

8-2015

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The Impact of Student Editing and Error-based Instruction on Writing in a  
Fourth-Grade Classroom

An Action Research Report  
By Erin Hinton

The Impact of Student Editing and Error-based Instruction on Writing in a  
Fourth-Grade Classroom

Submitted on August 6, 2015

in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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### Abstract

The purpose of the action research project was to determine the impact of self- and peer-editing and error-based instruction on student writing. The study took place in a fourth-grade classroom. There were 22 students who participated in the study. Data was collected through a writing self-reflection, weekly pre- and post- writing samples, an editing checklist, and an error tally sheet. Data was also collected through teacher observations. The results indicated that self- and peer-editing strategies along with error-based instruction had a positive impact on student writing. Although errors continued to persist within the students' writing at the end of the study, the students were more aware of their writing skills. The implication is that writing needs to be viewed by students and teachers as a continuous process, analyzing and reanalyzing students' work to guide instruction and practice.

*Keywords:* student writing, self-editing, peer-editing, error-based instruction

“High-stakes standardized testing can significantly influence the teaching of reading and writing” (Higgins, Miller & Wegmann, 2006). In classrooms today, much of the instructional focus is on tested skills and concepts that students and educators are held accountable for. Skills not a part of high-stakes testing, such as writing, are often overlooked. This has become more and more evident as I see my students struggle to meet the levels of competency in grammar and writing in recent years. The students’ grammar skills and mechanical writing are consistently scoring lower than other ELA standards, as evidenced on grammar skills tests, weekly sentence writing, and journal writing. In my experience, students have shown knowledge of concepts in “stand alone” grammar and writing lessons, however, these concepts did not transfer to their independent writing. This observation led me to explore effective strategies for improving student writing that fit naturally within current classroom practices.

Many times classroom teachers change their language arts curriculum to focus on the test (Harman, 2000). Based on a survey conducted with the seventeen most populous school districts throughout the United States, 72.7% of middle school students are not writing more proficiently than students from previous generations (Lacina & Block, 2012). District administrators who responded to the survey identified lack of instructional time devoted to writing as a reason why students are not better writers.

Past practice of teaching to the whole student has shifted to a standards-driven focus that has resulted in a loss of instructional time (Campbell, 2002; Vacca & Vacca, 2001). The teacher’s focus has turned to the standards and using instructional time to practice for the test. Teachers are adjusting instruction to help students meet the standards which in turn narrows the curriculum and has the potential of decreasing the

amount of freedom a teacher has in developing and carrying out his/her instruction (Campbell, 2002; Vacca & Vacca, 2001).

Research has shown that a teacher's understanding of his/her students is an essential component in developing successful writers. Feng & Powers (2005) recommend a model in which the teacher has the greatest amount of responsibility for instruction. The teacher is always analyzing student work and using the data to direct his/her instruction (Feng & Powers, 2005). In this model, the students' strengths and weaknesses drive instruction, creating relevant and meaningful learning opportunities.

According to Garlid (2014), knowledge of students' attitudes toward writing and awareness of students' interests helps teachers make connections with their students, often leading to increased student engagement. Through continuous gathering of information about the student, teachers focus their instruction in a way that is meaningful and provides opportunities for growth.

Students should be active participants in the correcting and revising of their writing and the writing of their peers. In a study by Annable (2012), introducing metacognition into grammar instruction had a positive impact on student writing. Rather than correcting the students' work for them, she identified grammatical errors and asked the students to correct them. Students were asked to identify common errors made in their writing and then share strategies of how to fix them. This exercise led to more meaningful discussions and the sharing of strategies with their peers. By the end of the study, students could better monitor and communicate the progress made in the development of their writing.

This work by Annable (2012) has shown that when given the necessary tools, students can identify strategies for editing and communicate their mistakes. A successful writer has the ability to identify grammatical errors in writing, express his/her understanding of the errors, and takes a lead role in developing a plan to correct his/her writing. Asking students to move into the role of the teacher to mark suspected errors within their writing encourages reflection and acknowledgment of their current level of skills. A student's ability to self-assess including skills such as monitoring, evaluating, and identifying strategies to improve understanding increases student motivation and achievement (McMillan & Hearn, 2008). The use of a checklist or rubric to assist in self-editing and peer-editing can also hold the students accountable--leading to an increase in ownership and pride in their work.

Mini-lessons provide teachers with both the opportunity to develop students' writing and to focus on the teaching of specific skills (Weaver, Bush, Anderson, & Bills, 2006; Annable, 2012; Feng & Powers, 2005). Teachers observe students during the writing process, and when appropriate, use their observations to develop mini-lessons for a small group of students. Teachers can also meet one-on-one with a student to have a more in-depth discussion of his/her writing, and when the need is great, teach to the whole group. In the research compiled by Feng and Powers (2005), mini-lessons developed from analysis of students' writing were found to be an effective strategy for developing writing skills. In their study, the students showed overall improvement in mechanical errors (from 63 errors in the first writing sample to 35 in the final sample), sentence structure (from 22 errors in the first writing sample to 1 error in the final sample) and usage (from 12 errors in the first writing sample to 8 errors in the final

sample) when the mini-lessons were developed based on student writing samples (Feng & Powers, 2005). A greater short-term effect in the areas of writing mechanics and usage was shown, indicating that an error-based instructional approach could improve student grammar and writing skills. The recommendation from the study was to implement a model of instruction in which the teacher reads and analyzes students' writing, creates mini-lessons, and continues with the process of reanalyzing students' writing, adjusting instruction based on the data gathered.

Improving student writing should be a continuous process (Feng & Powers, 2005; Lacina & Block, 2012; Graham, Gillespie & McKeown, 2013). Teachers should be analyzing and reanalyzing their students' writing to identify opportunities for reviewing previously taught concepts and identifying a need for new instruction (Feng & Powers, 2005). Blaauw-Hara (2006) suggests teaching writing as a process with several stages, and when appropriate, sharing one's work with the students. He notes increased engagement in discussion and a willingness of students to ask questions about the process as a result of having shared his work with his students. Several students contributed that they found this process of sharing helpful, not only as a model to help them develop their individual writing process but also encouraging to see that even successful writers have struggles and challenges.

Providing feedback is essential in helping students become better writers (Dawson, 2009; Graham et al., 2013; Blaauw-Hara, 2006; Weaver, Bush, Anderson & Bills, 2006; Lacina & Block, 2012). One-on-one conferencing with students presents opportunities for meaningful feedback, praising the students' attempts and providing focused instruction on areas of need. Students should be encouraged to share their writing



with others, discussing strengths and areas of needed improvement. This type of activity also promotes the development of good listening skills. When receiving feedback about his/her writing, it is easy for students to become defensive and try to rationalize his/her choices (Dawson, 2009). When this happens, meaningful feedback is often lost. Creating a supportive classroom environment that promotes student interactions within the writing process, where feedback is encouraged and accepted, will help in the development of successful writers (Graham et al., 2013).

A vast array of strategies and techniques can be used to improve student writing. Analyzing student writing to develop error-based instruction has been shown to be an effective way to teach grammar and writing instruction. Awareness of a student's writing, by both the teacher and the student, can lead to some of the most effective approaches to developing confident, successful writers. There is no guarantee that a particular strategy will work in every classroom (Graham et al., 2013). It is important to implement chosen strategies with integrity and adjust based on the students' responses in the development of their writing.

I have seen a significant increase in the number of errors in my students' writing, specifically capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure. Students are completing writing assignments, however, little time appears to be spent reviewing their writing for grammar and mechanics. When we discuss student writing, much of the focus is on the content of the writing. There has also been a decrease in the amount of time dedicated to grammar and writing instruction. Writing and grammar lessons have been shortened from thirty minutes to fifteen minutes. The focus of our language arts block has shifted to the standards aligned with high-stakes testing. The grammar and writing activities in

our text follow a particular sequence which allows the concepts to build on one another. Our focus on specific power standards leads us to jump through the themes finding stories with a particular focus. This makes it difficult to follow a sequence and keep instruction consistent.

The focus of my study was to answer the following question: What impact will student editing and error-based instruction have on student writing in a fourth-grade classroom? The 22 participants in this study were from a regular education fourth-grade classroom. Of the twenty-two students, 11 were boys and 11 were girls. Four of the fourth-graders in this study were identified to receive Title I services. Five of the participants were identified as gifted. Three students had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for additional reading services while still participating in the regular education language arts block. All participants completed the four week study.

We must not lose sight of the importance of writing. It is a valuable form of communication that provides individuals with an opportunity to express themselves. Although high-stakes testing often drives scheduling and instruction, it is necessary to make time for writing and identify strategies that will provide students with opportunities to further develop their writing skills.

#### Description of Research Process

There were a number of different paths I considered as I developed a plan for improving student writing in a fourth-grade classroom. During the spring of fourth grade, one hopes that students can successfully write a basic paragraph. The high number of errors in capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure that continue to occur in the students' daily writing led me to take a step back and focus on the basic sentence.

Pre- and post-assessments were conducted each week of the study. The purpose of these assessments was to determine how the introduction of student editing strategies and error-based instruction would impact student writing.

At the beginning of the study, students were asked to complete a writing self-reflection. The reflection, which was presented as a Google Form (see Appendix A), asked students to share their feelings about writing, perceived strengths and areas of needed improvement, and additional insight into their writing. Student responses guided small group and large group instruction at the beginning of the study. Information gathered from the survey also gave insight to the students' perceptions of their writing skills. This information was used to develop appropriate instruction and independent learning activities.

Each week of the study followed a similar pattern of pre-writing, whole-group instruction, small group mini-lessons, practice exercises, and a final edited copy. Students began by writing the first draft of their sentences. Whole group mini-lessons on self- and peer-editing strategies were shared, and small group mini-lessons were developed and implemented based on the students' work. A final copy of the week's sentences was written using what had been learned throughout the week.

Each week of the study began with the students writing five stand-alone sentences. Students chose five words from a list of ten vocabulary words included in the weekly language arts lesson. The students were asked to write a sentence for each word, using it correctly and showing an understanding of its meaning. Sentences were also scored for correct grammar and writing mechanics. A writing rubric (see Appendix B) was provided to help each student better understand the expectations of the assignment.

The rubric focused on correct use of capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure. The students were able to see how their sentences would be scored before they began the writing process. The students were given the 30 minute language arts block to complete the task. The entire 30 minute block was provided to accommodate the different needs and learning styles of the students. Writing samples were collected from each student and scored for correct use of capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure following the writing rubric. An error tally sheet (see Appendix C) was used to mark errors in each of the identified areas prior to self-editing, peer-editing, and further instruction.

Day two of each week focused on self-editing. Students received whole group and small group instruction based on the errors identified on the tally sheet. Lessons covered reasons for editing one's work, the components of editing, additional practice of skills for students with a high number of errors, and strategies to help remember the steps in the editing process. Activities included an introduction and discussion of the self-editing checklist (see Appendix D), practice using the checklist with pre-determined sentences, and Smart Exchange lessons that focused on skills connected to capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure. Each week a new activity or strategy was shared to give students a variety of tools and resources that could be used to improve their writing. One strategy that was a primary focus throughout the study, and referred to often, was COPS (Capitalization, Organization, Punctuation, Spelling). A SMART Exchange lesson was used as a guide for teaching the students this particular strategy. The lesson shared information about each component of the COPS editing process, including practice activities. The students' independent task for this day was to participate in the editing

activities and discussion, culminating with each student editing his/her sentences using the self-editing checklist and scoring his/her work using the writing rubric.

The third day of each week addressed peer editing. Similar to the self-editing lessons, whole group instruction focused on what peer editing looks like and sounds like, the benefits of sharing one's work with others, and modeling the steps of peer editing. During the first two weeks of the study, the focus was on three steps of peer editing; compliments, suggestions, and corrections. A peer editing tutorial created by ReadWriteThink was the foundation of these lessons. After participating in activities and discussion to build upon previous writing and editing concepts, students worked with one another to edit one another's sentences. The students edited the work of two different peers. One peer was chosen for them using a name sorter on the SMART board and the second peer was of their own choosing. The students followed the editing checklist, adding verbal and written comments and suggestions. While students worked with one another, I observed their interactions and level of engagement in the editing process. I listened to the discussions students were having and the feedback they were giving and receiving. These observations helped identify areas in the editing process that needed additional attention. As students finished peer editing, they wrote in their journals or participated in small group mini-lessons. The lessons focused on areas of needed improvement based on their written work or observations from the self- and peer editing activities.

Day four of each week continued with additional small group and whole group mini-lessons. These lessons were designed based on the data gathered from the previous days' activities, discussions, and observations. Students continued to review and practice

correct use of capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure through journaling and other written tasks. Students participated in one-minute challenges identifying sentence errors and online activities such as Eduplace's Grammar Blast. Based on student work, the whole group mini-lessons had a particular focus. The particular skill, however, may have differed from those worked on in small groups. In week one, the focus was on sentence structure, specifically subjects and predicates. Week two was a review of fragments and run-ons. By week three, there was a need for instruction on the uses of commas as evidenced in the students' work. In addition to having reviewed skills from the previous weeks, the final week of the study included additional exercises in capitalization and punctuation.

Small group mini-lessons were made up of two to four students. The students and I reviewed and practiced skills identified as areas of need based on the tally sheet or the students' own admission of difficulty. In the case of sentence structure, students were given a list of sentences, fragments, and run-ons. They were asked to label each sentence, supporting their choice with a verbal explanation. To review capitalization, students reviewed common nouns and proper nouns. They viewed writing samples looking for proper nouns that needed to be capitalized and identified common nouns and additional letters that should not have been capitalized. Punctuation lessons included a review of kinds of sentences and reading paragraphs with missing punctuation to determine where sentences should end. Lessons on the uses of commas, specifically appositives, were also included. The small groups were flexible, allowing students to participate as often as necessary.

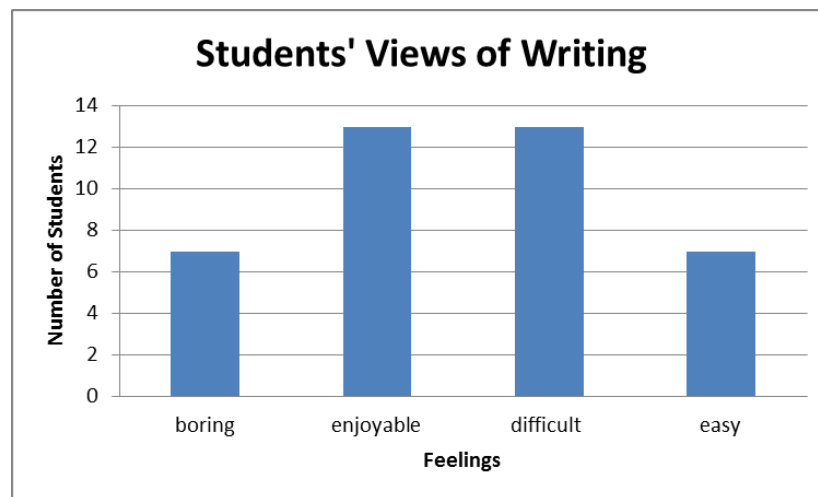
Each week culminated with the students writing a final copy of the sentences they wrote prior to additional editing instruction. The students were asked to review the self- and peer-editing checklists before they began writing. I also reminded the students that they could use the resources from mini-lessons as a reference in the process of writing their final copy. We discussed that they were to make all of the changes they deemed necessary. It was up to each student if he/she agreed with his/her peer's suggestions and whether or not to include it as part of his/her final copy. Once students finished writing their final copies, all papers were collected including self- and peer-editing checklists. The students' final copies were reviewed and scored using the sentence writing rubric. Errors in capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure were marked on the error tally sheet.

At the end of the study, four pre- and post-writing samples had been collected. Students had received instruction on self- and peer-editing strategies and were provided opportunities to practice what had been taught. Mini-lessons were developed based on the students' work, providing more individualized instruction when appropriate. In the next section of this study, you will find the data that was collected and an analysis of my findings.

#### Analysis of Data

The study began with the students completing a writing self-reflection (see Appendix A). The purpose of the reflection was to gather information about the students' feelings toward writing and perceptions of basic sentence mechanics such as capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure. Students were asked to choose from the following list to describe writing: boring, difficult, enjoyable, and easy. Students

were given the opportunity to check more than one response. The data showed that 59% of the students identified writing as enjoyable. Of the 13 students who identified writing as enjoyable, 8 of them also indicated that writing was difficult. In the self-reflection, 32% of the students shared that writing was boring. Of the 7 students who identified writing as boring, 3 of the students also indicated that writing was easy. In addition to boring, 2 of the remaining 7 students identified writing as difficult. The students' responses to their views on writing are included in Figure 1 and Table 1.



*Figure 1.* Students' views of writing as identified from the writing self-reflection.

When asked to provide additional insight to this particular question, the main themes of the students' responses were the enjoyment of writing, fatigue, and difficulty in choosing writing topics. When responding why writing was difficult, 36% of the students indicated that not knowing what to write about was a contributing factor. Fatigue was identified by 23% of the students as the main reason they found writing difficult and/or boring. Of the 10 students who identified writing as enjoyable, 9 students included words and phrases such as "fun" and "love writing." Grammar and writing mechanics were not included in any of the students' responses. This data suggests that



the students' concern with the topic and content may have overshadowed the use of correct grammar and mechanics. Student self-reflection data is included in Table 1.

The overall response to whether or not the students felt they were good writers was positive. Of the students who completed the self-reflection, 73% considered themselves to be good writers. The responses as to why they consider themselves good writers varied greatly. The themes of why they consider themselves good writers included receiving praise and positive feedback from others and knowing a lot about writing. The results of the self-reflection showed that 59% of the students identify themselves as good writers because they find it fun and have success. The success is shown in their grades or in the praise they receive from others. Based on the data, the majority of the students who participated in the study had a positive outlook on writing and their skills. Student responses to the writing self-reflection are shown in Table 1 and Figure 2.

Table 1

| <i>Student Self-Reflection Data</i> |               |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--|--|
| Student                             | Writing is... | Why writing is <i>difficult, boring, enjoyable, or easy.</i> | Why I am a good writer or not a good writer. |
| 1                                   | A, B, C, D    | 1, 2   | 1, 2   |
| 2                                   | B             | 3  | 1, 3   |
| 3                                   | A, C          | 4  | 3  |
| 4                                   | B, D          | 2  | 4  |
| 5                                   | A, C, D       | 1  | 4  |
| 6                                   | A, C          | 1  | 4  |
| 7                                   | C             | 4  | 4  |
| 8                                   | B             | 2  | 2  |
| 9                                   | C             | 4  | 4  |
| 10                                  | A, C          | 1  | 4  |
| 11                                  | A, C          | 4  | 5  |
| 12                                  | C, D          | 4  | 4  |
| 13                                  | A, C          | 2, 4   | 4  |
| 14                                  | B, D          | 1  | 4  |

|  |      |      |             |
|--|------|------|-------------|
| 15   | A    | 2    | 5           |
| 16   | A, C | 1, 4 | 4           |
| 17   | A    | 1    | 1,5         |
| 18   | A, B | 1    | 1           |
| 19   | A, D | 1, 4 | 4           |
| 20   | C, D | 4    | 4           |
| 21   | A, B | 3    | no response |
| 22   | C, D | 4    | 4           |
| Key: A = difficult, B = boring, C = enjoyable, D = easy<br>1 = choosing a topic, 2 = fatigue, 3 = dislike of writing, 4 = fun/success, 5 = lack of understanding |      |      |             |

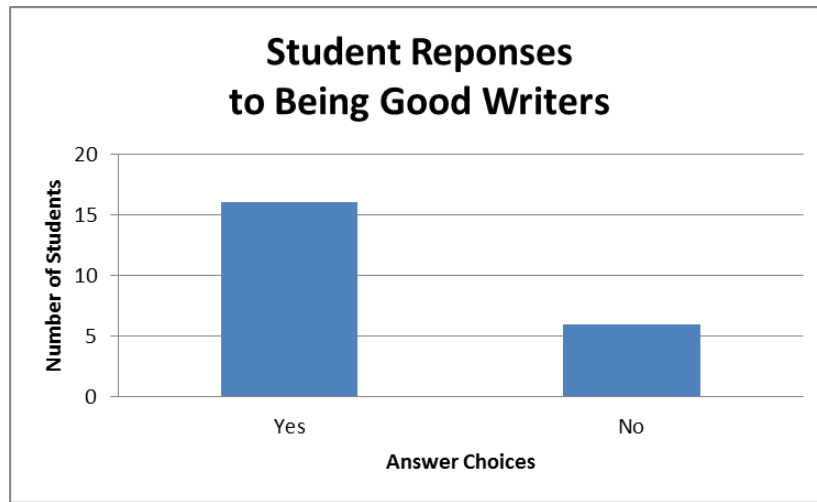


Figure 2. Student responses to the self-reflection statement, “I am a good writer.”

Included in the survey were 2 questions that focused on the mechanics of writing. Students were asked to identify which skill they felt was their strongest and the skill that needed the most practice. Students could choose from: understanding the rules for capitalization, understanding the rules for punctuation, and understanding the rules for complete sentences. The data indicated that most students identified understanding the rules for capitalization as their strongest skill. Understanding punctuation and complete sentences were equal with 2 students identifying each of these skills as strengths. Of the skills listed on the self-reflection, understanding complete sentences was the skill identified as needing the most practice by 73% of the students. Understanding the rules

of punctuation was next with 23% of the students identifying it as a skill they felt needed the most practice. Only one student indicated a need for additional practice with capitalization. Based on the results of the study, the students' perceptions did not correlate with their written work. The results are shown in Figures 3 and 4.

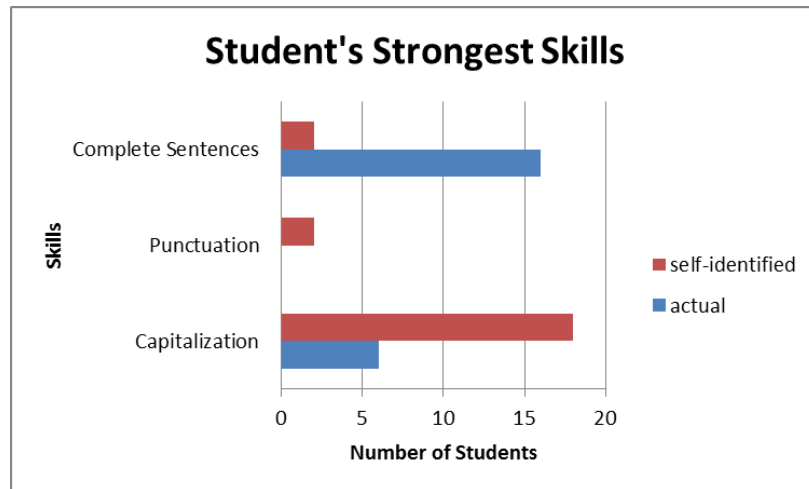


Figure 3. Students' self-identified and actual strongest skills.

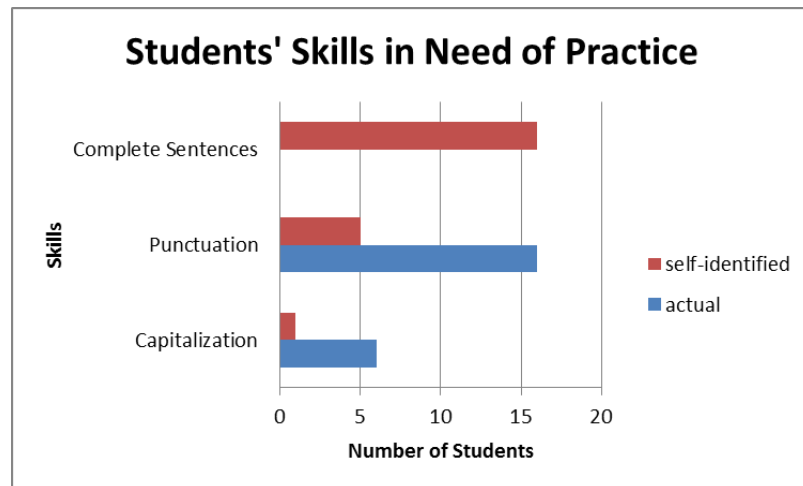


Figure 4. Students' self-identified and actual skills in need of practice.

The next data source, an error tally sheet, recorded the number of errors in capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure. In the writing self-reflection, most students identified capitalization as a strength. During instruction and the editing process, students focused on 3 areas of capitalization. The areas included: capitalizing

the first letter of each sentence, proper nouns, and using capital letters only when necessary. Of the capitalization errors, both prior to instruction and self- and peer-editing and after, 79% of the errors were the capitalization of letters in the middle of sentences. Examples include capitalizing the *t* in *the* and the *n* in *and*. Errors in proper nouns made up 15% of the errors, and less than 1 percent of the errors were made when capitalizing the beginning of each sentence. The 4 students who participated most in the mini-lessons that focused on capitalization decreased their number of errors from their pre-writing to their final copies by an average of 81%. Based on the data, students' use of capitalization improved after whole group instruction, small group mini-lessons, and the editing process. A breakdown of each week's decrease in the number of capitalization errors is included in Figure 5.

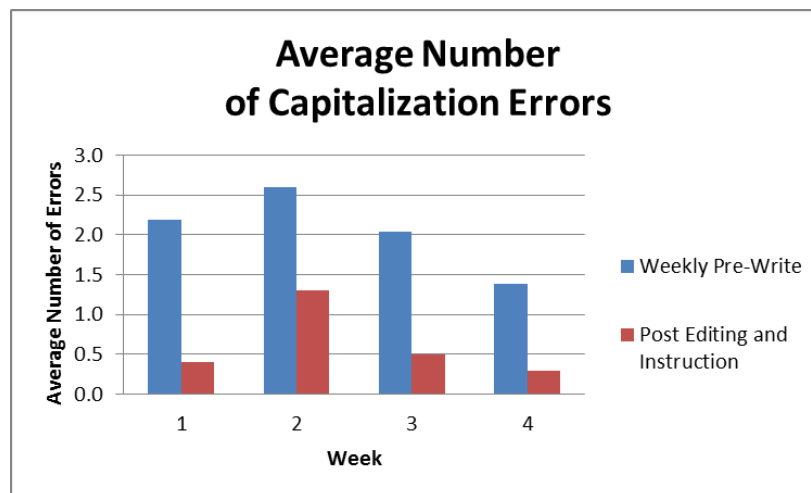


Figure 5. Average number of capitalization errors by week.

The average number of punctuation errors fluctuated from week to week and from pre-writing to final copies. The main focus for punctuation, as noted on the writing rubric, was appropriate use of end punctuation. Student writing samples showed an overall increase in the number of punctuation errors even after mini-lessons and self- and

peer-editing. Of the total errors on the pre-writing samples and final copies, 29% of the errors were due to incorrect use of end punctuation or lack of end punctuation. The data showed that of the 61 errors in end punctuation, 51 of them were for lack of end punctuation. After further analysis, the data indicated that incorrect use or omission of commas made up 61% of the punctuation errors. The average number of punctuation errors from week to week is depicted in Figure 6.

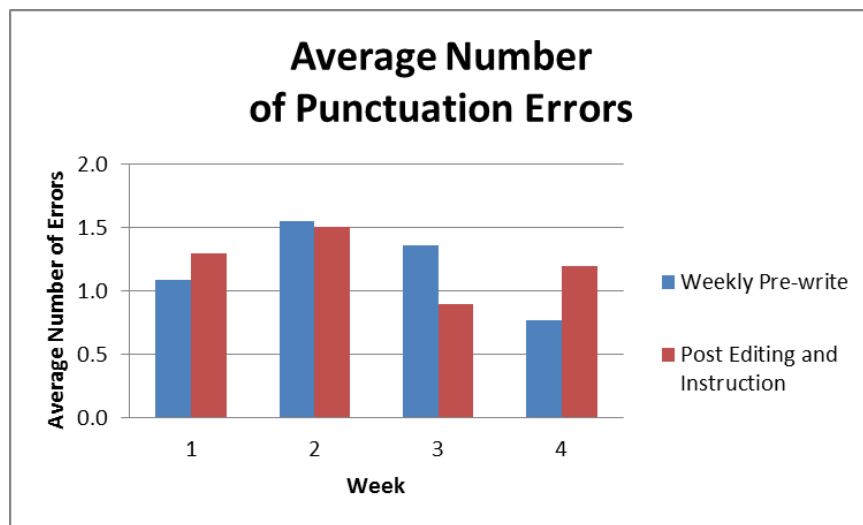


Figure 6. Average number of punctuation errors by week.

Sentence structure, identified as the skill that needed the most practice on the student self-reflection, was shown to be the strongest skill for the group as a whole. Based on the data, each student averaged 1 error in sentence structure in each the pre-writing and the final assessment throughout the 4 week study. Of the 3 students targeted for additional small group mini-lessons based on their initial writing samples, all made gains in this area. After further analysis of the data collected, students were writing longer, more detailed sentences in their final assessments. This may have been a contributing factor for the increased number of errors from their initial weekly writing sample. Results of the students' weekly work are included in Figure 7.

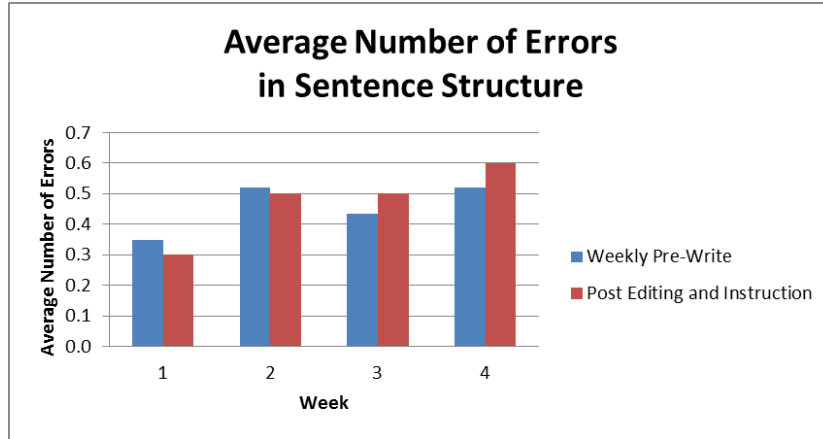


Figure 7. Average number of errors in sentence structure by week.

In addition to the tally sheet, student writing was scored using a writing rubric. Each sentence was scored on correct usage of capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure out of a possible 3 points. Based on the data, the students made the greatest gains in capitalization, gaining an average of two-tenths of a point. In the areas of punctuation and sentence structure, the overall rubric score from the pre-assessments to post-assessments remained the same. The rubric results for each skill are included in Figure 8.

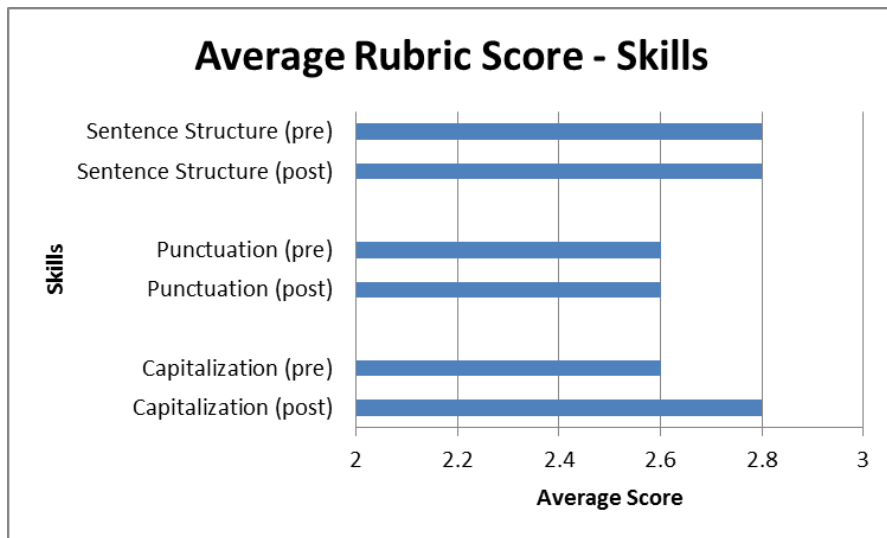


Figure 8. Average rubric score for writing skills.

The average weekly rubric scores, including all three skills (capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure), are shown in Figure 9. Based on the data, the students showed overall improvement on their pre-assessments from week to week. Aside from week two, the data shows improved scores on the students' post-assessments as well. After reviewing notes made during observations from week 2, data suggests that students appeared to rush through their final copies, not taking time to review the edits and suggestions made by themselves and their peers. It was also noted that students lacked focus during this work time. Many reminders were also given to follow the editing checklist. The first step on the editing checklist was to read the sentences out loud to listen for pauses and to hear when the sentences stop. As I observed the students, many of them had this step checked off while the room remained silent. The students and I discussed that whisper reading would be acceptable as long as they took the time to hear themselves read the sentences. On the peer-editing side of the checklist, there was a column for comments and suggestions. Students were reminded to provide written feedback for their classmates following the model of suggest, compliment, and correct that was shared during whole group instruction. Before each self- or peer-editing session, the students and I had a short discussion about the importance of following each step of the editing checklist. I shared with them that the purpose of the checklist was to guide them and help them through the editing process. By the end of the study, the students' use of the checklist had improved. Steps such as reading the sentences out loud needed to be revisited, however, students' effort improved in other steps of the checklist as evidenced by the increased number of comments and suggestions shared with their peers.

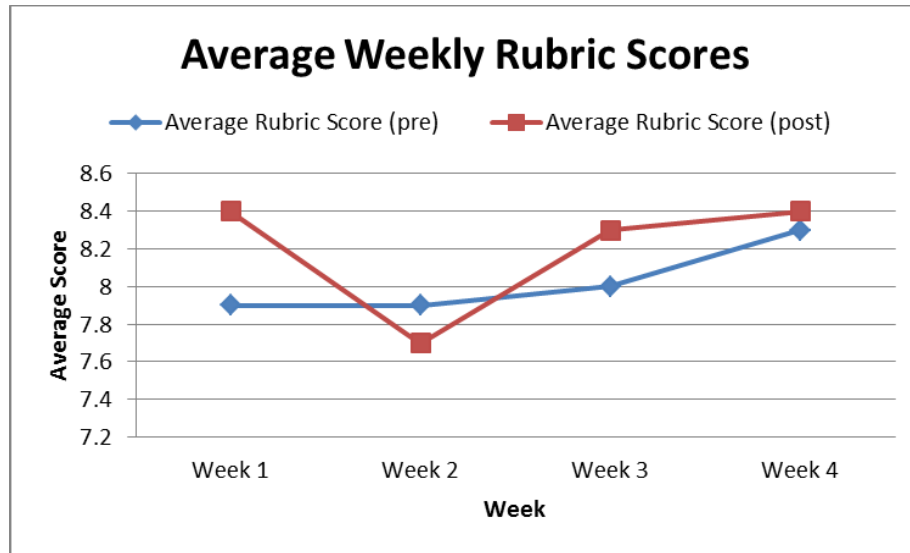


Figure 9. Average weekly rubric scores.

Overall, the results of the study showed that the introduction of student editing strategies and error-based instruction had a positive impact on student writing. In the following section, I will share my response to the results of the study. I will also include the impact these results will have on my teaching and student learning in the future.

#### Action Plan

After analyzing the results of the study, it is evident that improving students' writing must be a continuous process. The teaching of a skill is not complete after a single whole-group lesson and a week of practice. Students must be given many opportunities to review and practice the skills. One way this can be done is by using student work to guide instruction. Analyzing student work creates individualized learning opportunities that help meet the needs of each student.

Getting to know your students is essential to creating a successful learning environment. The information I gathered from the writing self-reflection gave me insight to the students' feelings about the writing process. I learned that providing choice can



help increase student engagement. Students want to be part of the decision-making process. Including students in the learning process by giving them say in what they write makes the work they do more meaningful. Students can make personal connections with their work, strengthening their understanding of skills and concepts. Allowing students to choose topics that are interesting and exciting is one way to help set them up for success.

Viewing students' perceptions of their strengths and areas of needed improvement on the writing self-reflection was eye-opening. The students' writing did not match their responses. Based on the data gathered, the areas students identified as strengths often needed the most work. Finding time for small-group instruction and one-on-one conferencing would provide opportunities to discuss these misconceptions. Asking the student to explain his/her answers would give the teacher insight into the students' thought processes and their current learning levels. In small-group instruction and one-on-one conferencing, teachers can clarify, reassure, and praise the student for his/her work.

Students need to be given the tools to become successful writers. Modeling how to use the tools, checklists, and rubrics were shared with students throughout the study. Providing time and allowing students to practice with these tools is essential in helping them understand the editing process. When developing learning tools, it is important to create resources that are meaningful to both the student and the teacher.

The errors identified throughout the study were a combination of careless mistakes and lack of understanding. The data suggests continued reinforcement of proofreading and editing skills to decrease the amount of careless errors such as missing

punctuation at the end of sentences. The majority of the punctuation errors identified in the students' work were the incorrect use of commas. Based on the data, students would benefit from additional instruction and practice in using the rules for commas. I believe that focusing on one or two uses for a longer time would prove more beneficial than covering all of the rules for commas at one time.

The data gathered from the weekly pre- and post-writing assessments, error tally sheets, and the writing rubric, leads me to believe that the students benefitted from self- and peer-editing and error-based instruction. Although the students' writing continued to have errors in the identified skill areas, additional benefits came from the process. As the study progressed, students were observed having more meaningful discussions during peer-editing, reviewing concepts previously taught and re-teaching one another. Students were questioning one another, trying to help each other better understand the suggestions they were making throughout the peer-editing process. Some students took the initiative to add an additional step to the self-editing process by using dictionaries to check spelling and joined in on discussions with other students when they felt they could provide further explanation and guidance. Toward the end of the study, a student shared with me that, "I noticed I would have missed 3 points had I not reread my sentences." I believe this statement affirms that the work done throughout the study had a positive impact on student.

After analyzing the data gathered throughout the study, there were a number of areas that I feel would benefit from a few changes. When using the rubric to score the students' pre- and post-assessments, the average scores were very similar. Developing a rubric with a larger point scale may have provided a more in-depth look at each skill,

creating additional learning opportunities. Conducting a longer study would have provided opportunities for additional instruction and practice that may have altered the number of errors, specifically those related to lack of knowledge in a particular skill.

The results of the study and the students' responses to the writing self-reflection have shown me the importance of continuing self- and peer-editing and error-based instruction in my classroom. There were times throughout the study when new questions and opportunities for additional research presented themselves. The first topic I saw as potential research was whether or not the use of technology in place of paper/pencil would have an impact on students' writing. A number of the students shared that writing makes them tired, and their hands hurt. If the physical task of writing is keeping a student from showing his/her true ability, will an accommodation such as using an iPad prove effective?

As I developed my action research question, I spent a great deal of time considering whether or not increased writing time, such as journaling, would impact students' writing. If the students write more often, they can put into practice the skills taught during whole-group and small -group instruction. Would there be a decrease in the number of errors in their written work if the students write more frequently?

Finding a way to get students to slow down and take their time is another area in the writing process I would like to investigate further. The amount of time students used to edit did not compare to the amount of time given. I am interested in researching ideas and tools that will encourage students to slow down and put more effort into their learning.

After analyzing the data gathered throughout the study, it is evident that student editing and error-based instruction can have a positive impact on student writing. It is important to remember that writing should be a continuous process. Teachers should analyze and reanalyze student work to drive instruction, making it individualized and meaningful. Students should also take a lead role in the writing process. In order to do so, they must be given the necessary tools to help them become active participants in the development of their writing.

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Appendix A

## Writing Self-Reflection

Please be as honest as you can when answering these questions. The information you share with me will help me guide my teaching. Your answers WILL NOT affect your grade in any way.

\* Required

1. **First Name**

.....

2. **Writing is... \***

You may check more than one box.  
*Check all that apply.*

- boring
- difficult
- enjoyable
- easy

3. **I feel this way because... \***

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

4. **When it is time to write in school I feel... \***

You may check more than one box.  
*Check all that apply.*

- unhappy
- nervous
- excited
- Other: .....



5. **I feel this way because...** \*

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. **I like to write in my free time.** \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- not at all
- sometimes
- often

7. **It is easier for me to write in places away from school (home, outside, etc.) than in school.** \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- I agree.
- I disagree.

8. **What do you like to write?** \*

You may check more than one box.

*Check all that apply.*

- Stories
- Letters/Notes
- Songs
- Poems
- Other: .....

9. **Of the choices listed below, which do you feel is your strongest skill?** \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Understanding the rules for CAPITALIZATION
- Understanding the rules for PUNCTUATION
- Understanding COMPLETE SENTENCES (avoiding fragments and run-ons)

10. **I have trouble thinking about what to write.** \*

*Check all that apply.*

- not at all

11. I like to share my writing with others. \*

*Check all that apply.*

- not at all
- sometimes
- often

12. Of the choices listed below, which do you feel is the skill you need to most practice on? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Understanding the rules for CAPITALIZATION
- Understanding the rules for PUNCTUATION
- Understanding the rules for COMPLETE SENTENCES (avoiding fragments and run-ons)

13. I am a good writer. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

14. I feel this way because... \*

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Appendix B

**Writing Rubric  
Sentences**

|   | <b>Meets Expectations<br/>(3)</b>   | <b>Partially Meets<br/>Expectations<br/>(2)</b>  | <b>Does Not Meet<br/>Expectations<br/>(1)</b>   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p><b>Capitalization</b><br/>                     *correct use of capital letters<br/>                     *first letter of sentence capitalized<br/>                     *proper nouns capitalized<br/>                     *capital letters used only when appropriate (i.e. not in the middle of a word)</p> | 0-1 errors  | 2-3 errors   | 4 or more errors  |
| <p><b>Punctuation</b><br/>                     *appropriate use of end punctuation</p>  | 0-1 errors  | 2-3 errors   | 4 or more errors  |
| <p><b>Sentence Structure</b></p>  | All sentences have a subject and a predicate. The reader can easily understand what the writer is saying. | Some sentences are missing a subject or predicate. Lack of sentence structure causes some difficulty in understanding what the writer is saying. | Most sentences are fragments (missing a subject or predicate) and/or run-ons, making it difficult for the reader to understand what the writer is saying. |

Appendix C

**Error Tally Sheet**

| <b>Student</b> | <b>Prior to self-editing and peer-editing</b> |                    |                           | <b>After self-editing and peer-editing</b> |                    |                           |
|----------------|---|--------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------|---------------------------|
|                | Capitalization Errors                         | Punctuation Errors | Sentence Structure Errors | Capitalization Errors                      | Punctuation Errors | Sentence Structure Errors |
| 1              |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 2              |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 3              |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 4              |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 5              |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 6              |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 7              |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 8              |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 9              |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 10             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 11             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 12             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 13             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 14             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 15             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 16             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 17             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 18             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 19             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 20             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 21             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
| 22             |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
|                |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |
|                |   |                    |                           |  |                    |                           |

Appendix D

Author's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Peer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Editing Checklist for Self- and Peer Editing**

**Directions:** Edit your written work using the Self-Edit columns, fixing any errors you notice. Then, have a peer complete the Peer Edit columns while you observe.

|                 | Self-Edit   |   | Peer Edit   |   |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|
|                 | Checklist Items   | After completing each step, place a check here. | Checklist Items   | After completing each step, place a check here. |
| Punctuation     | I read my written piece aloud to see where to stop or pause for periods, question marks, exclamation marks, and commas.<br><br>Quotation marks are included where needed. |   | I read the author's piece aloud to see where to stop or pause for periods, question marks, exclamation marks, and commas.<br><br>Quotation marks are included where needed. |   |
| Capital Letters | I checked for capitals at the beginning of sentences.<br><br>Proper nouns begin with capital letters.   |   | I checked for capitals at the beginning of sentences.<br><br>Proper nouns begin with capital letters.   |   |
| Grammar         | My sentences are complete thoughts and contain a noun and a verb.<br><br>I don't have any run-on sentences.   |   | Sentences are complete thoughts and contain a noun and a verb.<br><br>There are no run-on sentences.  |   |
| Spelling        | I checked spelling and fixed the words that didn't look right.  |   | Spelling is correct.  |   |