Examining the Read-to-Write Strategy and its Effects on Second Grader’s Writing of Sequential Text

John Neal

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EXAMINING THE *READ-TO-WRITE STRATEGY* AND ITS EFFECTS

ON SECOND GRADER’S WRITING OF SEQUENTIAL TEXT

by

John Neal

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2017
ABSTRACT

Examining the Read-to-Write Strategy and its Effects on Second Grader’s Writing of Sequential Text

by

John Neal, Doctor of Philosophy
Utah State University, 2017

Due to the adopted Common Core State Standards, writing has become an increasingly important area of instruction for elementary school teachers, especially with the increased sophistication in the types of writing required of young children and the use of textual evidence expected in student writing. Historically, children have not been routinely taught explicit strategies for writing, but have been exposed to less rigid writing instruction such as Writer’s Workshop. Research has demonstrated that explicitly teaching children strategies for writing can positively influence the quality of their writing. The Read-to-Write Strategy merges explicit writing strategy instruction with the modeling of exemplary informational texts to teach young children how to write discourse patterns of text required by the Common Core State Standards. In this exploratory study, second grade children were explicitly taught a writing strategy that followed the model proposed in the Read-to-Write Strategy. A paired-samples design was used to compare rubric scores using a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test to make comparisons.
between student writing before and after the Read-to-Write Strategy instruction to
determine if the quality of student writing of sequential text was enhanced. Student
quality of writing was determined by examining the number of signal words used,
number of words written, conventions of writing as in capitals at the beginning of
sentences and punctuation at the end of sentences, and text features as in introductory and
concluding sentences to see if student writing of sequential text is improved. A paired-
samples t-test was used on the total combined elements of the writing rubric. Results
indicated that the Read-to-Write Strategy significantly increased student writing of
sequential text from the pre- to post-instruction stage with a large effect size reported.
These findings suggest that elementary teachers should use the Read-to-Write Strategy to
teach children to write sequential text and that this strategy might be most helpful to
students who struggle with writing more than those who are already proficient writers.

(237 Pages)
Examining the Read-to-Write Strategy and its Effects on Second Grader’s Writing of Sequential Text

John Neal

Writing is so important. It is important in school and in our careers; writing is found to be helpful physiologically and psychologically. Experts wonder, with writing so important, why is writing not being adequately taught in the schools. The answer may be that writing is complex and teaching it is even more complex. The Read-to-Write Strategy is a writing model based on the study of exemplary models of text and children are explicitly taught how to write the way an author writes through a process of the teacher modeling how to write this way; the teacher sharing the writing task with children, and having children collaborate with a partner during the writing task, so that eventually children can independently write text to match the child’s audience and purpose. In this exploratory study, second grade children were explicitly taught a writing strategy that followed the model proposed by Read-to-Write Strategy. This study of writing compared samples of children’s writing before and after they received instruction in the Read-to-Write Strategy. Children made good improvements in their writing and the tests run on the children’s writing samples infer that learning was significant.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for and would like to thank Dr. Clark for all her time, work, and patience with me. She has played the biggest part of my success in this endeavor. I also express my thanks to my committee members, Dr. Boyce, Dr. Jones, Dr. Read, and Dr. Robertson for their willingness to help, their time, and their support.

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I give special thanks to my folks, my family, and especially to my beautiful wife, Echo Marie. I could not have done this without the care and support of all of you. Thank you for being in my corner.

John Neal
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A young student named Cole (pseudonym) was initially excited to write a response to a letter from his pen pal. Rather quickly, however, he lost his enthusiasm when he sat down to write. He started the process of writing a response, but after writing the greeting, he slumped over his paper, dropped his pencil, and gave up. He just did not know what or how to write. The writing process had become too difficult for him. Cole needed support and scaffolding in his writing instruction so he could meet the expectations of this and so many other demanding writing tasks.

For many students like Cole, writing is seen as “a difficult, complex, and laborious task” (Roberts, 2010, p. 112), which involves a wide variety of cognitive operations (Graham, Berninger, & Abbot, 2012; Helsel & Greenberg, 2007). These operations are both recursive and iterative in nature (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Flower & Hayes, 1980; Hayes & Flower, 1980), and as a result, learning to write effectively is very difficult and many children struggle with this task. Harris, Graham, and Mason (2003) determined the “majority of children in American schools demonstrate significant difficulties with writing” (p. 3). Moreover, Lienemann, Graham, Leader-Janssen, and Reid (2006) noted that according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), “three out of every four 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-grade students achieve only partial mastery of the writing skills and have limited knowledge about how to write at their respective grade levels with only 1 in 100 students described as having ‘advanced’ writing skills” (p. 66). Another study by Reid and Lienemann (2006) determined that
only 75% of the 4th, 8th, and 12th graders demonstrated “partial mastery” of writing skills. Graham and Sandmel (2011) further explained that over 3/4 of graduating high school seniors in the U.S. are writing below grade level and are not ready for advanced learning and writing demands. Helsel and Greenberg cited *The Nation’s Report Card: Writing 2002* in saying that “only one of five high school seniors acquires the writing knowledge and skills needed at their grade level” (p. 752).

The findings of the report produced by the National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges (2003) highlighted the difficulties many children face in learning to write, which resulted in a recommendation from the commission that writing become a central focus in schools, especially in this era of curriculum reform (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005). Otherwise, student educational success and ultimately their occupational success will be encumbered (Graham et al., 2005). As Lienemann et al. (2006) pointed out, children should be instructed as soon as possible to develop strong writing skills because “early intervention should help to maximize the writing development of young at-risk writers, [thus] minimizing the number of students who develop long-term difficulties with writing” (p. 66).

Unfortunately, many teachers express uncertainty about how best to teach writing (Troia & Maddox, 2004). Graham and Harris (1997) highlighted two persistent myths about writing instruction that are believed by many teachers. These myths are that good writing is difficult to teach and that writing develops only naturally. Cutler and Graham (2008) surveyed primary grade teachers in the U.S. about their writing instructional practices and described most writing instructional practices as an eclectic approach of
teaching the process of writing and/or skills instruction. Understanding which teaching methods are most effective in supporting writing instruction, especially those used to improve the content of student writing, can assist teachers in providing meaningful support to young children learning to write.

With the recent adoption of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), it is expected that elementary school students receive more reading and writing instruction using expository and informational text than they have before (Clark, Jones, & Reutzel, 2013). By fourth grade, the ELA-CCSS require that students receive instruction in reading and writing that uses a 50/50 proportion of information literary texts. This is very different from the past when narrative writing and literature were the focus of most elementary school writing and reading instruction. Under the heading of Text Types and Purposes, in the ELA-CCSS, second grade students are expected to “write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.” These changes and new expectations will require a change in the writing instruction that students traditionally receive.

Informational texts are structured very differently than literature and therefore can be challenging for young readers and writers (Farnan & Dahl, 2003; Graesser, Golding, & Long, 1991; Zabrucky & Ratner, 1992). Therefore, children are going to need greater experience with informational text and they are going to need lots of practice writing in an informative and explanatory writing format (Cutler & Graham, 2008). Time will need
to be spent teaching children to navigate informational text with an emphasis on learning about the common text structures, and how to use various text features and other elements of informational text such as bold text, signal words, headings, glossaries, etc. Meyer, Young, and Bartlett (1989) outlined five general types of text structures used in informational text: cause and effect, compare and contrast, problem/solution or question/answer, descriptive, and sequence (see Table 1). These text structures will need to be taught explicitly in order for primary grade students to learn them, to aid comprehension and understanding of text, and to write using these text structures in their own informative writing (Dickson, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1998; Pearson & Duke, 2002; Williams, Hall, & Lauer, 2004; Williams et al., 2007).

Table 1

**Informational Text Structures**

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<th>Attributes</th>
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<td>Description</td>
<td>A major idea is supported by details or examples</td>
<td>is, are, have, has, for example, most importantly, another kind, described as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence</td>
<td>A main idea is supported by details that must be in a particular sequence</td>
<td>first, second, next, finally, last, then, before, after, when, until</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem/Solution</td>
<td>A problem or question is considered</td>
<td>the question is, the problem is, therefore, if...then</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cause/Effect</td>
<td>Details explain the causes of a main idea or the results produced by the main idea</td>
<td>because, since, therefore, as a result, thus, hence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare/Contrast</td>
<td>Details of two or more main ideas indicate how those concepts are similar or different</td>
<td>similarly, on the other hand, compared to, different from, same as</td>
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Graves (1994) advised the use of trade books be part of the process of writing. Read, Reutzel, and Fawson (2008) explained that educators should “pair the use of high-quality informational texts with well-designed explicit instruction about text structure to guide student writing” (p. 218). Moreover, Clark, Jones, and Reutzel (2013) explained that close readings of informational text can be used in the “study of informational text organizations and structure” (p. 265), so that “young children learn to recognize and use well-structured example informational texts as models for their own writing” (p. 271). In doing so, young students will be “better prepared to deal with less well-structured, more complex text examples in their reading and writing in the years to come” (p. 271). These exemplary texts can also guide students in writing their own informational text. The current study seeks to determine if the examination of text structure while reading informational text will also help students as they write informational texts of their own. Clark et al. recommended the Read-to-Write Strategy to guide children in the study of well-structured informational text and then to use these texts as patterns or models to enable them to write selected discourse patterns found in the ELA-CCSS, but this strategy has not yet been examined empirically for its effectiveness.

Problem Statement

Given the fact that the ELA-CCSS are new to many early elementary school teachers and will require a shift in classroom instruction, support is needed to help teachers make meaningful instructional decisions to enhance their writing instruction in the area of informative and explanatory writing. There is evidence to suggest that the
systematic and explicit teaching of writing strategies is one way to support struggling writers and to help them become more skilled writers (Graham & Harris, 2005). However, there is a dearth of research evidence available to guide teachers on how best to explicitly teach young children to read and write informational text (Graham & Harris, 2005; Hall, Sabey & McClellan, 2005; Kucan & Beck, 1997; Pressley, 2007; Williams et al., 2004). The current study seeks to fill this gap in the research by examining the usefulness of providing exemplary models of informational text that utilize text structures to organize information as part of writing instruction for young children.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore how the explicit teaching of the *Read-to-Write Strategy* and the use of exemplary informational text as models, can help students improve their writing of informational text, specifically sequential text, as measured by analyzing students’ pre- and post-writing samples. Teachers using informational texts in the elementary classrooms to teach text structure is not a new idea (Clark et al., 2013; Hall & Sabey, 2007), but teachers using “children’s information books as exemplars of well-structured text models to teach young students how to write selected discourse patterns required of teachers and young students in the CCSS” is (Clark et al., 2013, p. 267).

**Rationale**

The rationale for pursuing this study is that children are now expected to write
more informative or explanatory text based on the ELA-CCSS objectives. While it is true there are five informational text structures (see Table 1) the researcher chose to study sequential text. A pilot study of second grader’s writing of descriptive text had been done previously and it was ascertained that signal words accompanying descriptive text were subtler and harder to measure thus making the analysis of student text more difficult and more prone to bias. The results of this pilot study were significant; yet it was considered that sequential text structure would be more conducive to a first study of informational text instruction. One reason for choosing to study sequential text is most signal words are at the beginning of the sentence and easier for students to see, recognize, and emulate in their own writing. Another reason is first grade students have exposure to sequential text in their reading and studying of informational text. So the reasons for choosing sequential text for study is the text structure is familiar and therefore easier to teach and signal words are less subjective to measure.

Accompanying the adoption of the ELA-CCSS are state assessments that will require children to respond in writing to prompts requiring understanding and examination of informational text and many young children have not received instruction to do this successfully. It is disconcerting the lack of knowledge students have about how to read and write informational text, and it is equally disconcerting that educators have not been prepared to teach their young students about the different text structures and features used by authors of informational text and thus students are ill prepared for these types of writing demands.

Lienemann et al. (2006) encouraged researchers to “identify other writing
interventions that are effective prevention and early intervention techniques with young struggling writers” (p. 77). Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara, and Harris (2012) reported that studies examining teachers’ writing instruction have “raised serious concerns about the quality of writing instruction received by students in the elementary grades” (p. 2). There is a “growing consensus that waiting until later grades to address literacy problems that have their origin in earlier grades is not successful” (p. 2). Graham and Sandmel (2011) concurred stating that there should be further experimentation and change in the way writing instruction is provided in the earlier grades.

The ELA-CCSS have been crafted in order to provide a vision and a standard for students’ writing. Educators need methods and practices that will help students perform to this standard and level of writing expertise. This study seeks to examine the practice of preparing children to write informational text by using the Read-to-Write Strategy which pairs explicit strategy writing instruction and the use of exemplary informational texts as models and the effect this instruction will have on students’ informational text writing.

**Research Question**

The research question used to guide this study will be as follows: Will second graders receiving writing instruction using the *Read-to-Write Strategy*, which pairs explicit writing instruction and the study of exemplary informational texts as models, produce higher quality informational writing in sequential text compared to pre-instruction writing samples as indicated by use of signal words indicating sequential order, word count, capitals at the beginning of sentences, punctuation at the end of
sentences, and introductory and closing sentences?

Definition of Terms

A variety of terms that are specific to and used frequently in this dissertation study have been listed in alphabetical order in this section with the intent of providing the reader with greater understanding and background information regarding the terms used in study.

Collaborative Writing

Writing that is shared between two or more parties, sometimes between teacher and student or between student and student. Collaborative writing is a way to scaffold a student’s writing but with less support than shared writing. Collaborative writing uses dialogue between the two parties to help move the writing process along. This helps guide children with a gradual release of the responsibility of writing to the student (Read, Landon-Hays, & Martin-Rivas, 2014) towards the goal of independent writing.

Exemplar Texts

Exemplar texts in this study are texts that are considered well-written texts and texts that use the desired text structure for students to use as models for their own writing. These model or exemplar texts are used as patterns for children to emulate as they write.

Explicit Teaching

Explicit teaching in the current study is defined as when teachers clearly state their goals, objectives, and definitions to their students (Dymock & Nicholson, 2010).
Strategies are explicitly taught one at a time and step-by-step. Explicit teaching infers “clear, accurate, and rich in example and demonstration” (p. 167) instruction.

**Expository Text**

Expository texts are designed to explain something. The author’s purpose is to persuade the reader or inform the reader on a topic.

**Independent Writing**

Writing that a student is able to complete on his or her own with very little assistance is called independent writing. The goal of explicit strategy instruction in writing is that eventually students will be able to first complete a complex writing task with modeling and guided practice from the teacher and then after much scaffolding and support move to independent writing where the writing task is completed by the student alone and independently.

**Informational Text**

An author writes informational text to inform and educate the reader. The standard CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.2 helps define informational text as when students “… introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section” (p. 19). The author writes in informational text using different text structures depending on their purpose. The five different text structures are descriptive, problem/solution, cause/effect, compare/contrast, and sequence and listed in detail in Table 1.
**Modeled Writing**

During teacher modeling, the teacher models how to write smaller writing tasks building towards a finished writing product. Think aloud is used by the teacher to make the process of writing more visible and concrete for the students. Modeled writing occurs within the different recursive phases of writing: planning, composing, revising and editing.

**Rubric**

A rubric serves two purposes. First, the rubric provides a way to assess and analyze writing content, text structure, discourse markers, etc. Second, the rubric describes for the writer the goal of the assigned writing. A rubric implies that writing can be improved with more work and allows room for improvement in writing which is motivating to students. The rubric used in this study defines the different elements that will be used to analyze student writing.

**Sequence Text Structure**

Informational text that requires an order of events when explaining or describing a topic uses what is called a sequence text structure. Sequential text can refer to how to do something like make a sandwich or an order of events that happen like in a life cycle. A main idea is supported by details that must be written in a particular sequence. Signal words for this text structure show an order and include words such as the following: first, second, next, then, lastly, before, after, in the beginning, or finally.
Shared Writing

The teacher and the group of students share the writing task and collaborate and write text in a collaborative effort with the teacher acting as a guide; the burden of writing is on the teacher. Shared writing is a reciprocal process that depends on teacher and students working together to write text. Again this working together on writing and thinking aloud by the teacher while writing helps make the writing process visible to students. This form of scaffolding is a step above modeling and moves children toward collaborative writing.

Signal Words

Signal words are also called discourse markers, cue words, linking words, and transition words within informational text. Signal words are words that help facilitate meaning and direction for the reader. Some examples of these words used in sequential text are: first, second, next, finally, then, before, after that, last. It may be important to note that these signal words in sequential text are usually at the beginning of the sentence.

Text Feature

In this study the text features studied are the introductory or opening sentence of a paragraph and the conclusion or ending sentence in the paragraph.

Think Aloud

This is a strategy commonly known for when the teacher is modeling their thinking and comprehension as they read. It is also used as the teacher goes through the
writing process to make this process of writing transparent to the student.

**Text Structure**

Text structure is defined as “the way an author organizes a selection to present information” (Bear et al., 2009, p. 203A). The five commonly used text structures are sequence, problem/solution, compare and contrast, cause and effect, and descriptive (Meyer et al., 1989). See Table 1 for a description of each text structure.

**Word Count**

This refers simply to the number of words used in the students’ writing samples.

**Writing process**

The writing process is defined as stages a writer goes through from the planning stages of writing, composition of text, and revision and editing of the text. It is complex and not simply stages one, two, and three but recursive and iterative as stages of writing are revisited and reworked throughout the writing process. Thinking of writing as a process allows for modeling and teaching at all phases of writing from planning through composing and revision to the finished product.

**Writing Strategy**

A strategy is a systematic description of steps for the purpose in mind (Dymock & Nicholson, 2010). Writing strategies are recognized by a composite of features or characteristics. For example, a writing strategy instruction for a narrative piece would
explicitly teach that elements of a story include characters, a setting, a problem, plot, and a solution to the problem. In the current study, the writing strategy being examined is to teach children how to write sequential text.

**Summary**

In this chapter, the introduction of the problem related to the lack of high quality writing instruction for young children has been presented as well as the complexity of the writing process, how hard it is to teach children to write, and the large number of children who struggle with writing. These problems are further compounded with the implementation of the ELA-CCSS, which require that elementary school students write more informational texts than ever before. Informational writing is considered more rigorous and different than the narrative writing and personal narrative experiences that many students and teachers are used to writing (Williams et al., 2007). As a result, many teachers have not received instruction on how to teach their students to write informational text or how to utilize the different text structures in writing to support and scaffold student writing. Subsequently, children have not been taught informational writing strategies to help them respond to the higher expectations of ELA-CCSS. This chapter outlined the need for a study such as this in the area of writing instruction with young children, as well as the rationale and significance of such a study.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I provide a review of the literature to better understand the research that has already been completed on this topic to determine strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of the collection of research examining how writing strategy instruction influences student writing. As Boote and Beile (2005) explained, “a researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding the literature in the field” (p. 3). Thus, the purpose of this review of the literature was three-fold.

1. To explicate the theoretical framework contributing to the design and framework of the proposed study.

2. To detail the extant research on studies examining the influence of specific writing strategies on a student’s ability to write narrative or informational text.

3. To present additional research findings about writing instruction generally and historically that did not necessarily meet inclusion/exclusion criteria but provided additional information along the following topics: history of writing instruction in elementary schools, learning to write effectively, characteristics of young writers, and helping students write more effectively.

This chapter is organized based upon the three objectives of the literature review. First, the theories employed in the current study are reviewed and the theoretical framework used to frame the current study is described. Next, a description of how studies included in this specific collection of research were located and the inclusion/exclusion criteria utilized, followed by a thorough review of each study included in this literature review. Finally, an expanded review of the research was examined and outlined to share additional information on the topics on the evolution of writing instruction in elementary school, why learning to write effectively is important,
why learning to write can be a challenge, the characteristics of young writers, and how to help young students write more effectively.

**Theoretical Framework**

Two theories provided the lens for viewing the research questions and provided the theoretical framework for the current study. The first theory is Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory. Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy proposes that as children are faced with a difficult task and if the children possess self-efficacy or believe they can accomplish the task, they will be more likely to persevere and complete this difficult task (Bandura, 1977). The second theory, Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, suggests that students who work with “more capable peers” receive the support and scaffolding they need to enhance their learning and to ensure that they reach their potential at a higher level than they would reach independently.

**Bandura’s Theory of Self-Efficacy**

Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy has application in learning to write. Many researchers have found that struggling writers believe they cannot write or do not feel capable of writing well (Graham & Harris, 2005; Little et al., 2010). With this premise of self-efficacy in mind, it stands to reason that children with a higher degree of self-efficacy about writing feel enabled to stick with the writing task until it is complete and completed correctly. If children believe they can endure to the end in the difficult task of writing, they will persevere even when the writing gets challenging.

Bottomley, Henk, and Melnick (1997) explained that a child’s ability to persevere
with the difficult task of writing predicts how well a child may perform on writing tasks. “A child’s self-perception of writing ability will affect his/her subsequent writing growth” (p. 287). Bottomley et al. also explained that individuals who hold positive self-perceptions about themselves as writers are more likely to “pursue opportunities to write, expend more effort during writing engagements, and demonstrate greater persistence in seeking writing competence” (p. 287). Pollington, Wilcox, and Morrison (2001) concurred stating, “Positive self-perception has frequently been linked with academic success…[and] self-perception is believed to affect learning by influencing an individual’s choice of activities, task avoidance, effort expenditure, and goal persistence” (p. 254). Therefore, a teacher who provides the resources and support needed to assist young writers who are learning to write will also be aiding to increase the self-efficacy these young children have in their perceptions about their ability to write.

“Self-efficacy, perceived competence, has been found to play a powerful role in predicting writing outcomes” (Troia, 2007, p. 134). Pajares (2003) explained that writing is as much an emotional activity as it is a cognitive activity and the more self-efficacy a child has about themselves as a writer, and the more knowledge and understanding they have about writing, then the greater the chances will be that their writing skills and self-efficacy will be improved.

**Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory**

Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory also influenced the design of this study as it involves the concept of modeling and scaffolding to help children write using a complex format such as those found in informational text. Vygotsky’s sociocultural
theory suggests children learn best when they are working within their zone of proximal
development (ZPD). ZPD is defined by Vygotsky as “the distance between the actual
development as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential
development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in
collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 33). For writing this means that instruction
should take place somewhere between what children write at independently and what
they are able to write while collaborating with the teacher or students that write at a
higher level than they do.

This ZPD is where instruction and tutoring are targeted and emphasized so as to
give the child the scaffolding needed to help them develop to their potential as a writer.
Research has demonstrated that struggling writers can learn to write with extra teaching
and more support. Teachers and “more capable peers” scaffold children’s learning and
thereby support children in their writing until students can eventually complete the
writing task independently (De La Paz, Owen, Harris, & Graham, 2000).

Children are more likely to complete a difficult writing task when they believe
they can accomplish this goal and also know they have the support of “more capable
peers” in helping them reach their goal. Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy and Vygotsky’s
social cultural theory of scaffolding are theories that are supportive of teaching explicit
writing strategies which can provide children with a model or pattern they can emulate
and help them be successful at writing. An explicit writing strategy with modeling,
scaffolding, and support may help children develop greater self-efficacy towards writing
informational text. Teaching a writing strategy enhances the students’ motivation for
writing by developing perceived confidence (Little et al., 2010). The theories of Bandura and Vygotsky validate that students need to be motivated and supported as they undertake the many difficult tasks of writing.

**Literature Review Procedures**

The researcher was searching for studies involving writing strategy instruction that explore the efficacy of instructing students in these strategies. The researcher was interested in studies that were experimental in design and case studies that have been shown to be effective.

**Locating Relevant Studies**

In order to locate studies where writing strategies were used in the elementary classroom, a search for literature was conducted using the following descriptors: writing workshop, effects of writing workshop, process writing, writing improvement, writing strategies, strategy instruction, strategies for writing improvement, explicit writing instructional strategies, effects of writing strategies, explicit teaching of writing strategies, primary writing instruction, writing informational text, writing explanatory text, and written discourse analysis. The search engines used for this search included EBSCOhost, ERIC, and Google Scholar.

Additionally, the following journals were searched using the preceding descriptors: *Behavioral Disorders, Contemporary Educational Psychology, Early Childhood Education Journal, Education and Treatment of Children, Exceptional Children, Elementary School Journal, Exceptionality, Focus on Exceptional Children,*
Inclusion Criteria

The following inclusion criteria were used to narrow down the information gathered from the search that resulted in numerous articles, books, and other resources:

- Studies published since 1980
- Studies examining writing instruction in elementary school
- Studies conducted in the United States
- Studies that were peer reviewed and available in full text

Overview of the Studies

An outline of the key studies that were located using the inclusion/exclusion criteria and those that examined explicit writing strategies employed by elementary school teachers to teach children to write is outlined in Table 2. Following this table is a discussion of the research questions, the research designs, the participants, and the findings that are relevant to the studies included in this collection of research.
Table 2

**Analysis of Studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studies</th>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Research design</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graham et al.</td>
<td>Will strategic writing and planning (SWAP) improve student writing in narrative and persuasive essays?</td>
<td>Experiment where children randomly placed in writing workshop (control), SWAP, and SWAP with peer support. Children were given pretest writing prompts on story and persuasive essay. Then children received intervention. Children then were given posttest prompts on story and persuasive essay. The results of these posttests were compared to pretests. Essays scored for premise, reason, examples, and conclusion. Stories were scored using basic story elements.</td>
<td>Seventy-three 3rd grade children identified as struggling writers by norm testing and test of written language by falling 2/3 of a standard deviation below the norm.</td>
<td>Teaching students explicit strategies for writing and helping them plan their writing seems to support students in producing higher quality and longer text. Children in SWAP and SWAP with peer support wrote narratives that were “longer, more complete, and qualitatively better” than control counterparts in WW. Children in SWAP and SWAP with peer support wrote persuasive essays that were “longer, more complete, and qualitatively better” than control counterparts in WW.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harris et al.</td>
<td>Will teaching explicit writing strategy help students improve in story writing and persuasive essays?</td>
<td>Case study of students who wrote a pre-instruction sample. Next taught explicit instruction in story writing. Then wrote post-instruction sample.</td>
<td>Two 2nd grade students.</td>
<td>Two students improved using all 7 elements for a story. Word count of stories were 22 and 10 to begin with and improved to 114 and 89 respectively. On persuasive essays they used all five parts of an essay.</td>
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<td>Lienemann et al.</td>
<td>Will explicit teaching of students, who are at risk for writing failure, to plan and write narrative text improve their story writing?</td>
<td>Case study of children instructed in an explicit writing strategy in narrative text. Children given prompt for baseline story. Children then received treatment and then given independent performance prompt for story. This independent writing compared to baseline writing.</td>
<td>Six 2nd grade children.</td>
<td>Children wrote longer stories, more complete stories, and higher quality stories. Baseline number of story elements included by children: ( M = 2.5 ). Independent performance after treatment ( M = 6.2 ). Story length: baseline ( M = 26.6 ) Independent performance ( M = 55.85 ).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mason, Harris,</td>
<td>Will teaching a struggling writer how to write in narrative improve their writing?</td>
<td>Case study of student. Pretest given, then student taught stages of instruction for narrative text, then posttested.</td>
<td>Third grade female struggling writer.</td>
<td>Student scored 0 on pretest, she received instruction, and then she scored highest score on posttest. “I can do it now.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johnson, Hancock, Carter, &amp; Pool (2013)</td>
<td>Will explicit strategy for writing stories help tier 2 students succeed by testing above 50% on the online assessment?</td>
<td>Case study of students who tested below 25% online assessment called total words written (TWW). Pre- and posttest paired-samples.</td>
<td>Seven students in fourth grade.</td>
<td>Tier 2 instruction successful for 6/7 students. Four students tested with online assessment TWW above 50%, two just below 50%, with one student progressing little due to excessive absences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lane et al. (2008)</td>
<td>What effect will teaching a story writing strategy to second-grade students at risk for writing and emotional and behavior disorder EBD have?</td>
<td>Case study of students were given pre-, post-, and maintenance probes. Instruction for explicit strategy for story writing taught.</td>
<td>Six 2nd grade children at risk for writing and (EBD).</td>
<td>Students stories improved from incomplete, brief, and low quality to higher quality and increase in word count. For example: Basic story elements for pretest $M = 1.46$ to Posttest $M = 6.56$ Word count pretest $M = 18.55$ to posttest $M = 68.22$ Quality pretest $M = 2.15$ to posttest $M = 5.56$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris, Graham, &amp; Mason (2006)</td>
<td>Will strategic writing and planning improve student writing in narrative and persuasive essays?</td>
<td>Experimental design with children randomly placed in three groups: writing workshop (WW), strategic writing and planning (SWAP), and SWAP with peer support. Children in each group were given writing prompts in story and persuasive essay before the treatment (pretest). Then writing prompts for story and persuasive essays were administered after the treatment (posttest). The pre- and posttests were compared. Essays scored for premise, reason, examples, and conclusion. Stories were scored using basic story elements.</td>
<td>Sixty-six 2nd grade children identified by test of written language 3 and verified by teachers as struggling writers.</td>
<td>Students who received SWAP and SWAP with peer support were able to write longer, more complete, and qualitatively better stories when compared to their counterparts in WW. The data results showed that children in SWAP and SWAP with peer support were able to write stories that were longer, contained more story elements, and were higher quality than children in WW. The results also showed that children in SWAP and SWAP with peer support wrote essays that were longer, had more essential elements of a persuasive essay, and were of a higher quality than children in WW.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helsel &amp; Greenberg, (2007)</td>
<td>Will a writing strategy that teaches student to use self-regulation and self-instruction affect a student’s performance in summary writing?</td>
<td>Case study of a young girl who struggled and failed in writing summaries. She was taught what a summary is. The teacher modeled steps for writing a summary and using self-instructions to stay focused on the task. Student was then able to complete a summary.</td>
<td>Struggling writer, sixth grade girl.</td>
<td>Student was able to write a summary using the writing strategy when before she could not. Very intense one-on-one instruction over five forty-five minute sessions.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little et al. (2010)</td>
<td>Explore how to improve the persuasive writing skills of second-grade children with emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD).</td>
<td>Children were given multiple baseline and post-intervention writing probes. Papers were scored for number of words functional essay elements i.e., premise, reason, elaboration, conclusion and overall writing quality. The intervention was an explicit writing strategy for persuasive writing.</td>
<td>13 second-grade students from 4 different schools with EBD that either internalized or externalized behavior.</td>
<td>This intervention had a “strong and positive impact” on students’ writing. For example: word count baseline $M = 15.96$ to post-intervention $M = 49.04$, essay elements baseline $M = 1.41$ to post-intervention $M = 6.05$, overall quality baseline $M = 1.42$ to post-intervention $M = 4.21$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine &amp; Weiner, (2007)</td>
<td>What effect does writing workshop have on the abilities of first grade children to become confident and independent writers?</td>
<td>Mixed methods. Part of measurement was to analyze writing piece before the intervention and then analyze a piece after intervention and analyzing with a rubric and comparing the pre- and post-writing.</td>
<td>19 students from first grade</td>
<td>Students improved in writing ability as measured by adding sentences: Pre-writing $M = 2.11$ to post-writing $M = 3.84$. Capitals and punctuation: pre-writing $M = 2.0$ to post-writing $M = 3.95$. Spelling: pre-writing $M = 4.12$ to post-writing $M = 4.56$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason, Harris, &amp; Graham, (2002)</td>
<td>Will an explicit writing strategy help children improve in their writing of a narrative?</td>
<td>Pretest writing sample compared to posttest writing sample. Intervention was an explicitly taught writing strategy for narrative.</td>
<td>Third grade female struggling writer.</td>
<td>No elements for a story written and only ten words written for the pretest. After the intervention the student wrote a story where all elements of the story were used within the writing and the word count increased to 99 words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criteria Study Characteristics

In this section there is a discussion of the research questions, the research designs, the participants, and the findings that are relevant to the studies included in this collection of research presented in Table 2.

Research questions. Research questions included in these studies were similar to the research questions employed in the current study. The research questions found in this collection of research studies examined how specific writing strategy instruction improved student writing overall. Of the twelve studies, two of the studies examined how writing strategy instruction influenced the writing of informational text (persuasive informational text), six of the studies examined how writing strategy instruction influenced the writing of stories or narratives, three of the studies examined how writing strategy instruction influenced the writing of both narrative and persuasive text, and one of the studies examined how writing strategy instruction influenced the type of writing selected by the student/participant. The current study examined how explicit writing strategy instruction influenced the sequential text written by students. Thus, the current study examined a type of writing that was not included in previous research studies.

Research design. Most research designs outlined in Table 2 were case studies (N = 7) with small groups of children studied. There were three studies that employed an experimental design with students assigned to various instructional groups and where pre- and posttest measures were used to measure the effectiveness of the treatment. Most designs did not have a control group for comparison except for two studies (Graham et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2006). Another study (Little et al., 2010) employed a multiple-
baseline across-participants design and the final study employed a mixed methods design. The current study utilized a quasi-experimental design using the same group of students to compare their writing samples at the pre- and post-instruction stages and the influence of the Read-to-Write Strategy.

Participants. The majority of the studies outlined in Table 2 included participants who were considered struggling writers. Eleven of the studies in this collection identified participants who were categorized as struggling writers, participants who were receiving special education support, or participants who were considered at-risk using some formal measures. One study included participants from whole grade-level classrooms. The current study examined participants who were enrolled in a regular second grade classroom with no delineation between students who were involved in special education or general education programs.

Because of the large number of case studies, the number of participants in the study samples was small. The case studies had a range of participants ranging anywhere from one to seven participants. The multiple-baseline study had 13 participants. There were two studies (Graham et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2006), that used 73 and 66 participants, respectively. Many of the participants in the various studies are members of whole classes or “samples of convenience” (Gravetter & Wallnau, 1999) except for some of the studies that screened for struggling writers and recruited participants from several classes and schools (e.g., Graham et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2006). Participants for the studies analyzed were all elementary school students. The grade levels represented in this collection of studies were mostly second grade ($N = 5$), with three studies including third
graders. The remaining studies included first, fourth, fifth or sixth graders. The current study examined second grade students \(N = 40\).

**Findings.** The studies’ findings demonstrated in this collection of research found that explicitly teaching writing strategies improve student writing including the length of writing and quality of writing. The commonly used explicit writing strategy, self-regulated strategy instruction was found to be successful in improving and increasing student writing. Another strategy, the writing workshop did show improvement in one study (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007) but writing quality was not measured. Instead, confidence and independence in writing were measured with students adding sentences and editing their work. The writing workshop and explicit strategy instruction are examined further in the next section of this literature review. However, the findings from this collection of research suggest that explicit strategy instruction does seem to positively influence elementary student writing in meaningful ways. Therefore, the current study examined another explicit writing strategy, the *Read-to-Write Strategy* that integrates the use of model texts as exemplars and sequential text structure instruction, combined with modeling, guided practice, and independent practice towards the goal of enhancing second graders’ ability to write sequential text.

**Gaps and limitations.** The first gap noted in the studies analyzed was that the writing genres typically studied were either narrative or persuasive text. There is a gap in that no student writing of sequential text has been studied yet and there was no mention of using informational text structures to support student writing in any studies whatsoever. This gap is undesirable because students in elementary school are expected
to write informational text as prescribed by ELA-CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) and this type of writing is being expected in high stakes testing. Sequential text is one of the types of informational text required of second graders. Thus, information about how teachers can help students improve their writing of informational text and information about how the Read-to-Write Strategy influences the writing of informational text as this strategy has not yet been examined in empirical research.

A second limitation is that larger sample sizes have rarely been employed in these empirical studies. The current study examines two classes of second graders ($N = 40$) and so this limitation is being addressed. Many of the research studies have also focused on struggling writers or those in special education programs. Less information is known about students who write at grade level. To address this gap in the research, the current study examines a large sample of second graders who write at grade level.

A third limitation is that this collection of research studies primarily used case study design. While case study design is critical to gathering information about how individuals respond to explicit strategy instruction, more research is needed in order to generalize these findings. The current study uses a quasi-experimental design to assist in generalizing to a larger population of second graders.

What Research Has to Say About Writing Instruction in Elementary School

In this section I address additional information in the research findings about
Learning to write effectively is important for each student if they are to be successful throughout their school career. Writing allows students the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and also helps them in the learning process. Graham and Harris (2005) observed:

Writing is critical to school success. It is the primary means by which students demonstrate their knowledge in school, but even more important, it provides a flexible tool for gathering, remembering, and sharing subject matter knowledge as well as an instrument for helping children explore, organize, and refine their ideas about a specific subject. (p. 19)

Being able to write effectively is important in all subjects as students are asked to write summaries for subjects other than English language arts and content areas and even more so with the new writing standards and expectations outlined in the ELA-CCSS. Helsel and Greenberg (2007) stated, that the “ability to write effective summaries is essential for success in a variety of subjects” (p. 755). Moreover, “high stakes assessments of achievement often measure students’ competency in and through writing” (Office of Special Education Programs, 2002, p. 1).

However, learning to write is difficult, complex, and not easy to master (Graham, Berninger, & Abbott, 2012; Helsel & Greenberg, 2007). Writing is the “mental equivalent of digging ditches” (Harris, Graham, Mason, & Friedlander, 2007, p. ix). Bromley (2007) said writing is a “mental juggling act that depends on automatic
deployment of basic skills such as handwriting, spelling, grammar, and punctuation so that the writer can keep track of such concerns as topic, organization, word choice, and audience needs” (p. 246). Graham et al. also noted:

Writing is an extremely complex skill. It is a goal directed and self-sustained cognitive activity requiring the skillful management of the writing environment; the constraints imposed by the writing topic; the intentions of the writer; and the processes, knowledge, and skills involved in composing. (p. 52)

Helsel and Greenberg (2007) concurred that writing can be complex and is especially complex for students with learning disabilities (LD). Children with LD and even those who struggle to write have trouble seeing the guidelines for writing and applying text structure to their writing. Research has shown that struggling writers may have trouble picking out the different writing strategies to use in their own writing as compared to writers who are more skilled (De La Paz et al., 2000). Fortunately, research demonstrates that explicit teaching of writing strategies helps struggling writers to develop stronger writing skills (Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Lienemann et al., 2006). Moreover, Linemann et al. explained that “the identification of effective instructional practices for young beginning writers, particularly students with special needs, is especially critical” (p. 66). They observed that providing an intervention to address children’s writing problems early in their education is advantageous for two reasons.

First, waiting until later grades to address literacy problems that originated in the primary grades has not been very successful. Second, early intervention should help to maximize the writing development of young at-risk writers, minimizing the number of students who develop long-term difficulties with writing. (p. 66)

These findings suggest that the earlier educators intervene on a child’s behalf to remediate writing problems, the more likely children will experience success as writers
later on. Because writing is a difficult and complex task, it needs to be taught in a
systematic and explicit way with scaffolding and support, especially for under skilled and
unmotivated writers (Graham & Harris, 2005).

When children struggle with writing, it often affects their love of learning and
their success later in their school career (McMaster, Du, Parker, & Pinto, 2011).
“Learning to write is critical to students’ literacy development” (p. 27), their overall
learning, and their school success. Also, research suggests that as students learn to write,
their attitude towards writing will be more positive and they will be more motivated to
write (Glasswell, Parr, & McNaughton, 2003). Therefore, writing with a pattern or
utilizing a strategy allows or frees up the writer to write with some automaticity and
attend to the more creative process of writing.

Learning to write effectively can also be a challenge because there is simply less
writing instruction taking place in schools because of an emphasis on other subjects.
Williams et al. (2007) stated:

... [Due to] mounting pressures to ensure that students achieve high levels of
proficiency on standardized tests, many school districts have begun to increase the
amount of time spent on reading and mathematics in the elementary school
classroom. Consequently, instruction in other subject areas has been significantly
reduced. (p. 111)

Policy decisions have also influenced the time devoted to writing instruction in
elementary school. Graham and Harris (2005) warned that the No Child Left Behind Act
of 2001 (NCLB) “places little importance on writing” (p. 19) which sends the message to
educators to prioritize and teach subjects and material that are tested on high stakes tests
while other instructional subjects receive less attention. This message and practice
exacerbates the problems students have with learning to write effectively. Writing instruction continues to receive less instruction and less attention (Office of Special Education Programs, 2002), but current expectations and standards delineated in the ELA-CCSS make this practice no longer an option. Teachers will be expected to spend more time teaching writing and helping students to develop writing skills in a variety of areas to meet these standards.

**Characteristics of Young Writers**

In order to support children in their writing, it’s important to understand more about the characteristics of struggling writers contrasted with skilled writers. Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) explained that children who struggle with writing view children who are skilled writers as having good penmanship, the ability to write long compositions, and the ability to perform a writing task in one single composition without editing or revising. It seems that children who struggle with writing do not recognize the effort of skilled writers because these writers make writing look easy. Skilled writers employ strategies that are not easily seen or easily explained. Culham (2006) explained “writing is a craft before it is an art; writing may appear magic, but it is our responsibility to take our students backstage to watch the pigeons being tucked up in the magician’s sleeve” (p. 55). Findings suggest that struggling writers need explicit teaching to understand how to write more effectively and to improve their writing skills (Bromley, 2007). The strategies employed by skilled writers need to be made more visible and concrete for the struggling writer. Santangelo, Harris, and Graham (2007) also noted some of the characteristics of struggling writers to include the following.
Struggling writers] (a) have limited knowledge of what constitutes good writing, (b) utilize an ineffective writing approach, (c) do not engage in advance planning, (d) have difficulty generating content, (e) rarely make meaningful revisions, (f) struggle with transcription, (g) evidence minimal persistence, and (h) have an unrealistic sense of self efficacy. (p. 3)

On the other hand, skilled writers have knowledge about the different writing genres and the elements, characteristics, and attributes that correspond with each writing genre. Struggling writers are more concerned with lower level skills like spelling and the mechanics of writing (e.g. punctuation and capitalization) than the content of their writing. Skilled writers are able to “engage in a multidimensional process that involves planning, composing, evaluating, and revising” (Santangelo, Harris, & Graham., 2008, p. 79). While struggling writers engage in a one-dimensional approach that has been called “knowledge-telling” which is to write down information that is considered topic related. Skilled writers spend time planning and creating a guide for their writing. Whereas struggling writers don’t use any planning strategies but start writing ideas without a pattern or a strategy for their writing. Skilled writers innately seem to grasp the importance of planning before writing (Santangelo et al., 2008).

Another difference between skilled and struggling writers is skilled writers are also able to generate content for their writing and edit out writing and information that does not fit within their plan. Struggling writers draft shorter work that has little elaboration or detail. Santangelo et al. (2008) reported that “skilled writers engage in extensive evaluation and revision processes that iteratively improve their compositions” (p. 79). Struggling writers have trouble with evaluating and revising their compositions and spend more time with spelling, word usage, word substitutions, and rewriting their
work to make it neater in appearance. Little et al. (2010) observed that struggling writers have more trouble getting their thoughts down on paper and are slower at transcribing than skilled writers. Skilled writers are able to write with automaticity and attend to their thoughts and ideas while the struggling writer gets bogged down in lower levels of writing like spelling, handwriting, and mechanics to the detriment of good ideas not getting down on the paper. Skilled writers spend more time and effort composing than struggling writers. Struggling writers spend a minimal amount of time in the writing process.

There is a difference between skilled writers and struggling writers when considering their proficiency in the writing process. This gap increases with further schooling. Glasswell et al. (2003) further noted that “research suggests that inequalities in knowledge and skills can act to impede or accelerate further learning, thereby contributing to an ever increasing gap between high- and low-progress learners” (p. 496), or skilled and struggling writers. The struggling writer falls further behind the skilled writer in writing proficiency. Involving children in the writing process without teaching strategies may leave some children behind (Glasswell et al., 2003).

The earlier educators intervene on children’s behalf for writing problems the better. McMaster et al. (2011) deemed it important to detect writing difficulties early in a child’s school career because difficulty in writing can affect overall academic achievement, affect college prospects, and have an effect on job opportunities. Glasswell et al. (2003) found in their case study of a young struggling writer that not only are there differences in the output of the struggling writer when compared to a more skilled writer,
but that a student’s struggle with writing can be further compounded by how he/she interacts with the teacher and the group when the teacher modeled writing or gave instructions for writing. For example, in Glasswell et al. study, the struggling writer had not been engaged in the lesson, did not listen to the instructions, and did not comprehend what was taught. There was no reciprocity of activity in the learning process for the struggling writer at each of the writing stages. The struggling writer’s disengagement contrasts sharply with the engagement of the more skilled writer. The teacher in this study (Glasswell et al., 2003) seemed to finally accept the struggling writer’s unengaged stance and lack of motivation. The teacher then lowered the expectations for the struggling writer.

The teachers lowered expectations exacerbated the struggling writer’s problems. These findings may transfer to other struggling students as well. When a student has a bad experience with writing they are more prone to give up easily or not engage in the writing process (Glasswell et al., 2003).

**Helping Students Write More Effectively**

In order to teach children to write effectively, changes in how writing instruction takes place during school needs to be addressed. Graham and Harris (2005) quoted the College Board stating that our society will be “shortchanged if writing is not placed squarely in the center of the school-reform agenda” (p. 19). Researchers, Graham and Harris believed that writing instruction provided to students is inadequate and that educators need to find interventions that are effective and easily assimilated into teaching practice. Graham et al. (2005) encouraged educators to seek interventions that attend to
all facets of the struggling writer (i.e., lack of knowledge about writing, writing skills, and motivation to write) and assure that the student is engaged in various phases of the writing process in order for them to become skilled writers.

Students also need to be motivated to write. When children are motivated they try harder in their writing (Bottomley et al., 1997; Troia, 2007). According to Graham, Berninger, and Abbott (2012), there are four hypotheses concerning motivation and writing. These include the following: (1) skilled writers are more motivated than less skilled writers, (2) developing writers become increasingly motivated with age and schooling, (3) individual differences in motivation predict writing performance, and (4) instructional procedures designed to improve motivation enhance writing performance.

These hypotheses support the proposition that “motivation shapes writing development” (Graham, Berninger, & Abbott, 2012, p. 53). Yet there is often a lack of motivation within struggling writers. Children who struggle with writing give up on themselves as writers. Explicit strategy instruction has been shown to assist the struggling writer in overcoming this self-defeatist attitude and in developing higher self-efficacy towards writing (Graham & Harris, 2005; Graham, Harris, & MacArthur, 1993).

Glasswell et al. (2003) stated that in order for educators to build effective interventions for struggling writers there has to be more than just “documenting difference(s)” (p. 496) between struggling writers and more skilled writers. We need to understand what the causes of the differences are in the first place. Explicit strategy instruction has potential to diminish these differences between the skilled and struggling writer and may provide the struggling writer with the skills needed to become more
competent in writing (Graham et al., 2005).

The Evolution of Writing Instruction in Elementary School

Historically, teachers in elementary school taught writing by having their students transcribe sentences from a grammar book. Students were instructed to copy sentences from their grammar book and perform exercises like underline nouns or identify other parts of speech that were being taught during the grammar lessons (Pollington et al., 2001). Pollington et al. suggested this traditional approach to writing instruction provides practice in writing or handwriting, but not within a context of writing and creating. Teaching writing using the traditional approach did not enable elementary students to be involved in what Calkins (1986) called a thoughtful planning, composing, and revising process.

In time, teachers were trained to include the practice of having children free write and share. Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, and Ungerleider (2011) defined the practice of free writing as having children write in a journal or diary. Nagin (2003) defined free writing as “private, nonstop writing—literally, putting words on paper continuously, without regard for the usual constraints of staying on topic or writing correctly” (p. 26). Adesope et al. explained how journal or diary writing helps children acquire vocabulary and language usage as they write and interact with their peers in conferencing. This also provides a meaningful and relevant context for writing (McBride, 1997). However, not all writing is to be kept private. Graves (1983) noted that writing and sharing one’s writing is a procedure shown to be motivational to students and encourage them to write.
Reutzel and Fawson (1990) said, “Sharing one’s writing is perhaps the most significant motivation, if not the only reason, for learning to write” (p. 222).

**The writing workshop.** Calkins (1986) introduced the writing workshop, which was designed to teach students that writing is a process of planning, composing, and revising. Writing workshop is intended to be an organized environment and has been framed to help students learn the writing process (Calkins, 1994). National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data indicates that nearly 7 of 10 teachers employ a process-oriented instruction like writing workshop to teach writing (Troia, Lin, Monroe, & Cohen, 2009). This method is called a process strategy because emphasis is on the planning, drafting, and revising with editing of the students’ writing and not just the finished product (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007). This strategy of writing instruction is widely used and is used by the school in this proposed study. Writing workshop has been associated as a whole language approach to writing (Harris et al., 2003; Moats, 2007; Pollington et al., 2001), yet many teachers vary in their application of writing workshop (Cutler & Graham, 2008). To be impartial writing workshop usage may be generic and widely misapplied to any writing process instruction that occurs in classrooms and may not follow the recommended guidelines that Calkins (1986, 1994) outlines in her work.

In many classrooms, the writer’s workshop environment provides various types of paper to be available for writing, different print mediums, supplies for writing and editing, and a setting for sharing student writing. Children are able to explore good writing and they are able to construct and internalize meaning for what good writing is. Students are expected to apply what they have picked up through their experiences with
print and reflect this in their own writing. The examples of good writing in this print rich environment are intended to provide children with examples they will follow in their own writing. Jasmine and Weiner (2007) described three key components of the writing workshop. The first component is the instructor teaches students mini-lessons lasting 5 to 10 minutes taught either at the beginning or end of the writing time. Mini-lessons focus on improving one aspect of writing, editing, revision strategies, prewriting strategies, writing skills, classroom procedures regarding writing workshop. These lessons are intended to be short and to the point addressing individual children’s needs and then applied during writing workshop.

The next component described by Jasmine and Weiner (2007) is the teacher conferencing with students during the writing process. These conferences include four subtopics of the writing process: rehearsal or planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Rehearsal is the gathering of ideas and raw materials. This rehearsal is the planning stage where the writer is picking a topic to write about and developing a plan for writing. Drafting or composing is putting thoughts down on paper. Revision is a cognitive effort where the writer checks to see if the writing follows the plan for writing and fits their outline or purpose for writing. Revision is considered an ongoing or continuous process with the idea of focusing on content while attending to mechanics of writing like spelling later. Conferencing goes on during this writing process with the teacher and the student conferring and responding over the writing piece. Editing is making sure the writing follows the conventions for writing (e.g., subject verb agreement, capitalization, and proper punctuation). Students learn grammar and the mechanics of writing within the
context of writing, which is meaningful to children (McBride, 1997; Pollington et al., 2001).

The final component of writing workshop is a venue for publishing and sharing. This provides a purpose for children to revise and edit their piece of writing. Children share their writing and a dialogue between the writer and audience ensues. Bromley (2007) stated that writing as a process is “planned, thoughtful writing” (p. 244) and the writing process approach develops “thoughtful and effective writers” (p. 244). When writing is viewed as a process all aspects of the writing are considered, from the genesis of the idea and through the phases of planning, drafting, revision, and editing (Nagin, 2003).

Pajares (2003) emphasized that “writing programs such as Writers’ Workshop endeavor to build students’ sense of efficacy in writing based on the belief that confidence is essential to skill improvement [because] writing is as much an emotional as a cognitive activity, affective components strongly influence all phases of the writing process” (p. 154). There is limited research, however, that demonstrates a positive influence that the writing workshop has on young writers. In one study, Jasmine and Weiner (2007) examined how the writing workshop helped nineteen first grade children become independent writers as they learned to choose a topic, revise and edit drafts, and share their work. “The purpose of this study was to explore the complete writing process of primary school children and support first grade students in becoming independent writers” (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007, p. 132). This study also examined the students’ attitudes towards writing and how these attitudes improved through the course of the
This mixed methods study revealed that the writing workshop was shown to be helpful for children in learning the writing process of rehearsal, drafting and revising, editing, and writing independently. These first grade students were able to improve their own writing as well as revise and edit with their peers in conferences. Students in this study also exhibited slight gains in the enjoyment of writing through the writing workshop but the study is limited because there was no control group included.

In another study, Troia et al. (2009) investigated the impact of writing workshop on children’s writing motivation and writing performance. The authors conducted this investigation in an urban school in metropolitan Seattle. Six teachers volunteered to participate in this study and each teacher nominated six of their students who were classified as two strong writers, two average writers, and two weak writers. The students’ classification of strong, average, or weak was based on their classroom writing performance and was verified through standardized norm referenced testing. Writing workshop instruction used mini-lessons, regular teacher modeling, feedback, and follow-up instruction, and routines for daily workshops, conferring, and collaboration. The writing instruction was rooted in genre study and each genre was taught for nine weeks. The genres were personal narrative, expository, poetry, and fictional narrative. The study included 31 participants ranging from grade 2 through grade 5. This study concentrated on the impact of the writing workshop on children’s writing motivation and writing performance. There were some interesting implications from this study. “Good and poor writers did not benefit appreciably (large enough to be noticed or measured) from writing workshop instruction” (p. 97). But good writers demonstrated significant growth in the
quality of their writing portfolio (32.8% increase) while poor writers gained 28.5%, but this increase was not statistically significant. A limitation of this study is that there was no control group so no causality can be attributed to writer’s workshop instruction or changes in student writing performance and motivational attributes. Yet Troia et al. found that the “children’s motivational stance toward writing improved” (p. 97) for both the skilled and struggling writers as a result of writing workshop.

This evidence suggests that the writing workshop strategy may be helpful to skilled writers but not necessarily to struggling writers. Although some students seem to flourish in a whole language writing environment—many children do not. Glasswell et al. (2003) described in their case study of a young struggling writer that not only are there differences in the output of the struggling writer compared with competent writers but the problem for struggling writers is compounded by how they interact with the teacher and the group when the teacher models writing to them or gives instructions for writing. The struggling writer is often not engaged, listening, or comprehending. There was no reciprocity of activity in the learning process for the struggling writer at all stages. The interventions for the struggling writer need to attend to all facets of the person and assure that the student is engaged and motivated in all writing activities in order to produce quality writing. With research demonstrating that the majority of students struggle with writing (Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Harris et al., 2007; Helsel, & Greenberg, 2007; Lienemann et al., 2006) and struggling students often benefit from more systematic and explicit writing instruction using specific strategies (De La Paz et al., 2000; Graham & Harris, 2005; Graham, Harris, & MacArthur, 2006) than with the writing workshop
Moreover, the writing workshop approach may help children improve their writing skills within the context of writing but the writing workshop may not sufficiently help students gain the knowledge of how to write in different genres (Read, 2005). Moreover, writing workshop does not encourage explicit instruction in writing strategies and instead implies that this explicit instruction may stymie creativity (Pollington et al., 2001). Graham and Sandmel (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of twenty-nine experimental and quasi-experimental studies involving students who struggle with writing in the first through twelfth grades. Their questions were if the process approach to writing improved student motivation to write and if the process writing approach improved the quality of struggling writers’ compositions. Graham and Sandmel concluded that the process approach to writing instruction did not improve struggling or at-risk students’ overall writing quality and that the process writing approach did not enhance the motivation of these students (p. 403). Troia et al. (2009) concluded that writing workshop needs additional elements or components in order to make it a successful writing strategy for teaching struggling writers. These researchers noted that “systematic and integrated teaching of transcription skills and a focus on self-regulation in writing through goal setting, progress monitoring, and self-evaluation” (p. 99) is critical. Graham and Sandmel recommended that the “process writing approach needs to undergo experimentation and change” (p. 405).

Another problem associated with using the writing workshop format is that the emphasis is on “expressive writing, particularly personal narrative” (Read, 2005, p. 36)
and this emphasis on narrative writing may lead to what has been termed as an “expository gap” (Read, 2005, p. 36). Coté, Goldman, and Saul (1998) observed that children are “knowledge rich in narrative in the case of narratives, but knowledge lean in the case of informational expository texts” (p. 7). The writing children typically do in a writing workshop environment is in narrative form (Read, 2005). Whereas the CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.2 requires that children “write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section” (see Appendix A). Students writing to meet the ELA-CCSS will need writing instruction and strategies to perform these tasks.

Explicit strategy instruction. Explicit strategy instruction is another form of writing instruction that has been analyzed in elementary schools. In their study, Lienemann et al. (2006) worked with three second-grade teachers and asked them to identify children who were considered at-risk for writing failure. Six second-grade students were taught explicit strategies for planning and writing stories. The purpose of the study was to find out if explicitly teaching these at-risk students to plan and write narrative text would improve their story writing. They found that explicit teaching of at-risk children on how to plan and draft stories was indeed effective. This intervention resulted in longer stories, more complete stories, and stories that are of a higher quality.

Explicitly teaching young struggling writers, including those with special needs, strategies for planning and writing text, the knowledge needed to apply these strategies, and procedures for fostering self-regulation and motivation was an effective instructional approach. (pp. 75-76)

Graham et al. (2005) conducted a study involving seventy-three third-grade children who were randomly assigned to three conditions: strategic writing and planning
instruction, strategic writing and planning instruction with peer support, and a control group which received regular writing workshop instruction. Strategic writing and planning instruction for this study was explicit instruction on how to plan for writing and using a model or framework for writing within a genre.

The teacher demonstrated the elements of narrative text and persuasive essays and then helped students plan their writing and the different elements they intended to use in their writing. Thus, when children wrote their narratives and persuasive essays the teacher would have them check their work against their plan for the different elements in their text. The students that received strategic writing instruction “produced stories and persuasive essays that were longer, more complete, and qualitatively better than those produced by their peers in the control condition” (Graham et al., 2005, p. 29).

The students in the strategic writing instruction group produced informative papers that were “longer and qualitatively better” than their peers in the control group. The group receiving strategic writing and planning instruction with peer support also wrote informative papers that were “longer and qualitatively better” than their peers in the control group. This group was also better able to describe how to plan a paper when compared to the control group and the group receiving strategic writing and planning instruction. These findings suggest that teaching students explicit strategies for writing and helping students plan their writing seems to support students in producing higher quality and longer writing.

Harris et al. (2006) conducted a study of 66 second-grade struggling writers. Their purpose was to try and replicate the findings of Graham et al. (2005) with younger
students. These struggling writers were randomly assigned to three conditions: strategic writing and planning instruction, strategic writing planning and instruction with peer support, and a control group which received regular writing workshop instruction. Students were randomly assigned to the strategic writing and planning instruction and strategic writing and planning instruction with peer support. Students received instruction in narrative and persuasive writing strategies. Students in the strategic writing and planning instruction group when compared to control counterparts wrote stories that were “longer, more complete, and qualitatively better”. These same students also wrote posttest persuasive essays that were “qualitatively better” than their control counterparts. There was, however, not a noticeable transfer of narrative and persuasive writing instruction to informative writing when compared with control counterparts.

Continuing with this study, students in the strategic writing and planning instruction with peer support group scored qualitatively better than both groups of students in the strategic writing and planning instruction group and the control group in narrative and persuasive writing. There also is evidence that this instruction transferred to informative writing as the students in the strategic writing and planning instruction with peer support group scored qualitatively better than both students in strategic writing and planning instruction group and the control group.

Graham and Harris (2005) observed in the three previous studies of second- and third-grade students by Lienemann et al. (2006); Graham et al. (2005); Harris et al. (2006). The children who were participants in these studies were randomly selected to three groups including a control group that received writer’s workshop; the three groups
were a treatment group that received explicit writing strategy instruction, a treatment
group that received explicit writing strategy instruction with peer support, and a control
group receiving writer’s workshop.

The finding from this group of studies indicate that students who received explicit
strategy instruction were able to write longer, more complete, and qualitatively better
stories when compared to their counterparts in the control group. Children randomly
assigned to the group that received explicit strategy instruction with peer support were
able to write stories that were even “longer and qualitatively better” than students who
received only explicit writing strategy instruction.

Planning-strategy instruction improved students’ writing knowledge, students’
motivation, and students’ writing in different genres. The strategy also helped students
generalize their writing in other writing genres. They determined that “planning strategy
instruction enhanced students’ knowledge of writing, students’ motivation for writing,
and the quality of students’ writing across genres” (Graham & Harris, 2005, p. 31).
Concerning peer support specifically, Hsu (2009) found that introducing partnerships (a
strategy used in these studies) allows for more collaboration and feedback on writing then
if just the teacher were conferencing with the student.

Further support for explicit strategy instruction is provided in Graham et al.
(2006) study where a fifth-grade class was instructed on how to write a report. Explicit
instruction was imbedded within the current writing workshop format. It was found the
“positive benefits of explicit instruction in how to plan and write a report are evident” (p.
293). The authors concluded that “explicitly teaching students strategies for planning,
drafting, and revising text is not only effective in improving the performance of struggling writers but also enhances the writing of their more skilled classmates” (p. 294).

Studies using the case study approach have also gathered evidence to suggest the effectiveness of explicitly teaching students to use writing strategies to improve the quality of writing. For example, Mason et al. (2002) worked with a third grade student who wrote from a story prompt and scored a zero. The child was then taught a story telling strategy. She progressed through stages of instruction for narrative text and in her posttest she scored the highest score possible on the test after using all the storytelling strategies taught.

Patel and Laud (2009) described another case study of a fifth-grade student in resource. He was taught an explicit writing strategy. This strategy required the student set goals and self-monitor his own progress in narrative writing. After instruction the student had improved in story content, elaboration, and word count on the posttest. Seven students in grades 3-5 (Johnson et al., 2013) were selected to receive Tier two instruction in the writing strategies provided using an explicit writing strategy. The instruction focused on two writing interventions called the story writing strategy and the opinion essay strategy. The intervention was considered a success for six of the seven students.

Mason, Harris, and Graham (2011) noted that explicit writing strategy instruction has been found helpful for children with learning disabilities in both elementary and secondary settings. Helsel and Greenberg (2007) determined in their study that “while many students flourish in the writer’s workshop environment, others struggle with the
independence that they are given” (p. 752). In this study, a young girl had not been able to write a summary before explicit instruction. She was taught an explicit strategy for writing a summary moving through the six stages of instruction and was considered proficient. The teacher and the student felt confident she would use the strategy and could write a summary again using the strategy.

De La Paz et al. (2000) conducted another study that examined the use of an explicit writing strategy. The purpose of the project was to ready seventh grade students for a state writing test. The students were instructed on how to compose expository essays. These researchers determined that the writing strategy “is a good example of what strategy instruction can do for a student who would otherwise be overwhelmed and reluctant to tackle a five-paragraph essay assignment” (p. 106).

Finally, Moats (2007) compared the writing workshop approach with explicitly teaching writing strategies. She determined that the writing workshop approach emphasized stages of the writing process and self-expression, rather than mastery of component skills through planned cumulative practice. Moats determined that with the writing workshop, journaling was a favored activity, because students get to choose the topic they write about with less attention on the grammar handwriting, spelling, and punctuation in the instruction. On the other hand, she noted that with explicit strategy instruction, grammar, handwriting, spelling, and punctuation are taught systematically along with many structured opportunities to practice various compositions. With more structured explicit strategy instruction, Moats determined that students build sentence writing skills, paragraph formation, and knowledge of the differences between narrative
and expository text structures.

A variety of themes and patterns as well as limitations in our understanding of effective writing instruction have emerged from this review of the research literature. First, multiple studies that have examined the use of explicit writing strategy instruction have provided ample evidence to suggest that writing strategies can indeed be helpful to both struggling and strong writers. Moreover, a wide range of ages have been included in this collection of research studies ranging from second to seventh grade. This pattern suggests that explicit strategy instruction is helpful to young as well as more experienced writers.

However, there were no studies that examined the use of explicit writing strategy instruction combined with the use of exemplar informational texts. Additionally, there were no studies that taught participants to write information/explanatory text using the sequential text structure. It is important to include this type of writing in research studies as these types of writing structures and formats are required of young writers. Therefore, a gap in the research concerning explicit writing strategy instruction has been exposed. These two limitations—the inclusion of model texts for study with explicit strategy instruction and teaching the sequential text structure—will be addressed in the current study.

Summary and Conclusions

To summarize this chapter there are two theories that influenced the theoretical framework of this study. Bandura’s (1977) theory underpins the importance of
developing self-efficacy towards writing so as to help children persevere and press on in the daunting task of writing. Helping children learn a strategy for writing then will help them develop self-efficacy towards writing. Vygotsky’s (1978) theory iterates the need for scaffolding to support young writers. The use of writing strategies and modeling exemplary writing is an effective way to provide scaffolding for young writers.

Studies demonstrate that the majority of students, three out of four, struggle with writing (Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Harris et al., 2006; Helsel & Greenberg, 2007; Lienemann et al., 2006). With the adoption of the ELA-CCSS, struggling students are required to write even more in all the subject areas.

Learning to write can be a challenge. Some students are seemingly able to pick up knowledge about how to write but many children struggle with writing (Glasswell et al., 2003). Children who struggle with writing have trouble with guidelines for writing and the different text structures required for writing in the many different genres.

A commonly used format for writing instruction in elementary school known as writing workshop may be beneficial in helping students learn about the writing process, but may not be helpful in increasing the quality and length of student writing. Learning to write effectively is critical to school success (Graham & Harris, 2005) and can have an effect on school, college, and job opportunities (McMaster et al., 2011). The increased emphasis on writing in expository and informative text has compounded the complexity of writing for many students. Therefore, they struggle with the writing process (Harris et al., 2007; Helsel & Greenberg, 2007).

The difficult practice of teaching writing has been ignored too long in the
classroom and the effects have been costly in student failure (Graham & Sandmel, 2011).
Expository writing has several structures to follow thus making expository writing more
difficult for teachers to teach and children to learn. Teachers feel more comfortable with
narrative text and less comfortable with expository text and may be unsure how to help
children with expository text (Hall et al., 2005) p. 214).

Explicitly teaching students writing strategies helps struggling writers develop
their writing skills (De La Paz et al., 2000). In their meta-analysis, Graham, McKeown et
al. (2012) noted that teaching students text structure helps them with the writing of text
structure, although the majority of the studies in text structure instruction concerned
narrative text. These facts further the need for studies involving explicitly teaching a
writing skill and using exemplary texts for modeling expository and informational
writing. There is a place for a study that explores the use of explicitly teaching sequential
text structure.

Writing strategy instruction and its success has been well documented in the
middle and upper elementary, but the number of investigations examining writing
strategy instruction in the primary grades is limited (Graham & Harris, 2005). Jones
(2014) reported “less than 5% of the writing studies have been conducted with
elementary children” (p. 1). Furthermore, researchers Linemann et al. (2006) called for
more experimentation with writing strategy instruction in the primary grades to help fill
the gaps we have in knowledge about how to develop interventions for young students
that struggle with writing. Further experimentation will help discover writing strategy
instruction that will help students with writing. It is important to detect and intervene
early in a child’s school career rather than try to rectify writing problems later in school.

The literature illustrates that writing is important, writing is difficult, students struggle with writing, and teachers struggle with teaching writing. The literature also shows that explicit teaching of strategies helps all students, including the few studies involving primary grade students, improve their writing (e.g., Graham & Harris, 2005). Ziolkowska (2007) observed with first grade students, timely interventions help children make progress throughout the school year. However, there are no studies that the researcher could find that specifically taught writing strategies for writing sequence text in regular education classes for young writers. Graham and Sandmel (2011) recommended that the “process writing approach needs to undergo experimentation and change” (p. 405). Children are “knowledge rich in narrative …but knowledge lean in … expository texts” (Coté et al., 1998, p. 7) creating an “expository gap” (Read, 2005) furthering the case for writing strategy instruction in expository/informative texts.

In order to address this gap in the literature, the current study seeks to examine the influence of the Read-to-Write Strategy, an explicit writing strategy paired with the study of exemplary text models, on second grade informative writing. This type of instruction will enable students to write text according to what is required in the CCSS (Clark et al., 2013).

Informational texts are different than the narrative or story genre. Informational texts convey information to the reader in a variety of text structures that Hall and Sabey (2007) categorized (i.e., cause and effect, compare and contrast, problem and solution, descriptive, and sequence). There are patterns and features related to each of the text
structures that need to be explicitly taught in order for students to learn them. These text structures need to be explicitly taught and the text structure made clear and visible for students (Cummins & Quiroa, 2012).

The Read-to-Write Strategy is a model for writing informational text that teaches children knowledge of writing, models the writing strategy, and provides scaffolding for the children as they eventually learn to use the writing strategy independently. However, there have been no studies to date that have examined the Read-to-Write Strategy. Hall et al. (2005) explained, “Children need to see, hear, read, and write expository text” (p. 214). The thinking that goes on in composition needs to be modeled by the teacher (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). Children will see, hear, read, and write in sequential text with the Read-to-Write Strategy.

The research question used to guide this study is as follows: Will second grade children receiving writing instruction using the explicit Read-to-Write Strategy, which pairs the study of exemplary sequential texts as models and explicit teaching, produce higher quality sequential text as indicated by quality of writing content such as the use of signal words, word count, capitalization, punctuation, opening and closing sentences?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to analyze how well an explicit writing strategy instruction influenced second graders’ writing of sequential text. The majority of the studies conducted thus far on this topic have examined the influence of explicit writing instruction on individual student’s writing or the writing of a group of students using the writer’s workshop as form of writing instruction with elementary students. Although the studies analyzed in the current study generally were of struggling writers and students in Special Education Programs that struggle with writing, the researcher recognizes the struggle with writing that many students have when considering the data on student writing (Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Harris et al., 2007; Helsel, & Greenberg, 2007; Lienemann et al., 2006). The researcher contends that most students will continue to struggle with writing with newer objectives for writing and more complex writing expectations in high stakes testing.

The current study sought to examine how the use of an explicit writing strategy known as the Read-to-Write Strategy influenced second grade writing. This study can help inform classroom teachers as to whether or not the Read-to-Write Strategy (Clark et al., 2013) enhances the ability of second graders to write sequential text as required in the ELA-CCSS.

Research Question and Hypotheses

The following research question was used to guide this study: Will second graders
receiving writing instruction via Read-to-Write Strategy, which employs the use of exemplary informational texts as models and explicit instruction, produce higher quality sequential texts compared to pre-instruction writing samples as indicated by use of signal words, word count, capitals at the beginning of sentences, punctuation at the end of sentences, and introductory and closing sentences?

The null hypothesis for this question was that there would be no difference ($p = .05$) between the student pre-instruction writing samples and student post-instruction writing samples after the Read-to-Write Strategy instruction. However, the alternative hypothesis, or the research hypothesis was that there would be a difference between student pre-instruction and post-instruction writing sample after the Read-to-Write Strategy instruction. This is because research suggests that elementary students who receive explicit writing instruction produce more effective writing samples following explicit instruction (Graham et al., 2005)

**Research Design**

This study was a quasi-experimental study that employed a paired-samples design to compare the pre-instruction and post-instruction writing samples of second graders who were taught to use the Read-to-Write Strategy as outlined by Clark et al., 2013). The participants are from existing groups or “samples of convenience” (Gravetter & Wallnau, 1999). This writing strategy combines explicit writing strategy instruction with the use of exemplary informational texts being used as models for children to emulate in their own writing of sequential text.
A paired-samples design was used because it allowed the researcher to compare the pre- and post-instruction writing samples taken from the same group of second graders. In a paired-samples design, each subject is measured two times which results in a pair of observations—pre- and post-instruction. This design is used when the researcher is interested in the study of a change in one group of subjects that occurs from Time 1 to Time 2 (Pallant, 2005). The group of subjects was given a writing prompt that encouraged writing using a sequence text structure. Students were assigned a random writing prompt to ensure that there was no favoritism in the topic the student was assigned (based on their background knowledge of the topic) in the pre-instruction writing sample. The second graders were then given the treatment, which consisted of the explicit writing strategy Read-to-Write Strategy. After the treatment, the children were then given another randomly assigned writing prompt that encouraged another writing sample that required students to use the sequence text structure. In this study, the researcher was interested in comparing how students wrote sequential informational text before they began the intervention and how they wrote sequential informational text after the intervention. This variable was measured using the paired-samples t test.

Setting

The school in which this study was situated was an elementary school where children in preschool and grades K-4 were attending. Only a limited number of studies have been conducted where primary grade students serve as participants (Troia et al., 2009). The study took place in an elementary school where the ELA-CCSS (National
Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. 2010) standards were used to teach the writing of informational text. The school was also located where the researcher could easily provide training for the teacher, the researcher could conference with the teacher as the study progressed, the researcher could conduct checks measuring fidelity to the intervention, and the researcher would be easily accessible if questions for the teacher arose concerning the study.

The school selected for this study was a Spanish dual immersion school located in the Western U.S. where Spanish classes were available for students in kindergarten through third grade. Dual immersion is a program where students participate in two classrooms one in English and one in the target language which in the school where the study took place is Spanish. Students spend 50% of their day in the classroom where they receive instruction in English Language Arts and Math and content areas like Science and Social Studies receive reinforcement in English. Then students spend the other 50% of their time in the target language of Spanish learning math, Spanish, and content areas like Science and Social Studies in Spanish.

Students enrolled in Spanish dual immersion class included children who were Hispanic and whose parents primarily spoke Spanish in the home, Hispanic children that were considered English fluent, and non-Hispanic children who wanted to learn Spanish and where English was the primary language spoken in the home.

Mr. Smith (pseudonym), a second grade teacher, volunteered to participate in the study and to teach the Read-to-Write Strategy lessons to the children who were enrolled in the dual immersion program. Mr. Smith has been teaching primary aged students for
nine years. He has taught third grade for seven years and second grade for two years. He has a passion for teaching writing and is an advocate for/with teachers to enable writing is taught in the classroom. He has been the English side of the dual immersion program for two years. Mr. Smith taught the children in this dual immersion class English Language Arts and support in Math and content areas like Science and Social Studies for half of the school day and shared these same students with another teacher who taught the children Spanish, Math, and other content areas like Science and Social Studies in Spanish for the other half of the day. The Spanish teacher, Mrs. Jones (pseudonym), has been teaching for two years in the dual immersion program. Previously, she had taught several years in the primary grades in Mexico and then was hired to teach Spanish in the dual immersion program at the school that is the setting for the current study. Mr. Smith and Mrs. Jones essentially shared two classes of second grade students ($N = 57$). When one class was with Mr. Smith, the English teacher for literacy, the second class was with Mrs. Jones, the Spanish teacher for Spanish, Math, and other content areas. Then the two classes switched teachers and classrooms and the students with Mr. Smith went to meet with Mrs. Jones the Spanish teacher, while the class that had been with Mrs. Jones then went to Mr. Smith’s class for English instruction.

**Participants**

The sample of children participating in the study were “samples of convenience” (Gravetter & Wallnau, 1999) and were drawn from the two classes of children ($N = 57$) who were enrolled in the two second-grade dual immersion classes. These students spoke
English as their primary language and/or English is the primary language spoken in the home. English language learners (ELLs) enrolled in these two classes \((n = 7)\) represented a small fraction of the overall sample of 57 second-graders. However, the ELL students were not included as participants in the study because of the language limitations. Some students \((n = 9)\) chose not to be participants in the study by not signing and returning IRB Consent Forms and one student wrote to the wrong prompt and his data was not used. So from the original students \((N = 57)\) enrolled in the dual immersion classes, 40 students qualified to be participants in the study. However, it should be noted that all of these students, whether participants or not, were able to participate in the Read-to-Write intervention and received benefit from the instruction.

The participants were second graders who lived in homes where English was the primary language spoken. The second graders who were invited to be participants in the study were given an envelope with an Internal Review Board (IRB) Informed Consent Form (see Appendix H) to take home to their parents or guardians. The parents reviewed this form and determined whether or not to provide permission for their child to participate. If parents decided to allow their child to participate, then the parents were instructed to talk to their children and explain the study to them. Parents were then to give their children the choice as to whether or not they would participate in the study. Parents who decided to have children participate (and the children who agreed to participate) would then sign the forms and keep one for their files and send one signed copy to the school in a previously stamped and addressed envelope. The students who had returned a signed Informed Consent Form granting permission for their child to
participate were included in the study. Forty-one students returned the Informed Consent and 40 students completed the study. One student’s work was excluded from the sample because he wrote to the same prompt for the pre- and post-instruction writing sample. All students, regardless of their participation in the study, were provided with the Read-to-
Write Strategy instruction as it was part of normal classroom instruction.

The demographics of the children that participated in the study are listed in Table 3. The number of participants in the study was 40 second-graders. The age of participants at the end of the study in November was 7 years old ($n = 27$) and 8 years old ($n = 13$). The race/ethnicity breakdown for participants in this study was 85% White ($n = 34$), 7.5% Hispanic ($n = 3$), 2.5% American Indian ($n = 1$), 2.5% Asian ($n = 1$), and 2.5% Black ($n = 1$). Of the participants, 60% ($n = 24$) were female and 40% ($n = 16$) of the participants were male. Within the group of participants, 43% ($n = 17$) of students were part of the free/reduced lunch program at the school.

Table 3

**Participant Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (Study to end of November)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>7.50</td>
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<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/reduced lunch</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are two tests second grade students took at the beginning of the school year. This data produced by the tests are included in this study to show that students are an actual sample of second grade children from the population. The two tests are the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). The data for the DIBELS and NWEA are shown in Table 4.

In September, students completed the DIBELS assessment. The DIBELS benchmark for Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) was 13 words read per minute. Seventy-seven and one half percent of the participants \((n = 31)\) involved in the study scored above the benchmark for second grade in DIBELS NWF. The range for student scores was 0 WWR to 44 WWR which shows a wide range of scores \((M = 22.41, SD = 12.11)\) with 70% of children \((N = 28)\) falling within one standard deviation of the mean, which is close to the normal bell curve statistic of 68.2%. The nonsense words follow a CVC pattern to measure if the child can decode words according to this phonetic pattern. Children read these nonsense words for one minute and any student that falls below 13 WWR is flagged as one that needs strategic or intensive support.

The Benchmark for the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (DORF) in the Fall testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
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<th>SD</th>
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<tr>
<td>DIBELS WWR</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22.41</td>
<td>12.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIBELS DORF</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>70.74</td>
<td>32.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>NWEA MAP Reading</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>178.98</td>
<td>14.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWEA MAP Language Usage</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>178.23</td>
<td>14.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
window is 52 words per minute with 90% accuracy. Sixty-seven and one half percent of students \((n = 27)\) scored above the benchmark for DIBELS DORF. The range for student scores was 25 words per minute read to 141 words per minute which shows a wide range of scores \((M = 70.74, SD = 32.42)\) with 62.5% of children \((n = 25)\) falling within one standard deviation of the mean which again is close to the normal bell curve statistic of 68.2%. Students read a story for one minute. The number of words they read is compared to the benchmark. If their score is below the benchmark, then this student is flagged as one that needs strategic or intensive support.

The NWEA MAP may be the best indicator showing that the “sample of convenience” is an actual sample of second grade children because the NWEA MAP is nationally normed. The NWEA MAP is utilized at the school where the study took place because it has been expressed by the administrator of the school that this test is in good correlation with the Student Assessment of Growth and Excellence (SAGE) taken by third and fourth grades. This means that how students do on the NWEA MAP is a good indicator of how they will do on the SAGE. The NWEA MAP helps teachers see where students still need help in getting ready for the SAGE.

The NWEA MAP is a computer-based test. It is also an adaptive test meaning depending on how the student answers determines the next question. For instance, if a student answers a question correctly then the follow up question is harder and conversely if the student answers a question incorrectly then the follow up question is easier. The student works through a series of about fifty questions and their Rausch Unit (RIT) score is determined. A student’s RIT score is meant to measure the student’s academic
knowledge and skills. The RIT score determined by The NWEA MAP Reading scores of participants ($M = 177.98$, $SD = 14.86$) matches a few points higher but is close to the national norms of the NWEA MAP Reading RIT scores ($M = 174.7$, $SD = 15.52$). Likewise, the NWEA MAP Language Usage RIT scores of participants ($M = 178.23$, $SD = 14.35$) is a few points higher but is close to the national norms of the NWEA MAP Language Usage RIT scores ($M = 174.5$, $SD = 16.58$). These data on DIBELS and NWEA MAP indicate that this “sample of convenience” is an actual sample of second grade children.

**Procedures**

Mr. Smith, who taught the *Read-to-Write Strategy* lessons, taught two classes of second graders and taught the writing instruction in English. He taught one class in the morning and one class in the afternoon but the procedure was the same for both classes. The procedures for this study consisted of three steps: Pre-instruction, Read-to-Write Strategy instruction, and post-instruction. In the first step, called pre-instruction, Mr. Smith instructed students to write a sequence text using a writing prompt.

In the second step, Mr. Smith provided the lessons designed using the *Read-to-Write Strategy*. There were 18 lessons and each lesson lasted between 20 to 30 minutes in length and the 18 lessons took approximately 4 weeks to complete. Eighteen lessons were provided to provide ample teacher modeling, guided practice, and independent practice.

In the third step, or post-instruction, Mr. Smith again instructed the students to write a sequence text using another writing prompt. All three steps of the procedure are
outlined in detail below.

**Step 1: Pre-Instruction Writing Sample**

To begin the study, the participants \( N = 40 \) were randomly assigned one of two topics to write about for their pre-instruction writing sample of sequential informational text. The prompts were selected so children would be able to write sequential text based on common experiences students may have gone through. These topics were assigned using a research randomizer at [www.randomizer.org/](http://www.randomizer.org/). The reason for randomizing the pre- and post-instruction writing prompts was to prevent any students from having the benefit of more background knowledge or experience with either of the two writing prompts. Only the children with a signed IRB Consent Form were included as participants in the study but all children were randomly assigned a topic that would encourage children to respond in writing to the writing prompt.

The prompts were written to be similar in complexity and two were chosen for the pre- and post-instruction writing samples while two were prompts selected for students to write to in the lessons in the study. The prompts children wrote to collaboratively and independently were: How do you get ready for bed? How do you make a snowman? The pre- and post-instruction writing prompts randomly assigned were as follows:

1. How do you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich?
2. How do you get ready for school?

Participants received no support or instruction, other than the prompt, a piece of paper, and a pencil. Children were give 15 minutes to complete the writing task. Each were seated at desks and the teacher gave them the paper with a randomly assigned
writing prompt on it. Each student wrote his/her own sequential informational text in response to one of two writing prompts randomly assigned. Mr. Smith read the prompts to the children and would reread it as necessary. The purpose of the pre-instruction writing prompt was to see what participants could write on their own for sequential informational text without any coaching, teaching, or instruction. Mr. Smith would not tell children how to spell a word but asked them to do their best with the spelling.

The students responded to this prompt in writing before they received the treatment of explicit instruction on how to write sequential informational text using the *Read-to-Write Strategy*. The pre-instruction writing prompt session took fifteen minutes to complete. Mr. Smith collected the pre-instruction writing samples from the students as they finished and gave them to the researcher at the end of the school day. Mr. Smith had any children who were absent or missed this session complete the writing prompt using the same materials, instructions, and randomly assigned prompts as were provided to the other students. All pre-instruction writing prompts were completed prior to the first lesson of the treatment.

**Step 2: Read-to-Write Strategy Instruction**

The teacher instructed the students in eighteen lessons that were twenty to thirty minutes in length. The lessons (see Appendix B) were based on the *Read-To-Write Strategy* (see Figure 1). The Read-to-Write Strategy lessons followed a cycle outlined in Figure 1. The top part of the figure is the reading portion of the cycle and the bottom part is the writing portion.
There are four cycles of reading and writing in the Read-to-Write Strategy. The first lesson in each cycle is a reading lesson where an exemplary text is studied. The writing lessons follow each reading lesson. The writing lessons are a pattern of planning for writing, composing text based on the plan for writing, revision and editing the composition. The reading cycle of the model is taught in one lesson and the writing lessons that follow in the cycle are three lessons comprising of planning for writing, composing text according to the plan for writing, and revision and editing the written text.

**Reading.** The reading portion of the cycle began with a study of an exemplary informational text that followed a sequence text structure. Together with the teacher, the students scan the table of contents of the exemplary text to determine what the book is
about followed by a reading of the book. As each page is read, the students and the teachers work to write the main ideas and points from the text in a graphic organizer to collect all of this information. Next, the teacher and students identify the signal words used by the author in the exemplar text and locate any pictures or graphics that would provide more information. The reading portion of the cycle ends with the students sharing what they learned with others. This reading portion is the first lesson of each cycle.

**Writing.** The writing portion of the cycle began with the teacher and students identifying a topic that required a sequence text structure. The teacher and students think of information that can be written about the designated topic and record this information in a graphic organizer. Once the notes and details have been recorded. The notes on the graphic organizer are transferred to complete sentences written on paper. Any pictures or graphics are added along with signal words that are commonly used in the sequence text structure. A title is determined and the paper is edited.

In order to teach the *Read-to-Write Strategy* in greater depth, eighteen lessons were designed to provide more in depth instruction and mentoring for the steps of the cycle. The lessons followed a “gradual release of responsibility” model for writing instruction with the teacher walking the students through modeling, sharing, collaborating, and independent writing (Read et al., 2014), which is suggested to help scaffold students until they are in a position where they can write independently.

The lessons used for the more in depth instruction are described as follows: For the reading portion students see, read, and study an exemplary model of sequential informational text for one lesson. Then they watch the teacher model the writing process
of planning, composing, revising, and editing in sequential informational text based on the book study for three lessons. The next steps follow where the student is involved in shared writing, then collaborative writing, and finally independent writing all based on sequential informational text studies.

In the writing phases of modeling and sharing, there are three lessons. The three lessons follow the reading lesson and are the planning of writing on an assigned topic, the composition of text, and the revision and editing of text. In the collaborating and independent phases of writing there are four lessons instead of three. This is designed so as to allow extra time for the student to draft and revise with the teacher conferencing with the students. The four lessons follow the reading lesson and are the planning of writing on an assigned topic, the composition of text, the revision and editing of text, and the fourth lesson added during collaborative and independent writing which allowed more opportunity for the teacher to conference with children and gave children a chance to share their writing.

In the modeling stage the teacher reads a sequential informational text to the children and models the book study and the taking of notes for the first lesson. Then for the second lesson in the cycle, the teacher models the planning phase of the writing process by picking a topic and planning what to write using a graphic organizer. Next the third lesson is where the teacher models composing text based on the planning phase (i.e., notes and graphic organizer). For the fourth lesson the researcher then revises the text composed and inserts signal words that were noted in the book study and used by the author of this studied text. Then the teacher edits the work by making sure there are
capitals at the beginning of sentences, periods or proper punctuation at the end of
sentences, and checks spelling.

The shared writing stage comes next; the teacher reads an exemplary sequential
informational text and works with the students as together they study the sequential
informational text with a book study and the taking of notes. Then for the second lesson
the researcher shares the responsibility of the planning phase of the writing process by
picking a topic and planning with the students what to write using a graphic organizer
and notes. In the third lesson the teacher and students compose text based on the planning
phase (i.e., notes and graphic organizer). For the fourth lesson the teacher and the
students review the text composed, revise the writing and insert signal words as modeled
by the author in the text studied, and edits the work by making sure there are capitals at
the beginning of sentences, periods or proper punctuation at the end of sentences, and
check spelling.

In the collaborative phase the first lesson is the book study. The teacher again
helps children as they see, read, and study an exemplary sequential informational text
together. The teacher reads a sequential informational text to the children and they follow
the procedure for the book study and the taking notes of text structure and text features.
The second lesson is the teacher then pairs up students in groups of two or three to work
through the planning part of writing. The teacher gives paired children the topic to write
on and gives children a Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet (see Appendix E) for planning
their writing. The third lesson in this collaborative phase is children now compose text
according to their plan for writing. The fourth lesson is children revise, add signal words,
and edit their work. The fifth lesson allows the teacher to continue to conference with the children and have children share their work with their peers.

During the writing sessions the teacher conducts conferences with the student writers using the Teacher Student Conference Sheet (see Appendix D). These lessons have children writing and the teacher meeting with the different groups using the Teacher Student Conference Sheet to help guide and improve their writing. It is important to note that sharing at the end of the writing sessions enables children to see good writing by their peers and children that are struggling with their writing can get support for their writing from their peers.

In the independent phase of writing the first lesson is a review of the previous book studies in lessons 1:0, 2:0, and 3:0 (see Appendix B). The teacher helps children as they together again review the previous books and these exemplars for writing in sequential informational text. These book studies are a model for children to emulate in their planning, composing, revising, and editing of their own independent writing in sequential informational text. The second lesson the teacher gives the children the topic to write on and a Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet to help with the planning for writing. This topic is to encourage student writing in sequential informational text and emulate the writing of the authors they have studied. The third lesson is children compose text according to the plan in the second lesson. The fourth lesson is children revise text, add signal words, and edit their text. The fifth lesson allows the teacher to continue conferencing with children and have children share their writing with their peers.

During these lessons the teacher meets with students and helps them by going
over with them the Teacher Student Conference Sheet to improve their writing. Once again there is sharing at the end of the lessons so children can see good writing by their peers and children that are struggling can get support for their writing from their peers.

Again these eighteen lessons of twenty to thirty minutes long help children progress through the study of an exemplary text using sequential structure, then planning, composing, revising, and editing of their text emulating the texts they studied. The lessons also help children progress through a gradual release of responsibility for writing from the teacher to the student from modeling writing, shared writing, collaborative writing, and independent writing. The teacher models to children how to write sequential informational text. The teacher then does shared writing with the children on sequential informational text. Next the teacher has children write in collaborative groups on an assigned topic that encourages sequential informational text. Finally, the teacher has children write independently on an assigned topic that encourages sequential informational text.

**Step 3: Post-Instruction Writing Sample**

Children were seated at their desks and were given paper and a pencil, and a new randomly assigned writing prompt. This prompt was randomly assigned for each student at the time they were given a randomly selected prompt for the pre-instruction writing sample. These prompts encouraged children to write their own sequential informational text in response to one of the writing prompts: How do you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? How do you get ready for school? The children who were randomly assigned to write about how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for the pre-
instruction writing sample then wrote to the prompt of how do you get ready for school for the post-instruction writing sample.

The instructions and the setting for writing the post-instruction writing sample matched the pre-instruction writing session instructions. Children received no support or instruction as they wrote sequential informational text to this post-instruction prompt. The amount of time for writing for the students was the same amount of time as the pre-instruction writing sample, which was 15 minutes. Mr. Smith read the writing prompts. If children asked how to spell a word he asked them to do their best spelling. The researcher was looking to see if children could write their own sequential informational text and if instruction would improve the student’s quality of sequential informational text as measured by signal words, word count, capital letters at the beginning of sentences, sentence ending punctuation, an introductory sentence, and a closing sentence. The teacher then collected the students’ post-instruction writing samples for the researcher to analyze and compare with the students’ pre-instruction writing samples.

Fidelity of Instruction

There were several safeguards implemented to assure fidelity to the treatment. Before Mr. Smith taught from the Read-to-Write Strategy lessons, he received training on Read-to-Write Strategy and the objectives of this writing model. Mr. Smith and the researcher compared objectives for this writing model to ELA-CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. 2010). The researcher gave Mr. Smith the lesson plans, the books to use for
instruction of sequential informational text, copies of student study sheets, and copies of graphic organizers needed for the lessons. The researcher sat down with Mr. Smith and together they went through the lesson plans and the lesson objectives with the main goal to help children write sequential informational text and other goals of the *Read-to-Write Strategy* with writing sequential informational text such as studying exemplary texts as models for student writing, making a plan for writing, following the plan when composing, revising, editing, and checking spelling.

During the period of time when Mr. Smith was teaching from the lessons, he and the researcher were able to meet weekly and daily, as needed, to discuss the study and answer questions that would arise. The researcher observed Mr. Smith as he taught from the *Read-to-Write Strategy* lessons to help insure the fidelity to the *Read-to-Write Strategy*. Mr. Smith let the researcher know when he was teaching the lessons and the researcher was informed that he was welcome to drop in any time to observe instruction. These observations took place two times each week during the four weeks the study was in progress. These observations ensured that the researcher could be confident that participants were all receiving the same treatment and that the growth in student writing could be attributed to the explicit writing strategy instruction. The researcher took notes during observations to ensure that teaching instruction aligned with the *Read-to-Write Strategy* lessons and any variations or improvements to the plans were incorporated and didn’t change the purpose of the writing model. The researcher noted that when Mr. Smith was teaching the writing lessons he kept the lesson plans close by so he could look at them and follow them as he taught students the writing strategy. The researcher
observed that Mr. Smith used a strategy called think, pair, share when asking questions. For example, when Mr. Smith asked what children thought the topic of the book was after reading the title, he would ask them to share their answer with a partner. Then he would randomly choose a child to answer the question by pulling a stick with a student’s name.

On a daily basis, the researcher would check in with Mr. Smith to see what support he could provide as Mr. Smith progressed through the lessons of the program. Mr. Smith expressed excitement about what he felt were notable student gains in their understanding of writing sequential informational text as the children progressed through the lessons.

After the study was over Mr. Smith and the researcher met and went over a Fidelity to Intervention Checklist (see on next page) to assure fidelity to the program was met. Mr. Smith and the researcher were able to meet and debrief at the conclusion the study and discuss how goals were met or not met for each student, how children did in the pre- and post-writing instruction and possible reasons for student success or lack of success.

**Fidelity to Intervention Checklist**

The researcher and Mr. Smith went over the procedures for *Read-To-Write Strategy* and listed below is the Fidelity to Intervention Checklist that they reviewed after the study to assure fidelity to the program was observed.

*Reading Informational Text Procedures*

- Teacher holds up a sequential text e.g., *From Caterpillar to Butterfly:*
Following the Life Cycle (Slade 2008) and reads the title aloud to students to determine the topic of the text.

- Teacher scans the book and reads the table of contents (if included), to determine what the text might be about.
- Teacher reads the book where the author has written text using sequential text structure.
- Next, the teacher asks the question about the sequence presented in the text. (Example: What is the process or what are the steps of how a caterpillar becomes a butterfly?)
- Using the Student Note Sheet, students and teacher fill in the information about the sequential text. Examples of the sequential text and signal words are written as examples for students to see (e.g., First the caterpillar attaches one of its ends to a milkweed leaf. Next the caterpillars outer skin breaks open.)
- The teacher explains common signal words used by the author to indicate sequential text structure has been used to organize information (Examples: First, next, finally, after, before, etc.). The teacher and students review the book to determine what signal words are used by the author. Sequential text and signal words are noted in the book study.
- The teacher and the students examine the pictures and diagrams to determine how sequence is presented in these.
- Allow time for students to share the information they learned with each other.

Test Procedures

- Children are given a randomized topic from the two prompts: Topic 1 is How do you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? Topic 2 is How do you get ready for school? These prompts are printed on a paper for students and encourage sequential text.
- Children are supplied with writing materials like pencils.
- Student given fifteen minutes for writing a response to their randomized prompt.
- Students are not given any other instructions for writing.
Writing Informational Text Procedures

- Teacher assigns a topic for writing that would require a sequential text structure. This topic is different from the book study.

- The teacher and student use recorded information from the book study to help model planning for writing (e.g., signal words, pictures, and text support sequence) on a different topic and record this on the Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet.

- Write and have students write about the new topic assigned using the information gathered on the Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet for planning of writing.

- Include and have students include signal words in writing that would help indicate the sequence text structure.

- Illustrate writing and encourage students to illustrate writing.

- Revise writing checking for signal words of the sequential text structure and edit for spelling, capitals, and punctuation.

- Allow time for sharing writing and illustrations.

Instrumentation

There were several factors that influenced the creation of a rubric for this study. One factor is the researcher analyzed all of the pre- and post-instruction writing samples using a writing rubric based off of the Utah SAGE Writing Assessment Criteria for third to fifth grades (Utah State Board of Education, 2017) for informative writing. The rubric was adjusted and modified so it would accommodate for second grade writing abilities and expectations based on teacher expertise and previous rubrics used to measure second grade writing at this school.

Another factor the researcher considered is he has observed some teachers will first address and build into the rubric an element for the measure of conventions of
writing like capitals at the beginning of sentences and periods at the end of sentences. These elements are important to teachers when they create a rubric. So the researcher tried to address this objectively and the elements of the rubric considering conventions of writing were built in to be easily measured but were weighted with a lower percentage than text structure in the weighted writing rubric.

An additional factor is the researcher noted in the CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. 2010) objectives that students are to write informative text using introductory and concluding elements in their writing. Because of the importance of this element in the objectives the writing rubric was built to include this element to analyze student text. It is noted that this element of the rubric is more subjective and harder to measure but is considered an important part of informative writing in the CCSS.

The researcher considered other factors in preparing a writing rubric. One factor was to construct a writing rubric that reduced the possibility of researcher bias (Wylie & Szpara, 2004) and another factor was to prepare a rubric that would allow for student improvement (Pressley, Mohan, Fingeret, Reffitt, & Raphael-Bogaert, 2007).

Additionally, the researcher used the Proficiency Level Descriptors outlined on the Utah State Board of Education website (Utah State Board of Education, 2017) to create the writing rubric. The writing rubric (see Table 5) was used to evaluate the number of signal words (e.g., first, next, then, after, last, and finally), word count, sentence beginning capitals, sentence ending punctuation, and both an introductory sentence and a closing sentence in both of the writing samples that were collected from
### Table 5

**Weighted Writing Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric element</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Structure:</strong> The student uses signal words to show sequence in text (e.g., first, second, next, then, and last).</td>
<td>Student uses a variety of five or more signal words.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student uses a variety of four signal words.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student uses three signal words.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student uses two signal words.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student uses one signal word.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No signal words used.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x .3 =</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word Count:</strong> The student’s text uses this number of words in response to the sequential writing prompt.</td>
<td>51 words or more written on topic.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-49 words written on topic.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-39 words written on topic.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-29 words written.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-19 words written.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-9 words written.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x .2 =</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Conventions</strong></td>
<td>Five or more capitals at the beginning of sentences.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capitals:</strong> The student uses capitals at the beginning of their sentences.</td>
<td>Four capitals at the beginning of the sentences.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three capitals at the beginning of the sentences.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two capitals at the beginning of the sentences.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One capital at the beginning of the sentences.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No capitals at the beginning of the sentences.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x .1 =</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Conventions</strong></td>
<td>Five or more punctuation marks at end of sentences.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Punctuation:</strong> The student uses punctuation (e.g., periods at the end of their sentences).</td>
<td>Four punctuation marks at the end of sentences.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three punctuation marks at the end of sentences.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two punctuation marks at the end of sentences.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One punctuation mark at the end of sentences.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No punctuation at the end of sentences.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x .1 =</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Features:</strong> The student writes using an introductory sentence in their text.</td>
<td>Includes an interesting introductory sentence, reflecting thought and insight, and one that is focused on the main idea of the sequential text.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes a clearly stated introductory sentence that shares the main idea of the sequential text.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes an acceptable introductory sentence that shares the main idea of the sequential text.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes an introductory sentence that is not on the main idea of the sequential text.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes an incomplete introductory sentence.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No introductory sentence is included.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x .15 =</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric element</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text Features: The student writes using a concluding sentence in their text.</td>
<td>Includes an interesting concluding sentence, reflecting thought and insight, and one that is focused on the main idea of the sequential text. Includes a clearly stated concluding sentence that shares the main idea of the sequential text. Includes an acceptable concluding sentence that shares the main idea of the sequential text. Includes a concluding sentence that is not on the main idea of the sequential text. Includes an incomplete concluding sentence. No concluding sentence is included.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rubric Total: Student writing composite score.

This score is based on a weighted emphasis on text structure 30%, word count 20%, writing conventions capitals and periods each 10%, and text features of introductory sentence 15% and concluding sentence 15% multiplied by points earned in each category.

participants. Each of the rubric elements were weighted and this score compiled resulting in a total rubric score. This total rubric score is based on a weighted emphasis on text structure of 30%, word count of 20%, writing conventions capitals at the beginning of sentences and punctuation at the end of sentences each 10%, text features of introductory sentence 15% and concluding sentence 15%. Then multiply the points earned in each component by the percentage weight assigned. Total the weighted points from each category and the possible total is 5 points. This data from the pre- and post-instruction writing sample rubric scores were recorded on an instrument called the Sequential Text Data Sheet (see Appendix C). The purpose of this instrument was to record the student rubric scores on an Excel spreadsheet for further analysis using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test and the paired sample t test.

The researcher had Mrs. Kellogg (pseudonym) assist in analyzing samples of student writing to determine if she would score student writing the same. Mrs. Kellogg
has been teaching for ten years. She has taught kindergarten, first, third, first grade dual immersion English speaking half, and one year teaching English in China.

Ten percent of the students \((n = 4)\) were randomly selected by using a random name selection formula in Excel. These four students had their pre- and post-writing samples analyzed by Mrs. Kellogg using the rubric. The researcher trained Mrs. Kellogg in the use of the rubric in analyzing student writing. The researcher demonstrated to Mrs. Kellogg how he rated more subjective elements of the rubric (i.e., introductory and concluding sentences) by using examples of student writing to guide scoring. The purpose of this exercise was to see how reliable the rubric was for analyzing and how close the researcher and another analyzer would be. The data from the rubric were compared to the analysis that the researcher had done. The researcher compared his analyzations of student writing with Mrs. Kellogg analyzing using Excel’s a correlation function of data analysis tool pack and the results were a 99% reliability. The researcher attributes this high reliability to the objectiveness of the rubric in regards to the different elements: signal words, word count, and conventions of writing using capitals at the beginning of sentences and punctuation at the end of sentences.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

In this section the collection of data procedures is described and the analysis of the data collected are described using the Wilcoxon-Signed Rank Test and a paired sample \(t\) test.
Data Collection

The data from the writing rubric was then recorded on a spreadsheet (see Table 5) and used to record student writing scores for each element of the rubric and the overall rubric score based on specific features and writing elements located within writing samples including students’ use of signal words, word count, beginning sentence capitals, ending sentence punctuation, and sentences that introduce and conclude the writing.

The researcher analyzed the sequential informational text writing samples following the recommendations of Goldman and Wiley (2004) who described the need for “systematic descriptions that provide a basis for comparing written texts with one another” (p. 67). A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare participant pre- and post-instruction writing sample rubric elements and a paired-samples $t$-test was conducted to compare participant pre- and post-instruction writing samples of total writing rubric scores to explore the influence of the Read-to-Write Strategy instruction in helping children learn to write sequential informational text.

There are two sets of data that were collected in the current study for data analysis. The first set of data was the pre-instruction writing sample collected at the beginning of the study before any writing instruction was given. The second set of data was called the post-instruction and consisted of writing samples collected after participants had received the Read-to-Write Strategy instruction. The student names were replaced with student identifiers to protect participant identification and to prevent bias in scoring the writing samples.
Data Analysis

For each writing sample, the different elements of the writing rubric were analyzed. These elements included the use of signal words showing sequence, the word count, the writing conventions capitals and punctuation, meaning capitals at the beginning of the sentence and punctuation at the end of the sentences, and introductory and closing sentences. A repeated measures design was used in this study because there was only one sample of participants being studied, but under different conditions, with the different conditions being before children receive the treatment of explicit writing strategy instruction and after they receive the treatment of explicit writing strategy instruction. Gravetter and Wallnau (1999) explained that when this design is used it is because “two sets of data are obtained from the same sample of individuals” (p. 262).

Because the data generated using the writing rubric was ordinal data, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare pre- and post-instruction writing samples for each of the six elements of the writing rubric. Multiple researchers have long cautioned against using a parametric test when ordinal data has been collected and recommended instead that a non-parametric test, such as the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, be used (see Kuzon, Urbanchek, & McCabe, 1966; Stevens, 1946). Stevens further recommended reporting the median and percentiles when reporting the descriptive statistics of ordinal data. Significance in this study was determined if the $p$ value was less than .05.

Next, a paired-samples $t$ test (Pallant, 2005) was used to compare weighted writing rubric scores because these scores constituted numerical data. Salkind (2011) explained that this test is good for when a “single group of the same subjects is being
studied under two conditions” (p. 208). In the current study, the two conditions were before and after explicit strategy writing instruction. It was determined that the weighted writing rubric scores were normally distributed. Again, significance in this study was determined if the $p$ value was less than .05. After the completion of the paired-samples $t$ test, an effect size measure was calculated using Cohen’s $d$ to determine the effect, or practical significance, of any statistically significant difference in the group means on the weighted writing rubric scores.

This study’s null and research hypotheses were used to project the impact or influence of the Read-to-Write Strategy. The null hypothesis stated that there would be no change in the student’s writing scores as measured by the elements of the writing rubric including signal words, word count, writing conventions of capitals and punctuation, introductory and closing sentences, and the overall writing rubric score. The research hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference in the student’s writing scores as measured by the elements of the writing rubric concerning signal words, word count, writing conventions of capitals and punctuation, introductory and closing sentences, and the overall writing rubric score based on the Read-to-Write Strategy instruction.

**Summary**

In this section, a summary of the procedures used in this study was provided. The study consisted of randomly assigning students to a pre-writing prompt that would encourage participants to write informational text using a sequence text structure. Next,
participants were provided instruction using the Read-to-Write explicit strategy instruction that consisted of eighteen lessons of twenty to thirty minutes in length that took four weeks to complete. Fidelity checks were conducted to ensure the lessons were taught as outlined. Upon completion of the lessons, participants were again provided with a writing prompt that was randomly assigned encouraging participants to write informational text using the sequence text structure. This writing sample was called the post-instruction writing sample.

Both the pre-instruction and post-instruction writing samples were analyzed using a weighted writing rubric that examined the following: signal words used for sequential informational text, word count, beginning sentence capitals, ending sentence punctuation, an introductory sentence and a closing sentence. Next, the pre-instruction writing sample overall scores were compared to the post-instruction writing sample overall scores using a paired-samples $t$ test. Overall scores of the children were called a writing composite score which was a total of the weighted writing rubric scores. In the next chapter, the findings of the data analysis are presented.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In the first chapter, the challenges teachers face related to teaching children to write effectively are outlined. Unfortunately, a large number of children struggle with learning to write effectively making it difficult for them to succeed academically (Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Harris et al., 2007; Helsel, & Greenberg, 2007; Lienemann, 2006). It has been documented that four out of five children who graduate from high school do so without the writing knowledge and skills required for higher learning (Helsel & Greenberg, 2007). Not only is learning to write difficult for many students, but teaching writing has been found to be difficult for many teachers as well (Graham, Berninger, & Abbot, 2012; Helsel & Greenberg, 2007). Unfortunately, many teachers assume that writing comes naturally and does not need to be taught (Troia & Maddox, 2004). This attitude is often a barrier towards finding and implementing effective teaching methods.

A possible solution to this challenge is to develop writing programs and/or strategies that will help teachers teach students how to write in a variety of formats and genres. This study was designed to explicitly teach young children a writing strategy to explore and measure the effectiveness of this strategy in teaching second graders to write informational text, namely sequential text. This writing strategy, known as the Read-to-Write Strategy, paired the use of exemplary texts as models and explicit teaching of how to write sequential text using graphic organizers combined with teacher modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. In this chapter, findings of this study are presented.
In this study, the participants were 40 second graders who were enrolled in an elementary school and were taught to write sequential text using the Read-to-Write Strategy. Students completed a pre-instruction writing sample and a post-instruction writing sample. The data from pre- and post-instruction writing samples were analyzed using a weighted rubric (see Table 5). Using the weighted rubric, each writing sample was examined and scored on six elements of writing including the number of signal words used, the number of words used, the number of capitals used, the number of ending punctuation marks used, the quality of an introductory sentence used, and the quality of a concluding sentence used. The pre-instruction and post-instruction scores were recorded on a spreadsheet entitled Sequential Text Data Spread Sheet (see Appendix G).

Because the scores produced from using the weighted writing rubric were ordinal data, and because the data did not meet the assumptions of normality, a paired samples t-test was not an option to examine individual rubric elements. Thus, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used instead to examine the individual rubric elements (signal words, overall word count, punctuation, capitalization, introductory and concluding sentences) and a paired-samples t test was used to determine if there were any differences in overall rubric scores (numerical data) on the student writing samples produced before and after the writing strategy instruction.

For organizational purposes, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section presents the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test analysis for each of the six elements of the writing rubric including the number of signal words, the overall word count, the number of capitals used at the beginning of the sentences, the number of
ending punctuation marks used, the quality of an introductory sentence, and the quality of a concluding sentence. For each element, the descriptive statistics were described and displayed in tables and figures, followed by the inferential statistics for each element of the writing rubric, and concluding with a table listing all of the descriptive statistics and inferential statistics for each writing rubric element for comparison purposes.

The second section of the chapter describes the findings from examining the overall writing rubric scores (numerical data). For these data, a paired samples $t$-test was used to compare combined writing rubric scores from the pre- and post-instruction writing samples. The third section provides three student examples of writing samples (high score, middle score, and lower score) from the pre- and post-instruction stages collected from each student, and the fourth section concludes with a summary of the chapter findings.

**Findings from the Six Writing Rubric Elements**

In this section the findings of the six rubric elements are displayed showing frequency scores with the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test results displayed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Use of Signal Words**

The first element listed on the writing rubric measured the number of signal words used. Writing samples were examined and rated using a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least number of signal words used and 5 being the most signal words used) to report the number of signal words used at the pre- and post-instruction stages. Signal words are
intentionally used by the writer to help facilitate meaning and direction for the reader. Some examples of signal words used in sequential text are: first, second, next, then, finally, and last.

Frequency scores for use of signal words in pre- and post-instruction writing samples are listed in Figures 2 and 3. The pre-instruction writing sample for the signal words reported a skewness statistic of .38 and a kurtosis statistic of -1.44. The frequency of scores for signal words were positively skewed and indicated that the mean (1.45) or average score was higher than the median (1) score.

The post-instruction statistics for skewness and kurtosis were 3.3 and 9.40 respectively. There was a positive skew to the post-instruction scores. The mean (4.075) or average score was higher than the median (4) score indicating that these scores were not distributed normally and were nonparametric. Thus, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

Figure 2. Frequency of signal words used in pre-instruction writing samples.
was used to compare pre- and post-instruction writing samples and the number of signal words used.

**Descriptive statistics.** When reporting the results of a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, it is suggested that the quartile scores, the range, the variance, and the median scores should be reported. The median score is more meaningful to share than the mean score. The range in the pre-instruction sample was 0-4 on a scale of 1-5, while the range on the post-instruction writing sample was 4-5. Thus, the range at the pre-instruction stage was greater than at the post-instruction stage. The first quartile score for the use of signal words on the pre-instruction writing sample was .00, the second or median quartile score was 1.00, and the third quartile score was 3.00. For the use of signal words in the post-instruction writing sample, the first quartile score was 4.00, the second or median quartile score was 4.00, and the third quartile score was 4.00. The descriptive statistics are listed below in Table 6 and exhibited on a box and whisker plots in Figure 4.
Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Signal Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>25th</th>
<th>50th(Median)</th>
<th>75th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Instruction</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Instruction</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Box and whisker plots for number of signal words.

**Inferential statistics.** A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test in SPSS was performed on the rubric scores measuring the children’s pre-instruction and post-instruction writing samples. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test showed that the intervention
Read-to-Write Strategy did elicit a statistically significant change in student writing in the use of signal words \((Z = -5.359, p = 0.000)\). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted that stated the explicit writing instruction using the Read-to-Write Strategy would result in an increase of signal words used in children’s writing of sequential text.

**Overall Word Count**

The second element listed on the writing rubric measured the overall number of words used. Overall word count refers to the total number of words used in the students’ writing samples. Writing samples were examined and rated using a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least number of overall words used and 5 being the highest overall number of words used) to report the overall number of words used at the pre- and post-instruction stages.

Frequency scores for overall word count are shown in Figures 5 and 6 for pre- and post-instruction writing samples. The pre-instruction writing sample for the overall number of words reported a skewness statistic of .18 and a kurtosis statistic of -1.1. The frequency of scores for word count were negatively skewed and indicated that the mean (2.925) or average score is lower than the median (3) score.

The post-instruction statistics for skewness and kurtosis were -4.3 and -.82 respectively. There was a positive skew to the post-instruction scores and the mean (4.025) or average score was higher than the median (4) score indicating that these scores were not distributed normally and were non-parametric. Thus, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare pre- and post-instruction writing samples.
Figure 5. Frequency of overall word count scores in pre-instruction writing samples.

Figure 6. Frequency of overall word count scores in post-instruction writing samples.
Descriptive statistics. The range in the pre-instruction writing samples was 1-5. The first quartile score for the pre-instruction writing sample was 2.00, the second or median quartile score was 3.00, and the third quartile score was 4.00. For the post-instruction writing samples, the range was also 1-5, but the frequency of scores within each point in range differed. The first quartile score for the post-instruction writing samples was 3.00, the second or median quartile score was 4.00, and the third quartile score was 5.00. The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 7 and exhibited in a box and whisker plots in Figure 7.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics for Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Word Count*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>25th</th>
<th>50th (Median)</th>
<th>75th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Instruction</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Instruction</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 7. Box and whisker plots for word count.*
Inferential statistics. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test in SSPS was performed on the rubric scores measuring the children’s pre-instruction and post-instruction writing samples. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test showed that the intervention Read-to-Write Strategy did elicit a statistically significant change in student writing in the number of words written ($Z = -3.938, p = 0.000$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted that stated the explicit writing instruction using the Read-to-Write Strategy would result in an increase in overall number of words used in children’s writing of sequential text.

Capitals Used at the Beginning of a Sentence

The use of capitals at the beginning of sentences was the third element measured on the writing rubric. Frequency scores for the use of capital letters used at the beginning of a sentence are listed in Figures 8 and Figure 9 for pre- and post-instruction writing samples. The pre-instruction writing sample for the signal words reported a skewness statistic of 1.52 and a kurtosis statistic of 1.23. The frequency of scores for the use of capitals were positively skewed. The skewness statistic indicated that the mean (1.275) or average score is higher than the median (1) score.

The post-instruction statistics for skewness and kurtosis was -1.90 and 3.12 respectively. There was a highly negative skew to the post-instruction scores. The skewness statistic suggested that the mean (4.6) or average score was lower than the median (5) score indicating that the scores were not distributed normally and were non-parametric. Thus, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare pre- and post-instruction writing samples.
Figure 8. Number of capitals used in pre-instruction writing samples.

Figure 9. Number of capitals used in post-instruction writing samples.
**Descriptive statistics.** The range in the pre-instruction writing samples was 0-5 on a scale of 0-5 (0 equals no capitals used at the beginning of sentences and 5 equals five or more capitals used at the beginning of sentences), while the range in the post-instruction writing samples was 2-5. Thus, the range at the pre-instruction stage was greater than the range at the post-instruction stage. The first quartile score for the pre-instruction writing sample was .00, the second or median quartile score was 1.00, and the third quartile score was 1.00. For the post-instruction writing sample, the first quartile score was 4.00, the second or median quartile score was 5.00, and the third quartile score was 4.00. The descriptive statistics are listed below in Table 8 and exhibited on a box and whisker plots in Figure 10.

**Inferential statistics.** A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test in SSPS was performed on the rubric scores measuring the children’s pre-instruction and post-instruction writing samples. The results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that the intervention Read-to-Write Strategy did elicit a statistically significant change in student writing in the use of capital letters at the beginning of sentences ($Z = -5.285$, $p = 0.000$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted that stated the explicit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Percentiles</th>
<th>25th</th>
<th>50th (Median)</th>
<th>75th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Instruction</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Instruction</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
writing instruction using the Read-to-Write Strategy would result in an increase of capital letters used at the beginning of sentences in children’s writing of sequential text.

**Punctuation Used at the End of a Sentence**

The use of punctuation at the end of the sentences was the fourth element measured on the writing rubric. The frequency scores for punctuation used at the end of a sentence are listed in Figures 11 and 12 for pre- and post-instruction writing samples. The pre-instruction writing sample for punctuation reported a skewness statistic of 1.40 and a kurtosis statistic of .76. The frequency of scores for punctuation at the end of sentences were positively skewed. The skewness statistic indicated that the mean (1.625) or average score is higher than the median (1) score.

The post-instruction measures for skewness and kurtosis were -3.56 and 13.13, respectively. There was a negative skew to the post-instruction scores. The mean (4.725)
Figure 11. Use of punctuation in pre-instruction writing samples.

Figure 12. Use of punctuation in post-instruction writing samples.
or average score is lower than the median (5) score indicating that these scores were not distributed normally and were non-parametric. Thus, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare pre- and post-instruction writing samples.

**Descriptive statistics.** The range in the pre-instruction writing samples for the use of punctuation at the end of the sentence was 0-5 on a scale of 0-5 (0 equals no punctuation used at the end of sentences and 5 equals five or more punctuation marks used at the beginning of sentences), while the range in the post-instruction writing samples was 1-5. Thus, the range at the pre-instruction stage was slightly larger than the range at the post-instruction stage. The first quartile score for the pre-instruction writing sample was 1.00, the second or median quartile score was 1.00, and the third quartile score was 2.00. For the post-instruction writing sample, the first quartile score was 5.00, the second or median quartile score was 5.00, and the third quartile score was 5.00. The descriptive statistics are listed below in Table 9 and exhibited on a box and whisker plots in Figure 13.

**Inferential statistics.** A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test in SPSS was performed on the writing rubric scores measuring the children’s pre-instruction and post-instruction writing samples. The results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Percentiles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Instruction</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Instruction</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics for Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Conventions in Punctuation*
intervention Read-to-Write Strategy did elicit a statistically significant change in student writing when using punctuation at the end of sentences ($Z = -5.262, p = 0.000$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted that stated the explicit writing instruction using the Read-to-Write Strategy would result in an increase of punctuation used in children’s writing of sequential text.

**Inclusion and Quality of an Introductory Sentence**

The inclusion and the quality of an introductory sentence used in student writing samples was the fifth element measured on the writing rubric. Frequency scores for the use of and quality of an introductory sentence are listed in Figures 14 and Figure 15 below for pre- and post-instruction writing samples. The pre-instruction writing sample
Figure 14. Use and quality of an introductory sentence in pre-instruction writing samples.

Figure 15. Use and quality of an introductory sentence in post-instruction writing samples.
for the introductory sentence reported a skewness statistic of 3.62 and a kurtosis statistic of 14.22. The frequency scores for an introductory sentence were positively skewed and the skewness statistic indicated that the mean (0.375) or average score is higher than the median (0) score. The post-instruction statistic for skewness and kurtosis was -3.17 and 8.72, respectively. There was a negative skew to the post-instruction scores indicating that the mean (4.575) or average score was lower than the median (5) score. Because the scores were not distributed normally and were non-parametric, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare pre- and post-instruction writing samples.

**Descriptive statistics.** The range in the pre-instruction writing samples was 0-5 on a scale of 0-5 (0 equals no introductory sentence used or the quality of sentence was poor and 5 equals the quality of introductory sentence was very high), while the range in the post-instruction writing samples was 0-5. Thus, the ranges appear similar but the scores at the post-instruction stage were rated more heavily at the point of 4 and 5 on the scale. The first quartile score for the pre-instruction writing sample was .00, the second or median quartile score was .00, and the third quartile score was .00. For the post-instruction writing sample, the first quartile score was 5.00, the second or median quartile score was 5.00, and the third quartile score was 5.00. The descriptive statistics are listed below in Table 10 and exhibited on a box and whisker plots in Figure 16. The range at the pre-instruction stage was greater than the range at the post-instruction stage showing a difference in variance at the two stages.

**Inferential statistics.** A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test in SSPS was performed on the writing rubric scores measuring the children’s pre-instruction and post-instruction
Table 10

*Descriptive Statistics for Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Introductory Sentences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>25th</th>
<th>50th (Median)</th>
<th>75th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Instruction</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Instruction</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 16.* Box and whisker plots for use and quality of an introductory sentence.

writing samples. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test showed that the intervention *Read-to-Write Strategy* did elicit a statistically significant change in student writing in the use of including an introductory sentence ($Z = -5.595, p = 0.000$).

Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted that stated the explicit writing instruction using the *Read-to-Write Strategy* would result in an increase in the use and quality of an introductory sentence used in children’s writing of sequential text.
Inclusion and Quality of a Concluding Sentence

The final element included on the writing rubric was the use and quality of a concluding sentence. Frequency scores for use and quality of a concluding sentence are listed in Figures 17 and Figure 18 for pre- and post-instruction writing samples. The pre-instruction writing sample for the signal words reported a skewness statistic of .97 and a kurtosis statistic of .41. The frequency of scores for a concluding sentence were positively skewed. The skewness statistic indicated that the mean (1.4) or average score is higher than the median (1) score.

The post-instruction statistic for skewness and kurtosis were -1.80 and 1.75 respectively. There was a negative skew to the post-instruction scores. The mean (4.175) or average score was lower than the median (5) score indicating that these scores were not distributed normally and were nonparametric. Thus, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare pre- and post-instruction writing samples.

Figure 17. Use and quality of a concluding sentence in pre-instruction writing samples.
Descriptive statistics. The range in the pre-instruction writing samples was 0-5 on a scale of 0-5 (0 equals no concluding sentence or concluding sentence of poor quality was used at the end of the writing sample and five equals a concluding sentence of high quality was used at the end of the writing sample), while the range in the post-instruction writing samples was 0-5. Thus, the ranges appear similar but the scores at the post-instruction stage were loaded heavily at the point of 5 on the scale. The first quartile score for the pre-instruction writing sample was .00, the second or median quartile score was 1.00, and the third quartile score was 3.00. For the post-instruction writing sample, the first quartile score was 4.00, the second or median quartile score was 4.00, and the third quartile score was 4.00.

The descriptive statistics are listed in Table 11 and exhibited on a box and whisker plots in Figure 19. The range at the pre-instruction stage was greater than the range at the post-instruction stage showing a difference in variance at the two stages.
Inferential statistics. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test in SSPS was performed on the rubric scores measuring the children’s pre-instruction and post-instruction writing samples. The results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that the intervention Read-to-Write Strategy did elicit a statistically significant change in student writing and the use of concluding sentences ($Z = -5.006, p = 0.000$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was
rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted that stated the explicit writing instruction using the *Read-to-Write Strategy* would result in an increase of the use and quality of a concluding sentence in children’s writing of sequential text.

### Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for All Writing Rubric Elements

This section displays the descriptive and inferential statistics for the pre- and post-instruction writing samples in all the different elements of the writing rubric.

#### Descriptive Statistics

Table 12 shows the descriptive statistics for all six elements of the writing rubric. Because a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used, the median, the range, and the interquartile range were noted. Table 12 is provided for comparison purposes. The rubric element that saw the range decrease the most from the pre- to post-instruction writing

**Table 12**

*Descriptive Statistics for Writing Rubric Elements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>25th</th>
<th>50th</th>
<th>75th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Signal</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Signal</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Word</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Word</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Capital</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Capital</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Punctuation</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Punctuation</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Introductory</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Introductory</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Concluding</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Concluding</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
stage was the use of signal words. It is interesting to note that in some cases, the range increased from pre- to post-instruction writing stages.

**Inferential Statistics**

The Z scores and the p. value determined from the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Tests for all the elements of the writing rubric are shown in Table 13. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test showed that the intervention *Read-to-Write Strategy* did elicit a statistically significant change in student writing concerning the different elements of the writing rubric. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis accepted stating that the explicit writing instruction using the *Read-to-Write Strategy* resulted in an enhancement of the different elements of the writing rubric for student writing in sequential text.

**Total Weighted Writing Rubric Scores**

In this section the total weighted writing rubric score frequency scores are shown along with results of the paired sample *t* test using descriptive and inferential statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th><em>p</em> value of sig. (two tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre/Post Signal Words</td>
<td>-5.359</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre/Post Word Count</td>
<td>-3.938</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre/Post Capitals</td>
<td>-5.285</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre/Post Punctuation</td>
<td>-5.262</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre/Post Intro. Sentence</td>
<td>-5.595</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre/Post Con. Sentence</td>
<td>-5.006</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive Statistics

The overall weighted writing rubric score was a total writing rubric score of the six writing rubric elements (signal words, overall number of words, punctuation, capitalization, introductory sentence, and concluding sentence). The writing rubric was weighted so that components of the writing rubric deemed more important were given more emphasis or weight in the composite score. The weighted writing rubric provided more emphasis or weight to the number of signal words used which were weighted at 30%, overall number of words used was weighted at 20%, the use of capital at the beginning of sentences was weighted at 10%, the use of punctuation at the end of sentences was weighted at 10%, the use and quality of an introductory sentence was weighted at 15%, and the use and quality of a concluding sentence was weighted at 15%. The percentages were multiplied by the points earned for each rubric element and then totaled to produce the overall weighted writing rubric score. The total points possible for the overall rubric score was 5. Using a weighted rubric allowed for attention and emphasis to certain criteria that were viewed as more important. For instance, the use of signal words in sequential text was viewed as more important than the writing conventions of capitals and punctuation. Thus, signal words used in sequential text were of more importance and were given more weight in this analysis than writing conventions or punctuation.

Frequency scores for the overall weighted writing rubric scores at the pre- and post-instruction stages are shown in Figures 20 and 21. The pre-instruction writing sample for the composite of rubric elements reported a skewness statistic of .44 and a
Figure 20. Frequency of total weighted writing rubric scores for pre-instruction writing samples.

Figure 21. Frequency of total weighted writing rubric scores for post-instruction writing samples.
kurtosis statistic of -.84. The frequency of scores for the total writing composite were positively skewed but approximately symmetric. The skewness statistic indicated that the mean (1.576) or average score was slightly higher than the median (1.375) score.

The post-instruction statistic for skewness and kurtosis were -1.63 and 2.02, respectively. There was a negative skew to the post-instruction scores. The mean (4.273) or average score was lower than the median (4.5) score. Although negatively skewed, the data was continuous and fit the parameters for normal distribution of scores. So the paired-sample $t$-test was the appropriate test to use to compare the overall weighted rubric scores determined for the pre- and post-instruction writing samples.

The descriptive statistics produced for the overall weighted rubric scores included the mean, standard deviation, variance, and the range. The descriptive statistics are listed below in Table 14 and exhibited in a graph in Figure 22 and the box and whisker plots in Figure 23.

The descriptive statistics indicate substantial changes in student writing from pre- to post-instruction stages. These changes are noted in the mean scores, in the variance, in the box and whisker plots, and in the range of scores. Scores at the pre-instruction stage were positively skewed and clustered more towards the lower end of the rubric while the

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 22. Descriptive statistics graph for total weighted writing rubric scores in pre- and post-instruction writing samples.

Figure 23. Box and whisker plots for total weighted writing rubric scores.
scores at the post-instruction stage demonstrated a smaller range and clustered at the upper end of the rubric scale.

**Inferential Statistics**

A paired samples *t* test was conducted to compare the overall weighted rubric scores at both the pre- and post-instruction stages. There was a significant difference in the scores for pre-instruction (*M* = 1.576, *SD* = .821) and the post-instruction stage (*M* = 4.273, *SD* = .576); *t*(39) = -22.74, *p* < .00, two tailed. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted that stated that the explicit writing strategy Read-to-Write instruction resulted in an overall increase of improvement in children’s writing samples. The effect size for this analysis was determined using Cohen’s *d* effect size and was equal to 3.84 which is a large effect based on Cohen’s (2008) guidelines. Thus, the effect size for the post-instruction writing sample was 3.84 standard deviations from the mean of the pre-instruction writing sample. See Table 15 for more information on the paired samples *t*-test results.

Table 15

**Paired-Samples t Test for Total Weighted Writing Rubric Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Paired differences</th>
<th>95% confidence interval of the difference</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest/posttest</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Score</td>
<td>-2.72</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.1196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of Student Work

In this section total weighted rubric scores for individual students are shown and their writing samples are exhibited with tables comparing their pre- and post-writing samples.

Total Weighted Writing Rubric Scores for Examples of Individual Students

This section highlights the writing of three children, Bobby, Abby, and Sammy (pseudonyms) who were participants in this study. Bobby, Abby, and Sammy’s guardians were contacted by the researcher conducting this study by letter and were asked for permission to display their student’s work in this study (see Appendix I).

These children produced writing samples respectively that scored high, average, and low on the pre-instruction writing samples. The average score on the pre-instruction writing sample and the standard deviation \((M = 1.54, SD = 0.80)\) shows that the student scoring lowest on the rubric was over minus one standard deviation from the mean and the writer scoring highest on the writing rubric was almost plus two standard deviations from the mean. In Table 16 and in Figure 24, the scores for the pre-instruction writing sample and the post-instruction writing sample data are listed for Bobby, Abby, and

Table 16

*Examples of Student Weighted Writing Rubric Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre-instruction score</th>
<th>Post-instruction score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bobby</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammy</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 24. Examples of student work and their pre- and post-writing rubric scores.

Sammy. The first child Bobby scored a 3.00 on the writing rubric on the pre-instruction writing sample, which was one of the higher scores at the pre-instruction stage, and then he scored 4.7 on the post-instruction writing sample, which was again one of the higher scores. The second child Abby scored 1.65 on the writing rubric which was very close to the mean on the pre-instruction writing sample and then she scored 4.7 on the post-instruction writing sample. The third child Sammy scored .4 on the pre-instruction writing sample, which was one of the lower scores at the pre-instruction stage, and then he scored 4.30 on the post-instruction writing sample. The post-instruction writing sample scores and the standard deviation shows that all three children scored within the same standard deviation ($M = 4.26, SD = 0.58$) on their post-instruction writing score.

Examples of Student Writing Samples

The writing samples for Bobby, Abby, and Sammy are shown in Figures 25-27.
I get out of my bed and I get my clothes on. And I go down stairs then I eat breakfast. And make my lunch then I get my backpack and put my lunch in my backpack then I do my hair then I put my backpack on then I get on my bike then I ride to my bus stop and go to school.

How do I make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? First, I get some bread. Next, I get the peanut butter and put it on the bread then I get the jelly and put it on the other piece. Last, I put the bread together. That is how I make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

*Figure 25. Bobby’s pre- and post-instruction writing samples.*
Figure 26. Abby’s pre- and post-instruction writing samples.
Their pre-instruction writing sample is displayed first followed by their post-instruction writing sample. In Figure 25, Bobby’s pre-instruction writing topic was on how to get ready for school and his post-instruction writing topic was on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Bobby’s work is an example of a student who scored
high on both the pre- and post-instruction writing samples.

Bobby’s writing sample scored 3.0 and was plus one standard deviation from the mean on the pre-instruction writing sample and he also scored better than average on the post-instruction writing sample. Bobby’s work is an example of how someone who is already writing pretty well can still improve in his writing in ways that are measurable on the rubric.

In Figure 26, Abby’s pre-instruction writing topic was on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich followed by her post-instruction writing topic on how to get ready for school. Abby’s pre-instruction writing sample scored a 1.65 on the overall rubric, which was close to the average score of $M = 1.58$.

In Figure 27, Sammy’s pre-instruction writing topic was on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and his post-instruction writing topic was on how to get ready for school. Sammy had the lowest overall weighted rubric score in the class. There is clear evidence of improvement in Sammy’s writing from the pre- to post-instruction stages.

Bobby, Abby, and Sammy are examples of students who respectively received a high, average, and low score on the pre-instruction writing sample. All children made gains but those that scored high on the pre-instruction writing sample didn’t improve as much as the children that scored in the average or low range. As in Bobby’s case, an improvement from a score of 3.0 on the pre-instruction writing to a score of 4.70 on the post-instruction writing sample is not as large of an improvement that was demonstrated in Abby’s scores with a score of 1.65 on the pre-writing instruction sample to a score of
4.70 on the post-instruction writing sample. Sammy demonstrated the greatest improvement going from a score of 0.40 on the pre-instruction writing sample to a score of 4.30 on the post-instruction writing sample.

These findings suggest that the explicit strategy writing instruction may have the most impact on students who may need the most support. Raw scores from the each of the individual writing rubric elements are displayed in Table 17 and a comparison of the individual student scores are displayed in Figure 28. These graphics suggest that Sammy saw the most improvement in the areas of using signal words, using punctuation at the end of the sentence, using capitals at the beginning of sentences, and using introductory and concluding sentences in writing. The overall word count did not seem to see as much growth. These results suggest that when teachers call attention to various text features

Table 17

*Sequential Text Scores for Bobby, Abby, and Sammy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing rubric elements</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Bobby</th>
<th>Abby</th>
<th>Sammy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-signal words</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-signal words</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-word count</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-word count</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-conventions capitals</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-convention capitals</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-conventions punctuation</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-conventions punctuation</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-introductory sentence</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-introductory sentence</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-concluding sentence</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-concluding sentence</td>
<td></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.65</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-rubric total</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Figure 28. Weighted writing rubric element scores for Bobby, Abby, and Sammy.
and writing conventions students begin to use these important elements and features in their own writing.

**Summary**

This chapter revealed the results of the examinations measuring pre- and post-instruction writing samples using both the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test and the paired-samples *t*-test. The findings from these analyses confirm that using the *Read-to-Write Strategy* as a model of instruction for teaching children how to write sequential text resulted in student writing scores showing an improvement in median scores as measured by the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test in the number of signal words used showing sequence, the number of words written, the increase in number of writing conventions, that is, capitals and punctuation, and the use of introductory and concluding sentences in student writing. Student overall weighted writing rubric scores also showed an improvement in the mean score as measured by the paired-samples *t*-test with a large effect size.

Several examples of children’s work were also presented in this chapter to demonstrate how many students made improvement with the most noticeable improvement coming from the lower or average student writing scores. The results of this study suggest that the *Read-to-Write Strategy* is successful in enhancing second-grade children’s writing of sequential text significantly with a very large effect size suggesting both statistical and practical significance.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a summary of the study examining the Read-to-Write Strategy to teach second graders to write sequential text. Included in this chapter is an overview of the dissertation study, a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, implications for stakeholders, and concluding remarks.

Summary of the Study

In this summary, the introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and conclusions of the study are reviewed.

Introduction

According to research, many students struggle with writing with 75% of students in schools tested in 4th, 8th, and 12th grades achieving only “partial mastery” at their respective grade levels (Graham & Sandmel 2011; Lienemann et al., 2006; Reid & Lienemann 2006). Only 20% of high school seniors acquire the skills and knowledge for writing that is needed at their grade level (Helsel & Greenberg 2007). A mere one percent of students has what could be considered advanced writing skills (Lienemann, et al, 2006). Students from U. S. Schools cannot write well enough for post-secondary academics.

Knowing the majority of students struggle with writing is understandable because
writing is a difficult task, and a task that requires a wide variety of cognitive operations (e.g., Graham, Berninger, & Abbot, 2012; Helsel & Greenberg, 2007). Children have to be thinking about their topic, their knowledge of the topic, their audience, spelling, handwriting, sentence construction, what they should add to their writing, and what they should take out. It is a “mental juggling act.” These operations are both recursive and iterative in nature (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Flower & Hayes, 1980; Hayes & Flower, 1980), and as a result, learning to write effectively is very difficult for students.

Many teachers struggle with how to teach writing (Troia, & Maddox, 2004). They seem unsure of the best method for teaching writing and there are myths circulating among teachers that are associated with writing instruction. Some teachers believe that writing develops naturally and that you cannot teach good writing (Graham & Harris, 1997). As a result, there is often an eclectic approach to teaching writing that prevails in our schools (Cutler & Graham, 2008), even though there is plenty of evidence-based writing instruction strategies that have been shown to be effective in helping children learn to write. To summarize, writing is a difficult task that is not frequently being taught effectively, but there is evidence to suggest that there are effective writing strategies teachers can use.

The ELA-CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. 2010) now require elementary students to write in many formats they are not familiar with and/or that are different from stories and personal narratives. For example, many children may be unfamiliar with expository or informational text and teachers may be unfamiliar with how to teach children to write
expository/informational text. However, the expectation is that children are to write in these formats and teachers are to instruct children to write in these formats. Without training and models, teachers may not know how to teach children to write informational text and many children are not able to learn how to write informational writing without such guidance and support.

Because writing is difficult and teaching writing can be challenging, this dissertation study was designed to examine an option that elementary teachers may consider for teaching children to write sequential text. The writing strategy researched is known as the Read-to-Write Strategy (Clark et al., 2013) and was employed to teach second grade children how to write sequential text. The purpose of this study was to determine if the explicit writing strategy specifically the Read-to-Write Strategy could help children to write informative text required by the ELA-CCSS, namely sequential text. The research question employed was as follows: Will second grade students receiving writing instruction using the Read-to-Write Strategy, which pairs explicit teaching of a writing strategy in conjunction with the use of exemplary informational texts as models, produce higher quality informational writing in sequential text compared to pre-instruction writing samples? The quality of writing was assessed using a weighted writing rubric to measure the use of signal words indicating sequential order, overall word count, the use of capitals at the beginning of sentences, the use of punctuation at the end of sentences, and the quality and inclusion of introductory and concluding sentences.

**Literature Review**

The literature review revealed that the majority of students struggle with writing
(e.g., Harris et al., 2007) and that many students are writing below their grade level (Helsel & Greenberg, 2007). It is clear that many students are not able to “pick up” the writing of different genres just by the exposure to good literature (Troia et al., 2009) with the support of literature presenting writing failure for students (e.g., Graham & Sandmel 2011). The literature review also revealed many factors that may contribute to this phenomenon. These include the following: (1) The task of writing is difficult and arduous (Culham, 2006; De La Paz et al., 2000; Graham & Harris, 2005; Graham et al., 2005; Graham, MacArthur, & Fitzgerald, 2007; Roberts, 2010) and children find writing to be difficult; (2) Many teachers are not sure how to teach writing believing that writing comes naturally and that one cannot teach writing to children (Graham & Harris, 1997); (3) High stakes testing in the past did not assess writing which may have implicitly stressed the lack of priority placed on writing instruction when compared to reading and mathematics instruction meaning that writing has not received its share of teaching time; and (4) teachers may not be aware of the most effective writing strategies to use when teaching children to write.

Researchers have documented clear differences between struggling and skilled writers and this provides an objective understanding as to the type of instruction struggling writers need to be successful. Educators are encouraged to teach younger children specific writing strategies (Gillespie & Graham, 2014; Graham, Bollinger, et al., 2012) It has been determined that explicit writing strategies seem to help all children with writing improvement but these strategies have been shown to be especially helpful for students that struggle with writing (Graham et al., 2006) Educators are also encouraged to
find through experimentation different kinds of strategies to help children with the task of writing (Lieneman et al., 2006). This will help differentiate the task of teaching writing to meet the needs of students.

Two similar but separate studies (Graham et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2006) experimented with writing strategies that were effective in helping struggling writers improve their writing of stories and persuasive essays. These researchers found that explicit writing strategies helped children that struggle with writing to improve their writing of narratives. The students’ stories were longer, more complete, and qualitatively better than their control counterparts after the explicit strategy instruction. The same two studies also explored the teaching of explicit writing strategies to children that struggle with writing on how to write persuasive essays and found that children were able to produce higher quality essays than their control counterparts after the instruction. The essays were longer, had more essential elements of an essay, and were a higher quality than essays written by control counterparts. These findings suggest that explicit writing strategies are helpful in teaching children to write both narrative and informational texts effectively, or at least more effectively than they were prior to the instruction.

Studies by Graham et al. (2005) and Harris et al. (2006) and other studies outlined in the literature review, it was determined that another explicit writing strategy designed to teach a whole class of second graders to write sequential informational text was reasonable. The purpose of this study was to explore how the Read-to-Write Strategy, which pairs the teaching of explicit writing strategies with the use of exemplary informational texts as models, would help second grade students improve their writing of
sequential text, as measured by analyzing differences in students’ pre- and post-instruction writing samples.

**Methodology**

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to examine pre- and post-instruction writing samples of second-grade children \((N = 40)\) and a paired-samples \(t\) test was used to compare pre- and post-instruction overall writing rubric scores. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was implemented because of the use of the ordinal data gleaned from the writing rubric.

Participants wrote in response to a randomly assigned writing prompt that encouraged them to write using a sequential text structure. This sample of writing was called the pre-instruction writing sample. This writing sample was analyzed using a rubric and data from the writing rubric was recorded for further analysis. After the pre-instruction writing sample was administered and examined, participants were taught 18 lessons based on the *Read-to-Write Strategy*. These lessons constituted the intervention in this research study. The lessons began with and were based on a book study using an exemplary book that used the sequential text structure. The teacher and participants examined the book and the text features employed by the author.

Next, and with their teacher, participants planned, composed, revised, and edited a topic that encouraged the sequential text structured using the book they studied as an example. Participants had multiple opportunities to practice writing using a sequential text structure and with modeling, guided practice, and independent practice from their teacher.
After the participants completed the eighteen lessons, they were asked to respond
to another randomly assigned writing prompt that encouraged participants to write using
a sequential text structure. This response was called the post-instruction writing sample.
This post-instruction writing sample was analyzed using a writing rubric that was similar
to the types of elements examined on state writing assessments. The writing rubric score
was weighted so as to provide more weight to some elements of the rubric than other
elements (see Table 4 for the Writing Rubric.) Data collected from the writing rubric
scores were recorded and examined using the same writing rubric as was used to examine
the pre-instruction writing sample. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare
pre- and post-instruction writing samples for each element of the writing rubric. Finally, a
paired samples $t$ test was used to compare the overall writing rubric score for the pre-
instruction writing sample with the post-instruction writing sample.

Results

The findings of this dissertation study support the efficacy that has been noted in
previous studies when other writing strategies have been employed to teach children to
write (e.g., Lane et al., 2008; Graham et al., 2006). Namely, explicit writing strategies do
indeed help improve student writing. In this study the intervention of the Read-to-Write
Strategy resulted in students writing higher quality sequential informational text from
before to after the intervention. The explicit writing strategy intervention showed student
improvement of writing in a variety of ways. These ways included the following: (1) the
number of signal words used to show sequence increased, (2) the overall number of
words written in the writing samples increased, (3) the number of capitals used at the
beginning of sentences in writing samples increased, (4) the number of punctuation marks used at the end of sentences increased, (5) the use of an introductory sentence increased, and (6) the use of a concluding sentence increased.

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test used to compare pre- and post-writing samples indicated statistically significant differences between pre- and post-instruction writing scores for all six components of the rubric and a paired-samples t test revealed statistically significant differences between overall rubric scores when comparing the pre- and post-instruction writing samples and rubric scores. The effect size for the paired samples t test was 3.84 suggesting practical significance as well. These findings indicate that the differences were scores were statistically significant, thus demonstrating that the results of the improvement in writing were not likely due to chance. The data generated by the students supported the hypothesis that the Read-to-Write Strategy significantly enhanced second grade children’s writing of sequential informational text with very large effect size for the overall rubric scores.

Conclusions

It is clear that explicit writing strategies do indeed help children improve their writing (Graham et al., 2006) and not just students who struggle with writing. The current study supports this assertion as well as the notion that all students benefit from explicit writing instruction, but struggling writers benefit even more (Graham, 1993). When implemented, explicit writing strategies such as the Read-to-Write Strategy, can support all writers and may eventually close what Troia et al. (2009) have termed the writing gap between struggling and more skilled writers.
The results of this study resembled those found in earlier research studies that also examined explicit writing strategy instruction and found positive effects on student writing (e.g., Lane et al., 2008). Several specific writing samples with low, average, and high scores on the pre-instruction writing sample were provided and indicated that all children, regardless of writing ability at the beginning of the study, made improvement and those with the most significant improvement seemed to be the students who needed the most writing support. Again, the struggling writers seemed to benefit the most from the intervention. Thus, the conclusions from the current study suggest that this explicit writing strategy can be not only be used to help improve all children’s writing of sequential text but can also be seen as helping even struggling writers be successful.

Studies have suggested that educators need to teach students a strategy or implement a model or pattern for students to follow when they are writing and especially when writing in unfamiliar genres (e.g., De La Paz et al., 2000; Helsel & Greenberg, 2007). The Read-to-Write Strategy helps children be successful at writing informational text (in this study sequential text) because it provides models and examples of the different informational text structures for students to examine, study, and emulate in their own writing. The Read-to-Write Strategy also enhanced the writing of children that are more skilled and helped them to have more focus in their writing and to even refine and enhance their writing. When students study exemplar informational texts and use them as models and then are provided with explicit instruction on how to write using this same text structure, students are able to write more closely to the exemplar texts in their own writing (Clark et al., 2013).
Strengths

All studies have strengths and limitations and this study was no exception. The first strength noted in this study was that the researcher was not also the teacher of the students in this study. The researcher worked with Mr. Smith, a teacher, who agreed to help with the research. Thus, Mr. Smith taught the Read-to-Write Strategy lessons, rather than the researcher. This practice of having another person teach the lessons other than the researcher put distance between the researcher and the findings and enabled the researcher to become an observer less prone to bias. Mr. Smith’s motive for teaching the explicit writing strategy was purely for the purposes of research and to learn new information about writing strategy instruction. This resulted in less pressure for the teacher, less pressure for the researcher, and a more collaborative environment for children to learn. Another strength of the study was the researcher was able to meet with Mr. Smith regularly before, during, and after the study to help ensure fidelity to the intervention and to answer questions about the study as the research progressed.

Using a rubric to examine student writing was the third strength noted in this study. Using the rubric as a tool for analyzing student writing is straightforward and easy to apply to the children’s writing with very little room for misinterpretation and error. Using five points on the rubric instead of the usual four points found on the state assessment where this study is situated, helped the researcher to analyze writing with less interpretation on some of the rubric components. For example, instead of the rubric stating that most sentences had punctuation at the end of the sentence, this rubric specifically measured the amount of punctuation used and not a general statement, which
could be more subjective. Rubrics used in other studies have also incorporated five points instead of four (see Williams, 2012).

Another strength of the study was the randomization of writing prompts students received for the pre- and post-instruction writing samples. Randomized prompts helped to alleviate the probability that students may have more background knowledge and/or experience with one or more writing topic than the other.

A final strength noted was that a pilot study was conducted prior to the actual study to examine the procedures of the study and the intervention. The pilot study helped in several ways. It helped to refine writing prompts, recognizing the need to randomize the writing prompts, and locating quality informational texts to use as exemplars. The pilot study also helped in refining the writing rubric for examining writing as well as the data analysis practice also helped to provide confidence in the instruments and processes of the research study.

**Limitations**

Although the results of the current study were statistically significant for each component of the rubric and reported a very large effect size when comparing the overall weighted writing rubric scores, there were limitations as well that need to be noted when examining the findings. The first limitation was associated with using a writing rubric to examine writing performance. Although the writing rubric was listed as a strength in the previous section, it is also a limitation. With a rubric, there really is no distinct way to measure the *quality* of writing. Use of signal words, word count, and writing conventions
such as capitals, punctuation, and the use of introductory and concluding sentences are all indications of quality writing, but the other words used in the writing sample may or may not have been quality writing. For example, measuring for word count didn’t allow for qualitative improvement in writing other than just counting the words. It was not surprising that word count in some writing samples was significantly enhanced from pre- to post-instruction, as this has been shown in previous studies (Graham et al., 2005; Patel & Laud, 2009). For instance, in one case study (Patel & Laud, 2009) word count improved with instruction and in experiments of larger samples, word count improved in both narratives and persuasive essays (Graham et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2006).

However, it was surprising to see that some students in the current study who wrote more words on the pre-instruction writing sample actually wrote fewer words on the post-instruction writing sample suggesting that the word count was not always an indication of quality of writing. This was especially true for the children whose writing seemed more skilled and had scored higher on the rubric for word count in the pre-instruction writing sample than they did on the post-instruction writing sample. Mr. Smith observed that one reason for this might be that the exemplar texts they studied were written in a more concise manner and as a result, some students may have been more concise in their writing during the post-instruction writing sample, which resulted in a lower word count. Discussion about quality writing may have also reduced overall word count. For example, Mr. Smith reminded children during instruction that the writing in the books they studied that the authors didn’t ramble or use the word “and” a lot. As a result, Mr. Smith said their writing was more “specific and to the point” after instruction.
The results of the intervention may have shown that the writing of more skilled writers was enhanced but not necessarily lengthened, while the writing of those who typically struggled with writing improved and was for the most part lengthened. Quality of writing and ways to measure quality of writing needs to be examined in future studies.

An additional limitation of the study may have been not giving children as much time as they needed to write sequential text. A time limit may have caused some students to shorten their word count and get a lower score on the rubric. In one study (see Lane et al., 2008), second grade students were given as much time as they needed to complete a story. This allows for planning and revision of text. In this current study the researcher noticed one student did not complete their writing sample. The student’s writing stopped in the middle of the concluding sentence and as a result their score was affected.

Another limitation of this study is that there was not a longitudinal aspect to the study. For example, students in the current study did not have a follow-up writing piece required that could be used as a maintenance probe (see Graham et al., 2005). This writing sample is collected after the intervention and the previous writing samples to see if the writing instruction had a lasting effect. The intervention from the current study had a strong effect but will the effect last over time?

Another limitation was that only the sequential text structure was employed. No exploration on other text structures (e.g., descriptive, cause/effect, compare/contrast) were given to see if instruction transfers to another text structure. Additionally, no exploration of other writing genres such as persuasive writing was explored. In previous studies children were instructed in one writing strategy but also utilized other writing
prompts pre- and post-intervention to see if writing improved in other genres (e.g., Harris et al., 2006).

Another limitation is the research design used. This paired-samples design did not have a control group to compare results with, thus limiting the claims one can make. This has been a common limitation of similar studies found in the research literature. Many studies have used a paired-samples design (e.g., Little et al., 2010) without a control group with a few exceptions (Graham et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2006). These studies did have a control with a strong writer’s workshop component used as the control.

Finally, there were other limitations, for instance, gender and time of instruction were not explored. Could this intervention have more of an effect on boys than girls or the other way around? Furthermore, the time of instruction may have impacted results. For example, some students were taught in the morning while others were taught in the afternoon. Also, the time of year may have a different impact on results with more improvement seen in the fall of the year and less improvement in the spring of the year, but these differences were not addressed.

**Research Implications**

The *Read-to-Write Strategy* had a statistically significant effect on second grade students’ writing of sequential text. There are multiple research studies to consider that would build on the current study.

**Participants**

The first area that needs additional research is to consider the participants
included in future studies. For example, a new study could examine how the Read-to-
Write Strategy works specifically with other student groups based upon such variables
such as gender, ethnicity, race, grade level, and/or writing ability. Several studies (e.g.,
Harris et al., 2006) identified struggling writers to include in study samples and provided
similar interventions with statistically significant results among these specific groups.
Examining the influence of the explicit writing strategy on student writing based upon
various student groups would add more information to writing research generally and the
topic of explicit writing strategy instruction specifically.

**Intervention**

Future studies could also explore if the Read-to-Write Strategy would influence
student writing using other informational text structures than sequence such as the
descriptive, cause and effect, problem and solution, compare and contrast text structures.
Prior to the current study, a pilot study was conducted that examined descriptive text with
second graders and found that overall writing scores in descriptive text were also
statistically significant when examining writing samples at the pre- and post-instruction
stages. The pilot study had a sample of only twenty-four students and so more
participants would be needed, but initial results are promising.

**Instrumentation**

Other research studies could also employ different instrumentation methods to
examine writing samples. The current study examined the use of signal words, overall
number of words used, punctuation used at the end of sentences, capitals used at the
beginning of sentences, and the quality and inclusion of an introductory and concluding sentence in writing samples. Other elements and writing conventions could be included such as specific punctuation marks being used, capitals used in addition to the beginning of the sentence, a title being used, and other text features such as headings, glossary, table of contents, etc.

Another avenue of future research along these same lines could be to examine if writing strategies such as the Read-to-Write Strategy encourages students to study pictures and diagrams in understanding the author’s purpose. The researcher focused more on the text, text structure, writing conventions, and text features rather than pictures and diagrams in the current study. The question in the future concerning young primary students and their writing may be: Does having students draw pictures improve the writing of text? It may be that pictures are part of a planning process for little children because when children draw about the subject they are thinking, planning, and refining the writing about the subject. In some situations, drawing pictures may help motivate children to write and to write more clearly.

Another area for future research is the Read-to-Write Strategy used modeling, shared writing, collaborative writing, and independent writing within its cycles of instruction. These different phases of writing are meant to gradually release the responsibility of writing from the teacher to the student (Read et al., 2014). It could be interesting to study each portion of writing in this release of responsibility to see what influence each phase of writing has on the improvement of individual student writing.
Research Design

The current study employed a paired samples design. Additional research designs could be considered including other quantitative designs (including a control group to compare performance among groups), qualitative designs (case studies of individual student’s progress over time with interviews included to ask students about their writing, the writing instruction they received, what they found to be helpful, and questions regarding why/how they changed their writing), as well as mixed methods designs that collect both qualitative and quantitative data.

Practical Implications for Stakeholders

The stakeholders benefitting from this study include children, parents, teachers, principals, curriculum experts, and publishing companies. There are a variety of implications for each of these stakeholder groups.

Children

Children could benefit from the results of this study if they are taught how to explicitly write informational texts and if they are shown exemplar texts upon which to base their own writing. The explicit instruction model highly recommended in reading (see Shanahan et al., 2010) seems to be important in writing instruction as well. The findings of the current study suggest that all children, regardless of their writing ability would benefit from the Read-to-Write Strategy.
Parents

Parents frequently ask teachers how they can support their children. Information from the present study can help parents understand how modeling can support their children in building and developing their writing skills. Parents should have children share their writing and thoughts which is motivational to children and writing (Graves, 1983; Ruetzel & Fawson, 1990). Parents and teachers can find ways to help children publish their writing which makes hard to read writing easier to read and like real books. Publishing writing for children also gives the child an opportunity to share, improve, and refine their writing with a more capable peer (Vygotsky, 1978). This activity would help children with spelling, writing conventions like capitals and periods, sentence structure, reading fluency, motivation to work harder and persevere when writing (Bottomley et al., 1997), write more, and share more.

Some children write text and then they and their classmates have trouble reading it. Typing a story for children makes it easier for them to read and to share with friends who can read it too. In one instance a story was typed for a child and they reread it several times and wanted to improve it. This reflects the iterative writing process that goes with writing.

Teachers

This study has many implications for teachers. First, teachers need to understand that there are things they can do that will impact student writing and in meaningful ways. Teachers should consider using the Read-to-Write Strategy so they can incorporate more exemplar texts as well as modeled and guided instruction during writing instruction.
Teachers who understand the value of these activities and suggestions are more likely to incorporate them in their classrooms. Teachers who only provide time for writing while encouraging students in the different stages of the writing process (pre-write, brainstorm, rough draft, editing/revising, final copy) may be missing opportunities to explicitly teach students to write in a variety of genres—especially informational text—and to provide exemplar texts for students to emulate.

Second, it was surprising to see the results of how writing improved after this instructional intervention. The results for changes in using capitals at the beginning of sentences and ending sentences with punctuation marks saw significant changes in student writing samples. Teachers spend a lot of time reminding students to start sentences with capitals and end sentences with periods with less than satisfying results. This improvement may be from the book study and modeling of writing by the instructor stressing what was learned from the book study. These findings suggest that children need to be shown how authors use writing conventions in their books through study and see the teachers model these conventions in their own writing and that these practices may result in a greater effect rather than students being told to use writing conventions and text features. Including an introductory and concluding sentence saw significant changes in student writing samples as well. Again, this could be explained by the use of the model of exemplary text being studied and the teacher modeling writing that used introductory and concluding sentences for the students.

**Principals and Instructional Leaders**

Principals and instructional leaders should look for a strong writing component
within literacy curriculum materials for their teachers and students. The writing component of literacy should incorporate exemplary text pieces with a 50% mix of the texts to include narrative and expository/informational text so that writing instruction aligns with those standards and expectations found within the ELA-CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. 2010). The writing instruction should be integrated with the reading instruction of exemplar texts and it should coincide with the text structure instruction. Writing is iterative and should support reading rather than become separate elements of literacy instruction where reading and writing instruction are competing for instructional time.

Principals should look for curriculum materials that also study a myriad of writing genres and text structures and materials that have a strong writing component that incorporates the study of writing and exemplar texts. Instructional procedures for writing should be “feasible and teacher friendly” (Graham & Harris, 2005, p. 20) because teachers will be unlikely to use instructional practices that are not easily understood and are difficult to teach. If principals and instructional leaders do not know how to support teachers who can integrate writing with reading throughout the curriculum through the use of modeling and exemplar texts, then they will likely not be able to support teachers who can effectively influence student writing in meaningful ways as they endeavor to teach writing.

**Curriculum Experts**

Curriculum writers and publishers should work with researchers, principals, teachers, parents, and even children to consider ways to bring the findings of the current
study into the classroom through the incorporation of appropriate materials and resources. The literacy curriculum should support and show how teachers can use text study to examine how authors organize their text and how students emulate this writing in their own writing samples. This will require multiple exemplar texts to be made available to teachers in curriculum sets, exemplar texts, and writing samples that incorporate a wide variety of writing genres including narrative, informational, and literature so that teachers have the rich supplies and models needed to guide students in writing their own texts.

Conclusions

The ELA-CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. 2010) are not new, but many teachers continue to struggle in implementing and teaching these standards effectively. Teachers need to be not only acquainted with and accustomed to what these standards mean and how to effectively teach these standards, but they also need to have a clear understanding of how to effectively teach these standards in knowledgeable ways so as to children to be able to write in ways that meet the levels of these standards. School and instructional leaders who understand how writing instruction should look in classrooms can support teachers to become familiar with these standards and also provide effective writing strategies for teachers to aid their students in their writing so children can meet these standards. Thus, teachers, or more knowledgeable others, as noted by Vygotsky (1978), are desperately needed.

Writing also needs to take great prominence in the elementary classroom.
Researchers have repeatedly noted that writing does not get the proper amount of teaching time in the school day. Writing has been called a “prisoner of time” (National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges, 2003) and “the silent R” (Nagin, 2003). High stakes testing in the past did not assess writing, and some have suggested that this may have implicitly stressed the lack of importance about writing skills when compared to more tested subjects like reading and arithmetic. However, high stakes tests on national and state assessments are incorporating more and more writing components suggesting there may be greater interest in research studies, such as the current study, as teachers seek ways to improve student writing. However, writing did not and will not receive the attention and teaching time needed if teachers do not understand how to teach writing in meaningful ways.

Writing is important to be successful in school, in educational opportunities, in opportunities for employment, and it is also beneficial physiologically and psychologically (Lane et al., 2008). Writing is too important to be relegated to an eclectic view of philosophies and teaching strategies. Research on writing strategies such as the Read-to-Write Strategy exhibit a significant impact on student writing and may need to be considered in today’s elementary classroom.

With such explicit writing strategies, children are taught patterns to emulate in writing from reading exemplar texts, which make writing seem less difficult. Explicit writing strategies like the Read-to-Write Strategy can be integrated within reading instruction that uses text study and teaches reading comprehension of informational texts. Additionally, the proposed eighteen lessons do not take an inordinate amount of
instructional time (20-30 minutes a day), and can be taught frequently and regularly. Mr. Smith, the teacher in this study, felt like this study’s lessons were easy to incorporate into teaching literacy and he asked permission to use them again next year.

Teachers should help children “develop as writers first so that achievement on tests is a natural outcome” (Bromley, 2007, p. 243). The study of exemplary texts and emulating the writing based on the model text has a natural flow to the process of reading and writing. Read a book, study it, write like it, and comprehend the text deeper than just reading and studying the text. The findings of the current study seem to support the idea that explicit instruction improves the writing of struggling writers and enhances the writing of more skilled writers which coincides with other studies that experimented with explicit writing strategies and their influence on children’s writing (e.g., Graham et al., 2006). These findings suggest and concur with additional research that suggests that all students benefit from explicit strategy instruction especially those that struggle with writing and enhances the writing of skilled writers (Graham, 1993; James, Abbott, & Greenwood, 2001). The findings from the current study also suggest that the gap for skilled writers and struggling writers can indeed be closed when the appropriate instruction, scaffolding, and support are in place for young writers.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

Text Types and Purposes
Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts Text Types and Purposes

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.1
Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.2
Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3
Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short descriptive of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.4
(W.2.4 begins in grade 3)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.5
With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.6
With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.7
Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.8
Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.9
(W.2.9 begins in grade 4)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.10
(W.2.10 begins in grade 3)
Appendix B

Lesson Plans for Sequential Text
Lesson Plans for Sequential Text

Lessons Objective and Overview

Objective: Students will write an informational text using the sequence text structure.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.2: Write informative texts in which students introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points.


Reading Informational Text Procedures:

1) Teacher holds up a sequential text e.g., From Caterpillar to Butterfly: Following the Life Cycle (Slade 2008) and reads the title aloud to students to determine the topic of the text.

2) Teacher scans the book and reads the table of contents (if included), to determine what the text might be about.

3) Teacher reads the book where the author has written text using sequential text structure.

4) Next, the teacher asks the question about the sequence presented in the text. (Example: What is the process (what are the steps) of how a caterpillar becomes a butterfly?

5) Using the Student Note Sheet, students and teacher fill in the information about the sequential text. Examples of the sequential text and signal words are written as examples for students to see (e.g., First the caterpillar attaches one of its ends to a milkweed leaf. Next the caterpillars outer skin breaks open.)

6) The teacher explains common signal words used by the author to indicate sequential text structure has been used to organize information (Examples: First, next, finally, after, before, etc.). The teacher and students review the book to determine what signal words are used by the author. Sequential text and signal words are noted in the book study.

7) The teacher and the students examine the pictures and diagrams to determine how sequence is presented in these.

8) Allow time for students to share the information they learned with each other.
Writing Informational Text Procedures:

1) Writing follows a gradual release of responsibility with the teacher modeling writing, then shared writing with teacher and students, collaborative writing with students writing together as partners, and independent writing for each student. Teacher assigns a topic for writing that would require a sequential text structure. This topic is different from the book study. The student emulates writing in sequential text and using signal words based on how the author wrote as noted in the book studies.

2) Use recorded information from the book study to help model planning for writing (e.g., signal words, pictures, and text support sequence) on a different topic and record this on the Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet (Appendix D).

3) Write about the new topic assigned using the information gathered on the Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet for planning of writing.

4) Include signal words in writing that would help indicate the sequence text structure. Signal words make it easier for the reader to comprehend what the author is describing and the order of events.

5) Illustrate writing. Illustrations and pictures can also help articulate or support a sequence.

6) Revise writing checking for signal words of the sequential text structure and edit for spelling, capitals, and punctuation.

7) Allow time for sharing writing and illustrations.

Book Studies: A Trip to the Emergency Room (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2011; From Tadpole to Frog: Following the Life Cycle (Slade, 2009); From Caterpillar to Butterfly: Following the Life Cycle (Slade 2008)

Topics for writing: Topics assigned for writing are meant to be familiar to all students so that students can write their own sequential text and the instructor need not worry if they know the content of a subject. Except for the modeled writing the teacher will model to the children his or her own background knowledge of how nectar becomes honey for writing sequential text.

Pre- and post-instruction writing: Children are randomly assigned one of two topics for the pre-instruction writing sample, then children write on the other topic for the post-instruction writing sample: How do you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? How do I get ready for school?

Modeled writing: Teacher models and writes on this topic: How does nectar become honey?
Shared writing: The teacher and children share the writing on the assigned topic together as a group with the teacher giving children some of the responsibility to write. The topic: The life cycle of the monarch butterfly. A word of explanation: Children have been taught life cycles in first grade and specifically about the life cycle of a butterfly in their reading basal. There is also a book study on this topic before the topic is assigned. So the teacher should be able to draw on group knowledge for this shared writing assignment.

Collaborative writing: Children write in pairs on the topic: How do you make a snowman? Independent writing: Children write independently on the topic: What you do to get ready for bed?

Note: Writing Module for sequential text is twenty sessions. The first and twentieth sessions are pre- and post-instruction writing sample prompt sessions and will take fifteen minutes with the eighteen book study and writing sessions being about thirty minutes for each session. For example, the book study for lesson 1:0 is 35 minutes and writing session for lessons 1:1, 1:2, and 1:3 take about 20 minutes.

Day 1: pre-instruction writing sample prompts: How do you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? How do I get ready for school? Children are randomly assigned one topic for the pre-instruction writing sample. Then they will write to the other prompt for the post-instruction writing sample. There is no support to the student for writing to the prompts except supplying materials and reading the prompt for them.

Modeled Writing: The teacher models the book study and models the writing process for the students for modeled writing. The topic: How does nectar become honey?

Day 2: lesson 1:0 Book study From Caterpillar to Butterfly: Following the Life Cycle (Slade 2008), and follow steps 1-8 on Reading Informational Text Procedures.

Day 3: lesson 1:1 Teacher models plan for writing following steps 1-2 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Day 4: lesson 1:2 Compose according to plan in lesson 1:1 following steps 4-5 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Day 5: lesson 1:3 Revise and edit writing from lesson 1:2 following steps 6-7 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Shared Writing: The teacher works with the students together as they study the book and share the writing process. The teacher takes the lead and guiding students through this process of shared writing on the topic: The life cycle of a butterfly.

Day 6: lesson 2:0 Book study A Trip to the Emergency Room (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2011) and follow steps 1-8 on Reading Informational Text Procedures.

Day 7: lesson 2:1 Plan for writing following steps 1-2 on Writing Informational Text
Procedures.

Day 8: lesson 2:2 Compose according to plan in lesson 2:1 following steps 4-5 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Day 9: lesson 2:3 Revise and edit writing from lesson 2:2 following steps 6-7 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Collaborative Writing: The teacher works with students as they study the book and then has children work in partners as they collaborate and work through the writing process. The topic for children: How do you make a snowman? The teacher conferences with them during the writing time using a Teacher Student Conference sheet.

Day 10: lesson 3:0 Book study From Tadpole to Frog: Following the Life Cycle (Slade, 2009) and follow steps 1-8 on Reading Informational Text Procedures.

Day 11: lesson 3:1 Plan for writing following steps 1-2 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Day 12: lesson 3:2 Compose according to plan in lesson 3:1 following steps 4-5 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Day 13: lesson 3:3 Revise and edit writing from lesson 3:2 following steps 6-7 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Day 14: lesson 3:4 Wrap up (finish and catch up) and continue to conference and share student writing and illustrations following step 7 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Independent Writing: The teacher works with the students as they review the past book studies (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2011; Slade 2008; Slade, 2009) from lessons 1:0, 2:0, and 3:0. The teacher then assigns children the topic to write about independently. The topic: What do you to get ready for bed? The teacher conferences with them during the writing time using a Teacher Student Conference sheet.

Day 15: lesson 4:0 review the past book studies from lessons 1:0, 2:0, and 3:0.

Day 16: lesson 4:1 Plan for writing following steps 1-2 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Day 17: lesson 4:2 Compose according to plan in lesson 3:1 following steps 4-5 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Day 18: lesson 4:3 Revise and edit writing from lesson 3:2 following steps 6-7 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.
Day 19: lesson 4:4 Wrap up (finish and catch up) and continue to conference and share student writing and illustrations following step 7 on Writing Informational Text Procedures.

Day 20: post-instruction writing sample prompt: How do you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? How do you get ready for school? Children were randomly assigned either the topic on peanut butter and jelly sandwich or how do I get ready for school topic for the pre-instruction writing sample and now they do the other prompt for the post-instruction writing.
Pre-Instruction Writing Sample Prompt.

Objective: Children will be seated at their desks and write their own sequential text in response to one of the writing prompts randomly assigned: How do you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? How do you get ready for school?

Materials needed: Children are given a randomized topic from the two prompts: Topic 1 is How do you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? Topic 2 is How do you get ready for school? (See appendix G for the two writing prompts.) These prompts are printed on a paper for students. They are also given pencils, crayons, and colored pencils. This session takes fifteen minutes.

Note: Children receive no support or instruction. The researcher is looking to see if children can write their own sequential text and the same directions apply to the post-instruction writing sample pertaining to no support other than paper pencils, and colored pencils.

Teacher: The teacher welcomes the children and thanks them for their attention. The teacher tells the children that today they will be writing on a topic. Children are given fifteen minutes to write and if they finish early they may draw a picture of the process on the back of the paper provided. The teacher collects the pre-instruction samples and thanks them for their writing. Children absent from this session can make this up in class with the same directions and resources given the children that have completed this writing task.
Lesson 1:0 Book Study

Objective: The student will listen to the teacher as he or she uses think aloud to study and read the book *From Caterpillar to Butterfly: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade, 2008). This book is informational text and uses a sequential text structure. Children could sit at their desk while listening to the teacher read and take notes on the text using their Student Book Study Sheet (see Appendix D). Children will listen to the teacher explain and show how an author writes in sequential text, uses signal words, and look at other non-textual features an author uses to support the text, (e.g., pictures). The teacher could use a document camera and an overhead to share and model the book. The teacher will also fill in a Student Book Study Sheet to support children. Keep in mind the goal of the Read-to-Write strategy is to study authors who write in sequential text and children will use these as models in writing their own sequential text.

Materials: The book *From Caterpillar to Butterfly: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade, 2008), Student Book Study Sheet (see Appendix D) for each child and one for the teacher, overhead, document camera, and or a writing easel. This lesson takes thirty-five minutes.

Lesson Note: The teacher will model and show what they are thinking in a think aloud process as they do a book study. The book study highlights text features that support the topic (e.g., the title expresses the topic). The teacher will use a graphic organizer to show how the author organized the text and used signal words to help present information on sequential text. This lesson in book study is taught more than once in order to help children become familiar with sequential text. This book study can be
done with the teacher using a document camera, overhead, and a copy of the text, while the students follow along filling out the Student Book Study Sheet. These are the steps for the book study:

1. The teacher holds up the book *From Caterpillar to Butterfly: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade, 2008) and reads the title aloud to students to determine the topic (what the text is about) of the text. The teacher uses think aloud throughout the book study to model their thinking, for example the teacher may ponder aloud what the title means.

2. Teacher scans the book with the children and reads the table of contents to determine what the text might be about. The teacher also notes the index and the glossary as well as diagrams and pictures.

3. Teacher reads the book pp.8-16 where the author has written text using a sequential text structure.

4. Next, the teacher asks the question about the sequence presented in the text. What are the different phases or steps in the life cycle of the monarch butterfly?

5. Using the Student Note Sheet, students and teacher fill in the information on the note sheet presented in the sequential text. The teacher writes down the sequential text for reference (e.g., First an egg is laid. Second the caterpillar hatches from the egg, etc.).

6. The teacher explains common signal words used by the author to indicate a sequence text structure has been used to organize information (Examples: First, next, finally, after, before, etc.). The teacher and students review the book to determine what signal words are used by the author and writes these down in the book study.

7. The teacher and the students examine the pictures to determine how sequence is presented in these and how the pictures support the text.

8. Allow time for students to share the information they learned with each other.

*Lesson:* This is an example of what the teacher may say and how they teach the preceding steps.

The teacher welcomes children and thanks them for their hard work in writing.

The teacher has selected a book where the author has used sequential text to describe a
topic showing a specific order of events. The teacher explains to the children he or she wants to show children a book where the author’s purpose is to inform the reader about a topic and describes this topic using sequential text, while using pictures and other text features like the title and chapter headings in support of the text structure. The author writes in what is called sequential text. Sequential text means the author is informing their reader about a topic using text structure called sequence. The teacher explains that in the book *From Caterpillar to Butterfly: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade, 2008) they are going to see how the author writes so her example of writing can help us write our own sequential text. We are learning to write sequential text because one day we will want to inform our readers about a topic we describe in sequential text.

Following are the questions from the book study:

1. What is the title of this book? Students and teacher writes down the title of this book.

2. What do think the topic of this book is? What will this book be mainly about? (Try to answer this in one or two words).

3. What do you think the text structure of this book will be? Will it be fiction or non-fiction? Explain fiction and non-fiction. Will this book tell a story or will it describe or inform the reader about a topic? Explain narrative and informative text to the children. Choose one word from each pair of words and circle your answers:

   - This book is fiction: nonfiction
   - This book is narrative text: informative text

4. What is a table of contents? Is there a Table of Contents in the front part of the book? Circle your answer: Yes No

5. What is an index? Is there an index in the back of the book? Circle your answer: Yes No

6. What is a glossary? Is there a glossary in the book? Circle your answer: Yes No
7. What are signal words? Look at the list of special words called signal words and circle signal words the author uses in the text: first, next, then, after that, later, finally, last. Other signal words or phrases: (e.g., one week later).

8. Why does an author use signal words?

9. Are there pictures or diagrams that help you to understand what the author has written about? Yes No

   Look at the diagrams. What do they help you understand? (i.e., life cycle of the butterfly)

10. Please fill in the graphic organizer below (example is on following pages) with the teacher showing the topic and supporting sentences showing sequential text the author used in describing the topic.

The teacher reads the title and asks questions and discusses with children possible answers: Can you tell what the author is going to describe? It will be about the life cycle of a butterfly. This process of how a caterpillar changes to a butterfly shows an order of events written by the author in sequential text. We will look in the book to see if the question we have about how a caterpillar changes into a butterfly is answered in the text.

   The next step in the lesson is to take a text feature walk. Text features are all the components of the book or article that are not the main text. A text feature walk is like a picture walk while looking over the structure of the book. Text features would also include the table of contents, headings, bold words, sidebars, pictures and captions, diagrams, glossary, and index that support text structure. The teacher shows and explains to the children how the text features support what the author is trying to describe in his or her sequential text. The teacher will show students the different text features while the teacher uses think aloud to note these features and how they support the topic. An author has a purpose for writing and the way they write helps support that purpose.
The teacher turns the pages and asks questions about text structure and text features. Starting on page 8, there is a diagram and key words like egg, pupa, chrysalis, larvae, adult, metamorphosis that help explain the life cycle. The pictures support the text that explains the life cycle. The teacher continues this dialogue with the students as he or she continues the text feature walk.

When the text feature walk is done the teacher reads *From Caterpillar to Butterfly: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade, 2008, pp. 8-17) aloud to the students. The teacher says, “We are going to read this book and also take notes on a study sheet that will help us understand how an author writes in sequential text”. As the teacher reads the book he or she takes notes and records the text structure on a graphic organizer showing this on the overhead or on the writing easel. This text structure is shown on a graphic organizer making visible the text structure to the students. The student can refer to this as a model later as they write sequential text. The author has done a good job in showing the life cycle of a butterfly by using signal words in their writing. The teacher can use think-aloud to model recording the text structure on the graphic organizer on the note sheet. The text structure examples can also be recorded on chart paper for children to refer to later. The graphic organizer is a visual representation of the writing, contains key vocabulary, and signal words.

The signal words we watch for as we read text and record them on the note sheet with the graphic organizer. Signal words make it easier for the reader to comprehend what the author is describing and the order of events. As the teacher reads he or she lists some of these signal words on the Student Book Study Sheet. For example, signal words
the author uses are: begins, soon, when, first, next, after, first, next, then, once, during, and some phrases that explain time process like four to six days, one hour, and two weeks.

Following is an example of how text structure could be shown on the graphic organizer.

• Butterflies go through four stages during their life.

• A butterfly begins its life as a tiny egg. This is the first stage in its life cycle.

• Soon a tiny larva begins to grow inside the egg.
• A larva hatches from a monarch egg in four to six days.

• It begins to munch on milkweeds and grows for about two weeks.

• First the caterpillar attaches one of its ends to a milkweed leaf.

• Next the caterpillars outer skin breaks open.

• The pupa begins to come out and enters a chrysalis.

• Once inside the chrysalis a butterfly begins to form.
A simpler form of the text could be recorded by children on their graphic organizer.

Closing: The teacher thanks the children for their attention and reminds the children the purpose for sequential text and the structure of this text that was read. The teacher tells the children that the next session he or she will model or demonstrate how to plan for writing about a topic in sequential text.

Lesson 1:1 Planning Writing

Objective: The students will observe the teacher model the planning part of the writing process in choosing a topic to describe and reviewing the book study on this topic to guide writing in sequence.
Materials: Writing easel, document camera, markers, notes, and graphic organizer from lesson 1:0 which lists signal words. This lesson takes about twenty minutes.

Lesson Note: The topic selected, how does nectar become honey, is one that the teacher has knowledge of and will be able to plan for in writing sequential text.

Lesson: The teacher meets with the children together at the writing easel. The last time we were together children we studied a book, took notes, showed the text structure of the book in a graphic organizer, and listed signal words. Now today I am going to develop a plan for writing. I am going to start with a topic I like and want to inform you about: How does nectar become honey? Does anybody know? I have read a little about this and have learned how this is so. The teacher then uses think aloud to help write down notes for a plan, shows the sequence for the process of nectar becoming honey in a graphic organizer, and lists signal words to use, for example, first, next, then, after that, finally.
Closing: The teacher thanks the children for their attention as the teacher planned for writing and reminds the children the purpose for sequential text.

Lesson 1:2 Compose Text

Objective: The children will observe the teacher as he or she models part of the writing process on how to compose text following the plan for writing from lesson 1:1.

Materials: Writing easel, markers, planning for writing from lesson 1:1. This lesson takes twenty minutes.

Lesson Note: The teacher models the writing process in sequential text using think aloud. The teacher models for the students how they would write sequential text referring to the things that were learned in lesson 1:0 the book study and refers to the writing plan from lesson 1:1.

Lesson: The teacher welcomes children to writing. The teacher reviews with the children why authors use sequential text and what the teacher modeled and worked on in the last writing session for them.

The teacher has the children meet at the writing easel. The teacher explains that he or she is working on writing in sequence. The teacher tells the children, “I am going to write for you on the topic: How honey is made from nectar. An author uses this writing to inform readers about a topic that takes place in a specific order. I look at my planning in form of notes and the graphic organizer that I did yesterday.” The teacher uses think aloud to show how he or she begins writing and makes it clear that this writing is a draft:
This text follows the writing plan from lesson 1:1 with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence but needs signal words and some revision which
will be completed in the next lesson 1:3.

Closing: The teacher reviews with the students that he or she was drafting sequential text according to the planning in the previous lesson. The teacher reviews the writing process, what sequential writing is, and the author’s purpose for writing in sequential text. The teacher thanks the children for their attention.

Lesson 1:3 Revise and Edit Text

Objective: The student will observe the teacher modeling to the student part of the writing process called revision and editing. The student will also observe the teacher referring to notes, the graphic organizer, and signal words the author used in to revise and edit the composition from the previous lesson.

Materials: The plan for writing from the previous lesson, the composition from lesson 1:2, and the writing easel. This lesson takes about twenty minutes.

Lesson Note: The teacher models for the children how to revise and edit previously written text. The teacher uses think-a-loud to help accomplish the task of making revisions, adding signal words as modeled by the authors, and editing of a composition visible to children.

Lesson: The teacher reviews with children the writing process and tells the children that he or she is working on the revising and editing stage of the writing process. The teacher explains that revising and editing makes the text clearer to the reader.

The teacher may say to the children, “I did the writing for you yesterday on how nectar becomes honey (show writing on chart). Now today I am going to revise my writing to make it better, the writing clearer, add signal words we have found author’s
use when they write, and then edit this writing. Revise means I am going to change and improve my writing. Part of revision is I want to be sure I used signal words that real authors use to help in my presentation of informing or describing using text that shows sequence or order. One thing we noticed in the author’s text is they used signal words to help readers understand the sequence for what they are describing. Let’s look at the signal words that I wrote down from our previous lesson.

The teacher continues with the lesson on revision of text and editing. The teacher tells the children, “I am going to check on good sentence structure. I am going to make sure that every sentence has a subject and a verb. Edit means I am also going to make sure I have capitals at the beginning of sentences, periods at the end of sentences, and the spelling is good. I like to think that editing is like polishing. I am going to polish my text to make sure it presents information about my topic clearly.”

The finished text could look like this: How is honey made from nectar? First honeybees drink nectar from a flower using their proboscis. Then they store this nectar in their honey stomach and fly back to the hive. Next they store the nectar in the honeycomb cells. After that bees fan the nectar and evaporate the water. Finally, the nectar is thick sweet honey. And last the honeybees seal off the honey cell with wax. That is how honeybees make honey from nectar.

Closing: The teacher reviews with the students the writing process and the stage he or she was modeling. The teacher reviews with the students what writing in sequence is and the author’s purpose for sequence writing. The teacher thanks the children for their attention.
Lesson 2:0 Book Study

Objective: The student will study and listen to the teacher as he or she uses think aloud to study and read the book *A Trip to the Emergency Room* (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2011). This book is informational text and uses a sequential text structure. Children sit at their desk while listening to the teacher read and take notes on this text using a Student Book Study Sheet (see Appendix D). Children will listen to the teacher explain and show how an author writes in sequential text, uses signal words, and look at other non-textual features an author uses to support the text, (e.g., pictures and headings). The teacher could use a document camera and an overhead to share and model the book. The teacher will also fill in a Student Book Study Sheet using a document camera to support children as they write in theirs. Keep in mind the goal of the Read-to-Write Strategy is to study authors who write exemplary sequential text and children will emulate the writing of these authors in writing their own sequential text.


Lesson Note: The teacher will model and show what they are thinking in a think aloud process as they do a book study. The teacher will use a graphic organizer to show how the author organized the text and used signal words to help present information on sequence text. (This book study will help children become familiar with an exemplary author’s work in sequential text which shows order, text features, and non-text features (e.g., the index, glossary, table of contents, and pictures). This book study can be done
with the teacher using a document camera, overhead, and a copy of the text, while the students follow along filling out the Student Book Study Sheet. These are the steps for the book study:

1. The teacher holds up the sequential text *A Trip to the Emergency Room* (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2011) and reads the title aloud to students to determine the topic (what the text is about) of the text. The teacher uses think aloud throughout the book study to model their thinking, for example the teacher may ponder aloud what the title means.

2. Teacher scans the text with the children noting pictures to determine what the text might be about.

3. Teacher reads the text with the children and notes where the author has written text using a sequence text structure.

4. Next, the teacher asks the question about the sequence presented in the text. What are the different phases or steps that a person would go through when they visit the emergency room?

5. Using the Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet, students and teacher fill in the information and the steps presented in the sequential text. (e.g., First a person checks in with the emergency room admissions worker. Next the nurse finds out what is wrong, etc.)

6. The teacher explains common signal words used by the author to indicate a sequence or process for when a person goes to the emergency room. This text structure has been used to organize information (e.g.: first, next, then, after that, finally, etc.). The teacher and students review the text to determine what signal words are used by the author and writes these down in the book study.

7. The teacher and the students examine the pictures to determine how sequence is presented in these and how the pictures support the text.

8. Allow time for students to share the information they learned with each other.

**Lesson:** The teacher welcomes children to writing and thanks them for their hard work in writing. The teacher has selected an article where the author has used sequential text to describe a topic using sequence of events, a process, or order of events. The teacher explains to the children he or she wants to show children a book where the
author’s purpose is to inform you about a topic and describes this topic using text, pictures, and other features like the title and chapter headings. The author writes in sequential text. Sequential text means the author is informing their reader about a topic using sequence or order of events. The teacher explains that in the article *A Trip to the Emergency Room* (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2011) they are going to see how the author writes so their example of writing can help us write our own sequential text. We are learning to write sequential text because one day we will want to inform our readers about a topic we describe in sequential text. The teacher passes out a Student Book Study Sheet to each child.

The teacher reads the title and asks questions and discusses with children possible answers: Can you tell what the author is going to describe? It will be about what happens in an emergency room. We will look at the text to see. The next step in the lesson is to take a text feature walk. Text features are all the components of the book or article that are not the main text. A text feature walk is like a picture walk while looking over the structure of the book. Text features for this text include headings and pictures. The teacher shows and explains to the children how the text features support what the author is trying to describe in his or her text. The teacher will show students the sequence in the text while the teacher uses think aloud to note this text structure and how it supports the topic of what happens to people when they visit an emergency room. An author has a purpose for writing and the way they write helps support that purpose.

The teacher turns the pages and asks questions about text structure and text features. Do you notice that these words in bold and bigger print? Why do you think?
Why does the author do this? The pictures and headings coincide with the print. The students will notice there is a picture that coincides with the text for each part of the sequence or process of a visit to the emergency room.

When the text feature walk is done the teacher reads *A Trip to the Emergency Room* (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2011) aloud to the students. “We are going to read this article and also take notes that will help us understand how an author writes in sequential text.” As the teacher reads the book he or she takes notes and records the text structure on a graphic organizer. This text structure is shown on a graphic organizer making visible the text structure to the students. The students can refer to this later as they write sequential text. The text structure we are looking for is sentences showing sequence of events. The teacher can use think-aloud to model recording the text structure. The graphic organizer is a visual representation of the writing, contains key vocabulary, and signal words found in the text.

- **Topic Sentence**  
  - What happens to patients when they need to visit the emergency room?

- **First sentence**  
  - Admissions checks the patient in.

- **Second sentence**  
  - A nurse checks to see what is the patient’s emergency.
The author uses signal words like first, next, then, and last. The author uses text, pictures, and signal words to help show sequence.

Closing: The teacher thanks the children for their attention and reminds the children the purpose for sequential text and the structure of this text. The teacher also reiterates how text structure supports what topic the author is describing. The teacher thanks the children for their attention.

Lesson 2:1 Planning Writing

Objective: The students will collaborate with the teacher in the planning part of the writing process in writing on a topic the teacher has picked and that students and teacher have prior knowledge of. The topic is to describe the life cycle of the butterfly.

Materials: Examples of the book study with notes, Graphic Organizer and Note Sheets on those readings, planning and writing by the teacher from lessons 1:0-1:3, 2:0 in

- An orderly takes the patient to the parts of the hospital where the patient gets help.
- The doctor makes a diagnosis and prescribes treatment for the patient.
- That is what happens to the patients at the emergency room.
sequence text, the writing easel, and markers for writing.

Lesson Note: The next step in the Read-to-Write Strategy lessons is for the teacher and the student to share the responsibility of planning, writing, and revision. Although the teacher and the student are collaborating on the writing, the teacher should have the topic picked and that topic is the life cycle of the butterfly. First graders are taught about life cycles and do some reading about the butterfly life cycle at the end of first grade. So all the children have prior knowledge of life cycles and the butterfly life cycle. Also lesson 1:0 was a book study on the life cycle of the butterfly.

Lesson: The teacher reviews with the children why authors use sequential text. The teacher tells the children, “In our last writing sessions you watched as I modeled planning for writing, composed according to the plan, and then revised and edited my composition. Over the next few days we are going to do some writing together.” The teacher has children come back to the writing easel as they plan for writing about the topic Life Cycle of a Butterfly. The teacher could use the chrysalis picture to help show the plan for writing in a graphic organizer laid out like the graphic organizer.
The Student Book Study Sheet has a graphic organizer and is a visual representation of the writing. It also contains key vocabulary (e.g., constrictors), text notes, and signal words. The teacher reviews with the student the book and the book study as they plan for writing.

Closing: The teacher thanks the children for their attention and help in planning for writing and reminds the children the purpose of sequential text. It informs the reader about a topic in a specific order.

Lesson 2:2 Compose Text

Objective: The student will collaborate with the teacher as they compose text according to notes and the planning in lesson 2:1.

Materials: The plan for writing from lesson 2:1, overhead, graphic organizer, and a writing easel.
Lesson note: Students and teacher collaborate and compose text according to the plan in lesson 2:1. The teacher is releasing responsibility for writing gradually to the student. The teacher needs to guide them in their writing and partner with the students. Children will get more responsibility for writing in the next phases of the Read-to-Write Strategy.

Lesson: The teacher begins by reviewing with the students the reason authors use sequential text. The teacher says, “Today we are going to work on the composing part of the writing process. We are going to use our notes from the planning we did in our last writing session and refer to our notes from the graphic organizer.”

The sentences the teacher and student collaborate on with signal words embedded into the graphic organizer are shown on the chart below to give suggestions for the teacher as he or she guides the students.

- **How does a caterpillar become a butterfly?**
- **An egg is laid by a butterfly and hatches as a caterpillar.**
- **The caterpillar grows.**
The teacher has children think of sentences but guides the work and helps children do the writing on the chart. This release of responsibility gets tricky. The teacher should give the students as much support as they need to be successful. The teacher and children write while following the plan that children and teacher collaborated on and put together in lesson 2:1. The teacher with the children could collaborate and write the topic sentence, then supporting sentences, and finally a concluding sentence. This could be an example of the collaborative work (keep in mind that this is a draft): The life cycle of a butterfly begins with the egg laid by a butterfly. Then the egg hatches as a caterpillar. Next the caterpillar eats and grows. After that the caterpillar enters a chrysalis. While in the chrysalis the caterpillar transforms into a butterfly. Finally, a butterfly emerges from the chrysalis.

This text follows the writing plan from lesson 2:1 with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence but needs signal words and some
revision which will be completed in lesson 2:3.

Closing: The teacher finishes the lesson by reviewing with the students the writing process and the stage and phase in writing the children and teacher just collaborated on—composing. Thank the children for their good writing.

Lesson 2:3 Revise and Edit Text

Objective: The student will collaborate with the teacher as they revise and edit the text generated in lesson 2:2. The teacher and students will refer to the writing plan and use signal words like the authors we have studied (e.g., lesson 2:0) have used in helping present their topic in sequence text. The teacher and students will also edit the text to make sure sentences begin with capitals, end with proper punctuation, and spelling errors searched for and fixed.

Materials: The plan for writing from lesson 2:1, the text generated in lesson 2:2, examples of writing and planning to refer to, and signal words from past lessons involving book studies (e.g., lesson 2:0).

Lesson note: In our last session 2:2 the teacher and students collaborated in their writing and generated text according to the writing plan that was developed in lesson 2:1. This session is about students revising, using signal words, and editing.

Lesson: The teacher reviews with the student the reasons authors use sequential text. The teacher could say to their students, “Now that we finished composing our rough draft, we are looking at the final phase of our writing—revision and editing. Revise means we are going to improve on our writing and make our description of our topic in sequential text more clear to our readers. Part of revision is we want to use signal words
real authors use when they write to help in our presentation of sequence text. One thing authors do is use transition words or signal words to help us understand what they are describing. Let’s look at the signal words that we wrote down from previous lessons of book studies”. The teacher should use think-aloud and dialogue with the children to show that he or she is searching for ways to improve their writing. The teacher shows signal words we have recorded from the book study on the chart and previous book studies. The teacher will discuss with children how to use signal words in writing and will show how the teacher modeled signal words that authors used in the previous lesson. For example, the text we composed in lesson 2:2 could now be written after using signal words in this way: The life cycle of a butterfly begins with the egg laid by a butterfly. Then the egg hatches as a caterpillar. Next the caterpillar eats and grows. After that the caterpillar enters a chrysalis. While in the chrysalis the caterpillar transforms into a butterfly. Finally, a butterfly emerges from the chrysalis. That is the life cycle of a butterfly. The teacher continues this revision of text and editing with collaboration from children.

The teacher explains that editing means we are going to make sure we have capitals at the beginning of sentences, periods at the end of sentences, check for spelling errors, and we are going to check on good sentence structure. We are using signal words to help show order. If there is time in any of the writing sessions the children could be drawing pictures that coincide with the butterfly’s life cycle. These also could be shared if there is time.

Closing: Finish the lesson with reviewing with the students the writing process and the stage or phase in writing, revision and editing, that teacher and children just
worked on together. Thank the children for their work on revision and editing.

**Lesson 3:0 Book Study**

*Objective:* The teacher will conduct a book study and students will listen to the teacher as he or she uses think aloud to study and read the book *From Tadpole to Frog: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade, 2009). This book is informational text and uses a sequential text structure. Children could sit at their desk while listening to the teacher study and read the book. While they are observing and listening they could take notes with the teacher on the text using a Student Book Study Sheet.

Children will listen to the teacher explain and show how an author writes in sequential text, uses signal words, and look at other non-textual features an author uses to support the text, (e.g., pictures and diagrams). The teacher could use a document camera and an overhead to share and model the book. The teacher will also fill in a Student Book Study Sheet to support children as they fill their own in. Keep in mind the goal of the *Read-to-Write Strategy* is to study authors who write exemplary sequential text and children will emulate these models in writing their own sequential text.

*Materials:* The book *From Tadpole to Frog: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade, 2009), Student Book Study Sheet, overhead, document camera, and or a writing easel.

*Lesson Note:* The teacher will model and show what they are thinking in a think aloud process as they do a book study. The teacher will use a graphic organizer to show how the author organized the text and used signal words to help present information on sequence text. This lesson in book study will be taught more than once in order to help children become familiar with sequential text which shows order, text features, and non-
text features (e.g., the index, glossary, table of contents, and pictures). This book study can be done with the teacher using a document camera, overhead, and a copy of the text, while the students follow along filling out the Student Book Study Sheet (Appendix D).

These are the steps for the book study:

1. The teacher holds up the book *From Tadpole to Frog: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade, 2009) and reads the title aloud to students to determine the topic (what the text is about) of the text. The teacher uses think aloud throughout the book study to model their thinking, for example the teacher may ponder aloud what the title means.

2. Teacher scans the book with the children and reads the table of contents to determine what the text might be about. The teacher also notes the index and the glossary as well as diagrams and pictures.

3. Teacher reads the book pp.8-22 where the author has written text using a sequence text structure.

4. Next, the teacher asks the question about the sequence presented in the text. What are the different phases or steps in the life cycle of the Wood Frog?

5. Using the Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet, students and teacher fill in the information and the steps presented in the sequence text. (e.g., First frog eggs are laid. Second the tadpole hatches from the egg, etc.)

6. The teacher explains common signal words used by the author to indicate a sequence text structure has been used to organize information (Examples: Starts, then, first, next, finally, after, before, etc.). The teacher and students review the book to determine what signal words are used by the author and writes these down in the book study.

7. The teacher and the students examine the pictures to determine how sequence

8. Allow time for students to share the information they learned with each other.

*Lesson:* The teacher welcomes children to writing and thanks them for their attention and their hard work in writing. The teacher has selected a piece where the author has used sequential text to describe a topic using sequence of events or order of events. The teacher explains to the children he or she wants to show children text where
the author’s purpose is to inform you about a topic and describes this topic using text, pictures, and other features like the title and chapter headings. The author writes in what is called sequential text. Sequential text means the author is informing their reader about a topic that happens or is done in a sequence or order. The teacher explains that in the text *From Tadpole to Frog: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade, 2009) they are going to observe how the author writes so her example of writing can help us write our own sequential text. We are learning to write sequential text because one day we will want to inform our readers about a topic we describe in sequential text. The teacher passes out a Student Book Study Sheet to each child.

The teacher reads the title and asks questions and discusses with children possible answers: Can you tell what the author is going to describe? It will be about frogs and tadpoles. We will look through the article to see. The next step in the lesson is to take a text feature walk. Text features are all the components of the book or article that are not the main text. A text feature walk is like a picture walk while looking over the structure of the book. Text features may include the table of contents, headings, bold words, sidebars, pictures and captions, diagrams, glossary, and index. The author also uses signal words that show sequence or order. The teacher shows and explains to the children how the text features support what the author is trying to describe in his or her text. The teacher will show students the sequence in the text while the teacher uses think aloud to note this text structure and how it supports the topic emergency room. An author has a purpose for writing and the way they write helps support that purpose.

When the text feature walk is done the teacher reads *From Tadpole to Frog:*
Following the Life Cycle (Slade, 2009) aloud to the students. We are going to read this text and also take notes that will help us understand how an author writes in sequential text. As the teacher reads the text he or she takes notes and records the text structure on The Student Book Study Sheet. This text structure is shown on a graphic organizer making visible the text structure to the students. The student can refer to this later as they write their own sequential text. The text structure we are looking for is sentences showing sequence of events. The teacher can use think-aloud to model recording the text structure. The graphic organizer is a visual representation of the writing, contains key vocabulary, and signal words. The author uses many signal words, for example: begins, later, starts, then, becomes, which, begins again, after, first, next, finally, once, in early spring, March or April, and two weeks to help show sequence. The author uses pictures to support the sequential text. The following graphic organizer shows children sequential text and signal words the author used in their writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A wood frog goes through many changes during its life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It (frog) starts out as a tiny egg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• After about two weeks, a tadpole hatches from the egg.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• First, a tadpole grows back legs.

• Next, a tadpole grows lungs and loses its gills.

• Finally, front legs begin to appear.

• Once a tadpole has all four legs its tail begins to shrink.

• Once the froglets tail disappears metamorphosis is complete.

• After females lay eggs in the pond, and new frog life cycles begin.

_Closing_: The teacher thanks the children for their attention and reminds the children the purpose for sequential text and the structure of this text. The teacher also reviews with the students signal words, life cycle and sequential text, supports what topic
the author is describing. The teacher thanks the children for their attention.

Lesson 3:1 Planning Writing

Objective: The student will collaborate with a peer (teacher assigns children as partners) in the planning part of the writing process in writing about the topic and filling in a graphic organizer to help plan for writing in sequence text: The topic: How do you make a snowman?

Materials: Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet (Appendix F) for each student, examples of writing and planning from our past lessons to refer to, writing easel, Teacher Student Conference Sheet, and a portable file for storing and keeping children’s writing safe.

Lesson note: Children collaborate with their partner and use their book study and plan for writing on their graphic organizer to help with composing.

Lesson: The teacher reviews with the children author’s purpose for sequence text and the writing process. The teacher explains in our last writing sessions students and teacher collaborated in planning, writing, revising and editing their writing together about the frog’s life cycle.

Students are now going to write collaboratively with their peers. Students work together on their topic of how to make a snowman to write in sequential text. Students are given support by their peers and by their teacher with more emphasis put on relying on their peers for support in working through the writing process and generating sequence text. The teacher conferences with collaborative pairs of writers and checks on their progress. The teacher can use the Teacher Student Conference Sheet for these
conferences (which is shown in lesson 3:2). The teacher needs to provide support for scaffolding and not give too much help or not enough support and allow children to support one another.

The teacher reminds the children, “Remember when we worked together on some writing? We planned for writing, took notes and recorded this on a graphic organizer. Next we composed, wrote, according to our planning. Then we revised and edited our work. Now is the time that you are going to do some planning and writing together in collaborative partners. For this writing session you are going to follow our process for writing by planning for writing on the topic of how to make a snowman, writing according to the plan, then revising and editing the work. The teacher conferences with collaborative partners to help them plan to write to the topic assigned.

The plan could look something like this with a snowman taking the place of the hexagon shapes for the graphic organizer. There is also an example of a sequence of events that children may plan and draft in the following graphic organizer.
Sharing: Have a partnership, or two, share what they did to plan for writing. The overhead camera would be useful in showing the children’s plans, notes, using the Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet. This would be a good time for children to voice support and give suggestions for writing. This would also be a good time to have children who are having trouble with this phase of writing to vocalize their difficulties to their peers and garner help from them.

Closing: Finish the lesson by reviewing with the students the stage or phase in writing they just worked on (i.e., planning stage). Thank the children for their hard work in writing today, specifically their planning for writing.

Lesson 3:2 Compose Text

Objective: The student will collaborate with their peer as they each compose sequential text according to the plans they devised in lesson 3:1.
**Materials:** The notes and graphic organizers children worked on for their plan for writing from lesson 3:1, examples of writing and planning from previous lessons to refer to, Teacher Student Conference Sheet (see Appendix D), and a portable file for keeping children’s writing safe.

**Lesson note:** The teacher conferences and supports collaborative partners to help and guide them in their writing according to their planning in lesson 3:1.

**Lesson:** The teacher reviews with children the reason why authors write in sequence text. The teacher reviews past writing lessons e.g., sharing, planning, compositions, revision, and editing. The teacher explains to children, “In our last writing session you collaborated with a partner as you planned to write on the topic of how to build a snowman. Today you and your writing partner are going to collaborate and compose text according to your plan you constructed in the previous lesson.”

The teacher circulates among the children and conferences with the collaborating pairs of writers to see how they are doing and what assistance is needed. This is the time to praise their work and encourage them to build on what they have. The teacher uses the Teacher Student Conference Sheet to help keep track of children’s writing. This could be an example of the text collaborative pairs come up with in drafting. This is how you build a snowman. Make three balls of snow. Stack these balls of snow with the largest one on the bottom and the smallest on top. Put a carrot in the top ball and this is the nose. Use buttons for eye and put a scarf around the neck of the snowman. Use sticks for arms. Have the snowman hold a broom. This is how you build a snowman. This draft will later be revised, signal words inserted, and edited.
Sharing: The teacher has a partnership, or two, share what writing they did and how their plan helped them with writing. The overhead camera would be useful in showing the children’s plans and composition. This would also be a good time for children to voice support and give suggestions for further writing. Children that are having trouble writing should be encouraged to explain what they are having trouble with and seek help from their peers in this sharing atmosphere.

Closing: The teacher finishes the lesson by reviewing with the students the stage or phase in writing (i.e., composing) they just worked on. Thank the children for their hard work in composing sequential text.

Lesson 3:3 Revise and Edit Text

Objective: The student will collaborate with their partner as they revise, insert signal words, and edit their sequential text they wrote in the previous writing session. The students will use the Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet as their guide.

Materials: The plan for writing from lesson 3:1, the text composed in lesson 3:2, examples of writing and planning to refer to, previous book studies, and a portable file for children’s writing.

Lesson note: Children may need help revising their text and using signal words. The teacher should encourage students to use their Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet to guide their revision. On this note sheet will be signal words the author used in the book study from session 3:0.

Lesson: The teacher reviews with the children reasons authors write in sequence text and the writing process of planning, composing, revision, and editing. The teacher
tells the children, “Today you and your partner are going to revise and edit your sequence text that you and your partner composed in our last writing session. One of your goals is to add signal words you wrote in your planning which is recorded on your Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet from lesson 3:1. Please follow your checklist for the writing process on that plan. The teacher circulates around the room and conferences with individuals and checks on their progress offering encouragement and support.

Sharing: Have a partnership or two share what they did for revision and editing on their descriptive text. The overhead camera would be useful in showing the children’s plans, composition, revision work, and editing. This would also be a good time for children to voice support and give suggestions for further writing. This would also be a good time for children struggling to get support and ideas for their writing.

Closing: Finish the lesson by reviewing with the students the writing process and the stage or phase in writing (i.e., revision and editing) they just worked on. Thank the children for their hard work in revising and editing.

Lesson 3:4 Share Writing

Objective: The object of this writing time is to finish conferencing with the different children writing teams and allowing all children an opportunity to share their writing. This is a good time for children to voice support and give suggestions for further writing. This would also be a good time for children struggling to get support for their writing this way. This is also a good time to praise and review concepts that come up as children share their work like the use of signal words.
Lesson 4:0 Book Study Reviews

Objective: The teacher will review with the students the book studies (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2011; Slade 2008; Slade, 2009) from lessons 1:0, 2:0, and 3:0.

Materials: The books *A Trip to the Emergency Room* (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2011; *From Tadpole to Frog: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade, 2009); *From Caterpillar to Butterfly: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade 2008) and the graphic organizers of the book studies.

Lesson Note: The teacher will use the previous graphic organizers to show how the author organized the text and used signal words to help present information on sequential text.

Lesson: The teacher welcomes children to writing and thanks them for their hard work. The teacher reviews with the children the book studies using the following steps:

1. The teacher holds up the books *A Trip to the Emergency Room* (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2011; *From Tadpole to Frog: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade, 2009); *From Caterpillar to Butterfly: Following the Life Cycle* (Slade 2008) *From Grass to Milk* (Taus-Polstad, 2004) and with each book reminds students how they were able to determine the topic (what the text is about) of the text from the title.

2. Teacher reminds the children how the table of contents helps determine what the text might be about. The teacher also reminds students about the index and the glossary as well as diagrams and pictures are able to help determine what the text is about.

3. The teacher and students review their previous work in the Graphic Organizer and Note Sheets, to see examples of text and signal words from the books studied.

4. The teacher explains common signal words used by the authors to indicate a sequence text structure has been used to organize information, for example words first, next, then, finally, and other examples from the books are written on the graphic organizers. The teacher and students review the graphic organizers to look at how the text was written to show and what signal words
are used by the authors.

5. The teacher and the students reexamine the pictures of the books to determine how sequence is presented in these and how the pictures support the text.

6. Allow time for students to share the information they have learned with each other and how they might write sequential text on the next topic they are writing about.

Closing: The teacher thanks the children for their attention. The teacher reminds the children the purpose for sequential text and the structure of this text is to show a specific order of events. The teacher reviews the purpose for signal words and how it supports text structure.

Lesson 4:1 Planning Writing

Objective: The student will plan for writing about the topic on how to get ready for bed by filling in a graphic organizer to help plan for their writing in sequential text:

The topic: How do you get ready for bed?

Materials: Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet (see Appendix E) for each student, Teacher Student Conference Sheet (see Appendix D), examples of student planning and writing work from previous lessons, book studies, overhead, document camera, and a portable file for storing and keeping children’s writing safe.

Lesson note: Students will be involved in writing independently about a topic to describe in sequential text. They will use a graphic organizer as a plan for writing, write notes on the topic, and list signal words authors have used in texts previously studied to use for their own writing. The teacher will support the children in their work of taking notes regarding the topic and filling out a graphic organizer.

Lesson: The teacher reviews with the children the last writing sessions they
collaborated with a partner where they planned, composed, revised, added signal words, and edited their sequential text.

Students are now going to write independently and work through the writing process successfully. Students work individually on the topic to write in sequential text. Students are given support by their peers and by their teacher. The teacher conferences with individuals and checks on their progress and keeps track of their progress using a Teacher Student Conference Sheet. The teacher needs to provide support for independent writing, scaffolding, and not give too much or too little support. In this stage of writing it may take several sessions to help each child attain their goal to write sequential text independently. These are the last steps to get children to the point where they can write sequential text independently with as little support as the student needs to be successful in their writing task. The teacher will need to gauge how much support each student needs to be successful in writing their own text.

The teacher tells the children, “Our goal today is to plan for writing on the topic: How do you get ready for bed? I will give you a paper we have used before that has a place for notes, signal words, and a graphic organizer to help you plan your writing. I call it the Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet. This paper also has a checklist for guiding you through the writing process”.

The teacher has children write and also keeps track of where students are in the writing process using a Teacher Student Conference Sheet.

Sharing: Have a child or two share what they did to plan for writing on their topic. The overhead camera would be useful in showing the children’s plans, notes, and
graphic organizer. This would also be a good time for children to voice support and give suggestions for writing. The writers that may struggle could get support from their more capable peers.

Closing: The teacher finishes the lesson by reviewing with the children the stage or phase in the writing process they just worked on (i.e., planning). The teacher reviews with children the author’s purpose for writing sequence text. Thank the children for their work in planning for writing and using the graphic organizer.

Lesson 4:2 Compose Text

Objective: The student will write sequential text independently as they compose according to the plan they devised in lesson 4:1 and will refer to their notes and graphic organizer from lesson 4:1 as they write.

Materials: Planning for writing in the form Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet from lesson 4:1, examples of student work from lessons 3:1, 3:2, and 3:3, examples of writing and planning to refer to from previous lessons should be displayed, overhead, document camera, and a portable file for children’s writing.

Lesson note: The teacher is actively moving about the room and going to children and conferencing with them as they write. The teacher should check their notes on the topic, graphic organizer, and signal words they may be using in their writing.

Lesson: The teacher reviews with children the reason an author uses sequential text. The teacher reminds children in their last writing session they planned for writing on the topic how to get ready for bed by taking notes, filling in a graphic organizer, and writing down signal words to help with their composition. The teacher tells the children,
“Your goal today is for each of you to compose text according to your plans and graphic organizers you worked on.” The teacher needs to circulate and conference with the children as they write and see how they are doing and what assistance may be needed. The teacher will use the Teacher Student Conference Sheet. This is the time to praise their work and encourage them to build on what they have. Each child should have their plan they devised in lesson 4:1 out and visible so the teacher is able to support them as they compose text. This could be an example of some writing children may do: This is what I do to get ready for bed. First I take a bath. Then I brush my teeth. Next I get dressed in my pajamas. Finally, I get into bed and then Mom reads to me. Lastly I say my prayers. That is how I get ready for bed. If signal words are not added, then in lesson 4:3 when children are revising these could be inserted.

**Sharing:** Have a child or two share what they did as they wrote according to their plan for writing. The overhead camera is useful in showing the children’s plans and composition. This is a good time to praise when children share their writing and are using the elements we saw authors use. This would also be a good time for children to voice support and give suggestions for writing. This is also a good time to have children who are struggling with composing text to garner suggestions, support, and scaffolding for their writing.

**Closing:** The teacher finishes the lesson by reviewing with the children the writing process and the stage or phase in writing they just worked on (i.e., composition). Review the purpose for sequence text and how signal words support this text. Thank the children for working hard in composing text.
Lesson 4:3 Revise and Edit Text

Objective: The student will revise and edit their sequential text they composed in the last writing session 4:2. Revision will also include adding signal words. Children will edit sentences which will include putting capitals at the beginning of each sentence, punctuating the endings of each sentence, and spelling errors searched for and fixed.

Materials: The student’s plan for writing (i.e., Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet) from lesson 4:1, the student’s composition from lesson 4:2, examples of writing and planning from previous lessons, and book study notes to refer to, and a portable file for children’s writing.

Lesson note: This writing session is about the student revising and editing their text that they drafted in session 4:2.

Lesson: The teacher reminds children in the last writing session that each of them composed sequential text according to the planning on the Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet they developed in lesson 4:1. The teacher explains to the students’ their goals are to revise text, add signal words, and edit their text that they composed in their last writing session. The children are to follow their checklist for the writing process on their planning sheet. The teacher circulates around the room and conferences with individuals and checks on their progress offering encouragement and support.

Sharing: Have a child or two share what revision and editing they did to their writing and the signal words they used. The overhead camera would be useful in showing the children’s plans, composition, revision work, and editing. This would also be a good time for children to voice support and give suggestions for revising, adding signal words,
and editing their writing to the children sharing. Show children’s good topic sentences and good endings to their writing. Share children’s use of sequential text and signal words. Children struggling with writing can also get help from their fellow writers at this time.

Closing: The teacher finishes the lesson by reviewing with the children the writing stage or phase in writing they just worked on (i.e., revise and edit). Review the author’s purpose for using sequential text and the purpose signal words serve. Thank the children for their hard work in writing, specifically revising and editing. Thank then also for sharing.

Lesson 4:4 Share Writing

Objective: The object of this writing session is to finish conferencing with the children and allowing all children an opportunity to share their writing. This is a good time for children to voice support and give suggestions for further writing. This would also be a good time for children struggling to get support for their writing this way. This is also a good time to review concepts that come up as children broach the subject.
**Post-Instruction Writing Prompt**

*Objective:* Children will be seated at their desks and write their own sequential text in response to one of the writing prompts that they didn’t write about in the pre-instruction writing sample: How do you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? How do you get ready for school?


*Note:* Children receive no support or instruction. We are looking to see if children can write sequential text using signal words, use capitals at the beginning of sentences, and punctuation at the end of sentences.

*Teacher:* The teacher welcomes the children and thanks them for their attention. The teacher tells the children that today they will be writing sequential text. Children are given fifteen minutes to write their text and if they finish early they may draw a picture of the process.

At the finish of this session the teacher thanks children for their writing then collects the planning sheets and writing papers students worked on. The teacher gives the post-instruction writing samples to the researcher for analyzing.
Appendix C

Student Book Study Sheet
Student Book Study Sheet

1. Write down the title of this book.

2. What do you think the topic of this book is? What will this book be mainly about? 
   (Try to answer this in one or two words).

3. What do you think the text structure of this book will be? Will it be fiction or non-fiction? Will this book tell a story or will it describe or inform the reader about a topic? Choose one word from each pair of words and circle your answers:
   a. fiction: nonfiction narrative text: informative text

4. What is a table of contents? Is there a Table of Contents in the front part of the book? Circle your answer: Yes No

5. What is an index? Is there an index in the back of the book? Circle your answer: Yes No

6. What is a glossary? Is there a glossary in the book? Circle your answer: Yes No

7. Look at the list of special words called signal words and circle signal words the author uses in the text: first, next, then, after that, later, finally, last. Other signal words or phrases: (e.g., one week later).

8. Why does an author use signal words?

9. Are there pictures or diagrams that help you to understand what the author has written about? Yes No
   a. Look at the diagram. What do they help you understand?

10. Please fill in the graphic organizer below with the teacher showing the topic and supporting sentences showing sequence the author used.
First

Next

Then

Last
Appendix D

Teacher Student Conference Sheet
Teacher Student Conference Sheet

Student Name: _______________________________________________________

Praise children for good work and thank them for their writing. Encourage them to work through this process. This sheet can be kept with the student’s writing in the writing folder and signed when completed.

Planning:

- Topic: __________________________________________
- Research and write down notes on topic.
- Graphic organizer filled in.

Composition:

- Begin with a topic sentence.
- Sentences that show sequence of events and support the topic.
- End with a concluding sentence.

Revision and editing:

- Signal words for sequence used i.e., first, next, then, after that, finally, last.
- Good sentences, i.e., subject and predicate.
- Spelling errors searched for and corrected.
- Capitals at the beginning of sentences.
- Proper punctuation at the end of sentences.

Student Signature_______________________________________
Appendix E

Graphic Organizer and Note Sheet
Fill in this chart with ideas for your own writing in sequential text.

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<th>Concluding sentence</th>
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Notes on Topic: What is the process (what are the steps) for the topic you are writing about?

Write down signal words you could use to help with sequential text: (Look at words authors use to help present information on the topic they describe, for example the word first is a signal word signifying an order).

Check list for writing process.

___ Your topic: ____________________________.
___ Plan your writing (use graphic organizer).
___ Write your text using sentences showing order of events.
___ Revise your writing.
___ Add signal words to the text like first, next, then, finally, last.
___ Begin text with a topic sentence and a concluding sentence.
___ Make sure each sentence begins with a capital letter.
___ Make sure each sentence ends with a period or other punctuation.
___ Check text over to see if you can fix spelling mistakes.

Thank you for your hard work!
Appendix F

Pre- and Post-Instruction Writing Topic
Pre- and Post-Instruction Writing Topic

Name: ______________________

Please write and tell me how you would make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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Thank you!
Name:_____________________

Please write and tell me how you would get ready for school.

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Thank you!
Appendix G

Sequential Text Data Spread Sheet
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<th>Post-Convention Punctuation</th>
<th>Pre-introductory sentence</th>
<th>Post-introductory sentence</th>
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Appendix H

Informed Consent
INFORMED CONSENT

A Written Discourse Analysis Study Examining the Use of the Read-to-Write Strategy for Teaching Second Graders to Write Sequential Text

Introduction/ Purpose Dr. Sarah Clark, in the Department of Teacher Education and Leadership at Utah State University, is conducting a research study to examine the use of explicit writing strategies to help students learn to write informational text more effectively. John Neal, a graduate student in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership, will be collecting data as part of the requirements to fulfill his dissertation. Your child has been asked to take part because he/she is a second grade student at an intermountain school and is in Mr. Smith’s classrooms. Mr. Smith will be teaching this writing strategy with Mr. Neal observing. There will be approximately 30 total participants in this research.

Procedures If you agree to let your child participate in this research project, your child will be asked to do the following:

- Your child will be asked to provide a writing sample of informational text before they participate in their regularly scheduled writing instruction. Informational text is often considered nonfiction text or anything that is not a story or narrative.
- During writing instruction, your child will be taught to write using the Read-to-Write Strategy instruction.
- Then, your child will submit a writing sample after instruction. We think that your child’s writing from the two writing samples will show an improvement in text structure, cue words, and an increase in word count.

Risks Participation in this research study may involve some added risks or discomforts. These include minimal discomfort as they attempt a new writing strategy. There is a small risk of loss of confidentiality but we will take steps to reduce the risk.

Benefits There may be a direct benefit to your child from participating in this study. Your child’s writing of informational text will most likely see improvement because of attention and instruction on this topic. The investigator may learn more about how to provide the most effective writing instruction for teaching writing strategies to young
students. Your child will also learn strategies for writing sequential texts that coincide with the English Language Arts CCSS. We will especially concentrate on writing in the area of sequential text writing, which this study will hope to show is beneficial to your child and their school career. You will most likely be able to see the results of their improved writing from samples of writing before the instruction and after the instruction using of the Read-to-Write Strategy.

**Explanation & offer to answer questions** This letter has explained this research study to you. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach Dr. Sarah Clark at (435) 797-0370 or sarah.clark@usu.edu.

**Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence** Your child’s participation in this research is entirely voluntary. To participate in this research study, it simply means that your child’s writing will be examined before and after the writing instruction to determine if there has been any influence on your child’s writing of sequential text. Your child’s writing samples (before and after the writing instruction) will be the data collected for this research study. You may refuse to have your child participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits or classroom time. Your child may also be withdrawn from this study without your consent by the investigator only if it is determined that no further information is needed. This simply means that your child’s writing will not be included in the research study, if it is not needed. All students, regardless of whether they are participants in the research study or not, will participate in the writing instruction. We need your permission, however, to use their writing in our study.

**Confidentiality** Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. To protect your child’s privacy, pseudonyms will be used. Only the investigator and the student researcher will have access to the data, which will be kept in a locked file cabinet and/or on a password-protected computer in a locked room at the school to maintain confidentiality. Identifying data will be maintained for three years from the end of data collection, and then destroyed.

**IRB Approval Statement** The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at Utah State University has approved this research study. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury and would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Director at (435) 797-0567 or irb@usu.edu to obtain information or to offer input.

**Copy of consent** You have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and keep one copy for your files.

**Investigator Statement** “I certify that the research study has been explained to the
individual, by me or the research staff, and that the individual understands the nature and purpose, the possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions that have been raised have been answered.”

_______________________________  _____________________________
Sarah Clark      John Neal
Principal Investigator     Student Researcher
435-797-0370      435-654-3418
sarah.clark@usu.edu     john.neal@wasatch.edu

**Signature of Parent** By signing below, I agree to allow my child to participate. I also allow the research team to access FERPA-protected educational records in the form of written assignments (pre- and post-instruction writing samples) used during the Read-to-Write Strategy instruction provided in their classroom. Only Dr. Sarah K. Clark and John Neal will have access to these writing samples. These writing samples will be destroyed three years from the end of data collection.

_______________________________ ______________________________
Parent or Guardian signature   Parent or Guardian Name (Printed)   Date

_______________________________ ______________________________
Name of Student     Relationship to Student

**Child/Youth Assent:** I understand that my parent(s) or guardian(s) are aware of this research study and that they have given permission for me to participate. I understand that it is up to me to participate even if they say yes. If I do not want to be in this study, I do not have to and no one will be upset if I don’t want to participate or if I change my mind later and want to stop. I can ask any questions that I have about this study now or later. By signing below, I agree to participate.

_______________________________  ______________________________
Name/signature      Date
Appendix I

Parental Permission to Display Student Work
Dear _______________________________,

Thank you for having your child participate in the recent research study conducted by Dr. Sarah Clark, from the Department of Teacher Education and Leadership at Utah State University. This research study was conducted to examine the use of explicit writing instruction strategies to help students learn to write informational text more effectively. Your child was a participant in this study.

John Neal, a graduate student in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership, is also involved in this study as he works toward publishing the dissertation based upon this study. Dr. Clark and John Neal are asking permission to include a picture of your student’s writing and display it in the dissertation. We appreciate your participation. Thank you.

To protect your child’s privacy, pseudonyms will be used to identify the work as it is displayed.

Please return the permission slip to your child’s teacher and the teacher will pass it on to Mr. Neal.

_____________________________ ______________________________
Name of Student     Relationship to Student
CURRICULUM VITAE

JOHN NEAL

CAREER OBJECTIVE

To obtain learning at a higher institution of learning that would enable me to become a better teacher and help parents, students, and colleagues by providing the best education for our constituency. Special areas of interest: literacy.

EDUCATION

BS in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Math, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana 59717. (8/85) GPA 3.0 (4.0 = A).

MEd in Elementary Education, Utah State University, Logan, Utah 84322. (5/03) GPA 3.9.

AS/C Program, Utah State University, Logan, Utah 84322. (8/06).

PhD in Education, Utah State University, Logan, Utah 84322. (5/17) GPA 3.89. Dissertation research conducted at an intermountain elementary school.

EXPERIENCE:

1st and 2nd grade teacher, Old Mill Elementary, Heber City, Utah, 2006-Present.


3rd and 5th grade teacher, Central Elementary, Heber City, Utah, 1988-1996.
