order?
6. Is there sufficient paragraph development?
7. Are all the paragraphs on the topic sentence of the essay?
8. Are the paragraphs unified?

C. Sentences

1. Does the opening sentence capture your interest?
2. Do all sentences make sense?
3. Are all sentences clear? (not ambiguous)
4. Are all sentences grammatically correct?
5. Are there run-on sentences?
6. Are the sentences choppy?
7. Are there sentence fragments?

D. Vocabulary

1. Is the same word used too often?
2. Does the writer pick good words to say what he wants?

E. Audience

1. What is the age and sex of my audience?
2. What is the status of the audience?
3. Is it clear who the audience is?
4. Is the relationship between the writer and the audience clear?
5. Will the opening capture the audience?
6. Is the language suitable to the people you are writing to?
7. Will the audience understand the writer's ideas?
8. Is there enough information?
9. Will the audience be convinced?
10. Is the audience an individual or a group?
11. Does the essay appeal to the audience?

F. Mechanics

1. Are paragraphs properly indented?

2. Are quotation marks used right?

3. Are words spelled correctly?

4. Is the essay neat?

5. Have capital letters and punctuation marks been used properly?

APPENDIX C

Sample Evaluation Guidelines

COMPOSITIONS

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING AND EVALUATION

A. Quality and Development of Ideas

1. Has the topic been sufficiently limited?
2. Is the writer's purpose clear? Is it a worthwhile purpose?
3. Is the writer original in his ideas or has he organized and interpreted old ideas in a novel, interesting way?
4. Is the material appropriate to the topic? Does it emphasize the main ideas?
5. Does the author develop each main idea adequately?
6. Does he try to cram too many ideas into an essay of limited length?
7. Is material included simply to fill up space?
8. Is the author guilty of plagiarism?

B. Organization

1. Unity - (a) Does every sentence in a paragraph specifically contribute to the development of the paragraph's topic?

   (b) Is each paragraph in a composition directly related to the main topic?

2. Coherence -

   (a) Are the paragraphs in a composition arranged in an effective order, according to the author's purpose?

   (b) Are connectives or other means used to clearly indicate the relationship between paragraphs?

   (c) Are the sentences in each paragraph arranged in the most effective order?

(d) Are the ideas so linked that the reader can follow smoothly the expression of the main thought?

(e) What major methods of development are used in individual paragraphs and within the composition itself?

(a) purposeful repetition
(b) time or place order
(c) specific to the general
(d) climatic arrangement
(e) examples and illustrations
(f) comparison and contrast
(g) dialogue
(h) question and answer
(i) hypothetical situations

3. Emphasis: some means of achieving emphasis

(a) forceful introduction

(b) effective conclusion

(c) purposeful repetition

(d) authoritative opinion

(e) authentic facts

(f) examples and illustrations

(g) comparison and contrast

(h) climatic arrangement

C. Effective Expression

1. Sentence structure:

(a) Are all statement sentences grammatically complete and separate?

(b) Are modifiers placed so that the reader cannot mistake the meaning?

(c) Are subordinate thoughts made subordinate and important thoughts emphasized?

(d) Are sentences varied in length and structure?

(e) Are sentences concise?

(f) Are the sentences as forceful as possible?

2. Diction:

   (a) Does the writer use a wide range of vocabulary? Does he repeat words unnecessarily?

   (b) Are words used which are direct, concrete and unpretentious?

   (c) Are verbs used effectively?

   (d) Are figures of speech original and appropriate?

   (e) Does the author use devices of effective writing such as humor, satire, irony, parody, personification, parallelism and balance, and purposeful repetition.

   (f) Is the kind of language used appropriate to the topic and the audience?

   (g) Does the author avoid overworked words, cliches, euphemisms and jargon?

3. Mechanics: check the following

   (a) paragraph identation

   (b) internal and end punctuation

   (c) spelling, including capitalization and possessives

   (d) consistency of tenses and numbers

   (e) correct reference and case of pronouns

   (f) manuscript form - layout-title, date name, teacher, margins legibility, and neatness, correct reporting of references.

EXPOSITORY WRITING: SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS

Name _____ Date _____

Assignment _____ Mark _____

Content -- 50%

Ideas: clear, pertinent, specific perceptive, focused	10	8	6	4	2	superficial
Organization: thesis stated, supporting development, logical sequence, builds to a conclusion, convincing	10	8	6	4	2	disorganized
Paragraphing: structure appropriate to the ideas, precise topic sentences, paragraph structures varied throughout essay	10	8	6	4	2	poorly-developed
Techniques for emphasis and/or persuasion: effective use of comparison, contrast, illustration, analogy, quotation, with the device selected to enhance the thought it conveys	10	8	6	4	2	boring
Unity and coherence: stays on topic, orderly development, appropriate connectives	10	8	6	4	2	off-topic and illogical

Style and literacy -- 50%

Maturity, ease, and flow: sense of appropriateness in relation between thought and expression...	10	8	6	4	2	juvenile
Diction: accurate, specific, vivid, fresh, symbolic, unaffected	10	8	6	4	2	hackneyed, vague inaccurate
Sentence structure: suits idea expressed, emphatic; varied use of loose, periodic, balanced, long, short; assertive, interrogative, exclamatory, imperative; parallelism, contrast, juxtaposition; avoidance of awkward, disjointed, fragmented, run-on sentences	10	8	6	4	2	confused, lacking in emphasis

Grammar and usage: appropriate....	10	8	6	4	2	substandard
Punctuation style: suited to the writing	10	8	6	4	2	inappropriate
Spelling: correct	10	8	6	4	2	incorrect

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION OF INTENDED AUDIENCE

1. Who is the intended audience?

   - What do you know about my audience's age, sex, social and economic status, occupation, educational background?

   - What positions, if any, of responsibility, influence, or control does my audience occupy?

   - Is my audience an individual or a group?

   - What is my personal relationship to my audience? For example, am I intimately familiar with my audience (a friend); Am I acquainted but not friendly (a teacher or student); or Am I personally unknown to my audience?

   - How will my audience perceive me? (hostile, friendly, neutral, demanding, requesting, entertaining, interested, courteous, sevile?)

2. What impression do I want my audience to form of me - both as a person and as a writer?

3. What assumptions can I make about my audience's knowledge, skills, attitudes, and interests as they pertain to my writing.

4. What must I tell my audience if my writing is to be clear and emphatic?

5. What kinds of ideas, facts, details, examples, reasons, feelings, attitudes, characters, stories, settings will appeal to my audience and sustain his interest?

6. What vocabulary and tone would be appropriate to my audience in a given situation for a given purpose?

7. If I imagine that I am in my audience's place - if I am the person receiving my writing - how would I respond?

   - Would I be satisfied or impressed with the neatness, attention, to handwriting, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, logic of organization and attention to interesting and convincing detail?

- Or would I be disgusted or "tuned off" by sloppy, careless writing which would seem to show that the writer really did not care much for his audience?
- Would the content be adequate?
- Would the writer's purpose be clear?
- If I could talk to the writer what questions would I ask?

8. What kind of response do I expect from my audience?
   - agreement?
   - action?
   - dialogue and discussion?
   - information?
   - appreciation and enjoyment?

9. Will I expect to be aware of the response. How will I know how my audience responds, if I expect to be aware of the response?