The Effects of Self-Evaluation Training on Writing of Students in Grades 5 & 6

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this action research is to discover how self-evaluation training affects students’ knowledge and understanding about their writing and needs for improvement.

In this study of 46 fifth and sixth graders, students underwent a four-stage self-evaluation training process. This involved students in defining criteria for their stories, teaching them how to apply the criteria using a variety of samples, giving students feedback about their self-evaluations, and developing action plans.

The study showed that after the self-evaluation process was set into place, students had an increased awareness of what made a good fictional writing piece. The self-evaluation process helped students become more aware of writing practices and of themselves as a writer. The study also found that the self-evaluation process set clear guidelines for students, focused student attention on important writing criteria, and opened up the conversation between students and teachers about evaluation, goal setting and the writing process.
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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND

Introduction

I remember my first years of teaching. I corrected everything. Detailed editing, marking, and anecdotal comments on students’ writing demanded long hours beyond the regular, classroom day. Half way through the year, I realized that I was correcting the same things that I had corrected in September. Although I knew something was wrong with the picture, I did not know what to do about it.

I later realized that instead of teaching children how to read their own work, I had taken students, the most important people and the ones who are closest to the work in progress, out of the entire evaluation process. As improving writing skills for all students is a major concern for everyone in education, it is critical to have students feel a sense of ownership in their learning and understand the purpose and process of their writing. As educators, we need to find a way to help students learn to respond to more than external motivational forces. We need to help them look internally and take responsibility for their own academic success. Self-evaluation is one assessment tool that addresses this need.

Motivation for the Study

Many students continue to feel mystified by teacher assessment practices. Teacher’s editing marks, vague comments, or complicated rubrics that contain confusing detail obscuring evaluative criteria give students little information on where they stand and few insights to the steps they need to take to improve. In particular, students with low self-direction and efficacy in writing continue to feel frustrated and continue to make the same errors with little improvement from one writing task to the other.
A need exists for assessment tools that will help students take active roles in the assessment process and direct them to greater success. The primary purpose of assessment and evaluation should be to inform the learners of their areas of strength and weakness. In this study I implemented a self-evaluation process adapted from the Cooperative Learning Evaluation and Assessment Research Group that involves teaching self-evaluation in four stages (Rolheiser, 1996). This is a training process that explicitly teaches students how to self-evaluate.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether self-evaluation training contributes to writing achievement using the four-stage model. In addition, I investigate the impact of self-evaluation training on students’ knowledge and understanding about their writing and needs for improvement. Students’ self-efficacy and motivation in writing are also explored.

Definitions

Although sometimes used interchangeably, I will clarify the difference between assessment and evaluation and how I have used these terms in this study.

Assessment is a general term that refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers and students that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities (Black & Wiliam, 1998). It is the process of collecting information on student achievement and performance.

Whereas assessment refers to the act of collecting student work, evaluation is the act of judging that collection of work. It is a judgment regarding the quality, value of a response, product, or performance, based on established criteria and curriculum standards.
In this study, I have defined self-evaluation as the “evaluation or judgment of the quality of one’s performance and the identification of one’s strengths and weaknesses with a view to improving one’s learning outcomes” (Klenowski, 1995). The self-evaluator will identify explicitly what has merit in his or her work based on specific criteria. The self-evaluator will also identify implications for future action. The student measures his or her progress against identified criteria that have been self-selected or negotiated with the teacher. The student is also required to reflect on his or her performance from an improvement perspective.

Defining the Research Question

With the desire to improve students’ writing skills in grade five and six, particularly in narrative writing, I formulated the following action research questions.

1. How does the self-evaluation training influence students’ understanding about their strengths and weaknesses in their writing and their ability to reflect on their writing with more precision?

2. Following the training, what are the changes in writing achievement, as measured by pre-and post scores on narrative tasks and answers to interview questions about their writing?

3. How does students’ self-efficacy change following the self-evaluation training?

I began this study with the belief that students’ achievement in writing will increase after the treatment of self-evaluation training has been implemented because of the attention put on performance criteria (Stages 1 & 2). In addition I believe that after self-evaluation training, students will have more understanding about what their strengths and weaknesses
are in their writing. Finally, it was my belief that after self-evaluation training, students will have better understanding of the criteria which will increase their motivation and self-efficacy.

In this study, the independent variable is self-evaluation and the dependent variables are: students’ writing achievement, students’ knowledge about areas needing improvement in their writing and students’ motivation and self-efficacy.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Current approaches to evaluation have it backwards. At the moment, the most important evaluator is some person out of town who knows nothing of the teaching situation. In fact, the student who is closest to the work…ought to be and is the most important evaluator. (Graves, 2002, p. 28)

In many schools, the concept of assessment leads parents, teachers, and students alike to think of tests and report cards. Many have become so focused on the letter grade or standardized test score that the true essence of learning and the achievement of the necessary skills needed for the future are often overlooked. In order for students to successfully reach the many demands and skills required in the twenty-first century, teacher strategies have shifted towards a more balanced approach to assessment that marries instruction and evaluation and shares authority with students.

In this literature review I will first explore the historical perspectives of curriculum, learning, and assessment, and the change from traditional assessment methods to authentic assessment practices like self-evaluation. It is important to remind ourselves where traditional views of testing came from and how tightly these views are linked with past models of curriculum and instruction. As part of that identity, the principles of both authentic assessment and formative assessment. I then finish with a review of the current research regarding the effects of self-evaluation in writing, self-efficacy and motivation.

Historical Versus New Perspectives of Curriculum, Learning, and Assessment

In the early 1900s, the social efficiency movement grew out of the belief that science could be used to solve the problems of industrialization and urbanization. The principles that were set in factories to achieve maximum efficiency were also used in schools. Thus,
every step would be taught specifically and precise standards of measurement were required
to ensure that each skill was mastered at the desired level. Scientific measure of ability was
also required in order to predict one’s future role in life. For John Franklin Bobbit, a leader
in the social efficiency movement, a primary goal of curriculum design was the elimination
of waste (1912), and in his view, it was wasteful to teach people things that they would
never use. Thus, this view led to a highly differentiated curriculum and a largely utilitarian
one. Alongside these curriculum theories, behaviorism and associationism theories held six
key assumptions of teaching and testing:

1. learning occurs by accumulating atomized bits of knowledge
2. learning is tightly sequenced and hierarchical
3. transfer is limited, so each objective must be explicitly taught
4. tests should be used frequently to ensure the mastery before proceeding to the
   next objective
5. tests are isomorphic with learning (tests=learning)
6. motivation is external and based on positive reinforcement of many small steps.

Thus, tests have traditionally focused at assessing one skill at a time and instructional
practices aimed at mastery of essential elements.

With the adoption of behaviourist learning theory in schools, the development of
“objective testing” also began to dominate instructional practice and classroom assessments.
Edward Thorndike, the “father” of “scientific measurement” and originator of associationist
learning theory, along with his students, fostered the development of the “objective” test.
This concept has been the foremost striking feature of achievement testing from the early 1900s to present day (Shepard, 2000).

In contrast to these past objective driven theories of knowledge, we now understand that learning is an active process of mental construction and sense making. From cognitive theory we have learned that existing knowledge structures and beliefs work to enable or impede new learning, that intelligent thought involves self-monitoring and awareness about when and how to use these skills (Shepard, 2000). The work of Vygotsky (1978) led to the realization that cognitive abilities are developed through socially supported interactions. Thus, development and learning are primarily social processes. These insights led to principles for curriculum reform. In order to be compatible with this new model of teaching and learning, classroom assessment also needed to change in order to represent important thinking and problem solving skills.

*The Change to Alternative Assessments*

As knowledge continues to expand, educators are faced with the challenge to their capacity to serve the needs of individuals entering a fast-paced future. “Individuals must be able to frame problems, find information, evaluate alternatives, create ideas and products (Darling-Hammond, 1993, p. 20), to work on teams, to be lifelong learners, to adapt to change, and to think critically” (Gilbert, 1990). In order to help students achieve these demands, a broader range of assessment tools is needed to capture important learning goals and processes and to more directly connect assessment to ongoing instruction. In order to substantiate these reforms, alternative assessment methods have been devised and the use of assessment for learning has been introduced. Alternative assessment is a word used to refer
to any kind of assessment that is different from the objective, traditional paper-and-pencil tests. Alternative assessment is assessment that “occurs in motivating contexts with meaningful tasks that are a part of daily instruction” (van Kraayenoord & Paris, 1993, p. 524).

Alternative methods of assessment have generated a lot of interest in education. There are many reasons for the growing interest toward alternative assessment methods. According to Mehrens (1992) the three principal reasons that contribute to support alternative assessment methods are: 1) the dissatisfaction with the objective tests, 2) the influence of cognitive psychology and, 3) the instructional impact of conventional tests.

1. The dissatisfaction with the objective tests

There has been a general dissatisfaction with traditional objective tests which don’t assess the skills and abilities teachers want students to develop during their school years in order to be successful in their later life and schooling (Mehrens, 1992). Objective tests often fail to measure higher-order thinking skills and only measure basic skills such as recall or recognition of information (Darling-Hammond, 1993). Essentially these tests usually fail to enhance the learning process and about what a student can do.

2. The influence of cognitive psychology

According to cognitive psychology and constructivist assumptions about learning, we must assess the performance as a whole. One must look at the progressive construction of knowledge. Integrating assessment in the learning activities gives students the tools to monitor their own learning process. This allows for the development of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.
3. The instructional impact of conventional tests

Finally, Mehren (1992) holds that the intensive use of objective tests has a harmful instructional effect on teaching and learning practices. Because traditional tests evaluate discrete points of knowledge and specific skills, instruction may also look narrow, decontextualized, and limited. According to Darling-Hammond (1993), the misuse of the tests rather than the tests themselves that are responsible for the negative instructional effects.

The Underlying Principles of Alternative or Authentic Assessment

Teachers today are experimenting with authentic assessment practices such as performance assessment, portfolio collections, classroom observation, peer assessment and self-evaluation.

Gardner (1991) defines assessment as “the obtaining of information about the skills and potentials of individuals, with the dual goals of providing useful feedback to the individuals and useful data to the surrounding community” (p. 90). Assessment becomes authentic when it exemplifies the real-life behaviours and challenges experienced by actual practitioners in the field (Davidson et al., 1992; Hawkins et al., 1993; Wiggins, 1989; Wolf & Pistone, 1991).

According to Wiggins (1990), assessments must have certain characteristics in order to be considered authentic. An assessment must be:
1. composed of tasks which we value, and at which we want students to excel – tasks worth “teaching to” and practicing (tasks simulate, mimic, or parallel the kinds of challenges facing the worker in the field of study)
2. constructed of “ill-structured” or “open-ended” challenges that require a repertoire of knowledge, as opposed to mere recall, recognition, or the “plugging in” of a ready-made algorithm or idea
3. appropriately multi-staged, leading to revised and refined products and performances
4. focused on students’ abilities to produce quality products or performances.
   Important processes and “habits of mind” are thus necessary means to the final work, and may be assessed
5. sufficiently de-mystified and known in advance by the student to allow for thorough preparation and the possibility of self-assessment
6. adaptable to student styles and interests, whenever possible and appropriate
7. based on judgments in reference to clear, appropriate-to-the-task criteria
8. rarely limited to one-shot, one-score tests with no interaction between assessor and assessee (often the assessment focuses on the student’s responses to questions or ability to justify answers and choice made)

Although teacher-made tests and standardized tests give us information about student learning, they do not provide all the information. Alternative forms of assessment can generate that other information. According to Shulman, “a union of insufficiencies” exists between tests and other forms of assessment (as cited in Rolheiser & Ross, 2000, p. 33). Various methods of assessment need to work together so that the “strengths of one offset the limitations of the others” (Skylight, 2000, p. 23). No single method or tool can provide all
the information needed to create a multidimensional portrait of the students as a learner (Skylight, 2000). Thus, methods need to be combined to complement each other.

**Positive Effects and Challenges of Authentic Assessment**

**Positive Effects**

Proponents of authentic assessment practices claim that a shift from traditional to authentic assessment might increase student achievement (Stiggins, 1994; Wiggins, 1993). Learning is maybe enhanced because authentic assessment encourages teachers to focus on the objectives to be measured. The assessments provide teachers with more accurate information than traditional tests, enabling teachers to respond more precisely to students’ learning needs.

According to Baron and Boschee (1995), the advantages to authentic assessment techniques are fourfold. First, authentic assessment techniques measure directly what educators want students to know. Second, they also emphasize higher thinking skills, personal judgment, and collaboration. Third, authentic assessment urges students to become active participants in the learning process. It is designed to create an environment in which students can show what they know, leaving the power in their hands and allowing them to utilize higher thinking skills. Third, authentic assessment urges students to become active participants in the learning process. It helps students to become more involved and responsible for their own learning process. Finally, it allows tests to be instructional rather than being an after-the-fact check-up on students’ learning.
Challenges of Authentic Assessment

Because authentic assessment allows students substantial latitude in interpreting, responding to, and designing the tasks, ensuring reliability is difficult.

One of the biggest difficulties is to generalize accurately about what students’ abilities are or what skills and knowledge are possessed by the students. Because students respond to fewer numbers of tasks, the issue becomes deriving inference about students and their abilities. In addition, there is undemonstrated reliability and comparability of the more subjective scoring systems and their results. Assigning a specific, adequately discriminating scaled score or percentile to a “more authentic” assessment is difficult.

Kerka (1995) explains that the use of authentic assessment requires more preparation work for teachers as goals, criteria, outcomes, and expectations must be clearly developed. Teachers must also become comfortable with some differentiation in teacher and student roles. This differentiation includes sharing the responsibility of the assessment and having more student input in it. In addition, challenges may arise for students who have difficulty with self-monitoring and reflection.

Self-evaluation as a Form of Authentic Assessment

Self-evaluation is a form of assessment that encourages students to become critical judges of the quality of their own work and their approaches to it. It is part of the family of assessments that link instruction and evaluation. Self-evaluation is the process by which a student gathers information about and reflects on his or her own learning. It is the student’s own assessment of personal progress in knowledge, skills, processes, or attitudes. Ultimately, it leads a student to a greater awareness and understanding of himself or herself.
as a learner (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2002).

Interest in the ways in which students may be encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning has increased. Life-long learning requires that individuals be able not only to work independently, but also to assess their own performance and progress (Falchikov & Boud, 1989). Thus, many proponents of alternate assessment practices acknowledge the importance of having students involved in the assessment process. Such involvement has the potential to impact many facets of student performance, including achievement in a specific performance task, self-efficacy, and intrinsic motivation. In his discussion of student-centered assessment, Stiggins (1994) claims that “our comprehensive re-examination of achievement targets over the past decade has revealed that students’ self-assessment is not just an engaging activity. Rather, it turns out to be the very heart of academic competence” (p. 33).

Self-evaluation has a positive impact on a student’s performance. For Cutting (1991), personal, on-going, self-evaluation system is the only way for students to visualize their own success. Perrone (1991) notes that, given repeated opportunities to actively participate in the evaluation of their own work, students “have become increasingly more articulate about their progress and what they need to work in to improve their performance and enlarge their understandings” (p. 166). Furthermore, Boud (1989) finds that:

frequent self-assessment produces a greater impact on children’s thinking and behaviour, carries an important practice effect, may influence pupils towards a better organization of the previous learning upon which future learning is based, and may serve to sharpen their perceptions of the objectives to be achieved. (p. 415)

Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, and Gardner (1991) criticize the current testing system for not allowing students to participate in discussions about the standards that are applied to their
work, and argue that “assessment is not a matter for outside experts to design; rather, it is an episode in which students and teachers might learn, through reflection and debate, about the standards of good work and the rules of evidence” (p. 52).

Thus, key researchers have found that self-evaluation or self-assessment is an important component in the evaluation process in order for students to get the appropriate feedback and continue to improve.

*Self-evaluation as Assessment for Learning*

Self-evaluation is an alternative form of assessment that encourages students to become critical judges of the quality of their own work and their approaches to it. It is also part of the family of assessments that is concerned with how judgments about the quality of students’ responses can be used to shape and improve the student’s competence, also known as formative assessment.

Feedback is a key element in formative assessment, and is usually defined in terms of information about how successfully something has been or is being done. Feedback provides for two main audiences, the teacher and the student. Teachers use feedback to make programmatic decision with respect to readiness, diagnosis, and remediation. Students use it to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of their performances, so that aspects associated with success or high quality can be recognized and reinforced, and unsatisfactory aspects modified or improved.

Summative contrasts with formative assessment in that it is concerned with summing up or summarizing the achievement status of a student, and is geared towards reporting at the end of a course of study especially for purposes of certification. It is essentially passive
and does not normally have immediate impact on learning, although it often influences
decisions which may have profound educational and personal consequences for the student.
The primary distinction between formative and summative assessment relates to the purpose
and effect, not to timing.

The studies of assessment in the last decade have shifted the focus of attention
towards greater interest in the interactions between assessment and classroom learning and
away from the concentration on the properties of restricted forms of test (Black & Wiliam,
1998). Underpinning this shift is the hope that improvement in classroom assessment will
make a strong contribution to the improvement of learning.

In surveys of teachers’ practices in formative assessment, Crooks (1988) and Black
(1993b) found common features showing these key weaknesses.

1. Classroom evaluation practices generally encourage superficial and rote learning,
   concentrating on recall of isolated details, usually items of knowledge which pupils soon forget.

2. Teachers do not generally review the assessment questions that they use and do
   not discuss them critically with peers, so there is little reflection on what is being assessed.

3. The grading function is over-emphasized and the learning function under-
   emphasized.

4. There is a tendency to use a normative rather than a criterion approach, which
   emphasizes competition between pupils rather than personal improvement of each. The evidence is that with such practices the effect of feedback is to teach
the weaker pupils that they lack ability, so that they are de-motivated and lose confidence in their own capacity to learn.

Both in questioning and written work, teachers’ assessment focuses on low-level aims, mainly recall. Minimal focus occurs on such outcomes as speculation and critical reflection (Bol & Strage, 1996; Pijl, 1992; Schilling et al., 1990; Senk et al., 1997; Stiggins et al., 1989), and students focus on getting through the tasks and resist attempts to engage in risky cognitive activities (Duschl & Gitomar, 1997). Although teachers can predict the performance of their pupils on external tests – albeit tests reflecting low-level aims – their own assessments do not tell them what they need to know about their students’ learning (Lorsbach et al., 1992; Rudman, 1987).

Self-assessment or evaluation by students is an essential component of formative assessment. Furthermore, in order for self-assessment to be productive, students should be trained in it so that they can understand the main purposes of their learning and thereby grasp what they need to do to achieve (Black & William, 1998).

Student Self-assessment of their Writing

In Elbow’s (1981) view of the writing process, “writing calls on two skills that are so different that they usually conflict with each other: creating and criticizing” (p. 7). Students must create their own words and ideas; while simultaneously criticizing those words in order to decide which ones to use.

Similarly, when discussing the role of self-assessment in the arts, Wolf and Pistone (1991) note that: “No artist survives without being what the artist Ben Shahn calls ‘the
spontaneous imaginer and the inexorable critic.’ An episode of assessment should be an occasion when students learn to read and appraise their own work” (p.8).

Thus, the ability to reflect on one’s work is critical in order to grow and develop as learners and writers. Graves (1994) suggests that looking deep within is essential not only to students’ understanding of their own writing but also to the very act of writing itself.

Nevertheless, revision based on self-evaluation can be really difficult for students. White (1994) explains: “Most students do not revise because they have not learned how to evaluate what they write; they have not internalized any consistent set of criteria or standards to which they can hold themselves” (p. 10). Graves (1994) underscores this difficulty by pointing out that, “We teach (students) how to read books but not how to read their own writing. Unless we show children how to read their own writing, their work will not improve” (p.xvi).

“Assessment and instruction work together; self-evaluation, reflection, and goal setting are integral to daily instruction and practice” (Routman, 1996, p. 48). Thus, in order for children to learn how to evaluate, they need to understand the criteria and continually practice self-assessment before they can start to see improvements in their writing.

According to Valencia (1990), when students are able to evaluate their own work, it helps them reflect on and understand their own strengths and needs, and encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning. Nevertheless, students may need guidance to feel comfortable about assessing their writing.

According to Spandel (2005), to help student writers reach a level of assessment where they can read their own writing and know how to make it stronger, teachers must first
teach themselves what good writing is. Then they must make students partners in the assessment process, not just recipients of teachers’ grades or comments. They must be fully active participants who speak writers’ language, have their own rubrics (written in student-friendly terms) and learn alongside the teachers how to think critically about writing. Becoming more self-regulated is crucial.

**Rubrics and Self-regulated Writing**

An important goal in writing instruction is to help students develop the self-regulation skills needed to successfully manage the intricacies of the writing process. Self-regulation is learning that is guided by metacognition. Self-regulation is the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of personal progress against a standard (Butler & Winne, 1995). Self-assessment promotes self-regulation because it gives students some of the responsibility for judging written work instead of placing all the responsibility on the teacher.

Rubrics can provide the scaffolding that students need to become self-regulated writers. A rubric articulates the expectations for an assignment by listing the criteria and describing levels of quality from excellent to poor. To ensure that students have some ownership of the rubric, instructional rubrics are often created with students and are always written in language that students can understand (Goodrich & Andrade, 2000). Wiggins (1992) reminds us that to the extent possible, “scoring criteria should rely on descriptive language, not on evaluative and/or comparative language such as ‘excellent’ or ‘fair’” (p.30). Strickland and Strickland (1998) caution that “Many rubrics we use are invalid because we don’t score what’s important in the real-world application of the content being
assessed. Instead we design rubrics to assess what’s easiest to describe rather than what really matters” (p. 81).

Kulm (1994) recommends that teachers begin self-evaluation by involving students in the construction of scoring rubrics which students then use to appraise their work. But even the joint construction of rubrics might be insufficient to focus student attention if the rubrics are too task-specific, too general, or too complicated for students to use readily (Ross, Rolheiser, & Hogaboam-Gray, 1999).

Criterion-based Feedback

Seinfeld (1993), a comedian, underscores the need for specific criteria:

I always did well on essay questions. Just put everything you know on there, maybe you’ll hit it. And then you’d get the paper back from the teacher, and she’s written one word across the entire page, “vague.” I thought “vague” was kind of a vague thing to say. I’d write underneath it, “unclear,” and send it back. (p. 164)

Teachers play an important role in evaluation, a role of helping students become life-long learners, critical thinkers, evaluators, and writers. Effective feedback is critical because it allows students to know what is working for them. With self-assessment and self-evaluation, it gives students the opportunity to become their own sources of feedback, given the appropriate supports.

Criterion-based feedback helps students find out how their writing measures up to certain criteria. It helps students isolate particularly troublesome aspects of their writing and then concentrate on them in revising and in future writing. Nevertheless, one of the main problems with criterion-based feedback is not knowing what qualities to look for in the
writing (Elbow, 1981). Thus, teachers must first understand what good writing is in order to guide students through the writing process and ultimately have students monitor their own work and criticize their own writing.

Criterion-referenced standards help clarify expectations for students. Most researchers agree that assessment practices become more valid and effective when students are explicitly informed of the criteria or standards by which their work will be assessed (Herman, Aschacher & Winters, 1992; Mabe and West, 1982; Paris and Ayers, 1994; Wiggins, 1989; Wolf, Bixby, Glenn & Gardner, 1991). Clear criteria not only improve the validity of self-assessments, they also guide students in monitoring their own thinking and learning. Butler and Winne (1995) argue that one reason students have difficulty monitoring their work is because they do not have standards or criteria against which to judge their progress. Thus, criterion-based self-assessment provides students with information and advice about how to monitor their work and how to improve it.

*The Six Traits of Writing*

Just as students must have clear expectations and understandings of what a good piece of writing looks like, so must the teacher. In order to help students have clear expectations and targets of good writing, teachers themselves need to be informed on the elements of good writing.

Deiderich (1974) had been curious to know whether people could agree on what makes writing work and whether they could come up with language to describe what they found. He assembled a group of approximately 50 writers, editors, attorneys, business executives, and English, natural science, and social science teachers. He asked them to read
numerous student essays and rank them into three groups: effective, somewhat effective, and problematic. They were asked to record their reasons for ranking the papers as they had. In most cases they were influenced by nearly identical qualities (traits) in the writing. The traits Diederich’s team identified are (in order of apparent influence): ideas, mechanics (usage, sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling), organization and analysis, working and phrasing, and flavour (voice, tone, style, and personal qualities). Ideas and organizational structure were weighted higher in later ratings because these were perceived to be the most significant of the traits identified. Mechanics was subdivided into (a) usage and sentence structure, (b) punctuation and use of capitals, abbreviations, and numbers, (c) spelling and (d) general neatness.

Over the years, Diederich’s method of ranking and systematically recording the thinking behind the ranking has been replicated by other researchers, including Purves (1992) in his work on international writing assessment. In the international writing study directed by Purves, raters identified these significant traits: content, organization, style and tone (what we call voice, word choice, and sentence fluency), surface features (essentially conventions, but also including neatness), and personal response of the reader (essentially, response to the quality we call voice). Similarly, in 1982, Murray identified these six traits: meaning, authority, voice, development, design, and clarity. Meaning and clarity equate with the trait of ideas, design with organization, voice and authority with voice.

A seventeen-member Analytical Assessment Model Committee set about replicating Deiderich’s research in 1974. Meyer and Spandel spent weeks reading student papers at every grade level from 3 through 12, sorting them into high, middle, and beginning levels and documenting their reasons for ranking them as they did. Eventually, they arranged their
documentation along a continuum of writing performance, and the result was a draft of what would eventually become the six-trait assessment model (as cited in Spandel, 2005). The set of criteria found by this committee is a model used by many educators evaluating writing and the one that is used in this study.

Shortly thereafter, Portland Public Schools conducted a similar study in which Spandel also participated. They came up with virtually identical traits and their list also closely matched that of Deiderich’s. This similarity demonstrated that teachers do in fact share common values about what is important in writing (as cited in Spandel, 2005).

**Self-assessment, Student Motivation, and Self-efficacy**

“From their very earliest school experiences, students draw life-shaping conclusions about themselves as learners as a result of classroom assessments” (Stiggins, 2000, p. 48). Assessment, therefore, becomes a powerful tool that can motivate or destroy a student’s decision to invest in the school experience. According to Stiggins (2000), teachers can enhance or destroy students’ desire to success in school more quick and permanently through their use of assessment than with any other tools at their disposal. The teacher’s most important challenge is to effectively manage the relationship between assessment and student motivation.

Perceived self-efficacy, or students’ personal beliefs about their capabilities to learn or perform behaviours at designated levels, plays an important role in their motivation and learning. In general, successes raise efficacy and failures lower it (Schunk, 2003). At the beginning of a learning activity, students have goals and a sense of self-efficacy for learning (Schunk, 1995b; Schunk & Ertmner, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000). Learners’ self-efficacy
sustains their motivation and promotes learning. During periods of self-reflection, learners evaluate their progress by comparing their performance to their goals. Self-evaluations of progress enhance efficacy and maintain motivation.

Although low self-efficacy is detrimental to learning, effective learning does not require that efficacy be extremely high. At overly high levels, students may feel overconfident and slack off in their efforts, which can slow down learning (Salomon, 1984). Self-efficacy is important but not the only influence on achievement. Other important influences are skills, knowledge, outcome expectations, and perceived value (Schunk, 2003).

Schunk (2003) holds that modeling, goal setting and self-evaluation, are important means of promoting learning and self-efficacy. Students must attend to a model, code the information for retention, be capable of producing the demonstrated pattern, and be motivated to perform it. Modeling informs, motivates, and provides information about what sequence of actions will lead to success and which actions have undesirable consequences. Models can raise efficacy among students who are apt to believe that they, too will be successful if they follow the same behavioural sequence. Models also motivate students to perform the same behaviour themselves or to avoid performing it. Thus, in self-evaluation training, students get the opportunity to see many models of writing that reflect the different writing criteria. These models act as benchmarks for students to help them better understand the criteria and produce similar results.

Goals are integral components to motivation and leaning. They motivate students to exert extra effort and persist, and they focus attention on relevant task features and the strategies that will help accomplish the task (Locke & Latham, 1990). Goals that
incorporate specific performance standards are more likely to enhance learning and activate self-evaluative reactions than are such general goals as “Do your best” (Locke & Latham, 1990). In self-evaluation training, the models of different writing pieces exemplifying the criteria in the rubric act as goals for students.

Finally, positive self-evaluations of one’s capabilities and progress in skill acquisition are important for maintaining self-efficacy for learning and performing well. They raise self-efficacy and motivation because students believe they are learning and capable of further progress (Schunk, 1990). Nevertheless, low self-evaluations will not necessarily diminish self-efficacy and motivation if students believe they can succeed but that their present approach is ineffective (Bandura, 1986).

Self-evaluation may not always have desirable effects. Asking students to periodically assess their capabilities on a task they repeatedly have failed to master might lower, rather than raise, self-efficacy and motivation. After many negative attempts students might conclude they are incapable of learning. Students with learning problems often fall into a cycle in which failure leads to negative self-perceptions, diminished motivation, and more failure (Licht & Kistner, 1986). To be effective, self-evaluation must be linked with instruction so students learn and perceive that they are making progress. When involving students in defining criteria, teaching students how to apply them, providing feedback to students on their self-evaluations, and helping students develop action plans, self-evaluation becomes more than just asking students to give themselves a mark. These stages in the self-evaluation training process help students develop careful reflections and ultimately develop their skills (Ross, Rolheiser, Hogaboam-Gray, 2000).
**Self-efficacy and Writing Achievement**

Schunk and Swartz (1993a, 1993b) explored the effects of learning goals and progress feedback on children’s self-efficacy, achievement, and use of writing strategies. The context was instruction on writing paragraphs. Children were assigned to a process (learning) goal, process goal plus progress feedback, product (performance) goal, or general goal (instructional control) condition. Process-goal and process-goal plus progress feedback children were informed that their goal was to learn to use the strategy to write paragraphs. Product-goal students were told that their goal was to write paragraphs; general-goal students were advised to do their best. Process-goal plus feedback students periodically received verbal feedback from the adult that linked strategy use with improved writing performance. Results showed that the process-goal feedback condition was the most effective and that benefits emerged when providing a process goal alone. Process-goal plus feedback students generally outperformed product-and general-goal students on self-efficacy and writing achievement, and they evaluated the effectiveness of the strategy positively and demonstrated the greatest amount of strategy use.

In three studies, (Graham & Harris, 1989a, 1989b; Sawyer, Graham, & Harris, 1992) teaching students with learning disabilities a strategy for writing essays or stories improved self-efficacy and composition. These researchers explained and demonstrated the strategy while applying its steps to write stories. They conveyed the strategy’s value by emphasizing that use of the strategy would help students attain their learning goals. Other components of the procedure are student self-monitoring of their writing performance and self-evaluation of their progress by comparing goals with their achievement.
Thus, self-efficacy plays an important role in the success of students and their writing. Giving students specific strategies and feedback along the way, not only improves writing, but helps students’ self-efficacy when they approach their next writing challenge.

*Studies of the Effects of Self-evaluation Training*

Few studies have examined the effects of teaching students how to self-evaluate in a classroom setting over a sustained period of time. Rief (1983) did a short eight-week study of her students’ abilities to evaluate their own work and the work of other writers. She first established a baseline by asking her students to evaluate the work of students from another school. Then, during the next six weeks, she had her students evaluate their own work, scaling the writing from best to least best and making extensive comments about needed improvements. At the end of six weeks, Rief brought in a new batch of outside papers for the students to evaluate; papers that had also been evaluated by top-notch writing teachers and professional writers. Her students’ ability to evaluate had improved remarkably, most to the level of their teachers of writing, and some were able to match the evaluative judgements of the professional writers. More important, these student writers were able to apply their discriminations to their own texts (as cited in Graves, 1983).

Another study of self-evaluation in the language area (Arter, et al., 1994) gave grade five students direct instruction on the meaning of six traits of essay writing. The teacher, without student participation, determined the traits. Students scored a sample of essays and applied trait analysis to their own writing over a five-month period. The treatment group outperformed controls on one of six traits (ideas) but the analysis procedures failed to protect the findings from Type 1 error, so the results are inconclusive.
In Ross, Rolheiser, and Hogaboam-Gray’s (1999) study of the effects of self-evaluation training on narrative writing, 148 students in 15 grade 4-6 classrooms were taught over an eight-week period how to evaluate their work. After using a four-stage model of teaching self-evaluation (involving students in identifying criteria, student self-evaluating, giving feedback, and helping students set goals), they found that treatment students became more accurate in their self-evaluations than control students. Treatment students also outperformed controls on narrative effect, although the overall effect was small. A key finding was that weaker writers improved their writing much more if they were in the treatment group than the control group.

Goodrich and Boulay (2003) examined the impact of self-assessment on 7th and 8th grade students’ written essays. Students wrote two essays: historical fiction essay and response to literature essay. All students received instructional rubrics that articulated the criteria and gradations of quality for the given essay. Students in the treatment group participated in two formal self-assessment lessons, during which they used the rubric to assess the quality of their drafts. The results from the historical fiction essay suggested a positive relationship between the treatment and boys’ scores. The results from the response to literature essay showed no effect of treatment for either boys or girls.

We also have evidence from other subject areas on the effects of self-evaluation. Fontana and Fernandes (1994) implemented a 20 week program to increase primary student control of learning. The program had a significant impact on student achievement for more able students but the effects were negligible for the less able. In another study, Schunk (1996) found that asking grade 4 students to judge how certain they were that they could solve computational problems increased achievement in a performance goal condition but
not on the learning goal condition. In another study, Ross (1995) found that self-evaluation training increased cooperative student interactions associated with achievement when he trained cooperative groups of grade 7 mathematics students to interpret edited transcripts of their interactions.

Research with university student subjects indicates that the accuracy of self-appraisals improves when professors and students agree on assessment criteria (Falchikov & Boud, 1989) and when students are required to justify their assessments (Boud, Churches, & Smith, 1986).

Across all of these studies, alternative assessment practices like self-evaluation have showed some success for students. Students who were trained in judging their work against evaluative criteria were later better able to judge their own writing. After self-evaluation training, students became more accurate in their self-assessment and some low-achievers showed better success. Some improvement was also shown in boys’ writing scores after self-assessment lessons. Thus, self-evaluation in areas like writing and other subject areas showed positive affects on student achievement.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this action research is to discover how self-evaluation training affects grade five and six students’ understanding about their writing and needs for improvement. Specifically, I focus on the following research questions.

1. How does the self-evaluation training influence students’ understanding about their strengths and weaknesses in their writing and their ability to reflect on their writing with more precision?

2. Following the training, what are the changes in writing achievement, as measured by pre-and post scores on narrative tasks and answers to interview questions about their writing?

3. How does students’ self-efficacy change following the self-evaluation training?

Mixed-method Design

In order to evaluate these effects, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results was used. Greene (2005) regards mixed methods research as a means to gain insight. Such enquiry can generate “important understandings through the juxtaposition of different lenses, perspectives, and stances” (p. 208). Thus, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods can provide a more robust understanding of the results than either method used alone.

Quantitative data are obtained when the variable being studied is measured along a scale that indicates how much of the variable is present. Higher scores indicate that more of
the variable is present than do lower scores (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). In this action research study, through the use of frequency charts, it was possible to see the rate of occurrence of each writing trait that students refer to in their interviews. In addition, writing scores gave a clear indication of the differences between achievement before the treatment of self-evaluation training and after. With the use of a questionnaire that has a rating scale, the teacher/researcher was able to determine the difference in scores in self-efficacy before and after treatment.

By contrast, the qualitative data in this study provided a better understanding about how individuals see the self-assessment process and whether or not they felt it has helped them. Through interviews and teacher observations, students were able to elaborate on how they perceive their writing, the self-evaluation training. The qualitative research, thus, contributed to the validation and interpretation of quantitative findings.

An explanatory design was adopted, whereby achievement results in narratives and self-efficacy results in the questionnaire were first collected and analyzed. The qualitative data from the interviews were used to refine the quantitative findings.

Data Collection

This study was carried out in a multiculturally diverse school in Toronto. This elementary school serves approximately 430 students from kindergarten to grade six. As of September 1998, the school became a dual track school offering both regular English and French Immersion programs. This school has 21 full-time certified staff members. Five percent of students have been living in Canada for two years or less and 11% of students have been living in Canada for 3-5 years. Sixty-seven percent of the students speak a
primary language is one other than English.

Participants

The students in this study come from two grade 5/6 classes. The first participating class was that of the teacher-researcher, which included 29 students. The second participating class was that of another grade 5/6 teacher who willingly volunteered to participate in the study with her 29 students. All students ranged in age from ten to twelve years old. The students and their parents were asked to provide permission to have student work included in the study. A sample of 46 students was selected from a possible total of 58 students. Fourteen students of the 58 were not included in the data collection for various reasons. Three students were not in attendance for the post-treatment writing tasks. Two students were new to the school and missed the first half of the writing activities. Another two students did not have permission forms. Of the sample of 46 students, 24 were boys and 22 were girls.

Before the intervention, the teachers rated students’ writing performance as high, medium, and low. Academic levels were based on students’ most recent report card marks in the area of writing. Those who were English Language Learners or had a mark between D- and C- were considered low. Medium students fell between a C and B and high students had a report card mark falling between a B+ and an A+. There were 14 high-levelled students, 22 medium levelled-students, and 10 low-levelled students. Of the 46 participants, two males, one in grade five and one in grade six, were in stage one of the English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) program. In this study, they were classified as low-level writers.
**Materials**

The materials used for this study included exemplars of writing tasks from the Education Quality Assessment Office of Ontario (EQAO) standardized tests from 2000-2005. In addition, exemplars of narrative tasks were taken from *6 + 1 Traits of Writing* (Culham, 1995). Students were asked to write two narratives in the writer’s workshop context (Calkins, 2006; Graves, 1983).

Because writer’s workshop takes students through the stages of the writing process, students begin for the preparation of writing by collecting material for writing, jotting alternative plans, talking about their topic, and reading texts that resemble the text that they hope to write. Writers drafted their writing, where they explored different leads, did a free-write, and developed their subject. Next, through revision, writers discovered the best way to convey their meaning. This may include rewriting a lead, elaborating on important sections or deleting unimportant ones. Finally, writers edited, which involves proofreading, correcting, and smoothing out. Writers thought about spelling, punctuation and word choice.

**Procedure**

The research study began in early April and lasted approximately 12 weeks, concluding at the end of June. On day one, all students in the class were given a survey that examined students’ self-perception and self-efficacy in the area of writing (Appendix I).
Teaching Narrative Writing

On day two, within the context of Calkin’s (2006) writing workshop program, students were given a writing task to compose a narrative. All 46 students were guided through the stages of the writing process by the teacher-researcher.

First, children collected story ideas and then selected one. Students were encouraged to write realistic fiction involving just a few characters. They were also encouraged to write stories about characters who resemble the author, at least in age, as they would be able to have more ideas and better relate to the main character. In order to help students generate ideas, a mini-lesson was conducted that gave students some strategies. Students were asked to think about a place or person that matters to them and then list several times when they did something with that person (in a particular place, with a particular thing). The teacher-researcher then suggested they reread their list, select one episode that they remembered with crystal clarity, and begin to write the story of that one episode. This is a form of rehearsal that involves seeing potential stories everywhere, selecting from all these possibilities one idea that is worth developing, and beginning to plan a first draft.

After students had selected their story idea, they began to write. A mini-lesson was conducted to help students develop their characters. Students were asked to develop their protagonist by thinking about external and also internal characteristics of that person, trying to create a coherent character. These ideas were put into a chart that the teacher-researcher created for the students as an example. Students began to focus on their character’s wants and struggles. They also developed their secondary characters.
Next, children plotted their story on a story mountain, thinking about how to focus on just two or three scenes, narrowing the plotline based on the recognition that this would be a short story and not a novel. An example was done with the students by reading a short story and plotting the main ideas on a story mountain.

They revised their plans, taking into account more information about effective stories. Students were led into mini-lessons about how to use dialogue effectively in their stories and how to show what was happening rather than tell about it. The teacher-researcher gave students examples of the same idea told in different ways. One was general and “told” the story while the other gave specifics and led the students through the action. Students discussed the differences and then looked at other examples and identified whether the writer “told” or “showed.” An example of “show” versus “tell” would be, instead of saying, “Leo was mean,” a writer shows Leo kicking his cat.

Next, they wrote their drafts in story booklets, with one page of the booklet for each dot on the story mountain. Children then revised and edited their work with no teacher assistance. A polished copy was then completed.

After the first writing assignment was completed by all students, each student was interviewed by the teacher. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. The teacher-researcher asked the following questions in the interviews.

1. What is good about your writing?

2. In what do you need to improve?
Self-evaluation Training

All of these same students were then given the treatment: self-evaluation training. This is a training process that explicitly teaches students how to self-evaluate using a four-stage approach. This approach was designed by the Cooperative Learning Evaluation and Assessment Research Group (Rolheiser, 1996), researched, and used directly in this study.

The first stage involves students in defining criteria. This increases student commitment to instructional goals and provides an opportunity for teachers to influence students’ orientations toward learning. The specific steps (Rolheiser, 1996) that guide this stage are as follows:

1. students brainstorm criteria
2. teacher and students negotiate about what should be included or excluded
3. students and teacher create a rubric
4. use student language.

Given that student language is used, the above steps ensure the criteria are shared as well as being understandable.

In stage two, teachers teach students how to apply the criteria. As students have been involved in a negotiation in stage one, the criteria that result will be an integrated set of personal and teacher/school goals. Given the goals are not entirely their own, students need to see examples of what they mean in practice. These models or examples help students understand specifically what the criteria mean to them. The specific steps at this stage are as follows:

1. show examples
2. students practise classifying the examples using the criteria generated. (Rolheiser, 1996)

In stage three, the teacher gives students feedback on their self-evaluations. Students’ initial comprehension of the criteria and how to apply them are likely to be imperfect. Through discussion, students can gain a better understanding of differences in the data. The specific steps that are helpful in guiding this stage are:

1. provide comparative data
2. talk about differences. (Rolheiser, 1996)

In the final stage, teachers help students develop action plans. Without teacher help, students may be uncertain whether they have attained their goals. Teachers can also help students connect particular levels of achievement to the learning strategies they used and to the effort they expended. Teachers can help student develop action plans in which feasible goals are set. The specific steps to guide this stage are as follows:

1. students identify strengths/weaknesses
2. students generate goals
3. teacher guides students to develop specific actions toward their goals
4. students’ goals and action plans are recorded. (Rolheiser, 1996)

As a group, students were introduced to the term “self-assessment.” Their perceptions of self-assessment were recorded on chart paper. Students were asked to share their opinions on both the positive and negative aspects of self-assessment and their experience with it. Students were then asked to brainstorm the important criteria necessary for an effective narrative. Student answers were recorded on the overhead. The teacher-researcher grouped similar ideas together and proceeded to identify ones where students were in agreement.
Students were asked to reach consensus regarding the criteria that would be used by the teacher to assess their writing and that they would use for self-assessment. Six writing criteria were chosen: ideas, organization, voice, sentence fluency, word choice, and conventions (See Appendix 3 for description of criteria in writing rubric).

The students were then divided into small groups where they were given one of the six specific writing criteria. In their groups, students created the standards for a high, medium, and low narrative piece. Students wrote descriptors for each category and shared them with the rest of the group. Student discussion of the descriptors was encouraged and changes were made until agreement was reached on the descriptors for a high, medium, and low narrative piece. This process was followed for all six criteria. Finally, a class rubric was created (Stage 1).

Students then practised using the rubric to judge other narratives (Stage 2). One criterion at a time was looked at until all six traits were understood. Later, students were asked to assess sample narratives based on all six traits. Student discussion was encouraged after each narrative was assessed and students debated with each other on why they assessed the way they did. Through this process, students developed greater clarity regarding the criteria.

After the self-evaluation training, students wrote another narrative in the same format (brainstorm, plan, rough copy, editing, and final copy), with no editing help from the teacher. After this process took place, students were asked to assess their own writing (Stage 3) based on the rubric developed by the class. Finally, students had a conference with the teacher about their writing, self-evaluation, and their future writing goals (Stage 4).
Students were then interviewed for the second time. In the second interview the following questions were asked.

1. What is good about your writing? (for original story and post-treatment story)

2. In what do you need to improve? (for original story and post-treatment story)

3. Did the self-evaluation process help you? How?

4. What stage in the self-evaluation process helped you the most? Why?

The students were given the same self-efficacy test again.

Data Analysis

Survey Analysis

Students were asked to complete a self-efficacy survey pre- and post-treatment (see Appendix 1). The self-efficacy measure was taken from Graham, Schwartz, and MacArthur’s study (1993), on knowledge and writing of composing processes, attitudes toward writing, and self-efficacy of students with and without learning disabilities. An average of all the scores was made and compared pre-and post-treatment.

This survey included 10 efficacy statements, in which the student is asked to indicate agreement with each item on a 5-point scale. The first seven scores for these seven items were summed and divided by the total number of statements. The result represents a measure of perceived efficacy for executing composing processes. The scores for items 2, 6,
and 7 were inverted prior to calculating the summed score, because these statements were worded negatively. The other two responses represent a measure of students’ perceived efficacy on specific writing tasks like the narrative and exposition. As the exposition task was not completed because of time restraints, that question was dropped. The last five questions measure students’ attitude towards writing. Those scores were summed and divided by the total number of items. The scores for questions 11, 13, and 15 were inverted prior to summing the responses because the wording of the items was in the opposite direction. After calculating each student’s score in the three sections, self-efficacy of composing processes, attitude towards self as a writer in relation to others in the class, and attitude towards writing, an overall average was made and compared pre-and post-treatment.

Achievement Analysis

Students then wrote a narrative before and after the self-evaluation training. These stories were scored by the researcher and another grade 5/6 teacher based on the rubric created during the self-evaluation training. Scores were compared to measure changes in achievement.

Interview Analysis

Each child’s answers to interview questions following the narrative task were audio-taped and later transcribed for quantitative and qualitative analysis. Student responses were organized into categories and tallied for proportional frequency. The total amount of responses in each category was compared to the total amount of responses and calculated into percentages.

Following an overall tally of the students’ responses for each category, the transcriptions
of their responses were further sorted according to the students’ gender and academic levels. Academic levels were categorized as high, medium, and low in the area of writing. The results were listed in frequency charts to illustrate the difference in proportions.

The students’ responses from the interviews were categorized under the eight writing categories. The researcher first grouped all similar responses together that gradually grew into larger categories. The following eight categories were created.

1. **Ideas and Development** - These are statements referring to the content of the piece. They have been broken down into 6 sub-categories.
   a) **Elaboration** - The writer refers to the elaboration of his/her ideas.
   b) **Personal knowledge and experience** - The writer uses his/her knowledge, experience, insight or perspective to make the story authentic/original.
   c) **Character Development** - The writer refers to his/her characters or character development.
   d) **Dialogue** - The writer uses dialogue to develop the story and characters
   e) **Detail** - The writer provides descriptive detail to illustrate an idea. The writer shows the story and does not tell it.
   f) **Plot Development** - The writer refers to the ideas, actions, and/or events in the story (plot and/or development of the plot).

2. **Voice** - These are statements referring to the writer’s desire to speak to the reader in a compelling and engaging way. The writer is aware of the audience and the writing’s purpose. They have been broken into two sub-categories.
a) **Personal Voice** - These are statements referring to the writer’s desire to speak to the reader in a compelling and engaging way. The writer seems engaged and involved with the topic.

b) **Audience Awareness** - The writer seems to know the audience and to care about their interests.

3. **Organization** - These are statements referring to the sequencing, ordering, and pace of information in the story.

4. **Sentence Fluency** - These are statements referring to the varied structure and length of sentences with the goal of giving the writing texture and interest.

5. **Word Choice** - These are statements referring to the language used to enhance the message and paint a clear picture in the reader’s mind.

6. **Conventions** - These are statements referring to the writer’s grasp of standard conventions and layout or presentation of the piece.

7. **Affective Responses** - These are statements referring to time, effort, ability, or sentiments of the writing piece or of themselves as a writer.

8. **Other** - These are statements not relating to the question or students did not have a response.

The frequency of each category was calculated in percentages of total numbers in all categories and rounded to the neatest one-tenth. A frequency table was created to observe the proportional relationship between the total responses and the amount in each category.

Following an overall analysis of the frequency for each category, the transcriptions of their responses were further sorted according to the students’ gender and academic levels (high, medium, low). Again, the frequency of each category was calculated in percentages
and rounded to the nearest one-tenth. Frequency tables were created to observe the proportional relationships between the total responses and the amount in each category.

In the students’ second interview, two additional questions were asked: Did the self-evaluation training help you and if so, how? Which stage in the self-evaluation training helped you the most and why? The responses from students were tallied in a frequency table according to which stage in the self-evaluation process helped students the most.

Finally, after alphabetizing the students by first name, six randomly-selected students were chosen from the list according to gender and academic level. Three boys and three girls were chosen, along with two high, two medium, and two low-levelled students. The highest-levelled student and the lowest-levelled student were dropped, as they represented extremes on the spectrum of academic achievement.

A closer look was given to six randomly-selected students in order to better examine how these students answered the interview questions and their thoughts on whether or not the self-evaluation training helped their writing process. In addition, their two stories were marked based on the writing rubric created from the self-evaluation training. The researcher, along with the other grade 5/6 teacher, scored the stories based on the six writing criteria. A level 5 represented the highest on the achievement chart while level 1 was the lowest. The researcher marked all of the stories that were done by the 29 students not in her class while the other grade 5/6 teacher marked the stories from students that were in the researcher’s class. The students’ final scores were compared in order to see if there was an increase in writing achievement after self-evaluation training.
Students’ assessments of the quality of their writing are summarized in Tables 1 and 2. I then discuss improvements in scores and areas where students identified strengths and weaknesses.

Table 1: What is Good About Your Writing? – Overall Summary of all Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Pre-treatment – Story 1 Percentage of Responses n = 92</th>
<th>Post-treatment – Story 1 Percentage of Responses n = 106</th>
<th>Post – treatment – Story 2 Percentage of Responses n = 147</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideas and Development (total)</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Experience</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Development</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot Development</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice (total)</td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal voice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience awareness</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Fluency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td><strong>9.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Responses</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: In What Do You Need to Improve? – Overall Summary of all Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Pre-treatment – Story 1</th>
<th>Post-treatment – Story 1</th>
<th>Post – treatment – Story 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
<td>N = 95</td>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas and Development (total)</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Experience</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Development</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot Development</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice (total)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal voice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience awareness</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Fluency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Responses</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Increase in Student Responses

When students in this study were asked to talk about what was good about their writing before treatment, there were a total of 92 responses; an average of two responses per student. After treatment, the number of responses increased to 106 for their reflection on their first story and 147 responses for the reflection on their second story. This is an increase to an average of 2.3 and 3.19 responses respectively. The number of responses in the second interview slightly decreased when asked the question on what they needed to improve. This may be because students had a lot more to say in their second interview about things they were proud of instead of what they wanted to improve. Overall, when combining the total responses for both questions there was little difference in the average number of responses from the pre-and post-interview on the first story but we see greater gains when comparing the average number of responses per person from their first story before treatment to the second story after treatment. The first story received an average of 4.07 responses while the second story received an average of 4.83 responses.

Students’ Self-assessments of their Writing Strengths and Weaknesses

After the treatment of self-evaluation training, the results highlight an increase in response rate for many of the writing criteria outlined in the class-created rubric. Students showed increased understanding of the targets and criteria.

Writing Criterion: Ideas and Development

Students having responses about their ideas and development of their ideas remained a popular category throughout all interviews. Although a popular response before treatment, an overall decrease was seen after treatment for both questions. Boys and girls witnessed
the same decrease as did high and medium-levelled students. This shows that students began to focus some of their attention on other writing criteria. Student responses began to diversify as they concentrated on other writing criteria other than the ones that they were usually most familiar with.

Within this category, students were most proud of their dialogue and detail. After treatment, the tendency to use these responses decreased. A similar pattern was witnessed with responses on how to improve the story. Elaboration was very important to students as many of them responded with ideas like, “I need to make my story longer.” This decreased after treatment as did their focus on improving their use of dialogue in their story. Adding detail still remained very popular as it saw an increase in response rate.

*Writing Criterion: Voice*

Overall, voice showed a steady response rate before and after treatment. The biggest gain was made by boys who began to talk about voice in their stories a lot more in their second narrative. Lower-levelled students also had an increase in response rate in their second story by identifying voice as one of the features that they were most proud of in their story.

*Writing Criterion: Organization*

As a writing trait, organization had the most impact on students’ response rate from pre-to post-treatment. Before treatment, organization was barely on the students’ minds when asked what they liked about their story and what they needed to improve. This saw a significant increase after treatment. Students began to talk a lot more about the organization of their work and how they were proud of it. Students also identified this as a major area of
weakness. When asked what they needed to improve, there was a response rate increase of 19.5% in their reflection on their last story. As a result of the self-evaluation process, the writing trait of organization became a lot clearer to them. The class rubric helped them identify key ideas to look at. Practising by evaluating samples with the rubric in hand made those ideas tangible. More boys than girls felt that this was an area in which they needed to improve. This area also tended to be a trait that more high-levelled students talked about. After treatment, high-levelled students dominated this area in both questions. Low-levelled students did not talk about it in their first reflection, but their response rate increased in both questions after treatment.

Writing Criterion: Sentence Fluency

Sentence Fluency also received a significant increase from pre-to post-treatment. Initially, no students talked about sentence fluency in both of their responses on what they were proud of in their stories and what they needed to improve. After treatment there was an increase in response rate for both questions. Students became more familiar with this writing trait after treatment.

Writing Criterion: Word Choice

The two teachers feel comfortable teaching word choice. Both teachers often help students with vocabulary-building activities, examine the role words play in sentences, and encourage students to develop skills to use new words. It is probably the reason why many students used it in their responses to what was good about their writing and what they needed to improve. Selecting word choice as an area of pride decreased from the first story
to the last as it did as an area for improvement. More boys than girls tended to use it in their reflections, but the difference was small.

Writing Criterion: Conventions

Interestingly, the rate of response for conventions slightly increased after treatment as many students felt proud of their writing conventions. Editing one’s conventions still remains a more tangible task to complete. More boys than girls dominated this area. This changed, however, in the second story as the difference between the two began to even out and became almost non-existent in the students’ last story. Low-levelled students also dominated this area before treatment as 31.6% of the responses were from low-levelled writers as compared to none from high-levelled students and only 4.5% from medium-levelled students. After treatment, the rate decreased for low-levelled students and the gap between all levels decreased.

Affective Responses

Affective responses after treatment decreased for both questions. This may be that because of the rubric, students began to focus more on the writing traits rather than other things like time and effort.

Girls’ and Boys’ Self-assessments Before and After Self-evaluation Training

Student responses were also categorized according to their gender. Table 3 provides an overall summary of their responses to the question, “What is good about your writing?” The results highlight an increased awareness of the writing traits described in the class-created rubric (See appendix 3) for boys, specifically in voice, organization, and sentence
fluency. Girls also saw an increased awareness of organization and sentence fluency after treatment.

Table 3: What is Good About Your Writing? – Overall Summary of Responses According to Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Pre-treatment – Story 1</th>
<th>Post-treatment – Story 1</th>
<th>Post-treatment – Story 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 47</td>
<td>n = 45</td>
<td>n = 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas &amp; Development (total)</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Experience</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Development</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot Development</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice (total)</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Voice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Awareness</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Fluency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Responses</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this study, when reflecting on the positive aspects of their narratives, many boys and girls talked about their ideas and development of ideas. The response rate from boys and girls in this category was close throughout all interviews. Specifically, under the category of ideas, using detail and dialogue were the most popular responses from both genders as they had experienced lessons on it during writer’s workshop. Despite this, there were some gender differences between the specific categories.

In their first story, more boys than girls focussed on the elaboration of their ideas. Many boys felt that they were proud of their stories because they “thought it was long,” or “wrote a lot.” Girls on the other hand looked at plot development and stated that they “put a lot of action in it.”

After treatment, when reflecting on the same story, the difference between response rates for the categories of elaboration and plot development decreased between the genders and began to even out. Using dialogue was not as important any more as both boys and girls began to focus on other areas of idea development. Detail still remained very important for both boys and girls as they stated that they did “a lot of showing and not telling.”

In their final story after treatment, response rates between boys and girls in the area of idea development equalled out except for the more specific categories of dialogue and detail. Although the response rate showed an overall decrease for both genders compared to the first story, more boys than girls focussed in on these areas.

A key difference between the results in boys and girls was in the area of voice. Many girls found this to be an area of strength in their story where as boys barely mentioned
it. This changed after treatment and with the students’ second story. The rates between boys and girls evened out as more boys began to respond within this category.

Another interesting difference between boys and girls was found in the area of writing conventions. More boys than girls spoke about their writing conventions in their first story. After treatment, however, the rates began to even out in the students’ second story.

Table 4 provides an overall summary of student responses according to their gender when reflecting on the question, “In what do you need to improve in?” Some differences between boys and girls also emerged. More boys than girls still had a higher response rate in the area of elaboration, and detail was a lot more popular amongst girls in the second story.
Table 4: In what do you need to improve? – Overall Summary of Responses according to Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Pre-treatment – Story 1</th>
<th>Post-treatment – Story 1</th>
<th>Post-treatment – Story 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 52</td>
<td>n = 38</td>
<td>n = 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 43</td>
<td>n = 40</td>
<td>n = 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas &amp; Development (total)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Experience</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Development</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot Development</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice (total)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Voice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Awareness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Fluency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Responses</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No boys responded in the area of voice; however, this changed after treatment. Although girls continued to dominate this area, more boys than girls thought that this was an area they needed to improve on in their final reflection. One boy stated, “I should make the reader more fulfilled.”

No boys looked at organization of their ideas in their first reflection. After treatment, however, boys began to respond in this area and surpassed females by 19% in their last story. One boy stated, “I should not make gaps in time in my work.”

Word choice was an area that boys dominated throughout all the interviews. The differences between the two, however, decreased after treatment.

Finally, more boys than girls gave affective responses in their first story. Boys would state that they should “work harder” or “take more time.” Their responses began to decrease in this area to no responses in their last reflection.

From these response rates, it appears that self-evaluation helped students, especially boys, concentrate on specific writing criteria. Student attention became focussed on important features of writing that they were better able to articulate after treatment.

Self-assessments by Students of Varying Abilities

Table 5 provides an overall summary of the students’ responses according to their academic levels (high, medium, low). Some important differences amongst the three levels also emerged when comparing pre-and post-interviews. The response rates highlight a larger impact on the reflections of low-levelled students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Pre-treatment – Story 1</th>
<th>Post-treatment – Story 1</th>
<th>Post-treatment – Story 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas and Development (total)</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Experience</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Development</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot Development</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice (total)</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Voice</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Awareness</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Fluency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Responses</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, when asked, “What is good about your writing?” high-levelled students dominated the area of idea development. A 20% difference remained between high-levelled students and low-levelled students. After treatment, the difference between these groups
decreased and began to even out amongst all academic levels. Within the category of idea development, before treatment, medium and high-levelled students focussed on dialogue and detail. One high-levelled writer noted that, “For some sentences I really put detail into them. When I do put it, it’s like really revealing stuff.” Another one said, “The details and events really contribute to the story line.” Low-levelled students on the other hand, focussed on elaboration. One low-levelled student was proud that he “wrote more.”

After treatment, elaboration decreased for low-levelled students as they shifted their focus to detail and personal experience in their reflection of their first story. One low-levelled student remarked that she “based the story in what happened in my life and other things and my experiences with my cousins.” Things changed for low-levelled students in their last story as many of them talked about being proud of their plot development. One low-levelled writer said, “It’s a different story. I added some surprises in there.”

In their first story, voice was an area that high-levelled students dominated. Nevertheless, after treatment, students from all academic levels were referring to the voice in their stories.

Organization also had a higher response rate after treatment amongst the students who were stronger writers. Struggling writers also showed an increase in response rate after treatment.

Conventions was an area in which struggling students dominated in as 31.6% of the responses about their first story were under this category for low-levelled writers as compared to 4.5% for medium-levelled students and 0% for high-levelled students. Low-levelled writers still had a higher rate than the other academic levels even after treatment,
but the gaps between them decreased. The response rate for struggling students also decreased by almost half.

Table 6 provides an overall summary of the students’ responses according to their academic levels (high, medium, low) when they were asked, “In what do you need to improve in?”

Table 6: In what do you need to improve? Overall Summary of Responses According to Academic Level (High, Medium, Low)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Pre-treatment – Story 1</th>
<th>Post-treatment – Story 1</th>
<th>Post-treatment – Story 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
<td>Percentage of Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas and Development (total)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Experience</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Development</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot Development</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice (total)</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Voice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Awareness</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Fluency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Responses</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
High-levelled students had the highest response rate in the idea development category for their first story. After treatment, the gaps between the three groups began to diminish and by the second story, it was the low-levelled writers who had the highest response rate under idea development.

In their first story, most high-levelled writers focussed on plot development, whereas medium-levelled students focussed on elaboration, and struggling writers focussed on the detail of their work. After treatment, detail was the main focus for all three academic levels for both stories. Interestingly, struggling writers had no response rate for plot development in their first reflection but began to look at their plot more carefully in their second reflection.

Organization was also an area that high-levelled students heavily focussed on as an area for improvement. Medium and low-levelled writers did not respond at all in this category after their first story. Nevertheless, after treatment, they began to focus more of their attention to the organization of their work.

Word choice and conventions were areas that most medium and low-levelled writers talked about as well as writing conventions. Higher-levelled writers did not focus a lot of their attention in these areas. This is probably because high-levelled writers would have an excellent grasp of their writing conventions and vocabulary and would be their areas of strength. After treatment, nevertheless, the response rate for these categories began to even out.

Finally, affective responses were mostly given by low-levelled writers in their first reflection, but significantly decreased after treatment.
From these response rates it appears that self-evaluation training had a larger impact on the reflections of low-levelled students. These struggling writers began to look at more aspects of their writing and articulate them in their reflections.

*Students’ Perceptions of the Self-evaluation Training*

As Table 7 shows, 59% of the students reported that stage 2, evaluating other pieces of writing based on the writing criteria, helped them the most.

Table 7: Percentage of Students’ Responses in their Most Helpful Stage in the Self-Evaluation Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1 (Establishing Criteria)</th>
<th>Stage 2 (Teaching How to Apply Criteria)</th>
<th>Stage 3 (Giving Feedback on Application of Criteria)</th>
<th>Stage 4 (Setting Goals)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One student reported that stage two helped her identify low-levelled writing and she “tried not to go near that and aim for higher.” Thus, by setting clear expectations, this student was able to set a goal for herself and then use the rubric to help her achieve it. Another student stated that stage two helped him the most “because I could see where they made mistakes and learn from it.” For this student, stage two helped him better understand and identify a good piece of writing and strive for that. Understanding criteria was extremely important for many students. For some, this translated into better revision-making skills. Others were able to set more specific goals, and for some it resulted into a better understanding of their writing ability. One student stated that the process “helped me
by showing me what I did wrong and what I did right. It showed me how to work on the story and what I need to do for different criteria.” Thus, stage two in the self-evaluation process helped create those standards students could begin to internalize.

Setting clear targets also helped students understand their goals as one student explained. “I understood what the criteria was for a 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and so of course I would aim for a level 5.” For another student, this process helped her understand her strengths as a writer. “A lot of people have told me that when I grow up I could be a writer. I hadn’t really agreed. But then when I read over my stories and evaluated them and saw all of the guides to writing, then I thought that my work wasn’t that bad. So I guess I have that opportunity of being a writer.” Thus, having guidelines explicitly taught to students made them more aware of the tasks set before them and awareness of who they are as writers.

*Teacher Perceptions of the Self-evaluation Training Process*

The teacher-researcher in this study made many important observations during students’ pre-treatment interviews, during the teaching and learning of the four stages in the self-evaluation process, and during students’ post interviews.

Students were highly interested in the short activities that would eventually lead them to the construction of their own stories. Students listened intently to the mini-lessons that were given on how to show what was happening in their stories, rather than giving a summary of the events. In addition, students were highly interested in how to use dialogue, action, and character’s thoughts to enhance character and plot development. These messages from the writing workshop resonated with students as they became the major focus of conversation in their reflections about their first story. Therefore, what was
explicitly taught in the writing workshops became the centre of what students reflected on as areas they were either proud of or required improvement.

After students wrote their first stories, they were led into the four stages of the self-assessment training process. The students had many ideas on what should be the criteria in assessing a narrative. Many of their ideas were very specific, primarily focussing on the elements of a story. Students very much required the assistance of the teacher to group similar responses together. For example, setting, plot, and character would all fall under the category of ideas. Once the criteria were created, students began to brainstorm the specific details and descriptions that would exemplify a high, medium, and low-levelled piece of writing. It helped to only have students think of the scale in these three terms, rather than think of all five under a 5-point scale system. Many of the students’ ideas were used in the final class rubric; however, due to a limited amount of time, it was necessary for the teacher-researcher to re-word and add her own ideas to make the descriptions complete at all levels.

Stage two created the most impact on students’ understanding of the writing criteria and also helped with the teaching of what good writing required. Students enjoyed the process of trying to use the rubric to identify what level each piece of writing would be and also enjoyed debating with other students on their choices. This process made a large impact on students’ understanding of what they should be aiming for. Students clearly saw the differences between different levels in all writing traits and began to understand what elements are important in the crafting of a story.

In stage three, students assessed their work and talked with the teacher-researcher about their results. As a teacher, it was interesting to listen to students’ reasons for each of
their marks. Many students were very proud of the stories they produced, as the stories reflected the best work they did all year. Nevertheless, for many students, especially for struggling students in writing, their hard work and effort led them to believe that they deserved higher marks. They sometimes referred to the rubric in their reasoning but usually maintained affective responses to their writing. Higher-levelled students defended their self-assessments using all aspects of the rubric and tended to be harder on themselves in their self-assessments. Interestingly, many students began to use the vocabulary in the rubrics.

Stage three was imperative as the teacher was able to discuss with the students the strengths and weaknesses of their writing and make things clear for students who had inflated self-assessments. It also made things clearer for the teacher about the students’ writing abilities. By listening to the students’ self-assessments, the teacher gained a better understanding about what students were proud of and where they had difficulties. Thus, the teacher was able to give specific solutions to help the students improve in that area of writing.

In the final stage of the self-assessment training, the students and teacher discussed future writing goals. This area was helpful for students as they began to get a clearer picture of what they needed to do for next time.

In the students’ final interviews, after self-evaluation training, students’ attention to various aspects of the writing rubric changed noticeably. Specifically, students really began to understand and talk about the criteria of organization and sentence fluency. Ultimately, the self-assessment process became a teaching tool that helped students identify and practice the different traits of writing.
Self-evaluation Training and Student Self-efficacy

Table 8 represents the average self-efficacy scores of the 46 students before and after the treatment of self-evaluation training. The survey represented three scores that included their beliefs on how well they do with writing processes, their perceptions on how well they do on a narrative compared to their classmates, and finally their attitude toward writing. From these results, there was no major increase in self-efficacy levels pre-and post-treatment.

Table 8: Average Self-Efficacy Scores of Students, Pre-and Post-treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Pre-treatment</th>
<th>Post-treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Processes</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing Narrative Ability to others in class</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Closer Look at Six Students

Six students were randomly chosen for closer examination of their responses to pre-and post-interviews and scores in narrative tasks. The purpose for analysing the responses and results of these students was to better understand the students’ beliefs about the self-evaluation process and to more closely examine the types of responses the students were giving in regards to the strengths and weaknesses of their stories. Three boys and three girls of high, medium, and low writing ability were observed. The students will be referred to as Student A (high achievement female), Student B (medium achievement female), Student C
(low achievement female), Student D (high achievement male), Student E (medium achievement male), and Student F (low achievement male). Students were from various ethnicities, 2 South-East Asian, 3 Asian, and one from European descent.

Table 9: Student Achievement in Pre-and Post-treatment Stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Word Choice</th>
<th>Sentence Fluency</th>
<th>Conventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story 1</td>
<td>Story 2</td>
<td>Story 1</td>
<td>Story 2</td>
<td>Story 1</td>
<td>Story 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student D</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student E</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 indicates the results of the six students’ narrative stories before and after treatment. The scores are from the teachers’ assessments of the students’ stories. Story 1 represents the story they first completed before self-evaluation training and the second represents the story they completed after self-evaluation training. Level 5 reflects the highest score on the rubric while level 1 is the lowest.

As the results show, students made no major changes in scores from pre- to post-treatment. Student A, a high-levelled female experienced the most change as she moved
from a level 4 in her first story to a level 5 in her second story throughout all the writing criteria. Student B, a medium-levelled female, experienced more success with Organization and Voice, but student C, a low-levelled female, experienced a decrease in scores in sentence fluency and conventions in her post-treatment story. Student E also had a decrease in scores in the writing criteria of voice. Student F, a low-levelled male, made some progress in his conventions and word choice after self-evaluation training.

*Student A (High achievement female)*

Student A is a well-rounded student who enjoys reading and writing. She prefers to read fantasy and mystery novels and also enjoys reading Manga comic books. She is a confident writer as she “knows what I did well in and what I need to improve.”

Student A’s first story was about two best friends who return home from a walk and discover that both of their parents had been murdered. The girls are put into foster care and wait to be adopted. After some challenges, the girls are excited to hear that they are being adopted by the same family and realize that that will make them sisters. In her second story, Student A takes more risks in the organization of her works as she begins her story with a re-occurring dream. The main character is peer pressured to take drugs but refuses as she remembers her warning in her dream. She then tries to save a friend and because of it finds herself in the hospital from a severe car crash. While she is fighting for her life, she hears the voice again but this time she also sees an image; that of her late mother. She realizes that the voices in her dreams was that of her mother’s, giving her advice and warnings. It was her guardian angel.

In her first reflection, Student A felt that she spent a lot of time thinking about the
details and writing them down. In order to improve her story, she thought she should have more dialogue because it would better express the characters’ personalities. She also thought her story needed more action. This high-levelled student identified some general areas of strength and weakness.

In her second reflection on the same story, Student A felt that it had a lot of detail and that her sentence fluency was good. In order to improve her story she would, “use different words for details and make them more specific. I would make the story a little bit more realistic.” In her new story, Student A went on to talk about the realism of her story and how she took on the perspective of the main character and made it “pretty personal.” She also felt that her expression and conventions were good. In addition, she felt that she rushed her story and identified pacing as an area that needed improvement. Only after treatment did Student A identify a variety of items that she was proud of and felt she needed to work on. She made mention of her ideas, sentence fluency, character development, voice, conventions, and organization, hitting almost all areas on the writing rubric.

This student felt that self-assessment or stage 3 helped the most “because I know that there are a lot of things that I need to improve on and some things I need to keep working on.” The training helped her better understand what she needed to work on.

This student showed an improvement in all writing criteria from her first story to her second. Student A’s perception of her performance was similar to the teacher’s in some areas. For her first story, Student A gave herself a lower mark in ideas, organization, and voice, and a higher mark in conventions. She agreed with the teacher’s scores in word choice and sentence fluency. For her second story, Student A again gave herself a lower
mark than what the teacher gave her in all areas except for conventions. Overall, student A was hard on herself in all of the writing criteria but was very confident in her conventions. Nevertheless, her self-assessment does reveal that she felt her second story was better than her first, similar to what the teacher found.

Student B (Medium achievement female)

Student B likes to read a lot more than she likes to write. She enjoys reading fantasy novels and likes topics that are based on ghosts and the paranormal. She usually has big ideas but has more difficulty getting those ideas across in her writing.

Her first story, “Back from the Dead,” is about a boy who dies and haunts his sister. Many people in the girl’s town begin to disappear and Janet knows that the ghost is behind the disappearances. She finds an anti-ghost sword, kills the ghost, and saves her town. In her second story, “Hatred,” a family home burns down and a mom tries to save her children. Unfortunately, she only manages to save her son and not her daughter. A ghost visits the two survivors at the hospital and haunts them. It is the ghost of Angela, the dead daughter. Angela is angry at her mother for her death and attempts to kill her brother and mother. At the end, Angela the ghost reconciles with her mother.

Before the treatment of self-evaluation, student B gave a general, affective statement on her writing rather than specifics about her story. “I think I improved a lot from the beginning of the year.” The area in which she felt she had to improve in was in spelling. “I think I need to improve in some of my spelling because I had to look in the dictionary a lot of times.”

After treatment, Student B again expressed her thoughts on the first story with a
general statement, “I think that in this story I did pretty well on being my first.” She also had something specific to add that was taken from the self-evaluation process. “I like how the sentences flow.” As an area to improve, Student B still felt that she had to work on her editing. Again, she focussed on conventions. “For this one I can improve on my editing.” For her new story, Student B identified a specific strength in her story. “I like the conclusion part because it’s wrapping everything up. I like how Angela goes to Heaven and how the mother now only has one child.” Again, only after treatment did the student begin to identify specifics from her story and focus on what she had learned through the self-evaluation process (e.g., organization). Despite her approval of her conclusion, she still felt that organization was an area she needed to work on: “I need to organize it better. From this part to this part, where the mother was running, it suddenly skips to the hospital.” Student B recognizes that the pacing is off and she rushed the details. Again, she specifically identified an area in her story that was inconsistent and that related back to the class-created rubric under the category of organization. Student B also mentioned that she was proud that she did not have to check the dictionary as much. Thus, conventions were still an important factor: “This time I didn’t need to check the dictionary as much.”

Student B felt that the self-evaluation training did assist her because it helped her focus her ideas and look at her sentence fluency. Stage two of the training helped her the most: “By reading all the other stories, I tried not to go near the low ones and aim for higher.” Thus, this student felt it beneficial to evaluate different levels of stories because the criteria for a high-levelled story became clearer and that is what she aimed for when she wrote her second story.

In her first story, Student B gave herself a higher mark than the teacher in all areas,
but agreed on the same mark for conventions. In her second story, she also scored herself higher in all areas except for organization, in which she agreed with the same mark as the teacher. Overall, this student felt very confident in her work and rewarded herself slightly higher than the teacher. Her interview reveals that she thoroughly enjoyed learning about the self-evaluation process and felt that she learned a lot about writing. She felt that her work was the best she had done, thus, her high marks in her self-assessment reflected her improved confidence. Nevertheless, she was not way off. Her self-assessment reveals that she felt better about her second story, in which, the teacher also felt was stronger.

_Student C (Low achievement female)_

Student C enjoys reading realistic narratives. Many of the books she reads and topics she writes about are based on friendships and school-age issues. She likes to write but has difficulty organizing and developing her many ideas. She’d rather read and write than do math. In her first story, “Rose’s First Day,” the main character, Rose, is the new kid at school. She wonders if she will ever make new friends and feels very lonely. She finally makes a new friend and gets invited to a birthday party. In her second story, “Not all Stereotypes are True,” blonde-haired Courtney is ridiculed for being “dumb” even though she is not. Boys tease her and her friends stand by her. Courtney’s excellent test results are announced on the school announcements one day and Courtney’s reputation changes.

In her first reflection before self-evaluation training, Student C talked about the plot of her story and the lesson. She implied that new kids could relate to her story. In order to improve her work, she would “make the story a bit longer, add more details, and more dialogue.”
When looking at the same story after self-evaluation training, Student C again spoke about her detail and how she wrote with enthusiasm. She went into more specific details this time with how she would improve the same story: “To improve I would make it less choppy because in one part of my story I go from the first day of school to one year. So I would make more time periods and more scenes to make it more detailed.” Student C now closely looked at the organization of her ideas and suggested a way to improve.

In her new story, Student C liked the lesson in her story. She felt that she could have made it longer and added more dialogue. She went on to explain how dialogue would help her story: “It would have made it more realistic so the people, the readers would see how their personality is, how they act to what’s happening and what they could have done and to help picture who the characters are.” Dialogue was also important to her from her first reflection but when asked how it would help her story, she said, “It would help my story because then people would know more about Rose and Jodi and Miss. Sabrina didn’t have much lines just ‘Take a seat,’ and stuff like that.” After self-evaluation training, it was obvious that her responses became clearer. This student also felt that stage three helped her the most. It helped her better identify what she had to improve.

In her first story, Student C gave herself scores that were higher than the teacher’s in all areas except for word choice and sentence fluency. In some categories like ideas and voice, the student and teacher were two points off from one another. In her second story, more matches were made but Student C still gave herself higher scores in word choice and conventions. These two areas also were two points off from one another. She was slightly harder on herself in organization as she gave herself one point less than the teacher. Overall, this student had more discrepancies than the medium and high-levelled female students.
**Student D (High achievement boy)**

Student D is a well-rounded student who has high results in all areas of the grade six curriculum. He sets high goals for himself with whatever task he completes. He is technologically savvy and prefers math to writing. He is an excellent reader and enjoys sports-oriented texts and non-fiction texts. His first story, “The Big Show Off,” is about two friends who are always competing against each other in biking tricks and racing competitions. The one friend is especially boastful and hurts himself after showing off one of his biking tricks. He loses his friends but then realizes the errors in his ways. In his second story, “Dreams,” the main character goes to college and is scouted to join the basketball team. The main character dreams of being a star on his team and finally gets his chance at an important game. The main character does not disappoint, gets the winning basket, and becomes a NBA hopeful.

In his first reflection, Student D was proud of his dialogue and that he didn’t tell his story but showed his story. These were two specific details that were taught during writing workshop. He felt that he needed to “improve on introducing the characters because the start of my story I didn’t really introduce the characters.”

After self-evaluation training, for the same story he stated, “The good thing about my writing was that my ideas were pretty well. I didn’t rush my ideas from one part to the next. I described them well. The conventions were really good because I didn’t have a lot of spelling mistakes.” In addition he felt that he should “try to develop my characters better so that the readers can understand more about them.” Thus, after treatment, there was more variety in how he talks about his writing.
In his second story and reflection, Student D thought his ideas were good because he “chose something that I was clear with and know more about so it would be easier to write about it.” He also again commented on his good use of conventions. In order to improve his writing, he referred to the pacing of his work, something that he became more aware of after self-evaluation training.

Student D felt that this training was beneficial for him as he better understood the criteria for achieving certain levels: “Of course I would try to aim for a level 5. I would know the criteria for that and would try to achieve that.” He also felt that stage three helped him the most because after he assessed his work he would know what to do better for next time.

In his first story, Student D agreed with the teacher’s scores in the areas of organization, word choice, and sentence fluency. He gave himself slightly higher marks in the areas of ideas and voice and slightly lower in the area of conventions. In his second story, similar scores between student and teacher were given in the categories of ideas, voice, and word choice. There was one point difference in the categories of organization, sentence fluency, and conventions, where the student was harder on himself. Overall, student D was close to the teacher’s evaluation of his narratives. He had a strong command of the criteria and was sometimes more tough on himself than the teacher.

*Student E (Medium achievement male)*

Reading and writing are important to Student E because they are values that his family have instilled in him. He has good ideas but sometimes has difficulty organizing and developing them. He enjoys reading non-fiction texts, especially on scientific topics.
Student E would prefer to do math than write. In his first story, “Bye, Bye Great Uncle,” the main character receives news that his favourite Great Uncle has passed away. At the funeral, the main character gives the eulogy. In his second story, “Serial Killer 665,” the main character discovers a ransom note after returning home. His parents were taken away and now the perpetrators are demanding grenade launchers. The police get involved and the parents are safely returned.

In his first reflection, Student E was most proud of his conventions and the appearance of his story: “This time I put the commas and quotation marks. I wrote neater this time.” When asked what he needed to improve, Student E responded, “I need to improve in writing it a little longer.” His response was quite general and did not offer specific ways in which his work could have been improved. In addition, one of his responses had nothing to do with the improvement of his story: “I should have read it a little more clearly and with more expression.” Student E refers to how he read the story during the interview.

In his second reflection, Student E looked at his original story. After receiving self-evaluation training, he said, “I like how each character is saying it like they’re actually saying it in real life. They’re actually putting a lot more expression.” Student E really examined the realism of his characters. He also closely looked at the pacing and organization of his work: “I think I need to improve in making sure that it’s trying to be in real order, not skipping a lot of words.” Compared to his first reflection, Student E was now looking at more specific elements of his story like character development and organization.

In his second reflection based on his second story, Student E again looked at the
realism of his characters: “My characters are believable and they’re actually using expressions that they would use in real life.” He looked at organization once again as an area that he needed to improve in: “I need to improve in not skipping parts and making sure that the ending sounds more realistic.” He also narrowed in on the conclusion as being weak and an area that he needed to work on.

Overall, Student E felt that the self-evaluation training helped him: “When I write a piece of work I can actually look at my evaluation sheet and say, ‘Oh this is where I went wrong,’ so then I can try to correct it.” Thus, this student felt that the rubric was a good guideline to helping him write a good story. He specifically looked at the category of sentence fluency and changed some of his sentences because of it. Finally, Student E felt that the last stage of setting goals was the most beneficial for him. Our final conversation about his writing piece was beneficial for him to hear as he could see what he needed to do for his next writing task: “I would say setting goals because when I set a goal I have to accomplish it.”

Only in one area did student E score consistently with the teacher in his first story. In all other categories, the student gave himself higher marks and differed by three points in the areas of ideas and organization. In his second story, the student again only had one agreement with the teacher in the area of word choice. He had many discrepancies with the teacher, differing up to three points in the areas of ideas, organization, and voice. Overall, this student had major discrepancies between his self-assessment and that of the teacher’s.

Student F (Low achievement male)

Student F says that he will always describe himself as someone who does not like to
He has great difficulty organizing and developing his thoughts and his knowledge on conventions is weak. He often finds himself stuck looking at a blank page and feels that writing is a daunting task. He will often state that he is a “bad speller” and never looks forward to having to write for any purpose. When he does read, he often chooses non-fiction texts on sports and enjoys using the Internet. He also struggles in other subjects like reading and math. In his first story, “Speed,” the main character is involved in a car race. The police show up but he was already off and going 198mph. Unfortunately, he loses control of his car and dies. In his second story, “A Dog’s Life,” the main character’s dog disappears. After a phone call with a strange man, he finds out that his dog is in the forest. He goes through many obstacles and challenges in the forest, but in the end he finds his dog.

In his first story, Student F thought that he did well in explaining his story. He used paragraphs, indented, and used good punctuation. He felt that he should have used more dialogue and “show not tell. I’m not sure if I did that.”

In his second reflection on the same story student F noted that his “conventions were good because I used good punctuation and paragraphs.” Again, this was an area in which he was proud. He felt that he needed to improve his sentence fluency because “my sentences might have been a bit choppy.”

In his second story, Student F says that “it’s a different story. I added some surprises in there. My sentence fluency was a little bit more fluent.” He also felt that he needed to make his “sentences a bit longer.”

Even after self-evaluation training, Student F focussed a lot on the mechanics of his
writing. Variation in responses increased after self-evaluation training as he talked about sentence fluency and referred to the plot of his story as having some surprises.

This student felt that the training helped him because it “made me understand more what I need to do to achieve a level 5.” He felt that stage two helped him the most “because I could see where they made mistakes and learn from it.”

In his first story, Student F had no identical marks to those of his teacher’s. He scored himself higher in all areas, mostly with one point differences, except for ideas which had a three point difference. In his second story, his mark for voice was consistent with the teacher’s, however; he scored himself higher in all areas except for organization. Most differences were by one point except for conventions which had a difference of two points. Mostly, this student experienced some difficulty making firm judgements about his work in the area of ideas. Although the ideas that he expressed in his stories were the best he ever wrote, this clouded his understanding of what a level 5 is according to the exemplars he studied.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

The purpose of this action research was to discover how self-evaluation training would affect the grade 5 and 6 students’ knowledge and understanding about their writing and needs for improvement. In addition, the study’s purpose was to identify changes in writing achievement, as measured by pre-and post scores on narrative tasks, and differences in self-efficacy.

The results in this study suggest that the self-evaluation training used in this study sets clear expectations for students. By choosing the criteria and learning to identify them in other pieces of work, students were better able to identify a strong piece of writing. In particular, six students chosen for closer examination felt that the self-evaluation process was extremely beneficial as it helped them understand the criteria, reflect on their work, and set goals.

In addition, training students to self-evaluate helps them focus their attention on important writing criteria. Students’ knowledge and understanding of the writing criteria improved as their responses to questions on the positive and difficult aspects of their writing began to diversify and reflect more aspects of the six traits of writing.

The quantitative data revealed that the scores on post-treatment narratives did not significantly change when examining the results of the six different students from different academic levels and genders. Results also showed that self-efficacy levels did not significantly change after the treatment of self-evaluation training.

Finally, having students evaluate their own work and talk about their evaluation helped provide teachers with information otherwise unobtainable. Teachers were able to get
a fuller understanding of the students’ effort, persistence, goal orientations, beliefs about their competence, and why students performed the way they did.

These key findings are discussed in the in terms of the literature in the following.

Self-Evaluation Sets Clear Expectations

Stiggins (2001) asserts that a key principle to higher quality assessment is clear targets: “Assessment needs to reflect clear achievement targets and provide appropriate description of the specific achievement expectations” (p. 21). In this study, involving students in setting the criteria and having them practice assessing with a class-created rubric, made the expectations much clearer for students. Training students in the self-evaluation process reinforced the performance standards and set clear guidelines for students. In particular, by having students evaluate other work using the writing rubric created by the class, they became more familiar with the quality of writing for which they were striving.

As cited in Ross, Rolheiser, & Hogaboam-Gray, (1999) Saddler believes that the heart of formative evaluation is communication of standards and strategies for self-improvement. Students need to understand the standards to appraise their work, be able to use the standards to assess their performance, and have strategies for modifying their work during the act of production. As shown in this action research study, students have a better grasp of academic expectations when they are involved in setting the criteria on which their work will be judged (Ross, Rolheiser, & Hogoboam-Gray, 1999). As a result, how students responded to questions about the positive and negative aspects of their writing and the number of responses they gave began to change after treatment. Thus, the self-evaluation
process helped students become clear on the expectations and gave them a road map for success.

Self Evaluation Increases Student Knowledge of Writing Traits

Self-evaluation focussed student attention on a variety of aspects of writing that would have been overlooked in the past. When students in this study were asked to talk about what was good about their writing after treatment, the number of responses increased. In particular, a significant increase in responses was made between the students’ first story and their last. This increase suggests that students were now better equipped with the knowledge and vocabulary to identify specific aspects in their writing upon which they could elaborate. According to Calkins (1994), we assess to learn. “If children can’t talk easily about texts, they will have a hard time being critical readers of their own or anyone else’s writing” (p. 326). Thus, equiping students with the vocabulary and understanding of consistent criteria that will help them identify the strengths and weaknesses of their writing.

Overall, students in this study showed that by having self-evaluation training, they were better able to observe, find, and discuss important writing traits. There was a decrease in response rate for ideas and development after treatment because students began to focus their attention on other traits that they felt were also important. Organization was one of those traits that not many students understood or talked about before treatment. Nevertheless, after self-evaluation training, students began to look closely at the organization of their work. In addition, sentence fluency was not on the students’ minds when writing their first story, but a small number of them began to look at their sentence fluency when writing their second story. These changes in what students chose to identify
as an area of weakness or strength shows that students became more aware of what makes a good piece of writing. They were more articulate on various aspects of writing and could use the vocabulary from the writing categories to express their thoughts. Many students specifically used the terms in the writing rubric like “sentence fluency” or “writing conventions.” Before treatment, these words were never used.

Gender Differences

Although both boys and girls benefited from the self-evaluation training, changes in the frequency of responses in the writing categories show that self-evaluation training had a larger impact on boys. As boys have received a lot of recent attention regarding difficulties in literacy compared to their female counterparts, looking at ways to engage boys, change attitudes, boost confidence, and raise achievement levels has been a major focus in literacy reform. A 2004 report from the Ontario Ministry of Education, notes that boys are more likely to have difficulties with writing and the literacy gap between girls and boys tends to increase with age. Furthermore, Peterson’s (2000) study of 400 Ohio school students in Grades 4, 6 and 8, showed that young males viewed themselves as less competent writers than their female counterparts.

In this study, besides ideas and development, boys focussed primarily on conventions as areas they were most proud of. They also frequently referred to their improved effort, increasing the frequency rate of affective responses used to reflect on their first writing piece. After self-evaluation training, although the frequency slightly decreased in reflection C, conventions still remained a big interest for boys. Similarly, Millard (1997) and Graham (1991) found that boys are more likely to perceive technical accuracy, spelling
and handwriting as the most important aspects of writing, and do feel daunted by writing because of the possibilities of error.

Despite their preoccupation with conventions, boys started to talk about other categories. Boys began to refer more often to the voice in their stories in reflection C, along with their organization and sentence fluency in reflections B and C. Affective responses also decreased in both reflections after treatment. When identifying areas to improve, besides ideas and development of ideas, boys primarily focussed on word choice and used affective responses in their first reflection. Affective responses decreased significantly that by their last reflection, no boys used them. Word choice also slightly decreased. After treatment, the reference to an improved use of voice and sentence fluency increased by 5.3% in reflection E and 7.9% in reflection F. Organization saw a drastic increase to 13.2% in reflection E and 21.2% in reflection F. All of these three categories were never referred to before treatment. It was only after self-evaluation training, that boys began to take notice of it in their work as an area they needed to improve in. Conventions were still an area of concern for boys as it slightly increased in their reflections after treatment.

Thus, the explicit study of the criteria helped boys concentrate on many important writing features that they traditionally would have neglected.

*Academic Differences*

In this study, important differences emerged amongst the three levels also emerged when comparing pre-and post-interviews. Similar to Ross, Rolheiser, & Hogaboam-Gray’s (1999) study, the results highlight a larger impact on the reflections of low-levelled students.
Before treatment, lower-levelled students heavily focussed their attention on the conventions of their stories. 31.6% of all of their responses fell under this category. After treatment, this dropped by 11.6% in reflection B and 13.1% in reflection C. Lower-levelled students also began to shift their focus to the organization of their work and sentence fluency. Both of these categories increased after treatment. Low-levelled students barely spoke about the voice in their original narrative in reflections A and B, but focussed more of their attention on voice in reflection C. Affective responses also decreased after treatment.

When looking for ways to improve, besides ideas and development of ideas, low-levelled students primarily had affective responses in their pre-treatment reflection. Many focussed on their time, effort, and self-efficacy in writing. After treatment, this dramatically decreased as none of those students responded with affective ideas on their writing. Organization became a clear area where these students felt they needed to improve. This was a dramatic change as no students spoke about the organization of their work before treatment. Students also began to talk about sentence fluency when they had never done so before. Interestingly, after treatment, there was an increase in the need to improve in conventions for the students’ first story but not in the second, which was written after self-evaluation training.

These changes in response rates from pre-treatment stories to post-treatment stories indicate that self-evaluation training had an impact on students’ ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Their responses indicate that these struggling writers began to target areas they had never reflected on before. Thus, self-evaluation training gave struggling writers explicit feedback on what they needed to improve and helped these students with understanding writing criteria that they may have not understood in the past.
Self-evaluation and Writing Achievement

From the results demonstrated on pre-and post-narrative tasks, there was little difference found in student performance amongst the six students randomly selected. In Ross, Rolheiser, & Hogaboam-Gray’s (1999) study of the effects of self-evaluation, they found that self-evaluation training had a positive effect on achievement, but primarily amongst weaker writers. The overall effect, however, was small. In addition, they found that self-evaluation had a much larger impact on the performance of students who wrote poorly at the beginning of the study. Part of their explanation for small overall effects was the duration of the treatment (8 weeks). Hillocks (1986) found that treatments of less than 17 weeks had a lower effect size. It may be that a longer duration is required before students recognize the importance of their role in the assessment process and transfer the benefits to their writing. In this study, nevertheless, the small difference between pre-and post-scores may be due to the small duration of the treatment. Despite no major increase in writing scores, students made small gains by expressing a better understanding of the writing criteria, paying closer attention to writing criteria like organization and sentence fluency, and expressing appreciation for the self-evaluation process that helped them understand the expectations and set goals for themselves.

Self-evaluation as a Tool for Improved Self-efficacy

Teachers in junior-levelled classrooms often state that student motivation is lacking, especially in writing tasks (Pajares, 1996). In this study, I explored the changes in self-efficacy after self-evaluation training and to evaluate whether or not, self-evaluation can improve students’ beliefs about themselves as writers. In the domain of written expression,
where the demands to the task are many, the need for belief in one’s capabilities to monitor and execute these individual skills required in writing – often simultaneously – is correspondingly high. Those with higher self-efficacy will translate it into higher achievement (Pajares, 1996). But even unsatisfactory performance might not lead to depressed confidence if the student believes that he or she could be successful by adopting a different strategy (Schunk, 1995).

In this study, no significant difference existed between students’ self-efficacy levels before treatment and after treatment. This may be due to the short duration of the treatment. In addition, as student surveys were anonymous, analyzing the responses according to gender and academic level was impossible. This was valuable information that could have provided a different outcome.

**Self-evaluation as a Tool for Teacher and Student Communication**

The self-evaluation model used in this study allowed teachers and students the chance to come together, discuss evaluations, and set goals for future writing tasks. By doing this, it allowed the teacher to elicit information about students’ effort, persistence, goal orientations, attributions for success or failure, and beliefs about their competence.

Students in this study felt that stage three was also a beneficial process (see pages 65 to 67 for explanation of four stages). Many students reported that stage three helped them because after they assessed their work and listened to feedback, “I would know what to do better for next time.”

Stage three also allowed students to talk about their work and why they evaluated themselves the way they did. This gave the teacher a good understanding of the student’s
inner state as he/she was writing his/her story and their interpretations of their work. In addition, through the conferences, students not only talked about the specific writing criteria, but something more came out. The process of writing and their ability to move through the stages was a topic of conversation, something that outcome-oriented rubrics may not generate. One student noted that she wasn’t as happy with her second story because, “I put all of my ideas in the first one so I didn’t have any ideas for the second one.” If traditional methods of evaluation were used, this area of improvement would likely have been overlooked. Through the third and fourth stages of the self-evaluation process, the teacher was able to see that this student needed more help with the pre-writing stage, may have needed more prompts, and time to discuss her ideas before she began writing. Thus, self-evaluation is a tool to help students and teachers communicate about the writing process and enable teachers to then better present content and anticipate impediments to learning.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The limitations of this study necessitate that further research be conducted in order to discovery the complexity of using self-evaluation in the classroom. Although the findings of this research study indicate that the self-evaluation process had some positive effects on students’ abilities to focus on a diversity of writing criteria and that it created clear expectations, and gave teachers better insight into the abilities of their students, it is critical to consider the following limitations.

The sample size used for the data collection was limited to 46 participants. The data collected from this small sample size may not be a reflection of the larger population. Gathering data from only 46 students to evaluate the effects of self-evaluation on their
knowledge of writing may bring into question the generalizability of the study’s results. Furthermore, using only six randomly chosen students to evaluate pre-and post-writing scores and to qualitatively analyse their responses, may have also affected the study’s generalizability. Further research could examine all of the junior classes in one school or more 5/6 classes across a number of schools.

Another concern of this study is the use of two different teachers marking the pre- and post narratives of the six randomly chosen students. Although both teachers marked the stories with the same rubric, there still is an element of bias or level of competency and familiarization with the different levels on the rubric that would influence the scoring of the writing. Any questions that arose while the teachers were marking the narratives were discussed and resolved together. No inter-rater reliability tests were done between teachers. Future tests should include tests of inter-rater reliability.

When constructing the rubric, time was a factor in not allowing more discussion surrounding the specific points for each of the writing traits. The rubric was constructed in partnership with the teacher, but there was greater teacher influence than was originally intended. During stage one of the self-evaluation process, the students gave input in writing the specific criteria that would be looked at under each writing trait. They also worked in groups to provide high, medium, and low-levelled descriptors for the writing criteria. Many of the descriptions that the students came up with were used in the rubric; however, there was still more that needed to be included in order for students to achieve clear targets. Revising the descriptors would ideally be done with students; however, because of the lack of time, the teacher-researcher added her own points to the rubric without discussion from the students. Thus, with more time, the rubric would have been even more student friendly.
Individual points, rather than just some, would have been discussed rather than appointed by the teacher. Future research should include more time with the students to generate descriptors for the rubric.

In addition, this study was conducted over approximately 8 weeks. More time devoted to the self-evaluation process may have created different results. In addition, the study was conducted towards the end of the year where student motivation and the chaos of year-end activities may have affected student performance. Other forms of writing may also have had a different effect on the development of the students’ writing and competence. Future research may allot more than an 8-week time period to complete all the necessary tasks and different forms of writing can also be examined.

Students were asked to complete a survey that measured their level of self-efficacy towards writing. Only an overall analysis was conducted as the student surveys were anonymous. If their names had been included, more information would have been extracted, like whether or not results changed for each gender and academic level. In the future, the students’ anonymity could be ensured by simply asking the students to identify their genders or their name could be included and then replaced with a code name.

Implications for Practice

The findings in this study demonstrated that the self-evaluation process set clear guidelines for students, focussed student attention on important writing criteria, and opened up the conversation between students and teachers about evaluation, goal setting, and the writing process. Although there was no significant change in writing achievement, there was increased student awareness of what makes good writing. Students who can read their
own writing and who know what to do to make it stronger are Spandel’s (2005) vision of success. What students can assess, they can revise. Thus, using this self-evaluation process consisted of many components that helped students become more aware of writing practices and of themselves as a writer.

The self-evaluation process helped students to set clear expectations and focused students on what was expected in their own writing. By involving students in choosing criteria, constructing a rubric, and using exemplars to better understand the criteria, consistent language for talking about writing was created. Many teachers recall ourselves as a student and wondering what on earth the teacher wanted. By having a class-created rubric and using it to assess other pieces of writing, expectations became clear. As cited in Spandel (2005), Stiggins holds that, “Students can hit any target that holds still for them.” When teachers define the expectations (as in a rubric), they dramatically increase the chances that students will perform better because teachers have tried to make things clear and have held the target still. Rubrics provide a reference point and guide students to more success. In addition, these rubrics can help students pay closer attention to writing traits and can make both writing and revising manageable by breaking it into small parts. Each criterion can be taught through mini-lessons and by looking at different exemplars, eventually helping students manage their understandings one step at a time.

If the primary purpose of evaluation is to inform the learners of their areas of strength and weakness, then the self-evaluation process has accomplished this. The four-stage process allows students to become more aware of what they have done well, what they still need to work on, and how to set goals with teacher assistance. Writing is mostly problem solving and students cannot get better at it if someone else is always solving the
problems for them. The self-evaluation process allows students to be their own source of feedback because the appropriate conditions and supports have been put in place.
REFERENCES


University of California, Center for the Study of Evaluation.


Available online: http://ericacve.org/docs/auth-pab.htm


Wolf, D., Bixby, J., Glenn, J., & Gardner, H. (1991). To use their minds well:


Appendix 1

**Self-Efficacy & Attitude on Writing**

As part of my research at OISE/University of Toronto in the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning MA program, I am conducting a survey of grade six students. The purpose of this survey is to find out your opinions and attitudes about your writing in narratives and expositions. It should take about 10 minutes to complete the survey.

Please respond to each of the following items by circling the option that best represents your opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When writing a paper…

1) … it is easy for me to get ideas.  
2) … it is hard for me to organize my ideas.  
3) … it is easy for me to get started.  
4) … I find it easy to make all the changes I need to make.  
5) … it is easy for me to write my ideas into good sentences.  
6) …. it is hard for me to keep the paper going.
7) … it is hard for me to correct my mistakes.

8) When my class is asked to write a short story, mine is one of the best.

9) When my class is asked to write an exposition, mine is one of the best.

10) I like to write.

11) I would rather read than write.

12) I do writing on my own outside of school.

13) I avoid writing whenever I can.

14) I would rather write than do math problems.

15) Writing is a waste of time.
Appendix 2

Mrs. Marina Zapitis-Kouzmanis

May, 2007

Dear Parent/Guardian:

In this letter I would like to introduce you to research that I am doing as a Master’s student in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at OISE/University of Toronto. I will be examining how students’ writing can be improved. Specifically, I will be looking at teaching students the qualities of good story and opinion writing through a self-evaluation process. I would like to offer you the opportunity to have your child participate in the study. Of course, whether you choose to have your child participate is completely up to you. Participation in this study is absolutely voluntary and will not impact in any way on your child’s grade. I will not know who has returned consent forms until July, after report cards go home. I will ask you child to give the consent form to Mrs. Tassopoulos.

This research will take place from May 2007 through June 2007. I will include all students whose parents agree to let their child participate. All students will meet with me during the regular program of instruction to record their thoughts about their stories and opinion papers they will be writing. During this meeting, they will read their writing and talk about what was good in their writing and what they need to do to improve.

I will tape record two interviews with each of the students. The first interview will be after they have finished writing their first two writing pieces (story and opinion) without the self-evaluation training. The second interview will be after the self-evaluation training has taken place and students have finished one more story and one more opinion paper. These interviews will likely be 10-15 minutes in length and the first will take place in May while the second will be sometime in June during class time.

I will ask these questions in the interviews:

Interview #1

(1) What is good about your writing?

(2) What do you need to improve?

Interview #2

(1) What is good about your writing?
(2) What do you need to improve?

(3) Did the self-evaluation process help you? How?

(4) What stage in the self-evaluation process helped you the most? Why?

In addition, I will photocopy the writing the students read during these interviews. I will transcribe all recordings. The cassettes will be stored in my office and then erased one year after the completion of the study. Only I will have access to the audio cassettes and photocopied writing.

To protect your child’s identity, I will mask the names of all locations and participants, including the children, and the school. None of the children’s names will be attached to any quotations that I will publish in this study. Your child’s participation is voluntary, so he/she may choose not to participate in the research study and may choose to withdraw at any time without penalty or negative repercussions. Regardless of whether your child participates in the study, your child’s grade will not be affected in any way.

You may contact me at (416) 396-6055 if you have any questions about your child’s participation in the study. You may also contact my thesis advisor, Professor Shelley Stagg-Peterson at (416) 923-6641 ext. 2375 at the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. If you agree to have your child participate, please complete the attached consent. If you wish to receive the results of the study, please write your name and mailing address on the consent form.

Thank-you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Marina Zapitis-Kouzmanis
Appendix 3

Class Writing Rubric

5 Point Writing Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>High (5)</th>
<th>Medium (3)</th>
<th>Low (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|       | - story is clear, focused and well-developed  
|       | - it holds the reader’s attention  
|       | - it has many important and interesting details | - the writer is beginning to define the topic  
|       |                                  | - development is still basic or general | - story has no clear sense of purpose  
|       |                                  |                                  | - there are many missing details that force the reader to have to make his/her own conclusions in order to make meaning |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>High (5)</th>
<th>Medium (3)</th>
<th>Low (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|              | - the order of the details in the story is compelling and moves the reader through the text | - the organization is strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion | - writer lacks a clear sense of direction  
|              |                                  |                                  | - ideas, details, or events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>High (5)</th>
<th>Medium (3)</th>
<th>Low (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|       | - the writer speaks to the reader in a compelling way  
|       | - the writer is aware of the audience and the writing’s purpose | - the writer seems sincere but not fully engaged  
|       |                                  | - result is pleasant, but not compelling | - writer seems uninvolved or distracted from the topic or audience |
### Word Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High (5)</th>
<th>Medium (3)</th>
<th>Low (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- language is precise, vivid, and natural</td>
<td>- the language communicates in a routine, workable manner</td>
<td>- writer struggles with a limited vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- language enhances the story and paints a clear picture in the reader’s mind</td>
<td>- it gets the job done</td>
<td>- writer uses words that do not speak to the audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sentence Fluency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High (5)</th>
<th>Medium (3)</th>
<th>Low (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- writing has an easy flow</td>
<td>- text has a steady beat, but tends to be more mechanical</td>
<td>- the reader has to practice quite a bit in order to give this story a fair reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sentences are well built with strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High (5)</th>
<th>Medium (3)</th>
<th>Low (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions and uses conventions effectively to enhance readability</td>
<td>- writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions</td>
<td>- errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar distract the reader and make the text difficult to read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- errors tend to be so few that just minor touch-ups would get this story ready to publish</td>
<td>- conventions are sometimes handled well and enhance readability; at other times, errors are distracting and impair readability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>