

UNDERSTANDING AND PROMOTING AUTHORSHIP  
IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM

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## Understanding and Promoting Authorship in the Middle School Classroom

### *1. Introduction*

The purpose of this study is to investigate how students see themselves as authors and what classroom practices help them to grow in their confidence and ability as writers from the individual concrete page to the communal digital space.

In this era of high-stakes testing, classroom writing instruction is often focused on passing the test. Writing in the real world requires a balanced writing ability, and students need opportunities to develop as an author, to see themselves as a writer, and to be proficient in various genres of writing in order to be competitive in the work world. I expect that students will become more aware of themselves and their position in the writing world if given opportunities like those presented in this study, from individual to collaborative writing and paper to digital space. Today's literacy definition requires a diverse and deliberate instructional focus.

This research project began in May 2011 after my 8<sup>th</sup> grade students had been immersed in the writing workshop model of teaching, learning, and writing since August of that 2010-2011 school year. Writing workshop is a strategy for teaching writing which incorporates dedicated daily writing time, learning craft and genre from mentor texts, writing for a real audience, practicing the art of peer review, and sharing from the

coveted author's chair. The students had written numerous genre papers in which they could choose the genre and the topic, an I-Search paper with choice of topic, a research/biography paper with limited choice, a remix of another student's research/biography paper, and owned a writer's notebook full of free writes. The project began with a survey of what the students thought about writing and how they thought about themselves as writers before the writing associated with this research commenced.

My suburban Fort Wayne classroom is home to approximately 107 students. There are 53 boys and 54 girls with an age range of 14-15 years old. The diversity of my classroom is limited –89% of the students are classified as white. Overall, there are 12 students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) and 2 students with Emotional Disorders. After introducing this research to my students and asking for their parent's and their written permission to participate in this research, over 60% of the students returned the required permission form. I was very pleased with the parent/student response and decided to use the data from all the students giving permission instead of a random group of 20-30 students.

My primary writing mentors in this study are Donald Graves, Donald Murray, and the National Writing Project. Through these writing experts I, as well as hundreds of others, have learned the strategies and importance of building competent student writers. My technology focus is inspired by the work and research of Cynthia L. Self and Stuart A. Selber who have made me aware of the urgency to incorporate technology literacy into our classroom. Students and teachers need to be embracing this ever-

changing dimension in the academic, professional, and personal world. Written communication has grown beyond the typical single author and single medium. This research will hopefully give administrators and teachers in the secondary level of education insight and affirmation as to what these new writing spaces entail and how we can embrace and experience them in light of the data-driven environment that is clouding every level of curriculum and school administration.

My goal is that if public educators like me have data-driven teacher research based on time-honored writing experts we could prove that the basics of effective writing instruction are simple but important. With ownership of the teacher-research in hand, teachers may have more say in this specific learning environment which is also a high-stakes testing environment. We could then push for the basics of writing to not be ignored or discounted because of their simplicity. We could provide local data to help balance curriculum mandates. We could prove that the simple basics of writing instruction are time-tested and doable. Writing basics are not teachers lecturing about writing or students quietly filling out quizzes and worksheets. Writing basics are found in an ambitious and active classroom where students are learning through writing, through student and teacher mentoring, through working side-by-side in the trenches of the hard work of writing.

I hope that my resulting statistics will convince teachers and administrators that writing instruction is based on a quantity of writing, the quality of genre-driven studies, and the incorporation of technology literacy. This inherently includes student discovery and ownership of the writing process, topic and genre choice, and time and experience

to develop a true writing voice. These elements are key to building writers who through the writing experience learn to be analytical thinkers -- who consequently are better equipped for the high-stakes testing that is not going away any time soon.

Additionally, I am suggesting that students need training and exposure to technology --that writing instruction is not limited to paper. Learning the basics as applicable to the world wide web is important to prepare students to write in the work world with proficiency and confidence in single and co-authored assignments.

## *II. Literature Review*

This project hopes to extricate the basics necessary in a middle school writing curriculum. With the demands from political leaders to leave no child behind, to create national standards and assessment, and to be competitive in the digital and world market, curricula are being calendared, supervised, and micro-managed by newly created specialty positions -- all in an attempt to make drastic changes. The art of teaching is being removed from the classroom teacher and replaced with programs and formulas that will attempt to solve what's ailing America's public education system. Under this pressure many substantial yet simple strategies are abandoned to be replaced with similar but newly focused packaged curriculum. I challenge administrators, curriculum coaches, teachers, and political reformers to retool what works, to practice what research has proven, and to offer this direction and authority to the middle school English teacher to implement according to the students' needs and experience. I have chosen three writing basics to focus my study: quantity, quality, and technology.

**Quantity:** It is no secret that practice leads to mastery. The most obvious staple to writing curriculum is that students be immersed in writing, producing a consistent yet substantial quantity of writing. This axiom supported by intense and intentional writing units, though time-consuming, needs to be encouraged and supported through English departments and school administrators. Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi acknowledge this in the first chapter of *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*, saying “It is crucial for students to have frequent, predictable time set aside for them to write” (8). Fletcher and Portalupi also address the fact that although teachers can set the precedent of what gets taught, only students can decide what they will learn (9), which is where the action of choice comes in – choice on topic, choice on genre – which will be addressed throughout in this composition. Frequent and varied writing opportunities give students occasion to move through levels of writing competency (Hillocks 18) and the development of their personal voice. “Voice is a significant element in our learning by writing” (Murray 110). It seems that Murray is suggesting that through writing we learn voice, and we learn life. Murray also suggests that finding voice is essential to the development of the writer because “The music of your drafts – your voice – also helps instruct you in the early stages of writing, telling you what you feel and think about the subject” (77).

This first writing basic of quantity includes giving students time and audience, choice and direction, and reflection and feedback so they can develop as writers, develop their writing voice, and learn through writing. The definition includes all those difficult parts a writer knows and experiences. As Donald Graves says,

The writing process has a driving force called voice.

Technically, voice is not a process component . . . [R]ather, it underlies every part of the process. To ignore voice is to present the process as a lifeless, mechanical act. Divorcing voice from process is like omitting salt from stew, love from sex, or sun from gardening. Teachers who attend to voice listen to the person in the piece and observe how that person uses process components.

(227)

It is through this process that students begin to find the writer within them. It changes, it grows, it hides, it matures – but the writing classrooms should provide the opportunity for students to find their writing identity and voice. Even now as I search for the words to express and focus my writing to help the audience understand and engage, I am writing and revising ....but I know my advisor and my peers will help redirect, question, and refine my message. So should be the environment of the writing classroom that builds confident, problem solving writers. By placing the “teacher and student more nearly in balance, with the teacher planning activities and selecting materials through which students interact with each other to generate ideas and learn identifiable writing skills” (Hillocks 123), students will “work together to solve problems of various kinds” (Hillocks 124).

It takes time. Students cannot learn real writing and develop true writing identity in a vacuum of a few prescribed writing assignments with little or no option in genre and topic choice. It takes time to develop writers that find voice, understand their personal

writing process, and begin writing with confidence. The maturing writer needs to be nurtured through a quantity of writing opportunities which takes more time than what calendar curriculum and mandated standards allow. The state and local curriculum standards and testing requirements complicate daily lesson plans, and time becomes a diminishing resource.

Another roadblock to this measure of quantity is that administrators observing this writing workshop strategy in the classroom may find it too relaxed, too quiet, too loud, too unstructured, too abstract. Administrators want to see something that will change their school test scores. They want to see something they can measure. What can be missed in these important settings is that the learning is happening empirically for the students; they are learning through the trial and error experience of putting into words what they are thinking. This metacognition is vital in the maturing student, but isn't always visible. Hillocks concludes his 1986 review of teaching modes of instruction with a warning:

The research of the past two decades indicates clear directions. If we wish our schools and colleges to teach writing effectively, we cannot retreat to the grammar book or rely on the presentation of rules and advice, or expect students to teach themselves how to write effectively simply by writing whatever they wish for varied groups of their peers. We must make systematic use of instructional techniques which are demonstrably more effective.

We must also continue our efforts to evaluate and understand those techniques, and to develop new instructional procedures. (251)

These students are prime candidates for this strategic and experiential learning. As they move into high school and college, curriculum becomes content focused with less attention to process and strategy training. Students are more frequently given assignments – not taught them. They are expected to perform in various genres for various reasons but aren't typically given the opportunity to practice and engage in these venues. There isn't time.

“Learning to write requires frequent, supportive practice” (National Writing Project 12). Donald Graves said back in 1978 in *Balance the Basics: Let Them Write*, “We need to let them write” (27). Donald Murray reiterates that “you have to plunge in and write ... Write and your writing will instruct you...Writing will make you aware ...”(1). Writing is how we explore and analyze life. As author Stephen King says, “If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot. There's no way around these two things that I'm aware of, no shortcut” (145).

**Quality:** Writing instruction needs to expose students to a variety of genres for a variety of audiences. It is easier to assess the whole writer with a collection of various writings than mandated and mechanical five-paragraph essays. Varying the genre of the writing assignment not only gives the teacher an opportunity to review growth of the writer from various aspects but allows for a “richer diagnostic for the teacher” (National Writing Project 79) in different forms and formats. By introduction and modeling of a variety of genres, students learn to address the rhetorical elements innate to different

purposes of writing for different audiences (National Writing Project 91). Genre studies give students not just a container, but a way to respond to a recurring rhetorical situation (Devitt 88) which allows students to be constructing knowledge, to make meaning, to address problems and situations with personal choice and intuition giving them a storehouse of strategies – building confidence as a writer – a competent author.

Genre in our current writing world could be said to provide the writer with time and place, reason and audience. In Anis Bawarshi's article on "Sites of Invention", he quotes Jim Corder who writes that "*inventio*, by its nature, calls for openness to the accumulated resources of the world a speaker lives in, to its landscapes, its information, its ways of thinking and feeling. . . .*Inventio* is the world the speaker lives in" (qtd. in Bawarshi 104). The writing world is not unlike the philosophy governing the modern design world in which form follows function. Genre helps to solve the rhetorical problem. I know I am walking a fine line between the theorists of using habitat as a framework from where the author is writing as opposed to the format in which it is written. I believe we need both in the middle school classroom. Through genre studies, students could learn to use writing as an instrument, a place, a tool, for invention – a form. As "topoi were ... rhetorical habitats" (Bawarshi 104) so genres can be the "act of locating oneself socially, a way of participating in the shared desires, values, and meanings already existing in the world" (Bawarshi 104). The goal for using genre studies in the classroom is to help students situate themselves within the genre and recognize how the genre helps to shape the rhetorical solution. As Lucy Calkins states in *The Art of Teaching Writing*, "Because the forms in which we write become lenses that affect our

way of seeing the world, it is tremendously important that we not allow our writing workshop to become a place in which children write over and over in the same genre. Student writers must be nudged to extend their repertoire” (Calkins 357). This nudging into a variety of genres allows writers to mature their perspectives to meet with that of their audience. Each writing assignment should have students inquiring how to solve the writing purpose. This cannot be done with the typical non-contextualized essays and papers required by state standards and curriculum restrictions.

**Technology:** Writing can be matured through current and popular writing venues, namely the digital space. Nearly 12 years ago Cynthia Selfe brought national attention to technology literacy through her work in *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century*. Here she challenged the nation’s literacy leaders to revise their definition of literacy. In the forward to her book, Hugh Burns states how the “political rhetoric these days has to do with improving literacy *in the future*. . . .but, Selfe argues, to teach the future means to attend to the present” (Selfe xiii). Writing classrooms are now wrestling with technology. “For teachers, literacy instruction is now inextricably linked with technology...and has become part of our responsibility, whether we like it or not” (Selfe 5). Two priorities are reflected in this new technology literacy: preparing students and communities to be literate in digital communication and to be attentive to the illiteracy it begets. Selfe is adamant in addressing writing teachers at all levels of the profession with this responsibility.

Stuart Selber warns us that “the stakes could not be higher. For at issue is the future shape of writing instruction and its significance to students” (Selber 3). In

*Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* Selber divides technology literacy into the functional, critical, and rhetorical levels needed to be integrated into computer literacy programs. These definitions articulate the complex levels that technology poses for the writing classroom. Writing instructors, however, drawing from the traditional strategies of the past, can work these complex structures of technology into current curricular standards. *Writing New Media* by Anne Wysocki is an example of the numerous resources and research available to writing teachers to help bridge this gap in their writing and technology lessons. As Denis Baron so simply stated, “Computer communications are not going to go away” (32), and to prepare students for the academic and work world, technology literacy syncopated with writing instruction is not an option – it is an essential.

Finally, a maturing writing process benefits from an actual audience. By giving students these opportunities, not only would their writing improve, but an accompanying benefit would be that their awareness and confidences as a true writer-author, would also emerge – one benefiting the other. What better place than the writing classroom to expose young writers to a variety of real audiences. Writing for an audience has a dual purpose. One, writing with the focus of the reader helps to focus the writing and “invites the reader to stand at the writer’s side so the writer can point out the view and comment upon it...taking the reader along” (Murray 54). Secondly, writing for an audience gives purpose to the writing – it makes it, well, important. As Mem Fox says, “it matters...So that was why I wrote: because it mattered” (Fox 2). If we want students to write prolifically, they need to be writing about something they care

about for someone who will listen -- because it matters. This is not only an audience issue, it is a choice issue as well. Students need a balance between learning content for content's sake and learning to write about things they care about, things that matter to them, topics that they can immerse themselves, emerging a more experienced true writer. These skills can then be transferred to the assignments that have less "self" involved but meet and prepare students for the curricular and testing genres and audience they often face in academia.

### *III. Methodology*

This research has a mixed methods design, beginning and ending as teacher inquiry – teacher research. The entire project was extensively pre-designed by the researcher and received approval from the Institutional Review Board of Ball State University. The subjects were determined through an IRB-approved parent and student consent form created for this research. All students were given the consent form and of the 107 forms given out, 60% of them were returned giving permission for the student to participate. After all data collection was complete, the data was sorted by students who had completed all levels of the data collection – the three surveys, the writing reflection, and the focus group questions – which resulted in 63 students. The results were manually tallied and reviewed by the practitioner-researcher with the aid of one research assistant.

The triangulation of data was anchored in a *Student Authorship Survey* (Appendix A) administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the data collection period. The *Writer's Reflection* (Appendix B-1) was administered at the beginning of the last week of

the data collection for this research project. And the Focus Group Questions (Appendix B-2) were given on the last day of the data collection.

The project commenced with the first application of the *Student Authorship Survey* to establish a baseline before participating in the planned writing assignments and activities. Students answered ten questions about how they saw themselves as writers on a continuum scale of six points from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This was an important baseline given the fact that it was the final and fourth quarter of the school year and students had extensive writing experiences throughout the 2010-2011 school year in the English classroom and writing across the curriculum. Students completed the authorship survey for the first time on April 29, 2011. Following the implementation of the first survey, the writing unit for this research project began with poetry as defined by the Indiana State Standards.

*The first week:* The first poetry writing assignment gave students an opportunity to write a “found poem” using the words of an author other than themselves. Students chose words from an excerpt of a published author’s work and arranged them into a poem of their own composition. There were five excerpts made available for them to choose from: *The Devil’s Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen, *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Francis Goodrich and Albert Hackett, two from *Night* by Elie Wiesel, and biographies of holocaust victims from the National Holocaust Museum. The objective is to use published authors as mentors to learn from their uses of genre, style, and writing craft, but also to realize the power of words to create meaning and ultimately, to find writing voice. This gives students a jumping off point to create their own poetry using

published authors as their sources, but without plagiarizing. They experienced the power of individual words that when combined have a unique form, voice, and message different from the original authors. The found poem has the student's voice, the student's message, the student's poetry genre style. "The meaning of the prose text belongs to the reader who, as a writer, must structure the meaning into a new literary form (Simmons 44).

*The second week:* Now that students have created their own poetry with wide parameters, the study is narrowed to review and work through models of the poetry styles mandated by the Indiana State Standards for 8<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts -- including ballads, lyrics, couplets, epics, elegies, odes, and sonnets (Standard 8.3.1). For the next assignment, students chose two of the styles studied to compose original works of their own -- using topics of their choice.

*The third week:* Students were immersed in a multi-genre speech/writing project incorporating the students' original poetry (written for this unit) and a written script for the oral presentation. The script required an introduction, body, and conclusion (the body being their original poetry) paying close attention to the element of audience. Following the speech presentations, the same *Student Authorship Survey* was administered for the second time, May 23, 2011.

*The fourth and fifth weeks:* Students were sent into the digital world. Through careful construction and alliance with the Technology Director of our school district, a restricted Google Sites platform was the base where students collaboratively designed class period wikis. (An example of a wiki would be Wikipedia, publicly authored and

edited information.). A template was set for each class period, and although all class periods could view the other wikis, they only had editing rights to their own class period wiki. However, everyone in each class period had the same editing rights to everything on that class period wiki. So we talked about who has rights to change your writing? Do they need permission? Should it go through a panel of “editors” before changes can be made? Students designed the wiki to have whatever focus they determine as a class adding links, photos, art, writing, design elements, charts and graphs as they saw fit – all original work.

*The sixth week:* During the final week of the data collection, the wikis got their final touch, the *Writer’s Reflection* and *Focus Group Questions* were completed (Appendix B-1, B-2), and the final *Student Authorship Survey* was administered on June 8, 2011.

The collection of data was completed on the last day of classes for 2011.

#### *IV. Discussion/Analysis*

The results of this project, even in a short six-week unit, indicated that students perceived themselves more as writers at the end than at the beginning of the writing unit. Though writing examples were not the focus of this study, the results suggest that the intentional work of the teacher pushing the quantity and quality of genre-focus writing coupled with the technology-focused classroom wiki brought measurable awareness to their identity as single and co-authors and their need to be familiar with writing for the web. The three suggested basics for the writing classroom will be

acknowledged by reviewing the results of the triangulated data from the survey, the reflection, and the focus group questions – individually.

*Student Authorship Survey Results:* The final results of the survey -- after compiling the data from the three submission dates -- suggests that a consistent and substantial quantity of writing produces more confident writers who identify themselves as “writers.” For Question 1, “I know what it means to be an author of a piece of written work,” the percentage changes 45% over the course of six weeks -- from 22% to 67%. Given the fact that these students have been writing all year, this movement seems significant. It must be acknowledged that familiarity with the survey may have influenced their responses, but the maturity factor, typically a problem in this type of research, seems minimal given the short tenure of this project. Likewise, you would expect this type of change from the beginning to the end of the year, not at the end of the year.

Their confidence level as represented in Question 4 also reflects a positive move toward strongly agree in the second level (see chart levels numbered 1-6). This is what I want to see, a movement from those students who see themselves as writers but often do not possess the confidence to perform well in writing assignments and ultimately writing for the real world. In Question 10, the fact that students prefer to write in their own words suggests that they are becoming more confident in not only saying something through writing, but actually having something to say. Developing a voice is critical to developing as a writer which was addressed in the literature review.

Survey Results from 4/29; 5/23; 6/8 (n = 63)	Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. I know what it means to be an author of a piece of written work.	22% 48% 67%	44% 48% 32%	30% 3% 2%	2% -- --		
2. I know how to give credit for information in my writing that is not my own.	46% 58% 52%	48% 38% 46%	6% 3% 2%	-- 2% --		
3. I enjoy writing in my own words.	49% 44% 43%	40% 38% 37%	8% 16% 16%	3% 2% 2%	-- 2% --	
4. I feel confident that my writing expresses what I want to say.	40% 39% 41%	33% 33% 46%	21% 22% 11%	3% 6% 2%	2% -- --	
5. I do not want or need to share the writing process with another person, for example, to complete a project that includes writing with someone else.	10% 16% 13%	21% 8% 17%	35% 22% 22%	16% 25% 19%	10% 23% 14%	8% 6% 14%
6. There are times when I would want someone else to be able to make changes to my writing.	24% 30% 35%	38% 34% 35%	22% 27% 22%	8% 8% 6%	5% 2% --	3% -- 2%
7. Being familiar with writing for the web is important to me.	3% 16% 22%	27% 23% 40%	25% 31% 19%	32% 14% 10%	11% 14% 5%	2% 2% 3%
8. I know that co-authoring means to work with another person(s) through the writing process to develop a finished product.	41% 45% 62%	37% 42% 29%	16% 13% 8%	6% -- 2%		
9. I know that when co-authoring, someone else has the right to make changes to my writing.	43% 41% 56%	27% 42% 25%	16% 16% 17%	11% 2% 2%	2 -- --	2% -- --
10. I prefer to write my own words instead of using information from a book or the internet.	22% 20% 38%	27% 27% 35%	30% 30% 21%	13% 14% 3%	6% 3% 3%	2% 6% --

In Question 7, “Being familiar with writing for the web is important to me”

percentages moved from 3% to 22% in level 1 and from 27% to 40% in level 2. These percentage changes suggest that students began to see the relevance of writing for the web and began to understand the importance of co-authoring. This tells me that awareness has been awakened, but there is still a long way to go in building proficiency.

The results of questions 8 and 9 reveal that students, through the collaborative work of designing and producing the class wiki, became acquainted with the definition and relevance of co-authoring to produce web based writing.

Question 5 is poorly worded and the results are difficult to decipher. However, the percentages shift from one side of the continuum to the other which suggests, again, that students are beginning to understand that not all writing can be done solo, and knowing how to write collaboratively will be an asset to their skill set. This is important given the digital world these students will continue to mature within. Standing by the literacy principles articulated by Selfe and Selber, I am convinced that we need to train and develop today's students to be technology literate, and writing teachers are positioned perfectly to prepare them. Alan November compares training our students to navigate the web to training our students to drive a car. It's time we considered technology literacy as important a life skill as driving a vehicle.

*Focus Group Questions* results: The student responses were consistent in stating that the difference between authors and writers is that authors write for publication and get paid and yet anyone can write. This is not what I was looking for, but the fact that they mentioned that "anyone can write" is progress. That means they consider themselves writers but not authors. Identity is the first step to owning the position. If these students have grown this much in their identity as writers in six weeks, it seems relevant to consider these writing basics a curriculum foundation for the entire year.

When asked, “What has been done in your education this year that has improved your image of yourself or your ability as an author, a writer?” students answered:

- ✓ I have grown emotionally
- ✓ I have added skills
- ✓ I have gained confidence
- ✓ I have grown through experience
- ✓ I have increased knowledge and perform at a new comfort level with my improved self image
- ✓ I can see different perspectives
- ✓ I have less fear because of my experiences

Unfortunately these students responded to “how” they personally changed, not “what” was done to bring about that change. These results confirm my hypothesis that more writing experience builds writer confidence. With this confidence comes the ability to write for other forms and audiences with less fear. The lack of fear allows students to push beyond their comfort zones which allows for the analytical, synthesizing student thinkers we are trying to equip.

Writer’s Reflection results: The students’ voices are consistent and clear. On the question asking what was their major accomplishment as a writer, they reflected not only on this writing unit, but the entire year of writing. Their answers were not surprising, were predictable, and directly reflected the language we used to talk about

writing. (The following list includes names of writing assignments mentioned in the introduction of this report.)

My Major Accomplishments (in students' own words): *My I-search and research projects because I felt really smart and successful; Actually doing good on essays on tests and quizzes and the biography and remix; I grew in the way that I wrote by the words that I chose and the craft I learned to incorporate; finishing and writing very long paragraphed papers; that I need to try different things and get out of my comfort zone; I took time to consider what I was writing about and gave all of my writing serious thought and attention; I liked the I-Search because it satisfied our curiosity as well as tested our writing techniques; I got up and shared my writings with the class because I had to; Poetry because I like to write what I feel; I think I caught my audience's attention and made them feel what I was trying to achieve; I can write longer; my I-Search because I learned about a topic that I cared about; the wiki project was fun to do with my friends; I liked writing with partners; I could choose what I wanted; writing the papers because you got to make them your own and do what you want; the I-search because I got to do what I wanted to do; when I wrote all 4 pages on my ISTEP essay prompts.*

These students are saying that they like to write about what matters to them, and that they feel more confident and successful as writers given those opportunities. Several even suggested that working together – co-authoring – was actually fun. Many commented on learning new genres and how to pick the right one for the right reason. Others commented about just writing more than they had ever written. Some shared

how they still struggle with poetry or found it to be their best genre. Overall, the true assessment is that students are writing about writing.

#### *V. Conclusion*

My hypothesis proved to be true – on all accounts. A learning environment filled with abundant and varied writing opportunities will help students improve their writing identity and their writing experience. Genre studies incorporated within the writing workshop give young writers an opportunity to investigate different formats, yet help them inquire about their audience and their topic, matching the genre to fits those needs. Working together on the wikis helped many to see that writing alone isn't always an option, and learning to write with others is an important skill to learn, to practice, without having to be afraid. Additionally, students will be more prepared and capable to write in the work world with more proficiency and confidence for single and co-authored assignments on both the paper and digital space.

The results of this research project seem self-evident. Maybe it's because it turned out as I suspected, but it just makes sense. So often educators are directed to new curriculum, new strategies, new focuses, and the standard fundamental teaching strategies are lost in the myriad of "new" pressures and ideas.

Another important point at issue in the teaching of writing is that students need to be matured into writers. There isn't a box on the shelf that will give you all the components necessary for a successful writing classroom. It is about teaching students to find their voice, their process, their writer within. Dona Hickey states that "voice is the sum effect of all the stylistic choices a writer makes to communicate not only

information about a subject but also information about himself or herself to a particular audience” (1). We are addressing a complex structure to build habits of the mind in our students. There is no magic formula or pattern, but the foundations we can anchor our footing are simple, evident, tested, and true: a significant quantity of writing coupled with the quality of genre-study and technology literacy. These basics will enable confident writers to solve the rhetorical problems they will face in academia, in work, and in their personal writing worlds. It is our responsibility as writing instructors to practice these strategies in our classroom and influence the curricula decisions our state and local administrators are debating.

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### Appendix A

**How do I think of myself as a writer?** Darken the circle that best answers each question.

Question	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
1. I know what it means to be an author of a piece of written work.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree .....Strongly Disagree	
2. I know how to give credit for information in my writing that is not my own.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree .....Strongly Disagree	
3. I enjoy writing in my own words.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree .....Strongly Disagree	
4. I feel confident that my writing expresses what I want to say.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree .....Strongly Disagree	
5. I do not want or need to share the writing process with another person, for example, to complete a project that includes writing with someone else.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree .....Strongly Disagree	
6. There are times when I would want someone else to be able to make changes to my writing.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree .....Strongly Disagree	
7. Being familiar with writing for the web is important to me.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree .....Strongly Disagree	
8. I know that co-authoring means to work with another person(s) through the writing process to develop a finished product.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree .....Strongly Disagree	
9. I know that when co-authoring, someone else has the right to make changes to my writing.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree .....Strongly Disagree	
10. I prefer to write my own words instead of using information from a book or the internet.	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree .....Strongly Disagree	

Appendix B-1

**Writer's Reflection – Poetry and Holocaust and Speech Unit of Study**

1. What genres have you written in this poetry and holocaust unit?
2. What is your favorite genre to write?
3. Which pieces of writing were your most effective? Why? (What did you do as the author?)
4. What were your major accomplishments as a writer during this unit of study?
5. What are your strengths as a writer?
6. What are the areas in which you can improve?
7. What changes have you made in your approach to writing?
8. One thing I have learned about good writing that I will apply to all my future writing is . . .

Appendix B-2

**Focus Group Questions**

1. What does it mean to you to be an author, a writer? Is an author and a writer the same thing?
2. How has that changed for you during this past teaching unit on poetry, multi-genre, and the blog/wiki?
3. What has been done in your education this year that has improved your image of yourself or your ability as an author, a writer?
4. What genres or assignments were the easiest for you to write? The most difficult?
5. Are there any words or questions on the survey or reflection that you did not understand?