EFFECT OF THE 6+1 TRAIT WRITING MODEL ON STUDENT WRITING

ACHIEVEMENT

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Effect of the 6+1 Trait Writing Model on Student Writing Achievement

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Abstract

Nancy K. DeJarnette. EFFECT OF THE 6+1 TRAIT WRITING MODEL ON STUDENT WRITING ACHIEVEMENT. (Under the direction of Dr. Jill Jones) School of Education, November, 2008.

The focus of this study was to determine the difference between teaching the 6+1 Trait Writing Model to fifth graders and the traditional writing workshop method of teaching writing on overall student writing achievement according to the data supplied by a writing rubric. The study involved 8 classes of fifth graders in 2 different schools. One school provided instruction according to the 6+1 Trait Writing Model, and the other school provided instruction using the traditional writing workshop method of teaching writing. It was hypothesized that students receiving instruction using the 6+1 Trait Writing Model would exhibit greater gains in writing achievement and quality according to the data supplied by a writing rubric. Significant differences were found in two out of four component areas on the rubric used for scoring student papers. Results indicated that the type of method used to teach writing is not as significant as providing structured instruction as well as time for student writing. Suggestions for further research are also included.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Inconsistencies in instructional methods for teaching writing abound in elementary schools across the United States (Graham, MacArthur, & Fitzgerald, 2007). When elementary school schedules get filled with too many subjects, usually writing is the first content area to suffer from benign neglect. Finding quality writing instruction and time committed for writing instruction and practice are rare in elementary schools. Elementary schools often do not have a designated writing curriculum or a specific method mandated by the district. There can be inconsistencies within schools and even from teacher to teacher in the selection and implementation of writing instructional methods. Both veteran and beginning elementary teachers can feel inadequate when deciding how to teach writing to their students. In 2008, as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), most states have adopted demanding writing standards for grades K-12 (Graham et al.). Teachers are now required to teach writing but rarely are given instruction on how to do so effectively. The goal of this study was to look at specific ways in which to improve the overall quality of writing instruction for students.

The 6+1 Trait Writing Model is a writing strategy rather than a published curriculum. Other writing strategies include Four Square Writing and Writer's Workshop. Each educational publisher provides a specific writing curriculum and many of them incorporate the 6+1 Trait Writing Model. The 6+1 Trait Writing Model is included in Houghton Mifflin's *Write Source* and Maureen Auman's *Step Up to Writing* published by Cambium Learning Company. The 6+1 Trait Writing Model is not used in McGraw Hill's *Spotlight on Writing* nor Scott Foresman's *Grammar and Writing Handbook.*

This study focused on two specific instructional writing methods for fifth grade students. Both methods required process writing involving prewriting, drafting, editing, revision, and publishing. The 6+1 Traits Writing Model provided direct instruction on the craft of writing, or specific traits, the writing workshop method did not address. The goal of this study was to determine if teaching the individual traits would improve overall writing achievement. This researcher's experience with both writing methods skewed her expectations towards the benefits of the 6+1 Trait Method. She looked forward to analyzing the data supplied by the rubric to see how the results compared with research studies done by experts in the field of writing instruction. A review of the related literature revealed many such studies.

Background

Effective writing instruction involves more than a teacher asking students to take out a sheet of paper and write a story about a topic. Writing instruction has taken on new meaning in education over the past two decades or so. Before the 1990's, writing instruction meant something totally different than it does in 2008. Writing instruction previously referred to a child's personal handwriting skills or ability to copy information from a chalkboard. Since the emphasis of writing instruction has changed, many veteran and novice teachers do not have adequate skills to teach the craft of writing. School districts do not usually purchase a formal writing curriculum which leaves the choice of how to teach writing to each individual school or each teacher in the school. This weakness in instruction can harm schools' academic ratings now that writing is included in standardized testing in every state.

There are numerous instructional methods available and teachers may approach the same method in different ways, creating inconsistencies in the methodology for writing instruction in American elementary schools. This study researched two previously-tested writing instructional methods to see which method yielded greater student writing quality and achievement.

Nearly 20 years ago, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratories [NWREL] (2002) launched an effort to improve writing in the elementary classroom. This research identified six traits of good writing. These researchers knew that the writing programs in the American classrooms were not cutting edge. The goal was to develop a writing program that went beyond grammar and mechanics and holistic grading. NWREL states, "They compared reams of student work and discussed the qualities or traits that all 'good' writing samples shared. Six traits emerged as the cornerstones of quality writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Later, presentation was added to the list" (para.3).

The 6+1 Trait Writing Model is a method of teaching writing and assessing students' writing using the distinct vocabulary of a professional writer. The traditional writing workshop method of instruction focuses on sentence and paragraph structure, conventions, and organization, emphasizing a beginning, middle, and an end. The 6+1 Trait Writing Model adds emphasis on additional writing skills such as ideas, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and presentation. The traits introduce new writing vocabulary to students that will help give them a vision for what "good writing" looks and sounds like. This writing model has been shown to help students add depth and style to their writing that would not normally happen alone.

Statement of the Problem

What is the difference between the 6+1 Trait Writing Model and the traditional writing workshop method of teaching writing on fifth grade student overall writing achievement as measured by the use of a rubric?

1. Teaching students the individual traits of writing, such as voice, word choice, and sentence fluency highlights the craft of writing for children and will improve the quality of writing.

2. Demonstrating the 6+1 traits of writing for children using examples from literature will also improve the quality of students' writing.

Statement of the Hypothesis

There will be significantly higher achievement in four component areas (as determined by the rubric utilized for this study) of the treatment group, following the 6+1 trait writing model, as compared to the control group, following the traditional writing workshop model.

Null Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference in the component area of content development (as determined by the rubric utilized for this study) of the treatment group, following the 6+1 trait writing model, as compared to the control group, following the traditional writing workshop writing model.

2. There will be no significant difference in the component area of organization (as determined by the rubric utilized for this study) of the treatment group, following the 6+1 trait writing model, as compared to the control group, following the traditional writing workshop writing model.

3. There will be no significant difference in the component area of voice/word
    choice (as determined by the rubric utilized for this study) of the treatment
    group, following the 6+1 trait writing model, as compared to the control
    group, following the traditional writing workshop writing model.

4. There will be no significant difference in the component area of conventions
    (as determined by the rubric utilized for this study) of the treatment group,
    following the 6+1 trait writing model, as compared to the control group,
    following the traditional writing workshop writing model.

Professional Significance

The significance of this study emphasized the importance of instructional methods
for teaching elementary writing. For many children writing does not come naturally and
can be quite difficult. The 6+1 Trait Writing Model provides direct instruction in the
different crafts of writing. These crafts, or traits, can be taught and emphasized to greatly
improve the quality of students' writing. This experimental method also closely relates
writing to reading. Examples from children's literature were used to introduce and teach
each of the individual writing traits. Using children's literature provides a model for
students and gives them ideas for their own writing. As students study the 6+1 traits in
their reading and writing, the traits become part of their vocabularies which give them the
capability to apply the traits to both reading and writing. Jarmer, Kozol, Nelson, and
Salsberry (2000) discovered that familiarity and emphasis on the traits raise student
achievement scores on writing standardized assessment measures. This study yielded
some useful methodological findings about how the instruction of writing should be
addressed in schools. The 6+1 Trait Writing Model has not been widely used in

elementary schools in the Eastern United States; however the results of this study may bring attention to this writing method.

Overview of Methodology

This study used a quasi-experimental design with cluster sampling. The task of the experimental writing instructional method was assigned randomly between two different, but similar, schools. Four fifth grade classes in each of two schools were used for the study. All students in the study were given a writing pretest that was evaluated by three raters. The raters were trained by the researcher on the use of the rubric for evaluation with anchor papers. The anchor papers chosen for training represented each of the rating levels on the rubric. A pretest consisting of a narrative writing prompt was given to all students first. Four fifth grade classes in one school were then instructed according to the 6+1 Trait Writing Model using a writing unit provided by the researcher for a total of 22 lessons. Four classes in the second school were instructed according to the traditional writing workshop method using a writing unit provided by the researcher for a total of 22 lessons. A posttest writing prompt consisting of a narrative writing prompt was given at the end of the study and was evaluated by the same three raters. These raters used a blind review process when evaluating students' writing. The researcher looked for differences in means between student gains from pretest to posttest between the two different method groups using an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The complete methodology is provided in chapter 3.

Definition of Terms:

- The 6+1 Trait Writing Model: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence

  fluency, conventions, presentation

- Ideas: the meaning and development of the message

- Organization: the internal structure of the piece

- Voice: the way the writer brings the topic to life

- Word Choice: the specific vocabulary the writer uses to convey meaning

- Sentence Fluency: the way the words and phrases flow throughout the text

- Conventions: the mechanical correctness of the piece

- Presentation: the overall appearance of the work

- Rubric: a two-dimensional matrix containing criteria and a rating scale in which

- to measure writing

- Process writing: writing instruction involving prewriting, drafting, revision,

- editing, and publication of work

- Writing Workshop: an instructional method that uses process writing

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Writing Development From Past to Present

Writing in the elementary classroom consisted of handwriting and grammar instruction before the 1980's. Teachers often linked writing instruction to grammar instruction in the 1960's. During the 60's and early 70's several studies were conducted on grammar instruction as a way of teaching writing which resulted in conflicting outcomes. Finally Hillocks (1986) concluded in his study that indeed teaching grammar did not have measurable positive effects on student writing performance.

Writing instruction came under attack in the mid 1970's by educators. The situation was defined as a writing crisis among this country's youth (Giroux, 1978). This writing crisis prompted a revision of the ideas of classroom writing and the best way to teach writing to children. Around this time members of Congress recognized the need for improvements and funded writing instruction in an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which named writing as a content area. Applebee (1981) described a trend in educational research that began to focus on writing as a process rather than an end product. After the publication of Donald Graves' writing: *Teachers and Children at Work* (1983); writing instruction began to take on new meaning in the eyes of educators. Writing became more of a process rather than a task or product. Graves introduced the five step process approach known as topic selection, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. He suggested allowing children to write as *real writers* do. Graves theorized that children want to write, and it was up to the teachers to channel

and nurture that innate desire. As a result of Graves' work, the writing workshop philosophy began appearing in elementary schools.

Henk, Marinak, Moore, and Mallette (2003) reported that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 brought nationwide attention to the evaluation and assessment of writing as a separate construct for American children. This Act placed new demands on American teachers to ensure that all students become successful readers and writers.

In September of 2003, national attention was brought to writing after the publication of *The Neglected "R": The Need for a Writing Revolution*. This report was published by the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges and created the *Writing Challenge* for the nation. This report unveiled a concern that "the level of writing in the United States is not what it should be" (p. 7). Several recommendations were made to improve writing in American schools such as increasing time for writing and applying new technologies when assessing student writing.

Graham and Perin (2007) in a report to Carnegie Corporation of New York titled *Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools* wrote about the writing crisis in American schools and offered recommendations from research. Eleven key elements were identified to assist in improving students writing. Some of the key elements mentioned that pertain to this study were writing strategies, prewriting, process writing approach, study of models, and collaborative writing.

Pritchard (1987) researched the effect of teacher training on a process writing approach verses no teacher training on student academic writing achievement. This research revealed a high correlation between teacher quality and student achievement.

Cotton & Northwest Regional Educational Lab (1988) reported on what research says about teacher training and student writing achievement. They concluded from the research that staff development programs do not necessarily have to follow a specific model in order to be effective. Training teachers to use a process approach to writing with ongoing skill-building lessons is essential for effective teacher inservice programs to improve student writing achievement.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for a process approach to writing is based on the work of John Dewey and the progressive theory of education. Progressivism is derived from the philosophy known as pragmatism. Gutek, (2004) explains that "For Dewey and the pragmatists, the successful life is one in which individuals and groups encounter, define, and solve problems. These problems are the challenges that test our abilities and develop our intelligence. They lead to our ongoing growth and development." (p. 73). Dewey was famous for his democratic approach to education (Englund, 2000; Kauchak & Eggen, 2007). Dewey (1916) believed that children learn socially and by exploring the environment around them. A key principal of the progressive theory is that children have a natural desire to learn about the world around them (Knight, 1998). "Progressives favor learning that is process-orientated and allows children to create their own beliefs and values through reflection on their interactions with the environment" (Gutek, 2004, p. 301). Out of progressivism, came the 'whole language' movement in the late 1970's in which children's literature, daily writing activities, and advanced language activities are used in the classrooms from the beginning of school (Toch, 1992). The 6+1 Trait Writing Model and a process approach to writing both reflect this philosophy. Teachers choose

writing topics and correlate them to children's literature around things that are of interest to the students. Making time daily for writing is a high priority.

The theory of Constructivism has its roots in progressivism. Kauchak & Eggen, (2008) write "Constructivism is consistent with progressivism and its precursor, pragmatism. All three emphasize concrete experiences, real-world tasks, and the central role of the individual in determining reality and promoting learning." (Kauchack & Eggen, p. 199). Some key principles of the constructivist theory are student learning involves real-life, authentic tasks, interaction with others, and interaction with an expert (Slavin, 2006). "Constructivism, like progressivism, emphasizes socially interactive and process-oriented "hands-on" learning in which students work collaboratively to expand and revise their knowledge base" (Airasian & Walsh, 1997, pg. 444). The 6+1 Trait Writing Model and the process approach to writing both involve these three principles as well. Using children's literature as a model for writing is a major component of the 6+1 Trait Writing Model. Children learn to write from authentic writers as well as use real writers' language. Children interact with expert writers on a daily basis as they read children's literature and use it as a model for writing. Teachers carefully choose literature that effectively models each of the 6+1 traits so that children can identify with the traits and in turn use them in their own writing. Children also interact with each other during the writing process as they conference to gain ideas for writing, revising, and editing their work. Conferencing is a key component of the writing process as children communicate writing skills and tactics. Writing instruction taught in this manner follows the constructivism theory as children are involved in real-life learning experiences, create authentic writing pieces, and interact with peers and experts.

Donald Graves (1983) expressed his theory in *Writing: Teachers & Children at Work,*

> Children want to write. They want to write the first day they attend school. This is
>
> no accident. Before they went to school they marked up the walls, pavements,
>
> newspapers with crayons, chalk, pens or pencils…anything that makes a mark.
>
> The child's marks say 'I am'. (p. 3)

Encompassing Graves' theory that children want to write is what makes the process approach to writing instruction unique. Children love the sense of story expressed in children's literature. The 6+1 Traits Writing Model capitalizes on children's love for story, uses children's literature to model story sense and the 6+1 traits, and teaches them to write in a similar fashion. A strong connection can be seen between children's love for reading and for writing stories.

Process Writing

Janet Emig (1971) is credited with developing the process approach to writing. Williams (2003) reported that the process approach to teaching writing has been implemented nationwide in classrooms since the late 1970's. Cotton, & Northwest Regional Educational Lab (1988) reported that during the 1980's, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory conducted numerous studies on effective practices for teaching writing. The studies found that student achievement was higher when a process approach to writing was taken versus a product approach. The studies also showed that increased writing time, along with opportunities for writing, increased student achievement in writing. Patthey-Chavez, Matsumura, and Valdeacutes (2004) discovered that the Kentucky Education Reform Act resulted in twice as much classroom writing time in

1995 as in 1982. This reform not only increased writing time but also focused on a process approach to writing instruction, changed statewide assessment practices, increased the diversity of the writing activities, and required teachers to maintain writing portfolios containing their students' works.

A process approach to writing breaks the writing task into smaller, manageable parts for students. The process approach focuses on the entire essay, not just parts of the essay or strictly grammar. The process approach is a more personal approach to writing as individuals spend more time on different steps of the process than others.

Lipson et al. (2000) discussed popular writing process models that consist of planning, drafting, and revising. Planning is an important step of the writing process; it allows the writers to organize their writing before they even begin. Deatline-Buchman, and Jitendra (2006) conducted a study that showed increased student writing achievement as a result of appropriate planning before writing. Planning is a unique and important facet of the writing process.

Writing Workshop

Lucy Calkins' book *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1994) emphasized Graves' (1983) philosophy and fine-tuned it into a recipe for writing instruction in the elementary classroom. Calkins introduced new ideas in writing such as the writing workshop environment, conferencing, mini-lessons, and integrating literature into the writing curriculum.

Nancy Atwell's book *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents* (1987) was another seminal influence in the development of the writing workshop philosophy. Atwell described seven principles for developing student writers

which involve making time for writing, students creating their own topics, teacher response to student writing, and creating time to read.

The reading/writing workshop developed by these three authors is founded upon the belief that children love to read and write when they have the freedom to choose in a literacy-based environment. During the following years, many educators embraced this new approach to writing instruction in the elementary and middle schools. Hughey and Slack (2001) added pedagogical constructs to the writing workshop by exploring new concepts such as multiple intelligences and collaborative groups. Lipson, Mosenthal, and Mekkelsen (1995) conducted a study on the use of process writing by classroom teachers and found that the use of such pedagogy was almost unanimous statewide. This study led to a later study by Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, and Woodside-Jiron (2000) which revealed that the process approach to teaching writing meant different things to different teachers, resulting in a variety of pedagogies. Williams (2003) contended that over the years so many approaches to teaching writing emerged, teachers were at a loss in selecting an appropriate method. Many teachers choose the method that they were taught as students regardless of its proven effectiveness.

Jasmine and Weiner (2007) concluded in a study involving the use of the writing workshop in a first grade classroom that students' enthusiasm and confidence in writing increased. Using the writing workshop with first graders proved to be an effective instructional method because students chose their own topics, revised and edited their work with peers and the teacher, and were able to share their writing with the class.

Behymer (2003) related her kindergarteners' overall literacy improvements to adding the writer's workshop to her curriculum. She includes the workshop everyday in

her classroom with an emphasis on phonics, conventions, and social interaction. Students have shown to be very successful in their writing as a result of providing numerous structured opportunities for writing.

Furr and Bauman (2003) discovered that the writing workshop can become frustrating for student's who struggle with reading and writing. The workshop atmosphere can often leave students to their own devices without expert guidance. Teachers often focus on independence in the writing workshop rather than support students with instruction, models, and techniques. Tompkins (2002) also recognized that struggling readers and writers 'require a great deal of support' during the writing process.

Pollington, Wilcox, and Morrison (2001) conducted a study regarding the effects of writing workshop (writing process) and traditional instructional methods (teacher-controlled textbooks and worksheets) on intermediate grade students' self-perception. Their findings revealed no significant differences between the scores of the two groups. They concluded that instructional methods are not as important as individual teacher skill.

The Reading-Writing Link

Stahl and Pagnucco (1996) conducted a study on first grade teachers and their pedagogical methods of teaching reading and writing. These researchers discovered that those teachers who used a whole-language approach and taught reading and writing together had higher student writing achievement. They found that the students' writing growth matched their reading growth when they taught both subjects in unison. Calkins (1994) described a relationship between good writing and reading. She explained that in order to create an effective writing workshop environment, the teacher needs to fill it

with rich and powerful literature. When students learn to listen to authors' words and ideas, they tend to apply those skills to their own writing. Jarmer et al. (2000) emphasized the importance of 'Reading to write….writing to read' and helping students make the connections. They stated that the 6+1 Trait Writing Model helps make adaptation to literature possible. Students who become immersed in rich literature approach their own writing in a more meaningful way. Edwards and Maloy (1992) wrote that "the greater familiarity children have with words, concepts, and genres, the easier it is for them to think of topics and ideas to write about for themselves. Written language provides models of sentence structure, conversation, plot, characterization, story line, detail, and suspense" (pg. 72).

Atwell (1987) stressed the importance of students being engaged in literature. She asserted that when students read a variety of authors and genres, they become aware of different techniques and styles they can incorporate into their own writing. Atwell encouraged the use of borrowing from literature. She declared that "everyone who writes anything is a borrower because everything we've ever read comes into play when we write" (Atwell, p. 240). As individuals read and write, they develop a literary heritage. When students are absorbed into the world of literature, it permeates every area of their lives.

Glenn (2007) found when students are allowed to write narrative text related to reading, they comprehend written narrative text better. She contended that reading improves student writing by providing a model which students can emulate. Glenn discovered that the converse is true as well; allowing students to write on topics of their choosing will improve their reading comprehension. When reading and writing are taught

together, students become better readers and writers and develop better critical thinking skills.

The 6 + 1 Trait Writing Model

Nearly twenty years ago, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratories [NWREL] (2002) launched an effort to improve writing in the elementary classroom. The researchers identified six traits of good writing. They knew that the writing programs in the American classrooms were not effective. The goal was to develop a writing program that went beyond grammar and mechanics and holistic grading. NWREL explains that they, "compared reams of student work and discussed the qualities or traits that all 'good' writing samples shared. Six traits emerged as the cornerstones of quality writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Later, presentation was added to the list" (para.3).

Considering the 6+1 Trait Writing Model's growing popularity, it is surprising that there has not been more research done on the method to ensure its effectiveness. Arter, Spandel, Culham, and Pollard (1994) conducted a study very similar to the one proposed by this researcher. They tested the 6 Trait Writing Model against traditional methods in six fifth grade classrooms. The teachers in the treatment group received a one day training session on implementing the 6 traits into their writing lessons as well as received instructional materials. Teachers in the control group did not receive any instruction or materials. These teachers provided a process approach to writing for their students and the researchers monitored their classrooms during the study. The study consisted of a pretest, instruction over six months, and a posttest. In this study, a 6+1 Trait Writing Model rubric was used to score student papers. These researchers

concluded that students in the treatment group (6 Trait Method) received significant gains in only one out of six areas, the ideas trait. Two other areas approached significance. However, Jarmer et al. (2000) reported in their study at Jennie Wilson Elementary School, that after 3 years of implementation of the 6 Trait Writing Method in all the grades, student standardized test scores increased each consecutive year.

Spandel (2005) wrote in *Creating Writers Through 6-Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction* that not only is the 6+1 Trait Writing Model effective in raising student test scores, but also, more importantly, the model creates "strong and confident writers in any context for any purpose" (p.11). This method of instruction assists students in becoming life-long readers and writers. She, too, emphasized the importance of demonstrating the traits of writing in real literature. Students learn to discover clues about the writer's craft in books and then apply it to their own writing. In order for the 6+1 Trait Writing Model to truly be effective in the classroom, teachers need to be trained on the content and use it daily in their classroom instruction.

Graham, et al. (2007) reported research indicated that students' writing does not improve simply through having the desire or the time to write as Hillock asserted in 1986, but does improve through strategic instruction. He wrote "The rationale behind explicit strategy instruction is that it purposely gives students the opportunity to learn to do independently what experts do when completing a task" (pg. 36). The 6+1 Trait Method provides this strategic instruction in the different crafts, or traits, of writing. The specific strategies and traits are introduced during group minilessons through literature and instruction and then reinforced during individual conferencing. These researchers also wrote that students need a language to talk about their writing. The 6+1 Trait Writing

Method is an approach that provides students with a specific composing vocabulary that real writers use.

Higgins, Miller, and Wegmann (2006) affirmed that the 6+1 Traits fit effectively into the writing process and make students' writing more focused and purposeful. The Traits method integrates assessment with the writing curriculum and students use the rubric as a tool for revision. Teachers provide instruction on the 6+1 Traits during minilessons that assist students in the revision process.

Cunningham and Allington (1999) asserted that students are more successful in a literacy-rich classroom where authentic reading and writing activities take place. They explained that authentic reading and writing activities involve reading and writing about real things. The 6+1 Trait Writing Method is characteristic of a literacy-rich environment due to the fact that many examples of children's literature are used as models, and children are given the opportunity to write as real writers do.

Measuring Writing Achievement

There are several ways of measuring writing achievement. One way is through developing student portfolios. Portfolios are collections of students' work over a period of time. The collection is used to demonstrate growth in writing. This method will not be used in this study other than as a way of collecting and monitoring student works.

A second procedure for measuring student writing achievement is through a descriptive writing rubric. Loveland (2005) explained that a rubric is a two-dimensional matrix used to evaluate different facets of a piece of writing. Loveland also emphasized that rubrics provide an objective assessment tool for a subjective assignment, such as writing. Rubrics lead to increased performance by students because they provide them

with specific criteria in which the assignment will be graded. One of the first educators to identify specific writing traits and create a measurable rubric was Paul Diederich (1974). Later, other educators used his ideas to create their own rubric versions using similar traits such as Murray (1982), Spandel (2005), and Culham (2003). Culham and Wheeler (2003) designed a rubric that directly correlates with the 6+1 Trait Writing model. In the Culham and Wheeler rubric, two sets of criteria are on each axis. Across the top axis are the numbers one through five used for rating each trait. One is the lowest or weakest score and five is the strongest. Down the left side of the matrix are listed the 6+1 traits of writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation. Each trait is rated by the teacher.

Schamber & Mahoney (2006) completed a study that showed using rubrics also developed critical thinking skills in students by teaching them to self-evaluate their own writing. The rubric provides clear expectations of what a successful paper entails. Using rubrics during instruction enhances the instruction. "The strength of using rubrics as a learning situation or as an assessment strategy lies in its success in developing metacognitive skills; this ability to think about one's thinking is critical in a world of continuous change" (Skillings & Ferrell, 2000, para. 22).

Assessing student writing is crucial to developing student writers according to Anderson (2005). He focused not only on assessment of students' final works, but also on assessing students every day. Through the use of teacher conferences, with individual students as a part of the writing workshop, teachers are able to learn about their students' writing habits resulting in assessment and instruction throughout the writing process.

Conclusion

Writing instruction has undergone major developments over the past 30 years in American education. Effective writing instruction in the elementary or middle school classroom requires a process approach to writing. Consistent and meaningful instructional time needs to be provided daily for quality writing instruction. Instruction should always include literature to provide examples of good writing, and to help generate ideas. The 6+1 Trait Writing Model helps students add style and depth to their writing. By focusing on the different traits, students get a feel for what *real writers* do. Using a rubric to assess writing not only offers an objective look at writing, but also helps students to think critically, self-assess, and shoot towards a target in their writing.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Participants

     Students and teachers.

The participants for this study were fifth grade teachers and students from two elementary schools in South Carolina. Four classes at Sweeney Elementary School received instruction according to the 6+1 Writing Model for 6 weeks. (All names used in the study have been changed to ensure privacy and professionalism.) There was an average of 20 students in each class, with class A = 21, B = 19, C = 20, and D = 19. Four more fifth grade classes at Pearson Elementary School received instruction according to the writing workshop method. There was an average of 21 students in each class, with class A = 21, B = 20, C = 21, and D = 21. The total number of students involved at the beginning of the study was 162 and the total number of students who completed the study was 131. Several factors such as absenteeism, relocation, insufficient information for evaluation, or illegibility of writing for evaluation contributed to the loss of students from start to finish. Method assignment was done randomly with a coin toss. Both schools had similar demographics of socioeconomic level, enrollment, culture, and parental involvement. The two schools were located within the same school district. The participants were the fifth grade teachers and their students. The average age of the fifth graders was 10. Similar numbers of males and females were present in each school in which Sweeney Elementary had 46 boys and 33 girls, and Pearson Elementary had 45 boys and 38 girls. Student ability levels ranged from marginally below grade level to marginally above grade level.

Schools.

The South Carolina Department of Education (2006) generates an annual report card for each school providing specific information about student enrollment and test scores at each school. The South Carolina standardized test is called the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT). Similarities between the two schools included similar numbers of students with limited English Proficiency in which Sweeney had 10 students in Grades 3–5 and Pearson had 8. Both schools had a similar percentage of students who performed below basic on the annual South Carolina standardized test (PACT) with Sweeney at 20% and Pearson at 17%. PACT testing enrollment of students in grades 3–5 was similar with Sweeney's enrollment at 222 students and Pearson's enrollment at 231 students. An additional similarity between the schools was the passing rate of basic or above on the annual South Carolina standardized tests (PACT). Sweeney had an 80% pass rate and Pearson had an 83% pass rate in grades 3–5.

There were a few differences between the two schools involved in the study. Pearson had a slightly larger total enrollment of 553 students as compared to Sweeney's 479 students. Pearson had a considerably larger number of minorities enrolled in grades 3–5 with 30% as compared to Sweeney's 9%. Sweeney had a slightly larger percentage of students who received subsidized meals with 53% verses Pearson's 39%. Refer to Table 1 for enrollment comparisons between the two schools involved in the study.

Table 1

School Demographic Comparisons

Category (Grades 3-5 involved in PACT Testing)	Sweeney Elementary (# of students)	Pearson Elementary (# of students)
1. Enrollment (Grades 3-5)	222	231
2. Males	54%	50%
3. Females	46%	50%
4. White	91%	70%
5. African American	4%	27%
6. Other	5%	3%
7. Limited English Proficiency	5%	3%
8. % of students receiving subsidized meals	53%	39%
9. % of students who performed below basic on English/Language Arts PACT Test	20%	17%
10. % of students who performed basic or above on the English/Language Arts PACT Test	80%	83%
11. Total School Enrollment in Dec. 2007 (Grades PK – 5)	479	553

Teachers involved in the study from both schools were surveyed to obtain the specific grade level information presented in Table 2. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix A. The classrooms within each school had both similarities and differences.

Both schools also had similar numbers of boys and girls in the classrooms with Sweeney reported 46 boys and 33 girls, and Pearson reported 45 boys and 38 girls. Another similarity was the total enrollment and the number of students who were able to finish the study. Sweeney had 79 students and Pearson had 83 students for total enrollment in fifth grade. Sweeney had a total of 66 students finish the study as compared to Pearson's 65. Completing the study can be defined as those students who completed the pretest, all 6 weeks of instruction, and the posttest.

Differences in the classrooms between the two schools include the number of years of teaching experience for the teachers. The teachers at Sweeney had a combined total of 68 years of experience. The teachers at Pearson had a combined total of 35 years of experience. This difference also was seen in the highest degree held by the teachers at each school. Three out of four teachers at Sweeney had earned a Master's Degree in Elementary Education, whereas only two out of four teachers at Pearson had completed a Masters degree. Differences were also apparent in how the teachers rated their students' ability levels. The teachers at Pearson reported 39% of students who were working above grade level and Sweeney reported only 25%. Pearson reported a greater number of students working below grade level with 22% students as compared to Sweeney's below grade level percentage of 20%. A significant difference between the two schools and the composition of their classrooms was seen in the total number of minorities present. Sweeney reported only 10% were minority students among the four fifth grade classrooms, whereas Pearson reported 26% were minority students among the four classrooms. Table 2 displays the classroom demographic comparisons between the two schools.

Table 2

Classroom Demographic Comparisons

Category: Grade 5 Classrooms by School	Sweeney Elementary (# of teachers / students)	Sweeney Elementary %	Pearson Elementary (# of teachers / students)	Pearson Elementary %
1. Teachers: years of experience	68		35	
2. Teachers: BA degree	1	25%	2	50%
3. Teachers: MA degree	3	75%	2	50%
4. Enrollment	79		83	
5. Number of students involved in the study	79		83	
6. Boys	46	58%	45	54%
7. Girls	33	42%	38	46%
8. Above grade level	20	25%	32	39%
9. On grade level	43	54%	33	40%
10. Below grade level	16	20%	18	22%
11. Caucasian	71	90%	61	74%
12. African American	5	6%	16	19%
13. Other	3	4%	6	7%

Instruments

  Rubric.

  The instrument used to evaluate student progress in writing was a rubric. The rubric for this study was taken from the South Carolina Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) which is a standards-based accountability measurement of student writing achievement South Carolina Department of Education (2006). This rubric was chosen because it includes five out of the six traits from the 6+1 Trait Writing Model, and the teachers and students involved in the study were familiar with it. The State Department of Education chose the PACT rubric in 1999 and it has been in use since that time. The Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) was chosen by the state to administer and score the PACT testing responses. The DRC used anchor sets and training sets to train the raters. The training sets were assembled by the DRC in cooperation with the State Department of Education (SDE). As of 2003, the readers had to qualify by achieving 70% exact agreement with the consensus scores for each domain on the rubric (South Carolina Department of Education, 2003).

  To ensure reliability, rubrics need to be analytic, topic-specific, and provide exemplars or rater training according to Jonsson and Svingby (2007). It was also reported that the more consistent the scores are between raters, the more reliable the assessment is (Jonsson & Svingby; Moskal & Leydens, 2000). The scoring of the student response for the PACT writing test consisted of one reader, with 10% receiving a second score by a second reader to check for reliability. Moskal and Leydens provide the following definitions for validity and reliability of rubrics. The validity of a rubric rests in the purpose of the assessment and that the scoring criteria match the objectives. To obtain

validity, the rubric should have both content-related evidence and construct-related evidence. This means the components on the rubric match the instructional goals. The scoring rubric used for this study is similar to the one used to measure writing achievement in the South Carolina PACT exam from Grades 3 through 12. It is a five point rubric measuring four specific writing components. The four components were content development, organization, voice/word choice, and conventions. The five rating levels of the rubric from least to greatest were experimenting, emerging, developing, effective, and strong. This rubric is located in Appendix B. The rubric used for scoring the South Carolina PACT test is located in Appendix C. The researcher added a fifth rating level of strong in order to provide more differentiation and growth, the level four evaluation information for voice was completed which was not provided in the original rubric, and the word choice component was added to the voice category to match the constructs of the study. By adding the fifth rating level, using anchor papers as examples and providing specific rater training, the rubric used in this study met all of the requirements of reliability and validity stated by Jonsson and Svingby (2007) and Moskal and Leydens (2000).

The rubric used in the study matched the rubric components with the instructional goals of the lesson plans. Moskal and Leydens (2000) also define reliability of a rubric as the consistency of scores. Reliability is achieved through interrater reliability, anchor papers, and sharing the rubric with students. The reliability of the rubric used in the study was achieved through using anchor papers to train the raters and providing scoring practice to achieve interrater reliability. Four anchor papers were presented by the researcher to the raters during training along with the scoring outcomes for each. The

anchor papers represented four out of five of the rating levels on the rubric. After a discussion on the anchor papers, the raters were given two practice papers to rate using the rubric. Rater 1 had 95%, rater 2 had 97.5%, and rater 3 had 90% agreement with the researcher on the practice papers. The rubric was also used during instruction with the students.

Statement of the Hypothesis

There will be significantly higher achievement in four component areas (as determined by the rubric utilized for this study) of the treatment group, following the 6+1 trait writing model, as compared to the control group, following the traditional writing workshop model.

Procedures

The researcher was granted permission by the district Superintendent to conduct the study in the two schools that were chosen. The two schools were chosen for this study because they were similar in area, size, student demographics, and proximity. Each school had four classes of fifth grade students, averaging 20 students in each class. A coin was flipped to determine which school would be the control group and teach the traditional approach to writing workshop and which school would teach the manipulated study or the 6+1 Trait Writing Method. The two methodologies were separated into different school buildings to help maintain the reliability of the study by preventing teachers from discussing the content of the instruction. Students were identified by number rather than name. This coding helped maintain validity when the papers were scored by the raters. Both groups began with a pretest and ended with a posttest writing

assignment using a writing prompt. These were scored using the chosen rubric seen in Appendix B. The pretest topic and posttest topic were different.

Instructional Units

The researcher wrote lesson plans for a unit of study involving 22 lessons for 6 weeks of instruction according to the Writers Workshop Method. Group A, the control group, received the traditional method of writing workshop instruction. The teachers in the control group continued teaching the process approach to writing including prewriting, drafting, revision, editing, and publication. Students in this group also received an instructional minilesson each day that addressed specific writing strategies such as characterization, setting, leads, word choice, imagery, and transitions. Six literature selections were used during this instructional method to help provide ideas for writing. Unit outlines along with the literature list for each is provided in Appendix D.

Group B, the independent variable, received writing instruction focusing on the 6+1 Trait Writing Model. Like group A, this group received 22 lessons of instruction for 6 weeks. The unit of study for group B also followed a process approach to writing including prewriting, drafting, revision, editing, and publication. In addition, this group received instruction on identifying, using, and applying the 6+1 traits to their writing. The 6+1 traits consist of ideas, sentence fluency, organization, word choice, voice, conventions, and presentation. Children's literature was used extensively in this method. Seventeen literature selections were used to model and teach each of the six traits and are provided in Appendix D. Like group A, students in this group also received an instructional minilesson each day that addressed specific writing strategies such as characterization, setting, leads, word choice, imagery, and transitions.

Before the study began, the researcher provided separate training sessions for both groups of teachers. The teachers in group A were given the details of the study and instruction on teaching the writer's workshop instructional unit. The researcher modeled teaching a typical lesson for the group. The use of minilessons during instruction was explained and modeled. Literature selections for instructional use were given to the teachers at this time.

The teachers in group B also received a training session to provide the details of the study. The researcher used an instructional PowerPoint presentation to familiarize and instruct the teachers regarding the 6+1 Trait Writing Model. Each of the 6+1 traits were explained in detail with examples from the literature was provided. Each teacher received a class set of the 17 books to be used during their instruction of the 6+1 Trait method. A typical lesson was modeled for the teachers. Book lists for both methods are provided in Appendix D.

The previously described writing instructional units with complete lesson plans were provided by the researcher for the teachers involved in the study. Teachers were asked not to diverge from the lesson plans provided. All teachers in both groups were required to set aside an uninterrupted time block for writing instruction of 30-45 minutes a day, 4 days a week, for 6 weeks. Both groups were given the same narrative writing prompt for the pretest; and a second narrative writing prompt for the posttest. The pretest writing prompt was different than the posttest writing prompt. The pretest was given during lesson 1, and the posttest was given during lesson 24. The pretest and posttest writing prompts used are displayed in Table 3. The pretest and posttest from both schools were collected by the researcher and given to three hired raters.

Table 3

Pretest and Posttest Narrative Writing Prompts

Pretest Prompt	Write about the best birthday party ever! This could be a true story about a wonderful birthday party you have had or one that you attended for someone else. It could also be purely fictional and creative. The choice is up to you!
Posttest Prompt	Write about a journey that you have taken. This could be a journey to Grandma's house, a friend's house, or a vacation. The story can either be real or completely fictional. The choice is up to you!

Throughout the course of the study, the researcher visited the teachers weekly to monitor progress, ensure lesson plans were being followed, and to answer questions or address concerns. At the beginning of each week a new writing topic was introduced to the writer's workshop group, and a new trait was introduced to the 6+1 Trait group. At the conclusion of the study all student writing samples were collected by the researcher to ensure that lesson plans were followed by the teachers and for use in future research.

Raters

The raters, three pre-service teacher candidates in their senior year, were paid to evaluate the writing samples. Two of the raters evaluated each student writing sample. To provide reliability, the third rater was used to evaluate papers that had more than a one-point discrepancy in any component area given by the first two raters. One rater evaluated each paper independently using the chosen rubric. The hired raters were not told the specifics of the study or the identity of the groups.

Analysis of Data

       Rating procedures.

       The students' writing was scored according to the writing rubric in Appendix B. The rubric contained four components scored on an ordinal scale of one to five. The four components chosen for the study consisted of content development, organization, voice/word choice, and conventions. The five rating levels of the rubric from least to greatest were experimenting, emerging, developing, effective, and strong. The students received a score for each component area as well as an overall mean score which was recorded for statistical analysis.

       The rubric used in the study as seen in Appendix B was taken from the South Carolina Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) rubric, which was discussed earlier in the instruments section and is provided in Appendix C. This study focused on writing achievement gains in the areas of content development, organization, voice/word choice, and conventions.

       The three raters met on two separate occasions. At the first meeting, the researcher began with an overview of the chosen rubric. Next, a presentation of four different anchor papers was displayed while modeling assessment procedures. A fifth anchor paper was presented and the raters practiced assessing the work. Raters then compared and discussed their ratings. The raters each took a class set of papers and rated each according to the rubric. Each student's work was recorded by the rater in a single chart, as seen in Table 2. Each rater's results were unseen by the other raters. After the completion of a class set, the raters switched sets and started the process again for a second review. Once a class set had been reviewed and assessed by the first two raters,

the researcher tallied the scores, shown in Table 3. The researcher then compared the

scores of the first two raters. If a student's score in any of the component areas differed

by more than a spread of one, then the third rater assessed the paper using the same

process as the first two raters. During the scoring of the pretests, the third rater was used

51% of the time, and during the scoring of the posttest, she was used 28% of the time.

This use of a third rater ensured the reliability of the assessment process (Jonsson &

Svingby, 2007). After recording all three raters' scores, the researcher calculated a single

mean score for each student in each component area, as well as a mean holistic score.

These scores were then recorded for the pretest in an Excel spreadsheet for each student

and saved until the final rating. This process continued until all papers had been assessed.

The second meeting of the raters took place after the study concluded. The

researcher reviewed the rubric and anchor sets with the three raters, and the same

assessment process was used. The student data for the post test was recorded in Table 4

for comparison between the two groups.

Table 4

Sample Excel Spreadsheet used to Record Student Data

Student #	Element Area	Pretest	Posttest	Difference
	Content Development			
	Organization			
	Voice/Word Choice			
	Conventions			
	Mean Score			

Statistical procedures.

The statistical procedures used in the study compared the mean scores of the two groups from pretest to posttest. The statistics determined if there were significant gains with the 6+1 Trait Writing Method (Group B) over the traditional writing method (Group A) within each writing component and holistically. An ordinal scale of one to five was used in the writing rubric. After the scores were charted in the Excel document as seen in Table 3, the difference between each component area from pretest to posttest was recorded for each student. The mean difference for each student was also calculated. The data collected was the difference in score for each student from the pretest to the posttest according to the writing rubric. Two types of data collection were made. The first was gains made in each of the four rubric component areas. The second was an overall average score given each student's paper according to the rubric. It had been hypothesized that students receiving the 6+1 Trait Writing Model (Group B) instruction would achieve greater gains from the pretest to the posttest according to the rubric than those receiving the traditional instructional methods (Group A). The null hypothesis stated that there would be no difference in improved achievement as measured by the provided rubric for students in the 6+1 Trait Writing Model group as compared to students in the traditional writing workshop group.

Differences between the two methods in each component area were recorded as descriptive data. The software program SPSS for Windows was used to calculate the statistics needed for this study. An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) test of significance for a quasi-experimental design was used to show a difference of means between the two research groups in each of the four component areas. This test was chosen because a

difference in pretest scores existed between the two schools. The 6+1 Trait group (treatment group) scored higher on the pretest than the writer's workshop group (control group). This difference needed to be accounted for in order to determine if one method yielded a better outcome than the other. The two schools were chosen for the study because of demographic similarities and similarities in PACT test results. On the English/Language Arts test, Sweeney and Pearson scored 80% and 83% respectively, performing basic or above. The researcher does not know why the students in the treatment group scored higher on the pretest. The ANCOVA test of significance took into account the differences in pretest scores that existed between the two groups. The ANCOVA F test evaluated whether the means on the posttest differed for the two method groups once they were adjusted for the differences on the covariate, or the pretest. Before the ANCOVA test could be conducted, a Test of the Homogeneity-of-Slopes Assumption had to be run. In order for the ANCOVA test to be used, the Homogeneity-of-Slopes Assumption must be accepted, meaning that the slopes of the regression lines were the same for both groups. Similar regression lines were parallel. Once this was accepted and determined non-significant with no interaction, then the ANCOVA F test was successfully conducted. All tests were conducted using alpha = .05.

Summary

Chapter 3 has explained in detail the methodology used in this study on the effect of different instructional methods on overall student narrative writing achievement for fifth graders. The selection process for the two schools and the subjects used for the study were described. Procedures, statistical instruments, and data collection and analysis documentation were explained. The results and the analysis of the data is included in

chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains the summary and discussion of the findings, along with

recommendations for further study.

Chapter 4: Data Summary Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the difference between the 6+1 Trait Writing Model and the traditional writing workshop method of teaching writing on fifth grade student overall writing achievement according to the data supplied by the use of a writing rubric. The demographics for the two similar schools in the study can be seen in Table 1, in chapter 3. The subjects for this study were fifth graders from two elementary schools in South Carolina. Both groups began the study by taking the same writing pretest containing a single writing prompt. Four classes with an average of 20 students each from Sweeney Elementary School received instruction according to the 6+1 Writing Model for 6 weeks. Four more fifth grade classes with an average of 21 students each from Pearson Elementary School received instruction according to the traditional writing workshop method. At the conclusion of the instructional period, both groups took the same writing posttest. The pretest and posttest were assessed by three raters using the rubric selected for this study. Method assignment was done randomly. Both schools are located in the same school district and have similar demographics of socioeconomic level, enrollment, culture, and parental involvement. The subjects were in the fifth grade with an average age of 10. There were a similar number of males and females. The range in abilities of students was from marginally below grade level to marginally above grade level. Table 1 in chapter 3 displays the school demographic comparisons.

The researcher hypothesized that according to the data supplied by the writing rubric, fifth grade students' writing would improve one or more points after receiving 6

weeks of consistent writing instruction according to the 6+1 Writing Model. Greater improvement would be noted using the 6+1 Writing Model versus the traditional writing workshop approach to teaching writing in each of the rubric's four component areas and overall.

The null hypotheses stated there would be no significant difference in improved achievement in the four component areas as measured by the provided rubric for students in the treatment group, 6+1 Trait Writing Model, as compared to students in the control group, traditional writing workshop.

An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to explore the impact of the 6 +1 Trait Writing Model on fifth grade students' writing achievement according to the data supplied by the rubric. Subjects were divided into two groups, one group received instruction according to the 6+1 Trait Writing Model, and one group received instruction according to the traditional writing workshop. All students received instruction in the four component areas on the rubric; however the 6+1 Trait method provided more detailed instruction and used numerous models from children's literature. The traditional method provided general and non-specific instruction in the four component areas and used only a minimal amount of children's literature.

Rubric

The scoring rubric used for this study is a modified version of the South Carolina PACT exam rubric used to measure writing achievement from Grades 3 through 12. The rubric chosen for the study consists of five rating levels and four writing components. The four components chosen for the study consisted of content development, organization, voice/word choice, and conventions. The researcher added the word choice

component to the voice component to ensure content-related evidence for validity of the

rubric. Moskal and Leydens (2000) report content-related evidence is necessary to

provide validity for a rubric, meaning the content of the assessment matches the

assessment tool, or rubric. Word choice reflects voice in writing and this content was

addressed in the unit plans. The five rating levels of the rubric from least to greatest were

experimenting, emerging, developing, effective, and strong. Reliability is achieved

through interrater reliability, anchor papers, and sharing the rubric with students. The

reliability of the rubric used in the study was achieved through using anchor papers to

train the raters and providing scoring practice to achieve interrater reliability. The rubric

was reliable and valid because it was analytical, topic-specific, used exemplars, and

provided rater training (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007; Moskal & Leydens, 2000). This rubric

can be seen in Appendix B.

Statistics

A total of 162 fifth grade students were involved in the study with 131 students

completing the study (N = 131). The traditional writing method group had a total of 65 (n

= 65) and the 6+1 Trait writing method group had a total of 66 (n = 66). The rubric used

to rate student writing used an ordinal scale from one to five, one being the weakest

writing and five being the strongest. The rubric rated students in four component areas:

content development, organization, voice/word choice, and conventions. The researcher

sought to identify differences in gains in each component area in addition to an overall

mean from pretest to posttest for each method group. This chapter presents the research

findings of the study. The first section provides descriptive statistics and the second

section explains the results of the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) *F* test of

significance for a quasi-experimental design.

     Descriptive.

     The composite frequency for all students combined, for overall differences

between pretest and posttest by each component area, showed 7 students digressed and

40 students remained the same in one or more component areas after receiving the

instruction. However, an average of 65% of students gained from one to three ratings on

the posttest across the four component areas. Student gains/loss ratings for each

component area are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

Cross Tabulation of Composite Student Gains from Pretest to Posttest

Loss / Gains	CD	CD %	Org	Org %	VWC	VWC %	Conv	Conv %	Mean %
- 1	13	10%	4	3%	4	3%	6	5%	5%
0	43	33%	30	23%	39	30%	46	35%	30%
1	52	40%	60	45%	56	43%	51	39%	42%
2	21	16%	31	24%	29	22%	25	19%	20%
3	2	2%	6	5%	3	2%	3	2%	3%
Total	131		131		131		131		

Note. CD = content development; VWC = Voice/Word Choice; Org = Organization;

Conv = Conventions.

Overall, the mean gain for content development was .66 with a standard

deviation of .910. The mean gain for organization was 1.03 with a standard deviation of

.868. The mean gain for voice/word choice was .90 with a standard deviation of .840. The

mean gain for conventions was .79 with a standard deviation of .883. The range of the

data suggests that the minimum gain was actually a digression of -1 rating across the four

component areas. The maximum was a gain of 3 ratings across the four component areas.

This data is displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

Frequencies: Composite Component Differences

	CDDf	OrgDf	VWCDf	ConvDf
N	131	131	131	131
Mean	.66	1.03	.90	.79
Std. Deviation	.910	.868	.840	.883

Note. CDDf = Content Development Difference; OrgDf = Organization Difference;

VWCDf = Voice/Word Choice Difference; ConvDf = Conventions Difference

The composite frequency for the pretest ratings compared to the posttest ratings

can be seen in Table 7. When looking at the composite mean for the pretest compared to

the posttest, the results show that mean scores increased and the standard deviation gap

narrowed in all four component areas for all students involved in the study. The range

also narrowed in the posttest scores showing that there was a wider spread of scores in

the pretest than in the posttest. In the pretest scores, some students scored the minimum

rating of one in all four components. In the posttest scores, in two out of the four

components, none of the students scored the minimum rating of one. In the posttest, no

one in the composite group scored less than a rating of two in content development or

voice/word choice.

Table 7

Frequencies: Composite Pretest and Posttest Rating Comparisons

	CDPre	CD Post	OrgPre	Org Post	VWCPre	VWC Post	ConvPre	Conv Post
N	131	131	131	131	131	131	131	131
Mean	3.06	3.73	2.54	3.58	2.65	3.56	2.59	3.38
Std. Deviation	.892	.851	1.025	.903	.919	.805	1.029	.940
Range	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	4
Minimum	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

Note. CD = content development; VWC = Voice/Word Choice; Org = Organization;

Conv = Conventions.

The study focused on the differences between the pretest and posttest scores in

each of the four component areas according to two different instructional writing

methods, the traditional writing workshop, and the 6+1 Traits Writing Model. Table 8

displays mean differences per method, organized by each of the four components. In the

component of content development, the mean difference score for the traditional group

was .63 and the mean score for the 6+1 group was .68. The 6+1 group had slightly

greater gains within this component as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Component Differences by Method

Method	Description	CD	Org	VWC	Conv
Traditional	Mean	.63	1.11	1.00	.77
	Std. Deviation	.894	.831	.750	.825
6 + 1	Mean	.68	.95	.80	.82
	Std. Deviation	.931	.902	.915	.943

Note. CD = content development; VWC = Voice/Word Choice; Org = Organization;

Conv = Conventions.

In the organization component, the mean difference score for the traditional group was 1.11 and for the 6+1 group was .95. The traditional group had greater gains within this component. In the voice/word choice component, the mean difference score for the traditional group was 1.00 and for the 6+1 group was .80. The traditional group had greater gains within this component. In the conventions component, the mean difference score for the traditional group was .77 and for the 6+1 group was .82. The 6+1 group had slightly greater gains within this component.

The findings for the individual results for the four different component areas by method showed that the 6+1 group scored higher means on the pretest and the posttest. On the pretest and the posttest, the 6+1 group resulted in higher standard deviation scores in each of the four component areas. These findings can be found in Table 9. Figure 1 displays the component means for the pretest and posttest by method. In Appendix F, the two graphs display the same information in columns.

Table 9

Frequencies: Four Component Pretest Means by Method

Method	Description	CD Pre	CD Post	Org Pre	Org Post	VWC Pre	VWC Post	Conv Pre	Conv Post
Traditional	Mean	2.78	3.42	2.20	3.31	2.29	3.29	2.26	3.03
	N	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
	Std. Deviation	.760	.705	.712	.748	.744	.605	.889	.847
6 + 1	Mean	3.33	4.03	2.88	3.85	3.00	3.82	2.91	3.73
	N	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66
	Std. Deviation	.934	.877	1.17	.965	.945	.893	1.063	.904

Note. CD = content development; VWC = Voice/Word Choice; Org = Organization;
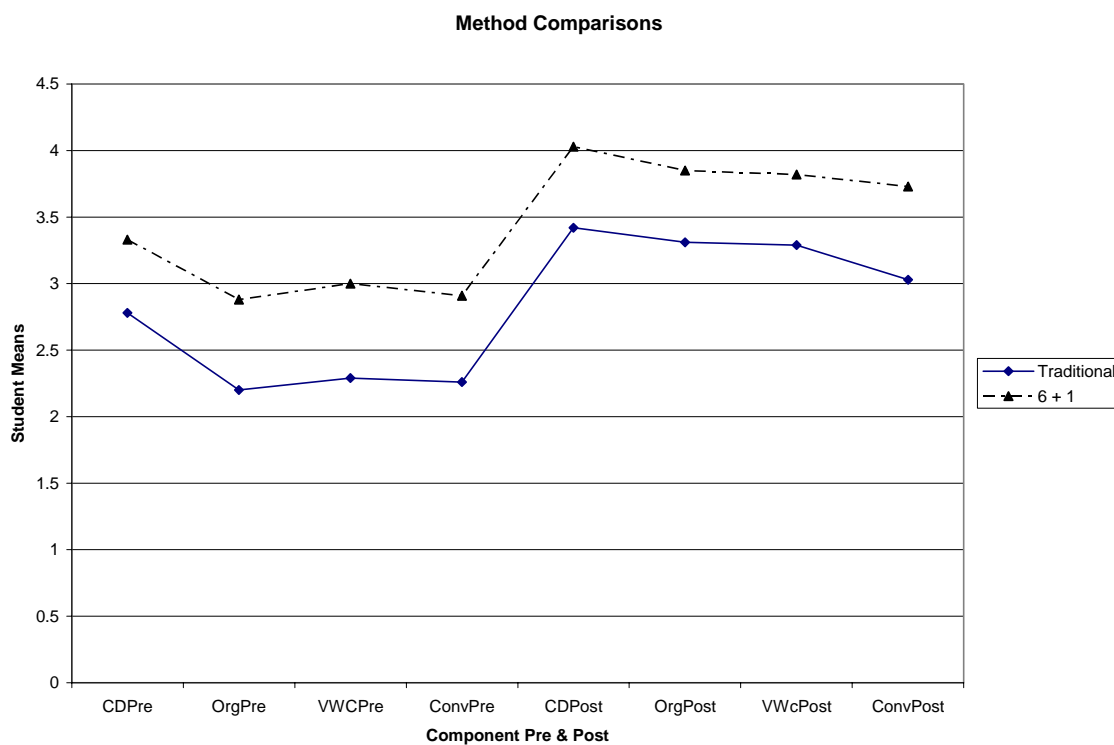
Conv = Conventions.

Figure 1

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the findings of the study. All subjects in the study showed growth from pretest to posttest as a result of the instruction in one or more component areas. The treatment group that received the 6+1 Trait Writing Model method received higher scores on average in all four component areas on the pretest than the traditional group. The treatment group also had higher posttest scores at the end of the study than the traditional group. Upon reviewing the mean gains in each component area by method in Table 9, the treatment group, 6+1 Trait method, only had greater gains in two out of the four components, content development and conventions. The traditional method displayed greater gains from pretest to posttest in the organization and voice/word choice component areas.

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Results.

A one-way between-groups analysis of covariance was conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different writing instructional methods. The treatment group consisted of the 6+1 Trait Writing Model method of instruction and the control group consisted of the traditional writing workshop method. Students were given a pretest, followed by 6 weeks of instruction, and then a posttest. Student writing was scored using a rubric with four component areas and five rating levels.

The analysis of covariance statistical test was chosen for this study because a difference existed on the pretest results between the two groups. The treatment group scored consistently higher on the pretest than the control group. As a result the pretest scores were considered the covariate in this analysis and were measured prior to the experimental manipulation. Preliminary checks of the assumptions were conducted to determine that there were no violations that would influence the outcome of the analysis.

The number of students in the control group was 65 and the number of students in the treatment group was 66. Reported scores are the results of the posttest given at the conclusion of the study. For the component area of content development, the control group had a mean score of 3.42 on the rubric with a standard deviation of .705. For the organization component, the control group had a mean score of 3.31 and a standard deviation of .748. Under the voice/word choice component the control group had a mean score of 3.29 and a standard deviation of .605. In the conventions component, the control group received a mean score of 3.03 and a standard deviation of .847.

In comparison, the treatment group received a mean score of 4.03 and a standard deviation of .877 for the content development component. For the organization component, the treatment group received a mean score of 3.85 and a standard deviation of .965. The treatment group received a mean score of 3.82 and a standard deviation of .893 in the voice/word choice component area. In the conventions component area the treatment group received a mean score of 3.73 and a standard deviation of .904. The treatment group scored on average higher than the control group on both the pretest and the posttest. This data is displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for the Analysis of Covariance (Posttest)

Method	Statistic	CD	Org.	VWC	Conv.
Traditional	N	65	65	65	65
(control)	Mean	3.42	3.31	3.29	3.03
	Std. Deviation	.705	.748	.605	.847
6+1	N	66	66	66	66
(treatment)	Mean	4.03	3.85	3.82	3.73
	Std. Deviation	.877	.965	.893	.904

Before the analysis of covariance was conducted, a test of between-subjects effects, or homogeneity of slopes, was run. The results of the homogeneity of slopes tests were not significant for any of the four component areas, (p = .770, .301, .394, .679). This ensured there was no significant interaction between the treatment and the covariate (pretest). The results for the homogeneity of slopes were satisfied.

Since the homogeneity of slopes was found not to be significant, the next step was to proceed with the one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The purpose of the test was to determine if the treatment group (6+1 Trait method) achieved greater gains on the posttest than the control group (writer's workshop) in any of the four component areas. The ANCOVA test accounted for the differences in pretest scores that existed between the two groups. The main effect for content development was found to be significantly greater gains for the 6+1 Trait method $F(1,128) = 8.877$, $p = .003$ (see means in Table 10). Results also indicated that the 6+1 Trait method was significant over the traditional method for the conventions component $F(1,128) = 7.828$, $p = .006$. A strong relationship

did exist in these two component areas between the method used and the posttest scores

when pretest scores were adjusted. The voice/word choice component area was not found

to be significant for the treatment method $F(1,128) = 3.474$, $p = .065$. The organization

component area was not found to be significant for the method used $F(1,128) = 2.473$,

$p = .118$. The effect size for content development and conventions using eta squared

measures a moderate effect at.065 and .058 which are close to .06 (Cohen, 1988). Table

11 displays these results. Organization and voice/word choice components measure a

small effect size at .019 and .026 which are close to .01.

Table 11

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (Main Effects ANCOVA Results)

Source	Statistic	CD	Org.	VWC	Conv.
Method	df	1	1	1	1
	F	8.877	2.473	3.474	7.828
	Sig. (*p*)	.003	.118	.065	.006
	Eta. Squared	.065	.019	.026	.058
	Error df	128	128	128	128
	R Squared	.276	.359	.285	.398
	Adjusted R Squared	.265	.349	.274	.389

Note. alpha = .05

Note. CD = content development; VWC = Voice/Word Choice; Org = Organization;

Conv = Conventions.

The ANCOVA test used adjusted means to determine F values. Since the pretest scores between the two method groups were different, it was necessary to use adjusted means to locate levels of significance. The analysis adjusted the means for both the treatment and control group so that a fair analysis could be conducted. A comparison of the actual means in Table 10 to the adjusted means in Table 12 show the adjustment process brings the means closer together. The ANCOVA analysis tests the relationship between the pretest scores and the posttest scores while controlling for method using adjusted means.

The adjusted means used for analysis in the content development component were (M = 3.524) for the traditional group and (M = 3.924) for the 6+1 group. In the organization component the adjusted means were (M = 3.473) for the traditional group and (M = 3.685) for the 6+1 group. The adjusted means for the voice/word choice component of the rubric were (M = 3.435) for the traditional group and (M = 3.677) for the 6+1 group. In the conventions component, the adjusted means were (M = 3.191) for the traditional group and (M = 3.570) for the 6+1 group. Table 12 shows the adjusted means that were used in the analysis of covariance.

Table 12

Estimated Marginal Means (Adjusted Means)

Method	Statistic	CD	Org.	VWC	Conv.
Traditional	Mean (a)	3.524	3.473	3.435	3.191
	Std. Error	.093	.093	.089	.094
95% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	3.340	3.289	3.260	3.005
	Upper Bound	3.707	3.657	3.611	3.376
6+1	Mean (a)	3.924	3.685	3.677	3.570
	Std. Error	.092	.092	.088	.093
95% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	3.741	3.503	3.503	3.386
	Upper Bound	4.106	3.868	3.852	3.754
	(a) Covariates evaluated:	2.59	2.54	2.65	2.59

Note. CD = content development; Org = Organization; VWC = Voice/Word Choice;

Conv = Conventions.

Summary

Descriptive statistics showed that all of the students in the study increased their writing scores from pretest to posttest as a result of the instruction in one or more component areas. The descriptive statistics shown in Table 9 also revealed the treatment group (6+1) scored consistently higher on the pretest than the control group. Because of the unequal pretest results between the two groups, the researcher conducted an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) which has the capability of adjusting for the unequal pretest scores and offers a fair analysis. The ANCOVA analysis resulted in two out of the four component areas, content development and conventions, having significant gains for the treatment group (6+1 Trait method); and the other two component areas, voice/word

choice and organization, having greater gains for the control group (writer's workshop).

Based on these findings, the hypothesis could not be supported. A more detailed

summary and a discussion of the findings are presented in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Results of the Study

The final chapter of this dissertation reviews the problem statement and the methodology involved in the study. A summary of the results and interpretations of the findings are provided. Finally, a discussion on the relationship to prior research, implications of the study, limitations of the study, and suggestions for additional research are presented.

Statement of the Problem

As was stated in chapter 1, the statement of the problem focused on the effect of the 6+1 Trait Writing Model on fifth grade overall writing achievement compared to the traditional writing workshop as measured by a rubric. The purpose of the study was to determine if the methodology of the 6+1 Trait Writing Model, which heavily emphasizes modeling from children's literature with special emphasis on the distinct traits of writing, would improve overall fifth grade student writing achievement over a period of 6 weeks. The hypothesis was the 6+1 method would yield greater gains in each of the four component areas on the rubric from pretest to posttest than the traditional writing workshop method at the end of the study. The null hypothesis stated that there would be no difference in achievement between the two method groups after 6 weeks of instruction in any of the four component areas on the rubric.

Review of the Methodology

The participants for this study were fifth grade teachers and students from two elementary schools in South Carolina. Four classes with an average of 20 students each from Sweeney Elementary School received instruction according to the 6+1 Writing

Model for 6 weeks. Four additional fifth grade classes with an average of 21 students each from Pearson Elementary School received instruction according to the writing workshop method. The total number of students involved at the beginning of the study was 162 and the total number of students who completed the study was 131. Several factors such as absenteeism, relocation, insufficient information for evaluation, or illegibility of writing for evaluation contributed to the loss of students from start to finish. Method assignment was done randomly with a coin toss. Both schools have similar demographics of socioeconomic level, enrollment, culture, and parental involvement. The participants were the fifth grade teachers and their students. The average age of the fifth graders was 10. Similar numbers of males and females were present in each school in which Sweeney Elementary had 46 boys and 33 girls, and Pearson Elementary had 45 boys and 38 girls. Student ability levels ranged from marginally below grade level, to marginally above grade level.

The South Carolina Department of Education (2006) generates an annual report card for each school providing specific information regarding the student enrollment and test scores at each school. This report showed that the two schools chosen for this study were similar in area, size, socioeconomic status, and student bodies. Each school had four classes of fifth grade students, averaging 20 students in each class. A coin was flipped to determine which school would receive the traditional approach to writing workshop, and which school would receive the 6+1 Trait Writing Method. Refer to Table 1 for enrollment comparisons between the two schools.

The rubric for this study was adapted from the South Carolina Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) which is a standards-based accountability

measurement of student achievement. The scoring rubric is modeled after the one used to measure writing achievement in South Carolina from Grades 3 through 12. It is a five point rubric measuring four specific writing components, content development, organization, voice/word choice, and conventions. The five rating levels of the rubric from least to greatest were experimenting, emerging, developing, effective, and strong. This rubric can be seen in Appendix B. The original rubric used for scoring the South Carolina PACT test from which the rubric for the study was taken can be seen in Appendix C. The researcher added a fifth rating level of strong in order to provide more differentiation and growth, the level four evaluation information for voice was completed which was not provided in the original rubric, and the word choice component was added to the voice category to match the constructs of the study. By adding the fifth rating level using anchor papers as examples and providing specific rater training, the rubric used in this study met all of the requirements of reliability and validity stated by Jonsson and Svingby (2007) and Moskal and Leydens (2000).

The researcher created two different units of instruction, one using the 6+1 Trait Method and one using the traditional writing workshop method. Each school was assigned a method. Both groups began with a pretest and ended with a posttest writing assignment using a writing prompt. These were scored using the chosen rubric seen in Appendix B. The pretest and posttest topics were different.

Following the pretest, each teacher taught the specific assigned writing instructional unit for the next 22 lessons. The study concluded when both groups took the same writing posttest. Student pretest and posttest writing was evaluated according to the rubric (Appendix B) by three hired raters. The first two raters scored each students'

writing, and the third rater scored the writing if the first two differed by more than one point in any of the four component areas. The researcher then found the mean score for the students in each of the four rubric component areas and an overall holistic score. The study focused on pretest to posttest differences and gains between the two method groups.

To analyze the findings for the study, descriptive statistics produced the gains made by each student according to the assigned method of instruction. This data was recorded and compared. The software program SPSS for Windows was used to calculate the statistics for this study.

An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) test of significance for a quasi-experimental design was used to show a difference of means between the two research groups in each of the four component areas. The ANCOVA F test of significance took into account the differences in pretest scores that existed between the two groups. The 6+1 Trait group (treatment group) scored higher on the pretest than the writer's workshop group (control group). This difference needed to be accounted for to determine if one method yielded a better outcome than the other. The ANCOVA F test evaluated whether the means on the posttest differ for the two method groups once they are adjusted for the differences on the covariate, or the pretest. Before the ANCOVA test was conducted, a test of the homogeneity-of-slopes assumption was run. In order for the ANCOVA test to be used, the homogeneity-of-slopes assumption was accepted, meaning that the slopes of the regression lines were the same for both groups. Similar regression lines were parallel. Once this was accepted and determined non-significant with no interaction, then the

ANCOVA *F* test was successfully conducted. All tests were conducted using alpha = .05.

These statistical results were presented in chapter 4.

Summary of the Results

The descriptive results of this study indicated that as a whole, all of the student

participants improved their writing scores after receiving the instruction in one or more

component areas. The sample size was 131 students total (N=131). The mean pretest

scores for the composite group were content development = 3.06, organization = 2.54,

voice/word choice = 2.65, and conventions = 2.59. At the end of the study the means

increased for the whole group on the posttest to content development = 3.73, organization

= 3.58, voice/word choice = 3.56, and conventions = 3.38. The mean average for all

students was a one point gain from pretest to posttest. An average of 5% of students had a

decrease in score and an average of 30% remained the same in one or more component

areas. An average of 42% had a one point gain, 20% obtained a two point gain, and 3%

obtained a three point gain. These composite student gains can be seen in Table 5 in

chapter 4.

The result differences by method were split evenly. The mean amount of gain was

calculated by finding the mean difference from pretest to posttest for all subjects

according to method of instruction. The mean difference for the 6+1 Trait Writing Model

group displayed greater gains in the component areas of content development and

conventions. The traditional writing workshop group displayed greater gains in

organization and voice/word choice. The results of these scores by method can be seen in

Table 13 and in greater detail in Table 8.

Table 13

Component Differences by Method

Method	Description	Content / Development	Organization	Voice/ Word Choice	Conventions
Trad.	Mean	.63	1.11	1.00	.77
6 +1	Mean	.68	.95	.80	.82

The findings for the individual results for the four different component areas by method showed the 6+1 group scored higher means on the pretest, and scored higher means on the posttest. On the pretest and the posttest, the 6+1 group had higher standard deviation scores in each of the four component areas. These findings are presented in Table 9 in chapter 4. Figure 1 displays the component means for the pretest and posttest by method in rows. In Appendix E, the graphs display the same information in columns.

The one-way between-groups analysis of covariance was conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different writing instructional methods. The results of the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were more helpful in determining what happened in the study between the two methods since the pretest scores of the two schools were different. The ANCOVA test used adjusted means to determine *F* values. As seen in Figure 1 and Table 9, the 6+1 group consistently scored higher in all four component areas. This confound, or the difference in pretest scores, impacted the statistical analysis. The ANCOVA test has the ability to take into account this confound. Prior to the ANCOVA test, a test of between-subjects effects, or homogeneity-of-slopes test was conducted. This test revealed that the homogeneity-of-slopes tests were not significant for any of the four component areas, therefore ensuring no significant interaction between the treatment and the covariate (pretest). Accepting these results, the ANCOVA test was

conducted. The ANCOVA test showed significance in two out of the four component areas. The area of content development was significant ($p = .003$) when alpha = .05, and the component area of conventions also was significant ($p = .006$) meaning that the 6+1 group achieved higher gains on the posttest as a result of the instruction. The voice/word choice component was not significant ($p = .065$) showing that the instructional method used did not effect outcomes. The component area of organization was not significant ($p = .118$) showing that the instructional method used did not effect outcomes. The ANCOVA test, by taking into account the differences in pretest scores between the two groups, found two out of four component areas were significant for the 6+1 Trait Writing Model method.

Discussion of the Results

Interpretation of the Findings.

It is important to note that all student participants in the study increased their scores from pretest to posttest in one or more component areas as a result of the instruction. The purpose of this study was to determine if the 6+1 Trait Writing Model method was superior to the traditional writing workshop in terms of improved student writing achievement. This study resulted in an even split between the four component areas on the rubric. The 6+1 method yielded greater gains in two component areas, content development and conventions. The traditional writing workshop method yielded greater gains in two other component areas, organization and voice/word choice. Since the gains are evenly split, the null hypotheses cannot be rejected. However, two out of the four component areas for this study did indicate a difference in instructional method in favor of the 6+1 Trait Writing Model.

The researcher has several possible explanations for these findings. An obvious pretest difference between the two schools is identified as the confound. Since the 6+1 group started out higher, they had less room for growth and improvement. The 6+1 method group ended with higher scores in all four component areas. The ANCOVA test revealed a level of significance in two out of four component areas. The analysis of covariance test has the ability to account for the differences in pretest scores and use adjusted means when conducting the analysis. Using the ANCOVA test, a level of significance was found for two out of four component areas, indicating that the 6+1 Trait Writing method was more effective in achieving higher student outcomes. Figure 1 and Table 8 display the differences in pretest and posttest means for both groups.

A second possible explanation for the findings lies in the methodology. The researcher provided the unit of instruction for both method groups with similar expectations. The researcher requested that all teachers reserve 30 – 45 minutes a day for four days each week specifically for writing. Both method groups received detailed lesson plans from the researcher according to their assigned method. Both method units included literature (although the 6+1 group had three times more literature to use during instruction), minilessons on writing technique, and reserved time for writing. Both method groups were required to complete the same number of writing topics as well as the same number of instructional lessons. For this study both method groups may have given writing instruction more time and perhaps a higher quality of instruction than they have done in the past. If there had been a way to conduct the study while having the control group continue with normal everyday instruction, it may have been possible that the 6+1 method would have experienced greater gains. Since the researcher provided

both method groups with quality instruction and required time for writing, both groups experienced achievement gains.

A third possible explanation for the findings is that the rubric data range was too small. A rubric with a range of six levels of measurement may be better than only five; it would provide more room for growth as well as prevent a middle measure. A combination of any of these three possibilities could have impacted the study enough to explain the findings.

Relationship to Prior Research

Many connections can be made from the results of this study to prior research. To begin with, the 6+1 Trait Writing Model incorporates a large amount of children's literature within the lessons. The theory behind the method is that children learn to write like real authors and use similar language, thus the six traits of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions become common vocabulary. Presentation was added later which is the plus one (NWREL, 2002).

Jarmer et al. (2000) emphasized the importance of the reading-writing connection. They stated that the 6+1 Trait Writing Model helps students make adaptation to literature possible. When students learn to listen to author's words and ideas, then they can in turn apply those ideas to their own writing. Cunningham and Allington (1999) wrote students are more successful in a literacy-rich classroom where authentic reading and writing activities take place. They asserted authentic reading and writing activities involve reading and writing about real things. The 6+1 Trait Writing Model is characteristic of a literacy-rich environment because a large amount of children's literature is used as a model, and children are given the opportunity to write as real writers do.

Arter et al. (1994) conducted a similar study to this one involving six classes of fifth grade students. These researchers concluded that students in the treatment group (6+1 Trait Method) received significant gains in one out of six trait areas, with two other areas approaching significance. The current study resulted in significant gains in two out of four component areas. Jarmer et al. (2000) reported in their study at Jennie Wilson Elementary School, that after three years of implementation of the 6+1 Trait Writing Method in all grades, student standardized test scores increased each consecutive year.

Learning to write through the use of literature and the 6+1 Traits not only is effective in raising test scores but also in creating strong and confident writers. (Spandel, 2005) It is important to demonstrate the writing traits in real literature for children. Using the 6+1 Trait method in the classroom as part of the daily writing instruction is effective when teachers are trained in the content and its presentation. Corden (2003) concluded from his study that providing models for writing through texts helps children to develop their awareness of how texts are constructed. He also stated that the children in the study gradually developed a literary language from discussing texts and were able to apply it to their own writing.

This researcher concluded through the findings of the current study that both quality instruction and time for writing improve student writing achievement. Graham et al. (2007) reported research has shown that students' writing does not improve simply through having the desire or time to write. They contended strategic quality instruction is needed as well. In the current study, this researcher provided the treatment and the control groups with strategic quality instruction through two different methods which resulted in all student participants achieving writing gains. Higgins, Miller, and

Wegmann (2006) concluded from their research that by combining the writer's workshop, process writing, and instruction on the 6+1 Traits helps students meet state standards in writing and develops skills needed to be effective writers.

Cotton & Northwest Regional Educational Lab (1988) reported on what research says about teacher training and student writing achievement. They concluded from the research that staff development programs do not necessarily have to follow a specific model in order to be effective. Training teachers to use a process approach to writing with ongoing skill-building lessons are essential for effective teacher inservice programs to improve student writing achievement.

One reason for the success of the 6+1 Trait Writing Model is its use of a specifically-created rubric encompassing the six traits for the component areas. The study previously mentioned by Arter et al. (1994) focused on the use of the 6+1 Trait rubric and its effects on student writing achievement. Teaching students about rubrics and using them as a guide for their writing does improve writing skills. Schamber and Mahoney (2006) also completed a study involving the use of rubrics. They determined that using rubrics develops critical thinking skills in students by teaching them to self-evaluate their own writing. It provides clear expectations of what a successful paper entails. The rubric used in the current study was similar to the 6+1 Trait rubric involving four component areas: content development, organization, voice/word choice, and conventions. This rubric can be seen in Appendix B. The rubric used in the study was taken from the South Carolina PACT test rubric which can be seen in Appendix C.

Prior research showed involving the reading-writing connection, using children's literature as a model for writing, requiring increased time for writing as well as

implementing strategic instruction, and using rubrics lead to increased student writing achievement. The 6+1 Trait Writing Model method used in the treatment group of this study included all of these things. These strategies were also included on a smaller scale in the control group, and as a result, both groups experienced significant gains in achievement.

Implications of the Findings

Several implications can be drawn from this study. Because of No Child Left Behind, writing is a tested academic skill in Grades 3-12 in most states. When instructional time becomes limited in the elementary classroom, writing is usually the first content area to go. Quality instruction and committed time for writing is difficult to find in elementary schools. The majority of elementary schools do not have a required curriculum or specific method adopted by the district. There can be huge inconsistencies within schools, and even from teacher to teacher, in writing instructional methods. Many elementary teachers, both veteran and beginning teachers, feel inadequate when it comes to teaching writing to their students. The goal of this study was to see if the 6+1 Trait Writing Method increased student writing achievement over time. The results showed that it did significantly improve writing, but only in two out of four component areas on the rubric as compared to the traditional writer's workshop method. However, other implications can be gathered from the study.

First, in order to improve student achievement in writing, teachers need to provide reserved time for writing on a daily basis. Teachers need to maximize instructional time as much as possible so that writing instruction does not get slighted or ignored.

The second thing that can be learned from the study is that schools need to choose a writing curriculum and then train their teachers on how to implement it. Quality instruction has been proven to increase standardized test scores in writing. When there are inconsistencies from teacher to teacher and grade level to grade level, students are at a disadvantage. The quality of writing instruction may not be the same for all students and some may not receive instruction in writing at all. To prevent this, districts and schools need to choose a method carefully and implement it. The 6+1 Trait Model has been proven effective as a method to teach students to write like real writers and to create authentic writing pieces. The process approach to writing method has also been proven effective.

A third implication from this study is the fact children learn to write better when literature is used as a model. This method relies on children's literature to teach the individual traits and vocabulary for writing. Children use and adopt a professional writer's language when using the 6+1 traits. Children learn about writing from reading and hearing real books by real authors. From hearing stories, they develop their own sense of story, plot, characterization, and setting. Children can borrow ideas from literature to improve their own writing. Many teachers do not realize the impact children's literature has on student writing.

The last implication from this study is the value of using a rubric as part of writing instruction to increase student writing achievement. The rubric in this study was used as a part of the instruction in both method groups. Providing a rubric during the instructional phase gives students a goal for writing, provides the elements upon which

they will be scored, and assists children in self-evaluating their own writing. Many teachers do not know the advantages of using a rubric during writing instruction.

Although the null hypotheses could not be rejected in this study, several implications can be made. Providing time for writing, implementing quality instruction which includes literature, and using a scoring rubric during instruction all help to increase student writing achievement. The fact that each of these things were provided for both groups may have contributed to the inconclusive findings of this study. Both groups experienced gains in writing achievement.

Limitations of This Study

One limitation in this study was that the researcher provided both method groups with quality instructional units. The experimental group received a unit and training on the 6+1 Trait Writing Model, and the control group, the traditional writing workshop, also received a unit of instruction in a general writing workshop. The study may have resulted differently had the control group continued with its current writing instruction.

Another limitation, as discussed earlier, was that both groups were required to provide a specific time for writing, to include children's literature as a model, and to use the provided rubric during instruction. These elements have been shown by research to improve student writing achievement and indeed all students involved in the study experienced gains from pretest to posttest as a result of the instruction, regardless of which method was used.

Third, the length of the study may have been too short. Teachers struggled to get all of the instruction and writing completed within the 6 week time period. The study may be improved by increasing the instructional time to a semester or an entire year.

Finally, the key limitation of this study was the experimental group received higher scores overall on the pretest. This demonstrated unequal abilities among students between the two elementary schools, even though the two schools were very similar in academics and demographics. Because the experimental group scored higher on the pretest, it had less room for growth on the five point rubric scale. The range of scale used may not have been great enough. However, the ANCOVA analysis test was able to account for these differences through the use of adjusted means.

Recommendations for Future Research

One recommendation for future research would be to increase the length of time for the study to be conducted. A semester or an academic year might yield interesting results. Another possibility would be to involve a larger sample size and increase the number of schools involved in the study. In addition to focusing on the instructional method used, one could study the effect of the instruction on boys versus girls to determine which gender responded better to each of the methods used. Additional writing programs and methods could be studied as well, such as, the Step Up To Writing Program. Finally, a study could be conducted on the effect of providing staff development and teacher training in writing methods on student writing achievement.

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Appendix A

Teacher Survey

Teacher Survey

1.   Teacher's name:_____

2. Class: _____

3. Including the present, how many years have you been teaching? _____

4. What is your highest degree completed? _____

5. How many students in your class? _____

6. In your estimation, how many students in your classroom are performing:

    _____above grade level

    _____on grade level

    _____below grade level

7. Please provide your classroom numbers for each of the following:

    _____boys   _____Caucasian

    _____girls   _____African-American

                                  _____Other

8. What did you like about the writing curriculum provided? _____

    _____

9. What did you dislike about the curriculum? _____

    _____

10. Please explain how you felt the curriculum helped /didn't help your students'

    writing achievement. _____

Appendix B

Rubric for Scoring Student Writing

Rubric for Scoring Student Writing

SCORE	CONTENT/ DEVELOPMENT	ORGANIZATION	VOICE/ WORD CHOICE	CONVENTIONS
5**	• Narrow and manageable topic • Precise, clear, and answers readers' questions • Relevant and accurate details • Shows insight into topic • Exceptional creativity in plot and supporting details	• Inviting introduction and satisfying sequencing conclusion • Masterful sequencing • Artful pacing used for stylistic effect • Structure showcases the central ideas or theme	• Compelling and engaging • Takes effective risks • Reflects interest in and commitment to topic • Purpose is clear and powerful • Powerful and engaging words • Artful use of figurative language • Words/language create a meaningful picture	• Spelling correct even on more difficult words • Accurate and creative use of punctuation and capitalization • Grammar usage contribute to clarity and style • Sound and creative paragraphing
4	• Presents a clear central idea about the topic • Developed central idea with specific details • Sustains focus on central idea throughout the writing • Writer understands topic	• Has a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. • Provides a smooth progression of ideas throughout the writing.	• **Uses precise and/or vivid vocabulary appropriate for the topic • Phrasing is effective, not predictable or obvious • Varies sentence structure to promote rhythmic reading Strongly aware of audience and task; tone is consistent and appropriate	• Minor errors in standard written English may be present.
3	• Presents a central idea about the topic • Develops the central idea but details are general, or the elaboration may be uneven • Focus may shift slightly, but is generally sustained	• Has an introduction, body, and conclusion. • Provides a logical progression of ideas throughout the writing.	• **Uses some precise and/or vivid vocabulary appropriate for the topic • Phrasing is somewhat effective, not predictable or obvious • Somewhat varies sentence structure to promote rhythmic reading • Somewhat aware of audience and task; tone is fairly consistent and appropriate	• Errors in standard written English may be present; however, these errors do not interfere with the writer's meaning.

2	• Central idea may be unclear • Details may be sparse; more information is needed to clarify the central idea • Focus may shift or be lost causing confusion for the reader	• Attempts an introduction, body, and conclusion; however, one or more of these components could be weak or ineffective. • Provides a simplistic, repetitious, or somewhat random progression of ideas throughout the writing.	• Uses both general and precise vocabulary • Phrasing may not be effective, and may be predictable or obvious • Some sentence variety results in reading that is somewhat rhythmic; may be mechanical • Aware of audience and task; tone is appropriate	• A pattern of errors in more than one category (e.g., capitalization, spelling, punctuation, sentence formation) of standard written English is present; these errors interfere somewhat with the writer's meaning.
1	• There is no clear central idea • Details are absent or confusing • There is no sense of focus	• Attempts an introduction, body, and conclusion; however, one or more of these components could be absent or confusing. • Presents information in a random or illogical order throughout the writing.	• Uses simple vocabulary • Phrasing repetitive or confusing • There is little sentence variety; reading is monotonous • There is little awareness of audience and task; tone may be inappropriate	• Frequent and serious errors in more than one category (e.g., capitalization, spelling, punctuation, sentence formation) of standard written English are present; these errors severely interfere with the writer's meaning.
B	Blank			
OT	Off Topic			
IS	Insufficient amount of original writing to evaluate			
UR	Unreadable or illegible			

For the purposes of scoring Conventions, "interference" is defined as that which would impede meaning for a reader other than an educator or professional reader.

** Section was changed from the original format and adapted to the needs of the study.

1 = Experimenting

2 = Emerging

3 = Developing

4 = Effective

5 = Strong

Appendix C

South Carolina PACT Rubric

SCORE	CONTENT/ DEVELOPMENT	ORGANIZATION	VOICE	CONVENTIONS
4	• Presents a clear central idea about the topic • Fully develops the central idea with specific, relevant details • Sustains focus on central idea throughout the writing	• Has a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. • Provides a smooth progression of ideas throughout the writing.		• Minor errors in standard written English may be present.
3	• Presents a central idea about the topic • Develops the central idea but details are general, or the elaboration may be uneven • Focus may shift slightly, but is generally sustained	• Has an introduction, body, and conclusion. • Provides a logical progression of ideas throughout the writing.	• Uses precise and/or vivid vocabulary appropriate for the topic • Phrasing is effective, not predictable or obvious • Varies sentence structure to promote rhythmic reading • Strongly aware of audience and task; tone is consistent and appropriate	• Errors in standard written English may be present; however, these errors do not interfere with the writer's meaning.
2	• Central idea may be unclear • Details may be sparse; more information is needed to clarify the central idea • Focus may shift or be lost causing confusion for the reader	• Attempts an introduction, body, and conclusion; however, one or more of these components could be weak or ineffective. • Provides a simplistic, repetitious, or somewhat random progression of ideas throughout the writing.	• Uses both general and precise vocabulary • Phrasing may not be effective, and may be predictable or obvious • Some sentence variety results in reading that is somewhat rhythmic; may be mechanical • Aware of audience and task; tone is appropriate	• A pattern of errors in more than one category (e.g., capitalization, spelling, punctuation, sentence formation) of standard written English is present; these errors interfere somewhat with the writer's meaning.
1	• There is no clear central idea • Details are absent or confusing • There is no sense of focus	• Attempts an introduction, body, and conclusion; however, one or more of these components could be absent or confusing. • Presents information in a random or illogical order throughout the writing.	• Uses simple vocabulary • Phrasing repetitive or confusing • There is little sentence variety; reading is monotonous • There is little awareness of audience and task; tone may be inappropriate	• Frequent and serious errors in more than one category (e.g., capitalization, spelling, punctuation, sentence formation) of standard written English are present; these errors severely interfere with the writer's meaning.
B	Blank			
OT	Off Topic			
IS	Insufficient amount of original writing to evaluate			
UR	Unreadable or illegible			

South Carolina Department of Education (2006). *Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT) Rubric information.*

Appendix D

Unit Outlines

Unit outline for 6+1 Trait Writing Method

6 +1 Trait Writing Method

Pretest	**Idea** Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street	M: revision A Fine, Fine, School	M: Editing Marks Author's Chair
Word Choice Under the Quilt of Night	M: Imagery The Wolf who cried Boy	M: Senses Hello Harvest Moon	Author's Chair
Sentence Fluency The Web Files (Reader's Theater)	M: Conciseness John Henry	M: Strong verbs Dogteam	Author's Chair
Voice Voices in the Park	M: Figures of Speech The Diary of a Worm	M: Characterization The Other Side	Author's Chair
Organization The Secret Shortcut	M: Setting Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type	M: Transitions The Journey	Author's Chair
Conventions Punctuation takes a vacation	M: Adjectives Hairy, Scary, Ordinary: What is an Adjective?	**Presentation** The Spider and the Fly Author's Chair	**Post Test**

M= Minilesson,   __ = Literature Selection

Book List for 6+1 Trait Method

Browne, A. (1998). *Voices in the park.* New York, NY: DK Publishing, Inc.

Cleary, B.P. (2000). *Hairy, scary, ordinary what is an adjective?* Minneapolis, MN:

 Carolrhoda Books, Inc.

Creech, S. (2001). *A fine, sine school.* China: Joanna Cotler Books.

Cronin, D. (2000). *Click, clack, moo: Cows that type.* New York, NY: Simon &

 Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Cronin, D. (2003). *Dairy of a worm.* New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

DiTerlizzi, T. & Howitt, M. (2002). *The spider and the fly.* New York, NY: Simon &

 Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Fletcher, R. (2003). *Hello, harvest moon.* New York, NY. Clarion Books.

Hartman, B. (2002). *The wolf who cried boy.* New York, NY: Puffin Books.

Hopkinson, D. (2002). *Under the quilt of night.* New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.

Lester, J. (1994). *John henry.* New York, NY: Puffin Books.

Palatini. M. (2001). *The web files.* New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

Paulson, G. (1993). *Dogteam.* New York, NY: Dragonfly Books.

Pulver, R. (2003). *Punctuation takes a vacation.* New York, NY: Holiday House.

Schotter, R. (1997) *Nothing ever happens on 90th street.* New York, NY: Orchard

 Books.

Stewart, S. (2001). *The journey.* New York, NY: Farrar Straus Giroux.

Teague, M. (1996). *The secret shortcut.* New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

Woodson, J. (2001). *The other side.* New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Unit outline for Traditional Writer's Workshop Method

Writing Workshop Method

Pretest	<u>Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street</u>	M: revision	M: Editing Marks Author's Chair
<u>The Diary of a Worm</u>	M: Conciseness	M: Strong verbs	Author's Chair
<u>The Secret Shortcut</u>	M: Effective Leads	M: Effective Transitions	Author's Chair
<u>The Relatives Came</u>	M: Developing Imagery	M: Senses	Author's Chair
<u>Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type</u>	M: Setting	M: Figures of Speech	Author's Chair
<u>Jubal's Wish</u>	M: Characterization	Author's Chair	**Post Test**

<u>M</u>= Minilesson   ___ = Literature

Book List for Writer's Workshop Method

Cronin, D. (2000). *Click, clack, moo: Cows that type.* New York, NY: Simon &

    Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Cronin, D. (2003). *Dairy of a worm.* New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

Rylant, C. (1985). *The relatives came.* New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.

Schotter, R. (1997) *Nothing ever happens on 90th street.* New York, NY: Orchard
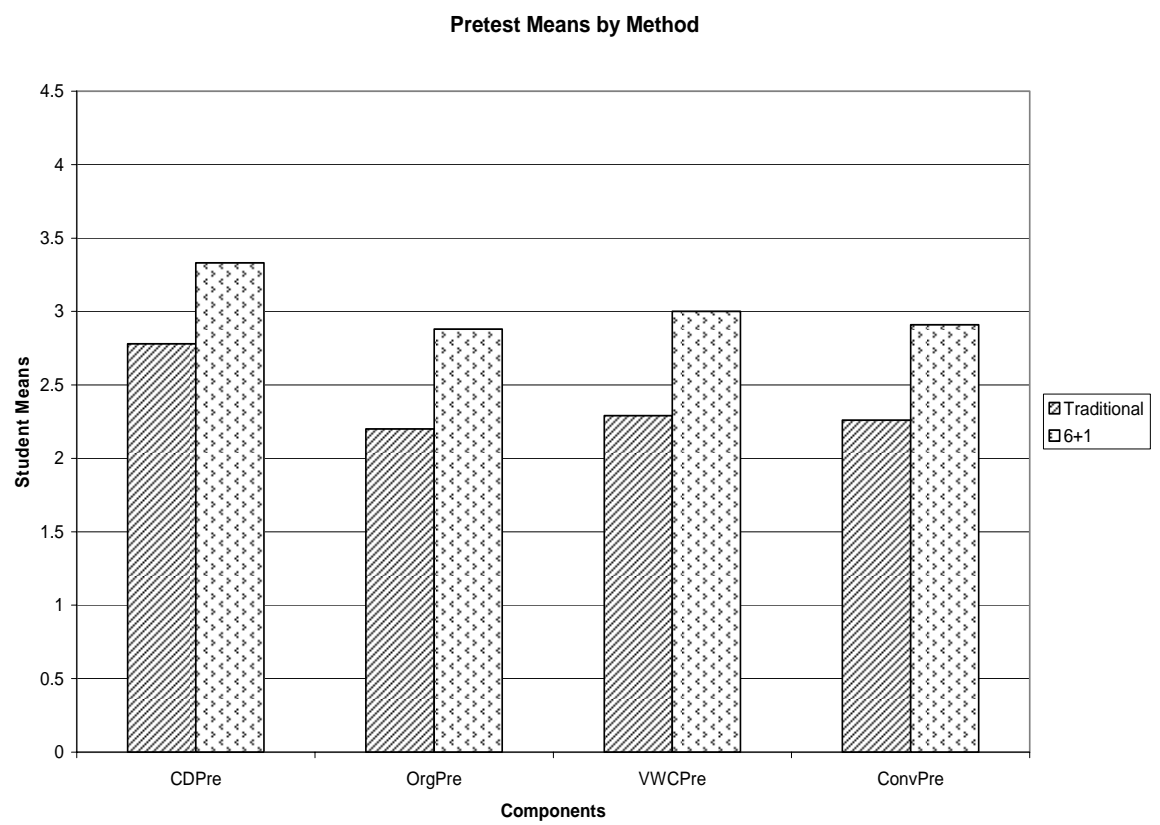
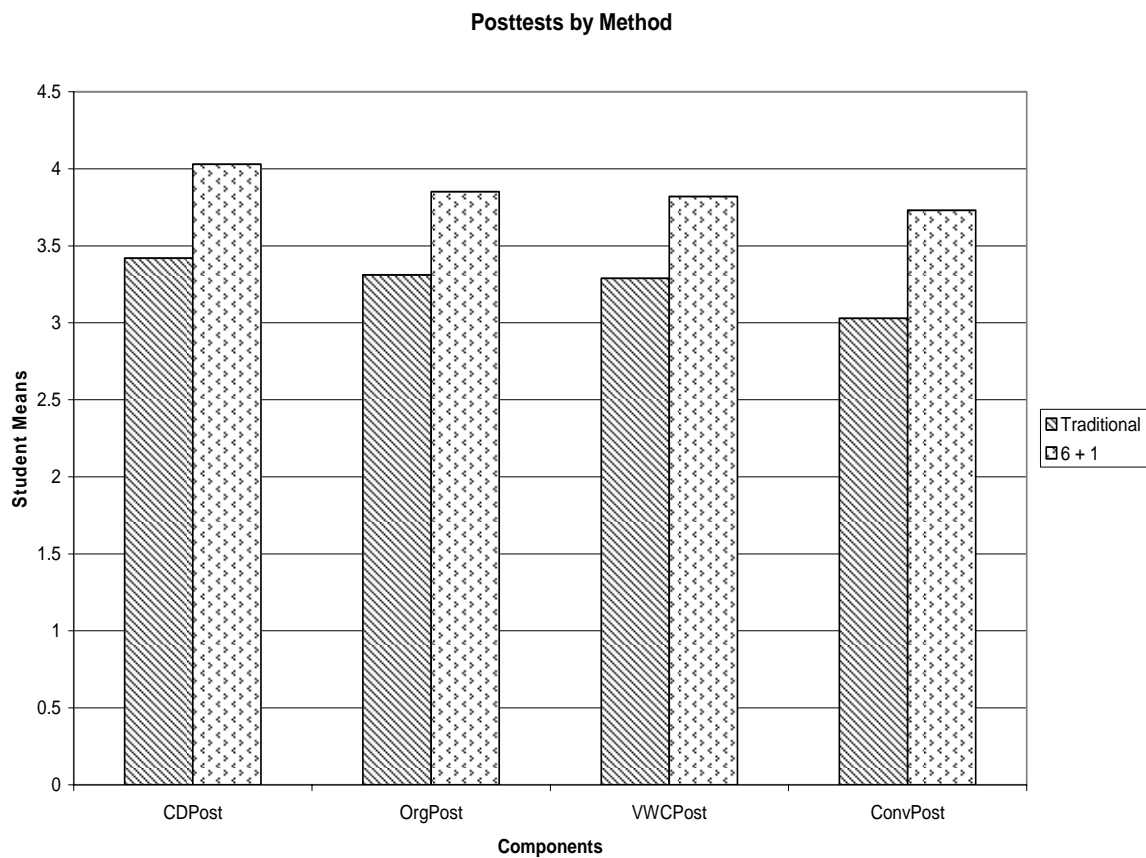   Books.

Teague, M. (1996). *The secret shortcut.* New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

Wood, A. (2000). *Jubal's wish.* New York, NY: The Blue Sky Press.

Appendix E

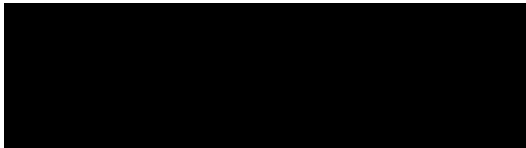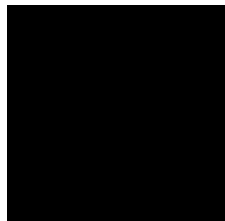Bar Graphs of Pretest and Posttest Means

Bar Graphs of Pretest and Posttest Means

Pretest Means by Method

Posttests by Method

Appendix F

School District Permission Paper

Kim J. Bagwell, Elementary Coordinator

February 6, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Mrs. Nancy K. DeJarnette has been given permission to work with two ▮▮▮▮ County Schools during the spring of 2008 to collect data for her research project. Should you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me at the number listed above.

Sincerely,

Kim J. Bagwell
Coordinator of Early Childhood/Elementary Education