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ABSTRACT

A comparison of students' and teachers' perceptions of the writing process

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This study was an attempt to view the writing process through the eyes of the students. It was an effort to discover what students believe about writing, specifically about the social aspects and the process of writing. In addition, teachers were questioned to determine if they could accurately report what students believe about writing. Questionnaires were completed by 80 fourth-grade students and 3 fourth-grade teachers in a middle-class, suburban district. Follow-up interviews were conducted with 5 students and 1 teacher. Findings showed that students value being creative and choosing their own topic. Students also stated that content and mechanics, followed closely by neatness, were the most important aspects of good writing. Results of teachers' reports of student beliefs were mixed. When reporting which genres students enjoy the most, teachers accurately reported fictional stories, letters and journals. However, teachers believed that students enjoyed the social aspects (sharing and discussing their writing with others) more than the students actually did. Students reported that they preferred the private aspects of writing (drawing pictures, being creative and typing).

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Writing instruction has become more socially constructed and student-centered in today's classroom. The current objective in writing instruction is to help students see the value of this social interaction as well as to view writing as a recursive process, approaching it in a nonlinear way. As a result, it is important to understand what students believe about writing to determine if these objectives are being met. This study was an effort to do exactly that.

When the goal is a student-centered classroom, it is necessary to ensure that the students' voices are being heard. Previous research in writing has focused on what teachers believe about writing. Teachers have been surveyed and interviewed. Observations have been made of class instruction, conferencing, and other writing activities. However, few studies have included student perspectives. Those that did include student perspectives focused on one specific writing issue rather than the entire writing process. The few studies that compared students' perspectives to teachers' perspectives resulted in conflicting findings. This leads to the question, "Can we rely on teacher reported beliefs to accurately tell us what students think about writing?"

Given the lack of research from the students' perspective about writing, the main focus of this study was to determine what students' perspectives are. It is important to focus on the student voice because student perspectives represent the heart of student-centered classrooms. It is also important to ensure that teachers are aware of, and accurately reporting, their students' beliefs. As a result, teachers in this study were also surveyed and interviewed on what they think their students believe about writing. The student beliefs were then compared to the assumptions being made by the teachers to determine if teachers truly know how their students view and feel about writing.

In short, this research focused on three questions relating to student perspectives of writing:

- (1) Do students view social interaction as a valuable and essential part of the writing process?
- (2) On which part of the writing process do students place the most importance?
- (3) Do teachers accurately report their students' beliefs about the writing process?

Theoretical framework

There are many theories that frame the thought process behind this study. First and foremost is the belief that process writing is a positive change in the instruction of writing. Literacy has always been a main focus in formal education. Writing instruction began with lessons on handwriting, spelling, and correct punctuation. Writing was viewed by most, in the 1970's, as a linear process in which mastery of the parts would result in mastery of the whole (Bridge & Hiebert, 1985). However, in today's classroom, writing has taken on a new form (Applebee, 2000; Bridge, Compton-Hall & Cantrell, 1997). During the 1980's, a new idea about how writing should be taught in the classroom began to emerge. Researchers such as Graves (1983), Calkins (1983, 1986), Atwell (1987), and Murray (1982) began advocating a type of writing instruction that focused on modeling, drafting, student choice, sharing of writing, social interaction, and conferencing. This idea is commonly referred to as the writing process. This process is defined in various ways (Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels & Woodside-Jiron, 2000), but the one aspect all the definitions share is the idea that writing is a social process.

Writing process instruction shifts the attention from teacher-directed to more student-focused; the student is in control of the process. The teacher is a guide but the students have more control over their writing and over the process of the writing. The students are actively involved in the creation of their writing piece and are given the opportunity to fine tune their piece and obtain feedback about the piece prior to teacher evaluation of it. However, this type of instruction requires that a teacher has a relationship with his or her students that fosters student-led conversations during conferencing versus a teacher helping students make changes considered necessary by the teacher (Heard, 1989).

Social interaction is an essential part of the writing process (Vygotsky, 1978; Bakhtin, 1986). Vygotsky's (1978) theory states that for writers to learn they need to be engaged in social interactions that focus on writing tasks the writer cannot do alone but can accomplish with some guidance. This theory focused research on teacher-student and student-student conferencing in writing instruction and an attempt to determine what that conversation should look like and the complications that differing ethnic or cultural beliefs may have on the conversation. Bakhtin's (1986) theory is based on the idea that each piece of writing is composed of the writer's past interactions with others and of anticipated future interactions. This points out the complexity of writing in that students are trying to compose a writing piece that incorporates many voices, sometimes contradictory ones, for the purpose of a dual audience comprised of teacher and peers.

Finally, an understanding of the writing process, by both the teacher and the students, is vital in creating effective instruction. The writing process is based on the belief that students are capable of writing in the same fashion that professional authors

write, with purpose and passion (Romano, 1987). Students go through a recursive process rather than a linear process to create a writing piece. Students draft, discuss, revise, ask questions, share thoughts and revise some more until the piece takes the desired form. Students are given choice of what to write, how to edit their writing, in what areas of their writing to ask for help, and what parts of their writing to share. These choices given to the students allow them to feel a sense of ownership over their writing. Teachers are expected to model writing for their students and write with their students. Discussion, or conferencing, is a means for students to receive feedback and advice about their writing from peers and teachers. It is through this socializing that students learn the most about the writing process and what makes good writing. Calkins (1994) stresses that the most important aspect of this process is that the students learn something that will help them with future written pieces.

Literature Review

Writing is a relatively new area of study (Sperling & Freedman, 2001). In the past decade, as such study has gained momentum, assumptions and theories have begun to take shape. Writing research began with a focus on the cognitive perspective and was recognized as a key factor in students' academic life. The generally accepted cognitive perspective in writing is that the process of writing is a set of distinct thinking processes that occur during the planning, translating, and reviewing stages of writing. Research suggests that these stages are not linear but recursive in nature. The stages are goal directed and incorporate problem-solving strategies. Studies were conducted to compare how experts and novices tackle the problem-solving aspects of writing differently.

In addition to the cognitive, current research incorporates social and cultural perspectives. Writers are viewed as members of a social and cultural community and researched in and out of academic settings. Connections between people and their environment are explored to discover what influence those factors have on writing. The social and cultural perspectives in writing research have been formulated around the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1986). Continued focus on the social aspects of writing has led to perceptions about writing becoming an important topic of study. In order to understand what is happening socially with writing, we must have knowledge of what people (students and teachers) believe about writing.

Teacher beliefs have been a main focus in writing research. Several studies have focused on what teachers believe about writing (Bridge, Compton-Hall & Cantrell, 1997; Bridge & Hiebert, 1985; Brindley & Schneider, 2002; Graham, Harris, MacArthur, & Fink, 2002; Johnston, 2001; Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels & Woodside-Jiron, 2000; Petruzzella, 1996; Wang & Odell, 2003). Most of these studies focused on what teachers believe about writing instruction and what influences their writing instruction (Brindley & Schneider, 2002; Graham, Harris, MacArthur, & Fink, 2002; Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels & Woodside-Jiron, 2000; Wang & Odell, 2003). Two studies, while still focusing on beliefs about instruction, were narrower in their research. Petruzzella (1996) focused on what teachers believe about grammar instruction and Johnston (2001) focused on what teachers believe about spelling instruction. The final two studies (Bridge, Compton-Hall & Cantrell, 1997; Bridge & Hiebert, 1985) examined, from the teachers' perceptions, the amount and kind of writing in which students were engaged during class. Bridge, Compton-Hall, and Cantrell (1997) duplicated the Bridge and Hiebert (1985) study in

order to determine how writing instruction had changed over those 12 years. They found that time spent on writing had doubled and that there was more emphasis on the process than on the product when compared to 1985.

A few studies have focused solely on student beliefs about writing (Bradley, 2001; Fang, 1996; Shook, Marrion & Ollila, 2003; Wray, 1993). The students in these studies were asked questions about what good writing looks like, the purpose of writing, and student preferences in writing. Bradley (2001) and Wray (1993) both examined what students view as good writing. In both studies, spelling and neatness were mentioned most often by the students. While Bradley only interviewed first graders, Wray interviewed students in grades 2-6 and discovered that, in addition to neatness, younger students focused mainly on mechanics and the older students tended to balance mechanics with content when describing good writing. Bradley (2001) and Shook, Marrion and Ollila (2003) found that a majority of students enjoyed writing. In the Bradley study, 84% of the students stated that they liked to write and in the Shook et al. study, 76% of the students stated that they were happy while writing. When asked why they write, Bradley found that 57% of the students stated enjoyment as the reason. Shook et al. found that 38% of the students wrote to learn or improve skills and 20% wrote for enjoyment. Shook et al. also asked if the students felt they were good writers and who gave them the most help with their writing. They found that 62% of the students believed that they were good writers. For 35% of the students, parents gave the most help with writing and teachers came in second with 32%. Friends were only mentioned 12% of the time. None of these studies asked students about what motivated them to write or how they felt about sharing their writing with others.

Only two studies actually compared the beliefs of students with those of their teachers (Fang, 1996; Bradley, 2001). The focus for both of those studies was the concept of good writing. After interviewing students and teachers in three first grade classrooms, Bradley found that what the teachers emphasized about good writing did not necessarily correlate with what the students emphasized. In Bradley's study, two teachers emphasized process while the third teacher emphasized technical skills. However, during the student interviews, the majority of students in each classroom emphasized technical skills.

Fang (1996) did not focus on what was emphasized by teacher and students but only on the categories mentioned when describing good writing and found that many of the categories mentioned by the teacher and the students were similar. Fang interviewed one teacher and fifteen students in a fourth grade classroom. The teacher mentioned substance, mechanics, style, vocabulary, and sequencing when describing good writing. The students mentioned elaborations (details), vocabulary, sequencing, punctuation and capitalization. No comparisons were made, in either the Fang (1996) or Bradley (2001) study, between students' and teachers' preferences in writing, feelings about the process of writing, or reasons for writing.

Data was collected through various ways in these studies. Most studies collected data through either interviews (Bradley, 2001; Fang, 1996; Johnston, 2001; Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels & Woodside-Jiron, 2000; Petruzzella, 1996; Shook, Marrion & Ollila, 2003; Wray, 1993) or questionnaires (Bridge, Compton-Hall & Cantrell, 1997; Bridge & Hiebert, 1985; Brindley & Schneider, 2002; Graham, Harris, MacArthur & Fink, 2002). Only one study combined a questionnaire with an interview (Wang & Odell,

2003). Other studies were able to use triangulation through adding observations (Bridge, Compton-Hall & Cantrell, 1997; Bridge & Hiebert, 1985) or artifacts (Bradley, 2001; Bridge & Hiebert, 1985; Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels & Woodside-Jiron, 2000).

Although all of the studies focused on perceptions of writing, each took a different approach. Due to the extensive range of specific research questions, the findings of the studies were quite diverse. Several studies found that there were many influences on teachers' writing instruction (Bridge, Compton-Hall & Cantrell, 1997; Brindley & Schneider, 2002; Fang, 1996; Johnston, 2001; Wang & Odell, 2003). Fellow teachers, administrators, personal beliefs, and state testing were all cited as examples that influenced writing instruction. However, none of those studies cited student beliefs as an influence on teacher beliefs or instruction. The two studies that compared teacher beliefs with student beliefs had conflicting findings. Fang (1996) found that there was a high correlation between teacher and student beliefs on the subject of what makes writing good. Bradley (2001) had mixed findings about the relationship between student and teacher beliefs when focusing on what was emphasized when describing good writing.

The review of research clearly demonstrates the need for more focus on students' perspectives about writing, and the need to take a closer look at the relationship between teacher and student beliefs. Rarely are students asked to give their perspectives about writing. When students are asked questions, they are asked to either give explanations of good writing, the purpose of writing, or their preferences in writing. While those questions address parts of the writing process, looked at separately, they do not give a clear understanding of the whole picture from the students' perspective. Additional research is needed to explore in more depth how students feel about the different aspects

of the writing process. Furthermore, studies that compared teacher and student beliefs had conflicting results. Additional studies are needed to help resolve that conflict as well.

Rationale

The purpose of this study was to focus on student perspectives of writing. The students' perspectives were then compared to the perspectives of their teachers in order to determine if the assumptions being made by the teachers were true. This student-focused instruction in writing is becoming wide spread and several studies have been done researching the effectiveness of it and teacher's beliefs about it (e.g., Bradley, 2001; Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels & Woodside-Jiron, 2000). Teachers have been interviewed, conferencing has been observed, students have been watched, and assessments have been made. All of these things have been done in an attempt to validate that this process is an effective one. However, all of this research has looked at the writing process from either the teacher's view or an outside observer's view and has relied on two major assumptions: (1) a belief that students' thoughts about the learning do not differ substantially from their teacher's beliefs and (2) a belief that all teachers will be able to create the necessary relationship between themselves and students and facilitate relationships among students to promote the desired learning environment (Walker, 1992). It is important that teachers pay close attention to the beliefs and expectations that students bring to the writing process because those factors shape how and whether the students will choose to embrace the instruction given by the teacher (Applebee, 2000). If the teacher's instruction and students' beliefs are not compatible, then the instruction will not be effective (Elen & Clarebout, 2004).

Several researchers have stressed the importance of clearly understanding student perspectives. Bradley (2001), Fang (1996), and Shook et al. (2003) stated that finding out what young writers understand about writing would be valuable information to use in the classroom. According to Wray (1993), the conversations help the teacher to know which aspects about writing are the most bothersome to the student at that time. According to Bradley (2001), the conversations lead students to verbalize what they believe about quality writing and that the more they verbalize it, the more likely they will be able to notice it and do it. Wray (1993) made the comparison that similar research with reading (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Johns, 1974) has proven to be valuable for educators. Johns (1974) compared children's concept of reading to their reading ability and found a significant positive correlation between children's concept of reading and their reading achievement. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) focused on students' perceptions of reading instruction and how that influenced feelings about reading. They concluded that reading instruction viewed as personally relevant by the students resulted in more positive feelings towards reading.

The understanding of students' perspectives about writing, and how those perspectives compare to what the teachers believed the students were thinking, will help teachers to make good instructional decisions. By making sure that teachers and students are coming from the same frame of mind, more can be accomplished in the classroom. This study is different from past research in that rather than focusing on what teachers believe about writing – or observing students during the writing process – the study focused on what students believe about writing and compared those beliefs to their teachers' beliefs.

Methods

This research focused on three questions relating to student perspectives of the writing process: (1) Do students view social interaction as a valuable and essential part of the writing process? (2) On which part of the writing process do students place the most importance? (3) Do teachers accurately report their students' beliefs about the writing process? An attempt to answer all these questions was made through questionnaires and interviews of students and teachers.

Participants

The participants for this study were fourth grade students in a middle-class, suburban district. Three of the five elementary schools in that district were selected. The three elementary schools involved in this study were all K-5 schools. They are from a district located on the fringe of a large city. The populations of the schools range from 376 to 721. Two of the three schools have Title 1 programs. In each school, over 95% of the students are white with the remaining percentage being a mix of Asian, African-American, Hispanic, and Indian. In each school, one language arts teacher and her corresponding classes participated. The schools and teachers were conveniently selected based on availability and accessibility (see Appendixes A-G for recruitment/permission letters and consent/assent forms).

A total of 164 students were asked to participate. Of those students, 83 received parental permission to participate and 80 actual participated, a response rate of 49% (see Table 1). The classroom teachers were asked to identify the participating students as high, average, or struggling writers. In school A, 44 students had permission to participate. Of these students, 14 were considered by their teacher to be high ability

writers, 20 were considered average writers, and 10 were considered struggling writers. In school B, 25 students had permission to participate. (However, only 24 participated due to one student being absent on the day the questionnaire was completed.) Of these students, 14 were considered by their teachers to be high ability writers, 5 were considered average writers, and 6 were considered struggling writers. In school C, 14 students had permission to participate. (However, only 12 students participated due to two students being absent the day the questionnaire was completed.) Of these 14 students, 7 were considered by their teacher to be high ability writers, 3 were considered average writers, and 4 were considered struggling writers.

Table 1

Participants

Schools	Number of students	Number that consented	Number that participated	Number of high writers	Number of average writers	Number of low writers
School A	53	44	44	14	20	10
School B	63	25	24	15	5	6
School C	48	14	12	7	3	4
Total	164	83	80	43%	34%	24%

Data Sources

Questionnaires were sent out to the teachers and students who had consent to participate (see Appendixes H and I). No names were written on the questionnaires. The

questionnaires were labeled with letters (for teachers) and numbers (for students) only to determine which student questionnaires corresponded with which teacher questionnaire. (For example, Mrs. Smith is teacher A and would have student questionnaires marked A1, A2, etc.) The questionnaires contained 10 questions including 6 open-ended responses and 4 checklists. The questions were designed to elicit information from the students and teachers about how students feel about writing, what they enjoy about the writing process and what they view as the most important aspect of writing. Checklists were used as a way to quickly gather information. Forced ranking was used with some of the checklists to require the participants to prioritize their responses. The open-ended responses were used to allow students and teachers to expand on and explain their ideas. The teacher was asked to complete her questionnaire prior to the students completing their questionnaire so that the teachers' responses in no way were influenced by the student responses. Once the classroom teacher completed and returned the survey, the student questionnaires were given to the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher distributed the questionnaires and when finished, she placed them in an envelope to give back to the researcher.

Once collected, all the questionnaires were read and responses were recorded onto four master questionnaire response sheets. One master response sheet contained the teacher responses, coded for each teacher. The final three master response sheets contained the student responses for each of the three elementary schools. Responses from the students were color coded, on the original form, to show the difference between responses from students who claimed to enjoy writing and those who stated that they did not enjoy it.

As soon as all responses were recorded, the open-ended responses were organized into categories. The number of student responses for each category was counted and percentages computed. The checklist items were counted to determine the number of students who responded to each item and then percentages were computed for each response. The results were grouped by school and then by total population into tables. Data were analyzed to look for trends in schools and the total population. Student data was compared to teacher data to determine how the teacher responses compared to those of the students.

After the questionnaire data was collected, categorized, and reviewed, one school was chosen to interview. School A was selected due to the large number of students who participated in the study. Within that class, the teacher was interviewed as well as 5 students chosen at random (from a list of those who had consented). The teacher and the selected students were interviewed individually. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes. The interviews followed a guided script (see Appendixes J and K). The purpose of the interviews was to enrich the information gathered from the questionnaire, to look for reasons for diverse responses, and to help clarify any questions that arose from the questionnaires. As a result, the questions for the interview were designed to compliment and expand on the questions from the questionnaires. The interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed. The responses from the interviews were grouped into categories by following the same procedure that was conducted with the questionnaires, and comparisons were made between the questionnaire categories and the interview categories.

Limitations

The obvious limitations of this study are that only teachers and students who were willing to participate (and present on the day of the questionnaire) were included in the study. In addition, only students in three schools, in one district, in one city were included. The response rate in each of these schools varied greatly. School A had the highest response rate with 83%. The response rate in school B was 38% and the response rate of school C was 25%. To keep the questionnaires as anonymous as possible, little data was collected on the participants. All of these factors limit the ability to generalize the findings.

There are also some internal validity problems. All of the data was self-reported. No observations were made to observe what students prefer about writing (by watching what they choose to do in the classroom) compared to what they stated they preferred on the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered and collected by the classroom teacher. In addition, in school A, the participants knew that the researcher would be one of their teachers the following year. This knowledge may have influenced how the students responded to the questions.

The use of questionnaires and interviews to gather data can also lead to validity issues. By having the questionnaires remain anonymous, the researcher could not clarify unclear, vague or non-responsive answers. There was also no means for participants to receive clarification on any of the questions being asked of them. During the interview, the use of the tape recorder could have caused some participants to change their behavior or answers to questions. In addition, no member checking occurred after the interview transcripts were written to make sure that interpretations of the recording accurately

matched the subjects' intentions. All of these factors could influence the integrity of the responses.

Results

An analysis of the data provided information in four areas: (1) How do students feel about writing? (2) What do students enjoy the most, and the least, about writing? (3) What part of writing do students view as the most important? (4) How do teachers' and students' view of writing differ? For each area, several questionnaire and interview questions provided data giving insight to the answers. Results are reported using quantitative data along with sample quotes from students. Findings showed that students value being creative and choosing their own topic. Students also stated that content and mechanics, followed closely by neatness, were the most important aspects of good writing. Results of teachers' reports of student beliefs were mixed. Teachers were able to accurately predict student responses in some areas but not in others. *How do students feel about writing?*

Questions 1 and 9 on the questionnaire asked students if they enjoy writing and if they believe they write well (see tables 2 and 3). The results of these questions showed that the majority of students (75%) enjoy writing and believe that they write well (73%). When asked why they enjoyed writing, 50% of the students simply stated that it is fun or they like it ("It's fun and you get to make up things."), while 19% of the students explained that it was an important way to express themselves ("I like to be able to write down what I am feeling and explore my mind."). Those students who stated that they did not enjoy writing gave reasons such as it hurts their hand, takes too long, and not being good at it ("It's hard to make up stories and it hurts my hand.").

Table 2

Reasons for enjoying (or not enjoying) writing (Open – Ended Response)

Reasons	Number of responses	Portion of students	Portion of responses
It is fun	40	50%	48%
Express feelings	15	19%	18%
Not good at it	9	11%	11%
Helps me learn	6	8%	7%
Non Responsive	6	8%	7%
It hurts hand	5	6%	6%
Takes too long	2	3%	2%

Note. Some students gave multiple reasons.

When asked why they thought they write well, only 1% stated enjoyment as the reason. Being creative, or having good ideas, was stated as the reason they considered themselves good writers by 33% of the students (“I am always very creative and I express my mind as much as I can.”). Coming in as a close second with 25% was the positive response they received from others (friends and teachers) as the reason they believed they wrote well (“I get good grades in writing and people compliment me a lot.”).

Surprisingly, out of the 14 students who stated that they did not enjoy writing, only 6 of them stated that they did not believe they wrote well. The most common reasons for not writing well were poor handwriting (“It looks sloppy.”) and not being good at it (“I don’t have good ideas.”).

Table 3

Students' reasons for believing they write well (or not) (Open – Ended Response)

Reasons	Number of responses	Portion of students	Portion of responses
Content	26	33%	31%
Validation	20	25%	24%
Process/Effort	13	16%	15%
Neatness	12	15%	14%
Non Responsive	7	9%	8%
Mechanics	5	6%	6%
Enjoyment	1	1%	1%

Note. Several students gave multiple reasons.

The student interviews also gave some insights about how students feel about writing. Of the five students interviewed, three of them stated emphatically that they enjoyed writing. The remaining two said that sometimes they enjoy writing. Two of the students focused on being able to express themselves through writing. Student A stated, “It is fun and you can write about your day if you had a bad one.” Student C stated, “I can write out what I feel. It is easier than telling someone.” Both students felt that by writing about a bad day, they ended up feeling better.

Questions 1 and 9 demonstrated that most students have positive feelings towards writing. Half of the students stated that writing was an enjoyable activity. In addition to enjoying writing, most students believed they wrote well. The basis for that belief was

because students felt they were creative or because they had received validation from others.

What do students enjoy the most, and the least, about writing?

Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 on the questionnaire focused on what students enjoy the most about writing, and by default what they enjoyed least. Question 2 asked the students what kinds of things they wrote while not at school (see Table 4). The top three choices were fictional stories, journals, and letters, followed closely by lists. Reports and poems were selected the least of the choices given. Fictional stories, journals, and letters were also the top three genres mentioned by the students that were interviewed. Student C stated, “In my diary, I like to write about my days. My days – like how I did in school.” Student D stated that writing his pen pal letter “gives me something to do on the weekdays.”

Question 3 of the questionnaire asked students about their favorite part of writing (see Table 5). Over half of the students marked that their favorite parts were being creative or expressive, drawing pictures to go along with their writing, and typing their pieces. (These results may explain why reports were the least enjoyable genre to the students. Most students may not equate writing reports with being creative.) Mailing letters and writing first drafts were seen as the least favorites from the choices given.

Table 4

Kinds of writing students do when not at school (Checklist)

Genre	Number of responses	Portion of students	Portion of responses
Stories	46	58%	22%
Journal	36	45%	17%
Letters	35	44%	17%
Lists	33	41%	16%
Poems	23	29%	11%
Reports	16	20%	8%
Comics*	7	9%	3%
Unresponsive	5	6%	2%
Songs*	2	3%	1%
Cards*	2	3%	1%
News Articles*	1	1%	0%
Signs*	1	1%	0%

Note. Students could choose as many items as they wished.

** Categories written in by students.*

Table 5

Students' favorite parts about writing? (Checklist)

Favorite Part	Number of responses	Portion of students	Portion of responses
Drawing Pictures	45	56%	19%
Being Creative	44	55%	18%
Typing Story	41	51%	17%
Sharing w/ Friends	28	35%	12%
Thinking of topics	19	24%	8%
Sharing w/ Teachers	14	18%	6%
Sharing w/ Family	14	18%	6%
Editing	8	10%	3%
Reading piece aloud	7	9%	3%
Having others help	7	9%	3%
Mailing Letters	5	6%	2%
Writing First Draft	5	6%	2%
Non Responsive	2	3%	1%
Making it Funny*	1	1%	0%

Note. Students were asked to choose their top 3 choices.

**Category written in by student.*

Question 4 asked the students what motivates them to write (see table 6). An overwhelming 89% of the students stated that being able to choose their topic was the

best motivator for writing. Being able to write with others was chosen by 60% of the students. Thirdly, having something on their mind was motivation for 49% of the students. The item that motivated the least number of students was knowing that they will be able to share their writing with others.

Table 6

What motivates students to write? (Checklist)

Motivation	Number of responses	Portion of students	Portion of responses
I choose topic	71	89%	30%
Write with others	48	60%	20%
Something on my mind	39	49%	16%
Quiet time	32	40%	13%
Assigned topic	25	31%	10%
Will share piece	21	26%	9%
When I'm alone*	1	1%	0%
When I'm bored*	1	1%	0%
I choose length*	1	1%	0%

Note. Students were asked to choose their top three choices. One student only selected 2.

** Categories written in by students.*

During the student interviews, students were asked about the best way to motivate students who did not enjoy writing. All students seem to feel that being able to choose their own topic was a great motivator to write. Student A said that teachers should tell those students “that writing is really fun to do and to make a list of all their ideas to write

about.” Student B said, “I would ask them what they like to write about, if they like to go on adventures or stuff, and tell them they could write about real life.” Student D stated, “If they daydream a lot, you could tell them to start writing down those daydreams.” Finally, Student E shared that, “If you try to write, you will get better at it.”

Question 5 asked the students about their favorite kind of writing (see Table 7). Over half of the students chose fictional narratives, letters, and poems/songs as their favorite kinds of writing. The least favorite type of writing was nonfiction pieces. This is not surprising since drawing pictures and being creative were the two most popular aspects of writing. Student D was one of those students who preferred writing fictional stories over reports. When asked why he preferred fictional stories, Student D stated, “I can make up whatever I can think of.”

The final question in this area, question 6, asked the students about sharing their writing with others (see Table 8). Despite the fact that knowing they will be able to share their writing was the least motivating (from questionnaire question number 4), 54% of the students stated that they did enjoy sharing their writing with others. The percentage of students who did not enjoy sharing their writing was 38%. The remaining 8% were undecided. When asked why they did not like sharing, 28% of the students stated that they worried about what others would think of their writing or they were embarrassed (“I sometimes think I didn’t do my best. I’m afraid the person will laugh at me.”). When asked why they did enjoy sharing, the two most popular reasons were they wanted others to help make their piece better (“If they think of something I could add, I could make it better.”) and that they enjoyed having others hear what they had written (“I want people to hear what I wrote.”).

Table 7

Students' favorite kinds of writing (Checklist)

Genre	Number of responses	Portion of students	Portion of responses
Fictional Story	64	80%	27%
Letters	51	64%	22%
Poem/Song	42	53%	18%
Nonfiction Report	33	41%	14%
Journal/Diary	31	39%	13%
Personal Narrative*	5	6%	2%
Nonfiction Story*	3	4%	1%
Horror Story*	1	1%	0%
Comics*	1	1%	0%
Historical Fiction*	1	1%	0%
Drawing Conclusions*	1	1%	0%
Funny Story*	1	1%	0%
Making a book*	1	1%	0%
Writing w/ a friend*	1	1%	0%

Note. Students were asked to choose their top 3 choices. Two students chose only 2 and 1 student chose only 1.

** Categories written in by students.*

Table 8

Students' thoughts on sharing their writing with others (Open - Ended Response)

Thoughts of Students	Number of responses	Portion of students	Portion of responses
Worried about thoughts of others	22	28%	27%
Want others to help make it better	18	23%	22%
Enjoy hearing others & sharing	16	20%	20%
Want to know what others think of it	8	10%	10%
Feelings of Privacy	6	8%	7%
Non Responsive	6	8%	7%
Don't want input from others	3	4%	4%
People take my ideas	1	1%	1%
Boring	1	1%	1%

Note. One student gave two reasons.

The student interviews resulted in similar findings on the topic of sharing writing pieces. Four out of the five students said that they did not like to read their stories out loud to the class. However, three of them enjoy listening to other students read their stories out loud and all five of them stated they enjoy sharing their writing pieces with their peers in one-on-one situations. Student B was the one student who enjoys reading his writing pieces aloud to the class. He stated, "I usually like to share them with my friends because they like to hear them." When asked if he liked listening to other students

share, Student B said, “Yeah, if they are good, but sometimes they write about things that I don’t really like.” Student C was one who did not like reading his pieces aloud. “I like keeping my stories private.” When Student C was asked if he likes listening to others, he said yes because “sometimes they give me ideas of what to write about.”

Questions 2-6 indicate that most students enjoy being creative and choosing their own topic. Fictional stories were the most popular genre. Just over half of the students stated that they enjoyed sharing their writing, but knowing they would share only motivated 26% of the students to write. While some students saw sharing as a time to improve their piece or entertain others, 28% of the students were concerned about how their peers would respond to their writing.

What part of writing do students view as the most important?

Questions 8 and 10 on the questionnaire both look into what students believe is important in writing. Question 8 asked students what it means to be a good writer (see Table 9). The most popular answer, given by 56% of the students, was that good content was most important in being a good writer (“Being able to create stories and tell them well.”). Good mechanics took second place with 19% of the students (“To write in complete sentences and to try your best to spell words correctly.”). Even though 25% of the students stated that validation from others was a way they determined if they wrote well or not (questionnaire question 9), only 6% of the students said that validation from others was important in being a good writer (“People like your work.”). Several students mentioned a combination of reasons (“Making your story interesting, writing long stories – but not too long – and not making many mistakes.”). Other items mentioned by less than 5% of the students were length, neatness, enjoyment, and personal belief.

Table 9

Qualities of good writing (Open - Ended Response)

Qualities	Number of responses	Portion of students	Portion of responses
Content	45	56%	50%
Mechanics	15	19%	17%
Non Responsive	10	13%	11%
Process/Effort	7	9%	8%
Validation/Published	5	6%	6%
Enjoyment	3	4%	3%
Amount/Length	2	3%	2%
Neatness	2	3%	2%
Personal Belief	1	1%	1%

Note. Several students gave multiple reasons.

Question 10 asked the students to name the most important thing they would teach a first grader about writing (see table 10). Mechanics and neatness were both mentioned more often than content (“Write in legible writing or no one will know what you wrote.”). Content, while coming in first when asked about being a good writer, came in third for this question (“Be very creative and write about something someone would want to read.”). Belief in self and enjoyment were mentioned by fewer than 5% of the students (“Have fun just writing and to appreciate your work and not change it because they think another classmates work is better.”).

Table 10

Most important thing to teach a first grader about writing (Open - Ended Response)

Topic	Number of responses	Portion of students	Portion of responses
Mechanics	24	30%	27%
Neatness	18	23%	20%
Content	17	21%	19%
Process/Knowledge of Forms	12	15%	13%
Hard Work	8	10%	9%
Enjoyment	4	5%	4%
Belief in Self	2	3%	2%
Non Responsive	2	3%	2%
Listen	1	1%	1%
Read	1	1%	1%

Note. Several students gave multiple reasons.

During the student interviews, students were asked if they saw themselves as a writer or to share the best advice they had been given about good writing. Both of these questions were an attempt to learn what the students viewed as good writing. When asked if they saw themselves as a writer, Student A did not “because I don’t have very good handwriting.” Student C did consider himself an author stating, “I think I am kind of creative and most authors are creative.” When asked about what makes good writing,

three of the students gave examples relating to improving content, mechanics and neatness. Student A stated, “Like how to spell this right or fix that.” Student C stated, “Be creative and make it mine.” Students D simply stated, “Make it good.” Students B and E both focused on effort stating, “Don’t give up,” and “Try your best.”

Questions 8 and 10 were asked to help determine what the students viewed as the most important aspect of writing. Content, mechanics and neatness were mentioned most often. When asked directly on the questionnaire, the students indicated that content was the most important. However, when asked about teaching a first grader, the students mentioned mechanics and neatness before content.

How do teachers’ and students’ view of writing differ?

The teacher questionnaire closely resembled the student questionnaire in order to make comparisons easily. Overall, the teachers accurately predicted the responses of the students (see Table 11). A few topics resulted in responses that were almost identical between teachers and students. When asked what their students like to write when not at school, the teachers correctly selected journals, stories and letters as the top three items. Teachers also correctly stated that writing with others and being able to choose your own topic were the top two motivators to get students to write. Finally, when asked what the students’ favorite type of writing to do in class, the teachers and students both selected fictional stories, letters, and poems as the top three.

However, there were a few topics that resulted in mixed results when comparing student and teacher perspectives. When asked what the students enjoyed most about writing, the teachers placed sharing with friends first, followed by sharing with the teacher. The students chose drawing pictures, being creative, and typing (above sharing

with friends). Sharing with the teacher was even further down the list for the students. While the teachers correctly noted that sharing caused some worries and fear for the students, the teachers still believed that most of their students liked to share their writings with others. However, the actual percentage of students who stated that they enjoyed sharing their writing was only 54%, just over half. When asked who gives the students the most help with their writing, both teachers and students stated that teachers give the most help. Teachers thought that peers would be a close second, but students reported that moms give more help than peers. When asked if the students felt they wrote well, the teachers believed that most students did believe this and in fact 73% of the students stated that they did. The teachers believed that the reason would be because of validation the students received from others. However, the students placed their own creativity above validation from others as their reason for believing they wrote well.

Probably the most surprising result came when asked about what makes writing good. When the question was asked directly, students placed content above mechanics in importance. The teachers placed mechanics above content. However, when the question was asked as, "What is the most important thing to teach a first grader about writing?" the results reversed. Students placed mechanics as first and teachers emphasized content.

Overall, the teachers were able to accurately predict the kind of genres students preferred and what motivated them to write. However, teachers believed that the students valued sharing and help from peers more than the students actually did. Teachers also believed that validation would be the main factor in determining if students felt they wrote well, but students placed their own level of creativity above validation when making that decision.

Table 11

Students' responses compared to teachers' responses

Question	Most Common	Most Common
	Student Response	Teacher Response
What do most students write when not at school?	1. Stories	1. Stories
	2. Journals	2. Journals, Letters
	3. Letters	
What do students enjoy most about writing?	1. Drawing Pictures	1. Sharing with Friends
	2. Being Creative	2. Sharing with Teacher
	3. Typing	3. Drawing Pictures
	4. Sharing with Friends	4. Typing
What motivates students to write in school?	1. Own Choice of Topic	1. Writing with Others
	2. Writing with Others	2. Student Choice of Topic
	3. Something on their mind	3. Quiet Time
	4. Quiet Time to Write	4. Assigned Topic
What are your favorite kinds of writing to do?	1. Fictional Stories	1. Fictional Stories
	2. Letters	2. Letters
	3. Poems	3. Poems
	4. Nonfiction Reports	4. Journals
Do you like to share your writing with others? Why?	54% yes	Believe most students do.
	1. Worry about what others will think	1. Worry about what others will think
	2. Want others to help make it better	2. Want validation
	3. Enjoy sharing and hearing other students'	

Question	Most Common	Most Common
	Student Response	Teacher Response
What makes writing good?	1. Content 2. Mechanics	1. Mechanics 2. Content
Who gives you the most help with your writing?	1. Teachers 2. Mom	1. Teacher 2. Peers
Do you believe you write well?	73% yes	Most students do.
Why?	1. Content (“I’m creative.”) 2. Validation from others	1. Validation from others 2. Enjoyed writing
What is the most important thing to teach a first grader about writing?	1. Mechanics 2. Neatness 3. Content	1. Content 2. Mechanics

Discussion and Implications

This study focused on students’ perspectives about the writing process. It was an attempt to answer the following questions: Do students view social interaction as a valuable and essential part of the writing process? On which part of the writing process do students place the most importance? Do teachers accurately report their students’ beliefs about the writing process? Questionnaires and interviews were used to try and determine the answers. Results from the data were categorized into four areas: (1) Students’ feelings about writing (2) What students enjoy the most about writing (3) Parts of writing students view as the most important (4) Comparison of teachers’ and students’ view of writing. An evaluation of these categories can help to answer the research questions.

By looking at how students feel about writing, what they enjoy, and what they view as most important, it can be determined if social interaction is deemed valuable and which parts of the writing process are seen as important by the students. What is learned is that, while students do recognize social interaction as part of the writing process, they value choice of topic and being creative more. Sharing their writing with others was mentioned often; however, it was accompanied with students worrying about what others will think and a desire to keep their writing private. Sharing was viewed more positively as a way to entertain their peers than as a way to improve their writing. When asked about their favorite parts of writing, sharing with a friend came in fourth (35%), sharing with teachers and family members came in sixth (18%), followed by editing, reading aloud, and getting help from others. Students were motivated by the idea of writing with others (60%), but not by sharing with others (26%). This may demonstrate a misapplication of Vygotsky's (1978) theory in the classroom. Vygotsky states that for writers to learn they need to be engaged in social interactions. Most current writing instruction has placed an emphasis on peer conferencing (editing) as that social interaction. The students in this study were not motivated to write by these peer conferences, nor did they view them as important aspects of the writing process. Furthermore, the students claimed to get the most help with their writing from teachers and parents, so the purpose of peer conferencing has been lost. Teachers need to find another focus for the social interaction. For example, teachers can allow students to write with others more often. That is a motivating factor for students and is also a social interaction.

Much of what was found in this study concerning important aspects of writing is supported by previous research. Most students like to write (Bradley, 2001; Shook, Marrion & Ollila, 2003) and state enjoyment as the main reason (Bradley, 2001). Most students believe that they are good writers and that they receive the most help in their writing from teachers and parents (Shook, Marrion & Ollila, 2003). Content, mechanics, and neatness were noted as the most important aspects of good writing (Bradley, 2001; Wray, 1993). When focusing on younger students, neatness and mechanics were mentioned more often than content (Wray, 1993). The implication here is that students believe mastering mechanics and neatness should come before focusing on content. The two studies conducted by Bridge and Hiebert (1985) and Bridge, Compton-Hall, and Cantrell (1997) demonstrate that this was the previous belief by educators as well. Bridge and Hiebert found that most of the writing instruction in 1985 was spent focusing on neatness and mechanics. In 1997, Bridge, Compton-Hall, and Cantrell found that trend changing and that more emphasis was being placed on content. Future research could determine if the change in classroom instruction eventually changes students' beliefs about what is most important for young writers.

Through comparing teacher data with the students', it is learned that in some areas teachers can accurately report their students' beliefs about writing. Teachers know which genres their students enjoy the most and spend their free time doing. Mixed results were found when looking at what parts of the writing process students enjoy the most. While teachers thought students enjoy the social aspects (sharing and discussing their writing) the most, students actually enjoy the private aspects (drawing pictures, being creative, and typing) more. Teachers believe that, besides themselves, peers gave students the most

assistance with their writing. Students reported that their parents (specifically mothers) gave more assistance with writing than their peers. It is important that teachers are aware of these differences in beliefs in order to enhance the instruction in the classroom (Elen & Clarebout, 2004). Through accurately knowing what students believe about writing, teachers will know which aspects of the writing process are bothersome to the students (Wray, 1993) and be able to address those aspects with the students. Helping students to focus on what quality writing is, and making sure that the students can verbalize it, will help students to produce quality writing (Bradley, 2001). The only way to ensure that these things are occurring in the classroom is by having conversations with students about writing and finding out what it is they actually believe about writing. It is through these conversations that we truly know what the students are learning and if the instruction has been effective.

There are many ways that we can use the students' own voices to expand our understanding of the best way to teach and encourage writing in the classroom. To increase students' comfort level with sharing their writing, teachers can openly discuss the worries that all students feel when sharing. Students can also be reassured that there are "private" kinds of writing and "public" kinds of writing. Private writings are pieces that are not - or may not ever be - ready to share. Public writings are those pieces that we are ready to share and solicit opinions, advice, and help on in order to improve the piece. Teachers may also need to reevaluate the emphasis placed on peer conferencing in the classroom and look for other ways social interaction can help improve writing skills.

Teachers can use their knowledge of which genres the students enjoy to encourage writing in the classroom and to help students appreciate the other genres.

Fictional stories were the most popular genre possibly due to the fact that students feel they can be the most creative in that genre. Teachers can use their knowledge of what motivates students (choice of topic and writing with others) combined with what students enjoy most about writing (being creative) to help students explore the least favorite genre of nonfiction.

Teachers can also use the knowledge of who helps the students the most with their writing. Often teachers create tools (rubrics, checklists) for peers to use when helping each other improve their writings. With the knowledge that parents assist students more often than peers, teachers could create tools for parents to use as they help their child improve writing pieces. In addition, teachers need to look at ways to help students see value in peer conferencing if that is to be continued in the classroom.

Understanding our students' perspectives about writing can be a powerful instructional tool. Teachers can use that knowledge to help students improve their writing while still allowing them to enjoy the act of writing. Teachers will be able to reach the goal so perfectly stated by a fourth grade student. "It's not about doing it because someone told you to, you should do it because you want to."

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Date

Name

Address

Dear (*Name*):

This letter is to inform you of a research study that I will be conducting and to ask for your permission to conduct my study in your elementary school. My research focuses on writing and the beliefs that students have about writing. The students' beliefs will then be compared to the thoughts of their teachers to see how the thoughts and beliefs of these two groups compare. I will be concentrating solely on fourth grade students and writing teachers for the study.

The attached consent form explains the study in more detail. It describes the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. In addition, it describes the requirement of consent and the rights of the participants.

I greatly appreciate your consideration in granting me permission to conduct my study in your school.

Respectfully,

Michelle L. Gratz

Date

Principal Name

Address

I give permission for Michelle Gratz to conduct her research on writing instruction in my building. I understand that the research will consist of fourth grade students and their teachers completing a 10 question questionnaire that will take approximately 15-20 minutes. In addition, one class may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. One teacher and approximately five students will be interviewed separately at a time and place deemed convenient by everyone involved. Interviews will take about 20-25 minutes.

I understand that all students and teachers who participate in the study will have signed consent forms. In the case of the students, their parents will sign permission forms as well as the students signing assent forms. All participants will be informed of their legal rights and know that participation is voluntary. They will also know that they can withdraw from the study at any time.

If I have any questions about the study, I can contact Michelle Gratz at 513-347-3749 or Dr. Keith Barton at 513-556-3384.

(Principal Signature)

(Date)

Date

Teacher Name

Address

Dear (*Name*):

My name is Michelle Gratz. I am a fifth grade teacher at Springmyer Elementary and a graduate student at the University of Cincinnati. I am currently in the last year of my master's program. I am writing in hopes that you will agree to participate in a research study that I am conducting. My research focuses on the writing process and the ideas that students have about it. The students' ideas will then be compared to the ideas of their teachers to see how the ideas of these two groups compare. I will be concentrating solely on fourth grade students and writing teachers for the study. I am asking several classes from multiple elementary schools to participate in the study.

Being a teacher, I completely understand how hectic the daily school schedule is and have made every effort to minimize the amount of time required for your participation. If you agree to participate:

1. You will be asked to sign the attached consent form.
2. I will then send an informational letter, consent form, and assent form home with your students. I will collect all signed consent forms. I will need your help to describe the writing ability (good, average, or poor) of those students who have consent to participate.
3. Then, I will ask you to complete a short questionnaire. The questionnaire contains 10 questions and should only take about 10-15 minutes to complete.
4. Once completed, I will trade your completed questionnaire for the student questionnaires. The student questionnaires also contain only 10 questions and should take 15-20 minutes for the students to complete. The students can complete the questionnaire while the rest of the class is working on independent work: silent reading, journal writing, etc. I will collect the completed questionnaires.
5. After analyzing the data collected, I will ask one class to participate in follow-up interviews. One teacher and approximately 5 students will be asked to participate in separate interviews. The interviews will take place at a time and place deemed convenient by everyone involved. The interviews will last about 20-25 minutes.

I greatly appreciate your consideration and hope that you will consent to participate. I will contact you in a few days to see if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Michelle L. Gratz

University of Cincinnati
Teacher Consent to Participate in a Research Study
College of Education / Curriculum and Instruction
Michelle L. Gratz / 513-347-3749 / mlgratz@fuse.net

A Comparison of students' and teacher's perceptions of the writing process.

Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important that the following explanation of the proposed procedures be read and understood. It describes the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. It also describes the right to withdraw from the study at any time. It is important to understand that no guarantee or assurance can be made as to the results of the study.

The purpose of this study is to look at the writing process from the students' viewpoint. The students' ideas will then be compared to the ideas of their teachers to see how the ideas of these two groups compare. You will be one of approximately 5 teachers participating in this study.

You will be asked to complete a short questionnaire (10 questions) that should take around 10-15 minutes to complete. You will also be asked to rate the writing abilities of those students who have consent to participate in the study. A few weeks after completing the questionnaire, one teacher will be asked to participate in an interview. If you are asked to participate in the interview, the day, time, and place selected for the interview will be ones deemed convenient by you. The interview will last approximately 20-25 minutes. The purpose of the interview will be to enrich the information gathered from the questionnaire. Your name will not be used in the writing of the study or on any questionnaires or transcripts. The interview will be audio-taped; however, that tape will be destroyed after the transcript is made of the interview. The transcript will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my house after the study is completed.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts in this research. The larger educational community should benefit from the research through having a better understanding of students' ideas about the writing process, but you will not receive any direct benefit for participating. All participation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. There will be no penalty or consequence for any teacher that chooses not to participate or to withdraw.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Michelle Gratz at 513-347-3749 or her faculty advisor, Dr. Keith Barton, at 513-556-3384. If you have any questions about the rights of the participants in the study, you may call the Chair of the Institutional Review Board – Social and Behavioral Sciences at 513-558-5784. Nothing in this consent form waives any legal right you may have nor does it release the investigator, the sponsor, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

I have read the above information and agree to be a participant in this research study. I will receive a copy of this form for my records.

(Teacher Signature)

(date)

(Signature of Person Obtaining Consent)

(date)

Date

Dear (*Parent Name*):

Hello! My name is Michelle Gratz. I am a 5th grade teacher at Springmyer Elementary as well as a master's student at the University of Cincinnati. As part of my master's degree, I will be conducting a research study in the field of writing instruction. I am writing in hopes that you will agree to allow your child to participate in my research study.

My research focuses on the ideas that students have about writing. The students will share their ideas with me through a questionnaire and possibly a follow-up interview. The students' ideas will then be compared to the ideas of their teachers to see how the ideas of these two groups compare. I will be concentrating solely on fourth grade students and writing teachers for the study. I am asking several classes from multiple elementary schools to participate in the study.

The attached permission and assent forms explain the study in more detail. They describe the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. If you would like to give consent for your child to participate in this study, please sign the consent form. In addition, please have your child read and sign the assent form if he/she agrees to participate in the study. Return both forms to school with your child by (*date*).

I greatly appreciate your consideration and hope that you will grant permission for your child to participate.

Respectfully,

Michelle L. Gratz

University of Cincinnati
Parental Permission to Participate in a Research Study
College of Education / Curriculum and Instruction
Michelle L. Gratz / 513-347-3749 / mlgratz@fuse.net

A Comparison of students' and teacher's perceptions of the writing process.

Before agreeing to grant your child permission to participate in this study, it is important that the following explanation of the proposed procedures be read and understood. It describes the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. It also describes the right to withdraw from the study at any time. It is important to understand that no guarantee or assurance can be made as to the results of the study.

The purpose of this study is to look at the writing process from the students' viewpoint. The students' ideas will then be compared to the ideas of their teachers to see how the ideas of these two groups compare. Your child will be one of approximately 60 students participating in this study.

Your child will complete a short questionnaire (10 questions) that should take around 15-20 minutes. The questionnaire will be completed at school. No names will be on the questionnaire, only a code number used to match students to the correct teacher. I will be asking the teacher to report the writing ability of the students completing the questionnaire. A few weeks after completing the questionnaire, one class will be asked to participate in an interview. If your child is one of the five asked to participate in the interview, the day and time selected for the interview will be ones deemed convenient by your child's teacher so that no instruction time is lost. The interview will last approximately 20-25 minutes and will take place at your child's school. The purpose of the interview will be to enrich the information gathered from the questionnaire. Your child's name will not be used in the writing of the study or on any questionnaires or transcripts. The interview will be audio-taped; however, that tape will be destroyed after the transcript is made of the interview. The transcript will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my house after the study is completed.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts in this research. The larger educational community should benefit from the research through having a better understanding of students' ideas about writing, but your child will not receive any direct benefit for participating. All participation is voluntary. Your child may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. You may also choose to allow your child to participate in the survey part of the study but not the interview. There will be no penalty or consequence for any student that chooses not to participate or to withdraw.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Michelle Gratz at 513-347-3749 or Dr. Keith Barton at 513-556-3384. If you have any questions about the rights of the participants in the study, you may call the Chair of the Institutional Review Board – Social and Behavioral Sciences at 513-558-5784. Nothing in this consent form waives any legal right you may have nor does it release the investigator, sponsor, institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

I have read the above information and give permission for my child to participate in this research study. I will receive a copy of this form for my records. *(Please check one of the following options and then sign.)*

- ☐ My child can participate in both the questionnaire and the possible follow-up interview.
☐ My child can participate in only the questionnaire part of the research.

(Parent Signature – with date)

(Student Name – please print)

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

University of Cincinnati
Student Assent to Participate in a Research Study
College of Education / Curriculum and Instruction
Michelle L. Gratz / 513-347-3749 / mlgratz@fuse.net

A Comparison of students' and teacher's perceptions of the writing process.

Please read this page carefully.

The purpose of this study is to find out your ideas about writing. I will compare your ideas to your teachers' ideas. About 60 students will take part.

You will fill out a short worksheet (10 questions) at school that should take about 15-20 minutes. Your name will not be on it, so no one will know what you write. A few weeks later, you might be asked to do an interview. You can decide to stop at any time.

I have read the above information and agree to participate. I will get a copy of this paper to keep.

(Student Signature – with date)

(Student Name – please print)

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Student Questionnaire

Teacher Letter: _____

Student Number: _____

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this search for knowledge! No names please! ☺ (Teacher letter and student number are used only to match students with the correct teacher.) Please answer the following questions as honestly and as completely as possible.

1. Do you like to write? Why or why not?

2. What kinds of things do you write when you are not in school? (Place a check mark in front of all the items that you write when not at school.)

_____ Journal	_____ Letters
_____ Lists	_____ Stories
_____ Reports	_____ Poems

Any other? Write in your own idea: _____

3. What are your 3 favorite parts about writing? (Choose only three and number your favorites 1, 2, and 3 in order.)

_____ Sharing my writing with my friends
 _____ Thinking of topics to write about
 _____ Sharing my writing with my teacher
 _____ Sharing my writing with parents or family members
 _____ Typing my stories
 _____ Drawing pictures to go along with my stories
 _____ Mailing the letters that I write
 _____ Editing my writing to make it better
 _____ Writing my first draft
 _____ Reading my writing pieces out loud to others
 _____ Having others help me make my writing better
 _____ Being creative / Expressing my thoughts
 _____ Any other? Write in your own idea: _____

4. What 3 things make you want to write when you are in class? (Choose only three and number your favorites 1, 2, and 3 in order.)

_____ When the teacher gives me a topic to write about.
 _____ When the teacher lets me choose what to write about.
 _____ When I am allowed to write with others.
 _____ When I have quiet time to write.
 _____ When I have something on my mind
 _____ When I know that I will be sharing my piece with others

5. What are your 3 favorite kinds of writing to do? (Choose only three and number your favorites 1, 2, and 3 in order.)
- _____ Writing Journal entries or diaries
 - _____ Writing make believe (fictional) stories
 - _____ Writing a report (nonfiction)
 - _____ Writing poems
 - _____ Writing letters
 - _____ Any other? Write in your own idea: _____
6. Do you like to share your writing with others and talk about it with them? Why or why not?
7. Who gives you the most help with your writing?
8. What does it mean to be a good writer?
9. Do you believe that you write well? Why or why not?
10. If you had to teach a first grader about writing, what would be the most important thing that you would teach that student about writing?

Thank you so much for answering all these questions! Your help is truly appreciated!

Teacher Letter: _____ # of Students Participating in Study: _____

1. What is the best way to teach students to write?
2. What kinds of things do you think most of your students write when they are not in school? (Place a check mark in front of all the items that apply.)

3. What 3 things do most of your students enjoy about writing? (Choose only three and number 1, 2, and 3 in order.)

4. What 3 things motivate most of your students to write in class? (Choose only three and number 1, 2, and 3 in order.)

- _____ When you give the students a topic to write about.
- _____ When you let the students choose what to write about.
- _____ When you allow your students to write with others.
- _____ When you give your students quiet time to write.
- _____ When your students have an end goal for their writing piece
- _____ Any other? Write in your own idea: _____

5. What 3 types of writing do most of your students enjoy? (Choose only three and number 1, 2, and 3 in order.)

_____ Writing Journal entries or diaries
_____ Writing make believe (fictional) stories
_____ Writing a report (nonfiction)
_____ Writing poems
_____ Writing letters
_____ Any other? Write in your own idea: _____

6. Do most of your students like to share their writing with others and talk about it with them? Why or why not?

7. Who gives your students the most help with their writing?

8. How do most of your students define good writing?

9. Do most of your students believe that they write well? Why or why not?

10. What would your students say are the most important things about writing?

Thank you so much for answering all these questions! Your help is truly appreciated!

Student Interview Questions

- Do you consider yourself an author?
- What does it mean to be an author?
- How do you think authors write their stories?
- What are your feelings towards writing?
- When do you do your best writing?
- Who (or what) help to make your writing better?
- What is the best advice or suggestion you have ever been given about your writing?
 - Who gave that advice to you?
- Do students ever read their stories aloud in class?
 - Do you enjoy that?
 - What kind of stories do you enjoy listening to?
- What kind of writing do you do in this class?
 - How do you decide what to write about?
 - What are your favorite topics to write about?
- Do you talk to other students in the class about your writing?
 - Does talking help you write better?
 - What kinds of things do you discuss when talking about your writing?
- Is there anyone in your class who writes like you?
 - In what ways?
- Is there anyone in your class who write differently than you?
 - In what ways?
- What do you think makes students in your class want to write?
- Tell me about the best story you have ever written.
 - Where did you get the idea for it?
 - Describe for me how you wrote the story.
- What advice would you give someone who does not like to write?
- Do you have any additional thought about writing that you would like to share?

Teacher Interview Questions

- Do you enjoy writing?
- Describe for me a typical writing class.
- What is the best way to motivate your students to write?
- What makes some students not want to write?
- What writing activities do your students enjoy the most?
- Do your students help each other with their writing?
- What aspects of writing do your students struggle with?
- What instructional beliefs do you have about writing?
- Do your students consider themselves authors?
- Do students read aloud their stories in class?
 - Do they seem to enjoy it?
- What do you tell students who do not like to write?
- What motivates your students to write?
- What do you hope your students will learn about writing from you this year?
- Do you have any additional thoughts about writing instruction that you would like to share?