

Sharon Fouche

Electronic Professional Portfolio

Masters in Education, Reading Specialist with ESL
Endorsement

Concordia University of Nebraska

Dr. Uffelman – Course Director

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GRADUATE STUDENT PROFESSIONAL VITA

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Personal and Professional History

I appreciate the wealth of experiences that range from being educated and teaching in the Caribbean to studying and teaching in the state of Nebraska. My educational experiences include parochial and public schooling, as well as a University that embraced the unique cosmopolitan nature of the country of my birth. My father, aunt, and grandfather all held teaching and administrative positions, and their emphasis on education influenced me in becoming a teacher. I am a mother of three children ranging from ten to seventeen years, and I find it very rewarding to work with children of all ages.

I look forward to using my ELL endorsement to be an advocate for students from diverse backgrounds who are trying to find their voice and place in our education system. I rely on my experiences as an immigrant to help students negotiate through new settings. Through my student teaching, I learned valuable lessons on the power of collaboration among teachers and administrators, as well as students and their parents. I learned how important it is to integrate technology in lesson plans and how to motivate participation in class work. I stayed in touch with the ELL students I worked with, serving as a mentor in the college application process – for example, filling out FAFSA and college application forms, and taking them for loan counseling and career guidance.

As a Reading Specialist, I feel privileged to have acquired skills in using the best methods of formally and informally assessing the reading abilities of elementary and secondary students and in developing individualized programs for students with literacy needs – such as newcomer and ESL students or those with special needs. I really enjoyed the experience of working with five newcomers from Togo and using my knowledge from the Master in Reading Literacy Program to assess, plan, and monitor their learning. My Reading Specialist role incorporated the responsibilities of a peer partner, advocate for students and parents, translator, and facilitator of the home-school connection. I used the strategies in the Reading Specialist Practicum to take the newcomers from phonemic and phonological awareness to word decoding skills, development of expressive and receptive vocabulary, cognitive transfer, sight-word development, academic-content vocabulary development, reading and listening comprehension skills, and connections to math, social studies, and science. Newcomer pride and comfort in their heritage and language were also incorporated in instruction.

Description of Present Position

I am a substitute teacher for the Ralston and Papillion La Vista school districts. I enjoy building relationships with teachers, staff, and administrators throughout these schools – and I am so grateful for the opportunity to expand my learning experiences. I take my duties and

responsibilities very seriously, and I appreciate the time spent with the students. It feels very rewarding to be on the preferred substitute list for some schools and teachers – and it inspires me to be a dedicated employee. I have served as an ELL long-term substitute teacher in two elementary schools in the Papillion and Ralston school districts during the 2010/2011 school year. I have applied to the Bellevue, Papillion, and Ralston school districts for ELL and Social Studies positions. I continue to stay in touch with former ELLs who need any help in understanding the college application process. I also tutor elementary ELL students.

Goals and Objectives for Graduate Study

I want to gain more knowledge of the philosophical and political issues in education so I can better understand the decisions made in schools today. I enjoy having a forum to discuss policies with peers in my graduate classes. I have gained more insight into first and second language education in this country, as well as the importance of meeting literacy needs – along with approaches that work best with students from diverse backgrounds. I feel better prepared to accommodate students, to work with other teachers to modify instruction, and to engage in successful assessment and placement procedures.

I place a lot of importance on understanding the socioeconomic backgrounds of my students, and I feel like this program allows me to investigate this knowledge and apply sound methods that help my students to be successful. It is teaching me how to be part of a collaborative team of parents, teachers, and administrators. I can see how all this connects in creating a school that is a good fit for students.

Philosophy of Education Statement

A successful eclectic approach allows me to address a variety of learning styles, interests, and backgrounds. I want to motivate students to think creatively, express ideas, engage in hands-on and real-world learning, thematic instruction, and to see that knowledge is relevant to their lives. I like to inspire my students to make connections across all subject areas. It is also important to guide students in self-monitoring their skills and behavior so they can learn to set goals that would help them to be successful in and out of the classroom. These ideas are consistent with the more modern philosophies like Progressivism (problem-solving using creative methods), Pragmatism (collaborative and active learning), and Existentialism (focus on individual experiences). This is especially useful during the years of adolescence when students want to participate more in learning and expressing perspectives.

Effective teaching enhances the important connections among the home, school, local, and global communities. I encourage my students to respect the perspectives of others as an enriching contribution to our nation and to our world. Once students can apply information to other contexts, they feel more confident to communicate successfully in an interdependent global setting. This approach is also more compatible with modern philosophies like Pragmatism that encourage a sense of community in the classroom. As an ELL teacher, I enjoy the challenge of linking concepts to students' backgrounds and cultures through a wide range of collaborative and

meaningful activities. Language and culture are inseparable from identity, and my philosophy is that a teacher plays an important role in helping all students feel a sense of belonging in the classroom and in the school (Existentialism and the need for self-expression).

As a Reading Specialist, I plan to use my knowledge to assist students with literacy needs who come from a range of backgrounds. I appreciate the multi-dimensional role that the Reading Specialist plays in planning, developing, and evaluating a sound literacy program and designing individualized instruction to meet the unique needs of learners. I look forward to applying the knowledge I have gained to assess the needs and strengths of my students and communicate those findings to teachers, parents, and administrators. I am aware that the Reading Specialist conducts these responsibilities with professionalism, leadership, and a desire to collaborate with those involved in meeting the educational needs of my students. This includes fostering a positive climate of trust with parents.

I want to be an effective teacher who exhibits expert knowledge of subject matter, pedagogical competence, and good classroom management. I believe in setting high expectations for my students. This aligns with the traditional philosophies like Essentialism and Idealism in which I was educated – where students demonstrate respect for the teacher and appreciate the impact of the past on our present. I do agree that we need some common framework of understanding so we can tie past experiences with newer understandings. Current policy sets high requirements for standardized testing and it is helpful when the school supports teachers in making sure that tests align with what is being taught in the classroom. I like, however, to involve my students in creating the expectations for respect and performance in the classroom through intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic motivation. I also think it is important to use additional and more authentic forms of assessments like portfolios and journals (Existentialism). While I agree that we need to cultivate a shared background of knowledge, we also need to draw on the multiple expressions of thought and literature that serve as rich resources. More modern philosophies like Pragmatism also encourage us to use more interdisciplinary learning that connects knowledge.

My spiritual learning is tied to my teaching (Neo-scholastic Philosophy) and I believe God's purpose for me is consistent through any context that I face. However, I try to lead by example and to express my faith and values through the way I treat my students, co-workers, parents, and other members of the community. The strongest expression of my faith in a public school setting is to be an advocate for my students – a voice for those who need help in negotiating the complexities of issues we face in schools today – from the hidden curriculum to making accommodations for testing and learning. I plan to model sincerity, patience, dedication, faith in God and in my students, a love for learning, and passion for my students within the community I serve.

My desire to create a caring and democratic and caring classroom community depends on the collaborative efforts of a team of teachers, administrators, parents, and members of the community – and I am dedicated to being a supportive co-worker and a trustworthy and reliable team member who values her supervisors and administrators – and is faithful to the goals of the principal and the school. Parental involvement is such a necessary component to student success as well. The school benefits when the traditional knowledge base is extended to include culturally and socially relevant policies that motivate children to be caring citizens of a world

where there is respect for a multiplicity of dialogues and voices, human rights, justice and equality – and where all expressions have an opportunity to be seen and heard.

Vision for the Future

I want to be part of innovative approaches that invite students from all backgrounds to be successful in reaching their fullest potential. I plan to be a passionate teacher who is an expert in her field and who motivates her students to have a love for learning. I want to ensure that my students receive the tools to become confident and happy adults in their pursuit of higher education and a successful life.

My faith in God is the center of my life, and it is the foundation for all that I do in my life. I hope to continue God's work to help others see His purpose in their lives. I have always placed value on becoming an active member of the community, and I can see the benefits of collaborating with the rich resources others are eager to provide to students. Teaching offers us that chance to serve God in serving others, and I look forward to serving God, my children, my school, my students, and my community in the next five to ten years and beyond.

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~Determined ~Dedicated ~Team Player

Making a Difference in the Lives of Students so they can make a Difference in the World

Motivated, passionate, and creative Elementary, Middle, and Secondary School Educator with an eclectic style of teaching that addresses a variety of learning styles, interests, and backgrounds. Talents to design, implement, and supplement Social Studies/History and ELL curriculum with engaging and interactive lessons that allow students to see that knowledge in the classroom is relevant to their lives. Advocate for guiding, supporting, and motivating students to communicate successfully in the diverse settings of an interdependent, global community. Possesses excellent intrapersonal, interpersonal, and communications skills that foster meaningful and respectful relationships with students, parents, and staff.

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION

Bachelor of Arts (1986); Major: History

University of the West Indies – St. Augustine, Trinidad – Graduated with Honors

Masters in Reading Literacy – Concordia University

Professional Education Classes: Chadron State College, Chadron, Nebraska;

College of Saint Mary, Omaha, Nebraska; Concordia University, Nebraska

Nebraska Educator's Certificate – Social Science 7-12; ESL K-12

Overall GPA: 4.0; National Dean's List

Professional Teaching Experience

- Helped to develop an Instructional Program to tutor struggling high school students evenings and weekends (Trinidad, W.I.)
- Substitute teacher for Miami Dade County Schools, Florida (1990 – 1991) and Alachua County Schools, Gainesville, Florida (1991 – 1994); Papillion and Ralston Schools (2008 to present)
- ^{9th} Grade American History student teaching; K through 12 ELL internship; Masters in Reading Literacy internship; ELL long-term positions La Vista West Elementary November 2010 to January 14, 2011; Mockingbird Elementary January 31, 2011 to March 18, 2011

- Developed a Newcomer ELL program for 5 students from Togo that incorporated phonemic and phonological awareness; cognitive transfer of literacy skills from home language (French) to English; sight word and academic content vocabulary development; reading and listening comprehension skills; ability to connect to Math, Reading, Science, and Social Studies curriculum; tutored students during their optional calendar school break in school.
- Served as liaison, translator, and advocate for ELL group of newcomers and their parents in guiding them to understand regulations, routines, and class and school expectations. Created a positive partnership with parents.
- Developed creative lessons to supplement American History curriculum and to help ELL students develop better connections to the material.
- Utilized creative approaches that motivated ELL Elementary students to use English to achieve high goals in all academic areas
- Enhanced multicultural awareness among students by fostering self-respect and self-monitoring skills and respect for the perspectives of others as an enriching contribution to the community.
- Motivated students to do homework through active participation of class assignments, thorough review of material, and a system of rewards and recognition
- Developed positive interaction with students and collaboration with parents to ensure a cooperative and active learning environment that encouraged creative thinking and participation
- Integrated technology in lesson plans such as visual presentations through Smart Board and Elmo.

References Available Upon Request

Conceptual Framework Outcome – Teaching

T1 (skill in planning)
T2 (designs valid instructional methods),
T3 (assesses and evaluates learner progress)
T5 (integrates professional knowledge and research)
T8 (applies learning theory)

Case Study Form

Name of Student: Narie
Date of Report: April 11, 2011
Age of Student: 8 years
Gender: Female
Grade in School: Second Grade
School Name: Mockingbird Elementary
Parents'/Guardians' Names: Mr. and Mrs. Daeida

Background Information

Reason for referral:

- Newcomer from Togo
- Limited to no knowledge of English
- Not on level with present reading curriculum
- Needs ELL services to be successful in Second Grade

Family information:

- Moved from Togo to Nebraska with parents in early January
- Has limited contact with her biological mother because of a bitter divorce and accusations of neglect
- Two older siblings (sisters) – 6th Grade and 9th Grade; one younger sibling (brother) – 1st Grade

Linguistic background:

- Dad is attempting to teach English at home through television shows
- Recent arrivals – so children do not presently visit library
- No reading material at home
- Good transfer of literacy skills from Narie

- Transfers sounds and letters from French language
- Home languages – French and Ewe
- Seems to come from a strong and structured educational background
- She is excited to learn a new language
- She loves to read
- Can follow the sequence of some stories that we read together by looking at context clues
- Writes very neatly and understands that words and sentences help her to communicate what she is thinking or feeling
- Some important differences in sounds of letters in the French alphabet are the following: ch is pronounced sh; g plus e, l, a, or o is pronounced as zh like in “mea-sure”; h is silent; q and qu are pronounced more like k; r has a gargling sound; s between two vowels sounds more like z; th is pronounced like t; x is pronounced eg; and x before a consonant sounds like xc as in excel.

Social and personality factors:

- Able to focus on tasks – very dedicated and committed student
- Respectful and courteous to teachers – kind to her peers
- Loves to participate in small group because she is quiet and shy; enjoys one-on-one time with me
- Follows directions very well

Medical history:

- Eye and ear screenings done by dad last year – but unable to get copies of these
- No history of serious illnesses

Educational history:

- No daycare
- Attended Kindergarten
- Attended Second Grade in Togo
- No prior retentions
- Good attendance here in the United States – father very committed to children receiving a sound education

Results of student/parent interviews:

- Father is very concerned that Narie's quiet nature could be misconstrued as a lack of interest in learning – or even disrespect
- No health issues or learning disorders
- Father feels confident that Narie will be successful if she continues receiving ELL services and support in the classroom
- Father is very appreciative of bilingual books, picture dictionary, and collection of books that I have given to Narie
- Father has two jobs and states that Narie and her siblings have a wide circle of support that consists of aunts, uncles, neighbors, and friends
- Dad is very supportive of Narie and siblings (all on optional calendar) to attend school half-days during break so instruction will not be interrupted
- Narie states that learning English is difficult and that she misses her friends and family in Togo – but she likes Nebraska with exception of snow
- She is trying hard to adapt to the changes in her life – new school, language, friends – and living apart from mom (mom resides in Minnesota)
- Has strong perception of herself as a good reader and feels confident that her peers and teacher think she is a great reader
- She prefers to have adults read to or with her versus reading on her own
- She loves to write and to draw
- Likes reading funny stories and poetry

Summary of Previous Assessment Data

- I was unable to locate a cumulative folder because Narie only just started attending this school. Her second Grade teacher thinks she may be ready to learn some words from the Storytown Reading program and states that Narie tries to sound out letters. She expresses concern that Narie may struggle over the vocabulary-rich content of the new Math program. Her teacher states that because Narie is a newcomer with limited to no English knowledge, she is not expected to be on grade level at this moment and is not being formally assessed on the Storytown lists of spelling words and comprehension tests
- The literacy methods and materials in use in the classroom include Read-Alouds, Storytown reading groups, explicit instruction of vocabulary, writing support, and paraprofessional support in word recognition. The

teacher has been instrumental in providing bilingual reading material for Narie. The tasks normally required of the student are silent independent reading, writing journals, fun activity worksheets, and math worksheets that are not yet graded.

Summary of Assessment Data Derived During the Case Study

- **Qualitative Reading Inventory:**

In the pre- primer 1 word list, Narie automatically identified 15 of the 17 words and was therefore at an independent level. However, for the Pre-Primer 2/3, she only automatically identified 50% of the words from the word list – and could not identify the others, which put her at a frustration level. I think this was due to a combination of factors. Firstly, we have been focusing only on the short vowel word patterns and, secondly, Narie’s knowledge of sight words is not on the same level as her peers because she is a newcomer ELL student.

In the Pre-Primer 1 Level, Narie could only demonstrate to me by actions what the words meant (hop, jump, sleep, and dream). She had 86% Total Accuracy for miscues – which did put her at the frustration level. She scored some correct answers to “I Can” by looking at the pictures. This put her at the instructional level for those questions. For the “I See” lesson, she drew the answers to the concept questions (what is a bug; what is a pig) and read at a 94% Total Accuracy level. I think our previous reading of a book called, “Len Bug and Jen Slug” helped her with some of these words.

In Level 2 Pre-Primer, I avoided the concept questions like, “What is a Mom?” because of the family situation of mom being estranged from family. Narie scored a 77% Total Accuracy and was at a frustration level in reading the passage, “Just like Mom”. She was not able to do the retelling activity and only got one correct implicit answer. I attempted the Pre-Primer 3 level where she scored a 75% Total Accuracy – and she was able to recall that a cat and a dog were lost and when I asked her where they had been – she answered that they were under the table. She was able to answer the question of where the lost pets were without looking at the picture – which demonstrated progress in spite of her being in the frustration level.

- **Running Record:**

Reads at instructional level

Our first running record reflected Narie's first experience in reading a complete book aloud in English. Narie brought her own interpretations or meanings as far as adding "a" to make that musical line "rata cata sata". Some of the errors were print influence and some errors were influenced by the syntax of the sentence – for example – Sam Cat "saw" as opposed to "was" and the insertion of "the" at several lines. For this first reading, her self-correction rate was 1:3. In the second reading, Narie seemed to make errors based on what words she predicted were coming next based on the readings, as well as visual errors based on what she thought looked right. She had improved in phonemic awareness, sight word recognition, confidence in sounding out words, and retention of some of the word family games we have been playing (of short vowel sounds). This time her self-correction rate was 1:2 because she seemed more aware of words or letters that just did not sound right and she paid a little more attention to context clues and the illustrations. The text difficulty at both times was assessed as instructional. I felt it best to provide prompts in the form of short yes or no answers if she did not understand the comprehension questions. That format helped her to provide a response to my questions – and helped Narie to feel a sense of accomplishment that she could answer some of these questions.

- **Placement tests:**

We performed a series of assessments that included phonics, word recognition, counting, spelling, and writing

Narie did wonderfully on both her uppercase and lowercase letter names and sounds – and only missed 2 main letters – H and Y. H is a silent letter in French and she tried to give it the /ch/ sound in "chain". She performed well in the phonemic awareness for primary grades. She demonstrated abilities to hear initial sounds and alliteration (all correct); to hear rhyming words (all correct); to distinguish oddity; to blend words orally; to manipulate sounds orally to create new words; and to drop initial sounds. I had to demonstrate the meaning of syllables – but once Narie understood, she was able to correctly identify all of these.

She did well for a newcomer with limited in the Student Reading Analogy list. She got 9 correct pairs out of 18, but was still able to identify 4 of the other words – and though she missed some of the pairs with long-vowel sounds – she tried to sound them out with her knowledge of short vowel sounds – example – “same and fame” as “sam and fam” and “make and rake” as “mak and rak”. I was proud of her self-correction of “lik” for like and “bik” for bike!

As far as the rubric for assessing the writing process, she scored a total of 21 points three weeks ago because some of those skills were not immediately apparent. Her more recent score was 60 points. As Narie developed more trust in me as her teacher – as well as more confidence in her knowledge of English – she began to show a positive willingness to self-edit. She began to demonstrate more awareness of letter-sound relationships and formation of her letters and words. She began to share her ideas with me in the form of personal notes that she clearly edited so that I got the perfect versions. I used a first and second grade word list to get a general picture of Narie’s word knowledge, and she missed 33 out of the 125 First Grade words and 50 of the 151 Second Grade words. I think her recognition of High Frequency words is increasing – and once we continue with those important connections in the sight word activities, I think it will become easier for Narie to automatically identify these words.

We used a Snakes and Ladders game board for her to call out the numbers she knew. Narie counted all the way to 20, and mispronounced thirteen and eighteen but was definitely aware of the names of numbers. She counted several numbers in the twenties and thirties and we stopped at that point. As far as Auditory Discrimination Assessment Tool, she was able to detect the words that had the same beginning sounds; she missed middle sounds in two of the five words; and identified all of her ending sounds after she self-corrected pool and wall.

Diagnostic Teaching

Hypothesis: Narie needs explicit instruction in phonemic awareness

Strategy:

- Songs, nursery rhymes, and other forms of language play
- Clapping to help determine syllables and foster retention of unfamiliar words

- Letter games using real objects

Hypothesis: needs familiarity and automaticity with sight words – both in context and in isolation

Strategy:

- Dolch Sight words with accompanying activities (Enchanted Learning Website)
- Word searches and Crossword puzzles
- Use high-quality poems and picture books with rich vocabulary
- Teach new words in meaningful context
- Allow for enough practice of each new word (DeVries, p. 154)
- Use sentence strips and similar activities to reinforce new words (DeVries, p. 142); Help student figure out how to look for context clues
- Covering part of the word with finger (DeVries, p. 77)

Hypothesis: Needs help in identifying word patterns in unfamiliar text

Strategy:

- Use fun activities that emphasize rhyme; Word walls

Hypothesis: Needs to develop comprehension. Summarizing, and retelling skills

Strategy:

- One-on-one tutoring that emphasizes contextual reading with word study (for example, Howard Street Tutoring, DeVries - p.71)
- Introducing books at and beyond instructional level
- Choice of reading material and use of repetitive text
- Use of manipulatives; role play; art; visuals; games to encourage retelling and visualization of stories (Appendix D – DeVries text)
- Incorporating writing activities with more detail

Hypothesis: Structural analysis of words like prefixes and suffixes; identification of parts of speech

Strategy:

- Visual series of grammar books by Marcie Aboff
- Word-building blocks; Sentence strips

Suggestions and Recommendations

Student strengths:

- Dedicated learner
- Willingness to please teachers
- Has sound educational background in reading
- Recognizes sounds of letters; understands the concept of word families and patterns

Student needs:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Reinforcement of letter recognition
- Beginning reading skills
- Sight word automaticity
- Development of expressive and receptive vocabulary
- Academic content vocabulary development
- More practice with consonant blends and digraphs and word families

Methodologies:

- Narie is an active learner who loves hands-on activities. She is a quiet student who seems to reflect on what we are learning. She is also a visual learner who loves pictures, diagrams, charts, and illustrations. Narie is both a sequential learner – because she wants to follow the assigned steps – and a global learner – because of the connections to learning that she expresses in her drawings to me. She seems to savor the things around her and fits a sensory learner – yet there is a quiet intuitive perspective she expresses.

Materials: Instructional level is at Second Grade Level

Recommended level of support:

- Narie should continue to practice short-vowel sounds, long-vowels, and consonant clusters; she should receive direct instruction in reading and spelling; efforts should be made to incorporate fun learning activities that build word pattern knowledge
- Narie will benefit greatly if she can read high-quality poems and books with rich vocabulary. She will respond very well if new words are taught in meaningful context, and she has many opportunities to practice these new words. One of the main goals is comprehension –Narie’s instruction should allow her to reach closer to the goal of being successful under the more complex Story Town reading program.
- Narie should engage in more contextual reading, as well as word study and easy reading. She should follow a plan such as the Reading Recovery program of introducing a new book at the student’s instructional level as well as books with repetitive text. She enjoys playing games or doing fun activities that emphasize rhymes. She should also work on developing the ability to look for context clues. She will also retain knowledge of new words if she continues strategies like cutting sentence strips, storing new words in word bags, and using manipulatives. The use of visual imagery as far as clip art, drawings, power points, and other visuals help students like Narie who are in the early emergent literacy stage.

Recommendations for home:

- Narie loves to read and I have provided her with and we have provided her with a personal library of nursery rhymes, adventure books, and other stories. In a reading survey, Narie said that she loves to read to her family. Students develop a love for reading when they can share their connections to what they enjoy reading. I would encourage the family to ask Narie to retell or summarize what she has read – and to talk about what her favorite part of the story was or her favorite characters. Narie will be taking home word sorts and word games like memory matches – and she would really benefit from other family members doing these activities with her. I have also sent home a French and English picture dictionary and it would be very helpful to Narie to practice some of these words at home.

Signature of Graduate Practicum Student Sharon Fouche

Date April 11, 2011

Conceptual Framework Outcome - Leading

LD2 (communicates effectively)

Adjective Activity using French translations to provide cognitive transfer

Happy; cheerful; pleasant; joyful



Kind; gentle; nice; sweet; helpful



Intelligent; smart; studious



Faithful; loyal; friendly

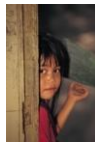
Funny; comical; humorous



Responsible; reliable; dependable



Quiet; peaceful; calm; shy



Loud; energetic; exciting



Creative; artistic; imaginative; talented



Beautiful; magnificent; wonderful;
amazing; cute; handsome
fashionable



Confident

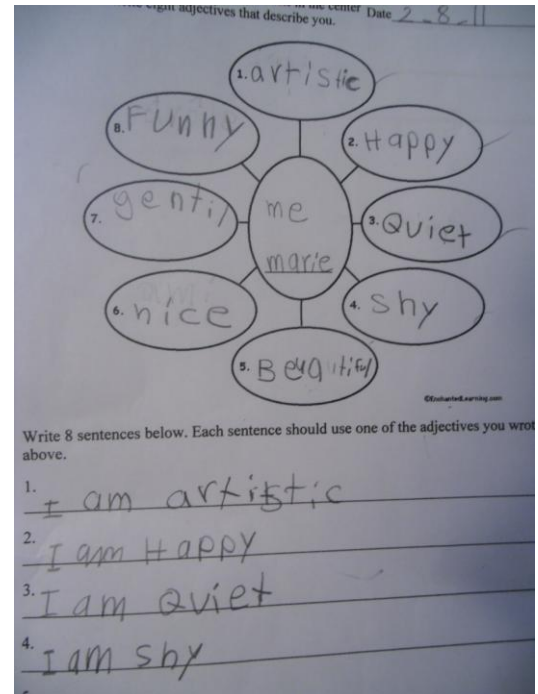
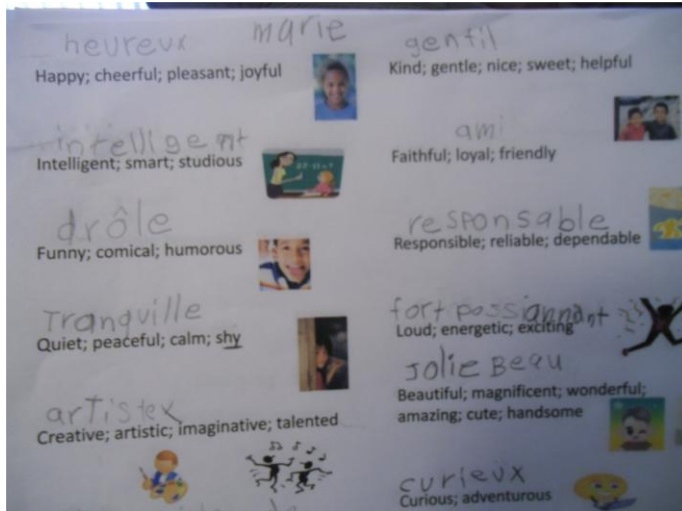


Curious; adventurous



Athletic; sporty





Adjective Activity describing
personal characteristics – using
French terms to provide cognitive transfer

Happy; cheerful; pleasant; joyful



Cheer up!



Jump for Joy

Funny; comical; humorous

Hilarious!



Conceptual Framework Outcome—Learning

LR5 (practices lifelong learning), LR7 (demonstrates specialty depth of knowledge)

**EXPLORING THE USE OF VISUAL IMAGERY AS A FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPORTING
LITERACY IN THE WRITING PROCESS**

A Research Proposal Presented to Concordia University

Sharon Fouche, Suzanne Jagels, Chelsey Mangers

Grace-Ann Dolak, Proposal Advisor

January/February, 2011

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Statement of the Problem

The ability of our nation's children to read and write has been a topic of discussion and debate for many decades. Americans have always been concerned with our ability to compete globally (Alexander and Fox, 2004) and we analyze district, state, and national report cards to measure that progress. We have traveled from a remedial and deficit approach to literacy (phonics and grammar drills) to a difference model (whole language movement) and understanding that children learn in different ways (Uffelman, 2011).

Current models encourage teachers to connect literacy with the experiences of children and to use more creative and instructional approaches (Uffelman, 2011). This approach encourages meaning-making activities that allow children to draw from their backgrounds and experiences so they can become better writers. This paper seeks to explore how visual imagery supports the writing process in the elementary grades.

Literacy has been described as an art and writing as an art form – where visual imagery connects meaning to writing (Ebersole, 2002) as opposed to only being used as an end product of the literary experience. This approach supports the theories of Vygotsky and others about the important connection between making-meaning experiences and ideas of school-age children. In “Conferring with Primary Writers” Lucy Calkins states that drawing is often the first step towards communicating in writing and that we should help children understand that writing is about communicating the stories they have to tell. She states that drawing is an effective way of helping children to remember what they want to say and therefore write (Calkins, Hartman, and White, 2008).

Past research focused on the positive effects of visual literacy in helping children to connect to prior experiences but did not emphasize the effects of these strategies on the writing

product. This research paper seeks to explore a more concrete connection between visual imagery and constructing parts of a story in the elementary school level. Resource teachers, English Language Learners teachers and Literacy coaches could explore the use of visual imagery as an effective tool in improving students' writing skills. Children will also benefit as excited participants in an activity that engages them in the writing process.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study will be to explore the use of visual imagery throughout the writing process. This issue of using visual imagery throughout the writing process will be studied by using a case study design to observe two small groups of elementary students and by examining relevant documents. For this study, visual imagery will be defined as information which passes through the brain as though something is being perceived, when nothing is actually happening.

Research Questions

The researchers will seek to answer the following questions:

1. How do students use visual imagery in the writing process?
2. How effective was visual imagery in helping kids to form connections to the topics they wanted to write about?
3. Does the use of drawing or comic strips aid in the writing?
4. How do the students feel about using drawings or comic strips in the writing process?

Researcher Assumptions

The researchers in this study acknowledge that their ideas about the use of creative imagery could influence the willingness of students to participate in those strategies. The results of the study could therefore be related in part to our positive interaction with students that would

directly or indirectly inspire them to use the drawings to influence their written product. The researchers believe in a balanced literacy approach where our students are able to build listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills in a literacy environment that encourages them to make connections to prior knowledge and personal experiences. The teachers in this research group have worked with students from diverse backgrounds and with a variety of needs. We continually use a variety of visual imagery to inspire students to share this diverse talents and experiences – and we are motivated to use tools that range from drawings to technology offered online in the form of comic-strip makes, power points, and photo stories. We have found that when we use creative tools for writing, this in turn motivates children to be independent and creative writers.

Part Two: Literature Review

This qualitative study will examine the benefits of using visual imagery to help young writers in the elementary grades. The purpose of this literature review is to provide information on the various forms of imagery that are effective in supporting children in the writing process. The following literature review will explore how the drawing process is an effective meaning-making strategy that allows children to express their interests and experiences, explain the use of pre-writing strategies taught under direct instruction to improve literacy skills, and discuss the social context and writing context of literacy that incorporates comic sources to teach struggling students.

Drawing as a Meaning Making Strategy

Einarsdottira, Dockett, & Perry (2009) looked at drawing as a way of motivating children to uncover the perspectives and interpretations they have of the world around them. The researchers felt that the best way of uncovering these ideas was to listen to children as they draw so we can

understand the meanings children attach to the images. They advised educators to look beyond drawings in terms of developmental sequence. Drawing is therefore seen as a highly effective meaning-making strategy which becomes a purposeful and constructive process. The researchers discuss how drawing declines as children progress through the elementary grades and is especially dependent on teachers' perceptions of drawing and if it should be included in the curriculum. They state that much of the attention is on the finished product and not on the intended meaning children construct before and during writing activities linked to drawings. They describe drawing and narrative as inseparable in the meaning-making process and state that children can get discouraged when they see drawing as an academic task open to teacher correction or approval. The study was conducted in two separate contexts of Iceland and Australia – and looked at how preschoolers felt about starting school and how first-graders felt about their pre-school experiences. The researchers felt that asking children to reflect on their experiences was a successful experience when encouraged by the teacher. They felt that drawings helped young children in the elementary school years address issues relevant to them.

Kendrick and McKay (2002) have focused on how children use drawings to express their interest in reading books and writing at home or school. They stated that children are quite skilled in the early grades at interpreting their worlds around them. Researchers used a multimodal approach to learning, looking at drawings not as a response to conventional language tasks but as images of literacy. They describe children's meaning-making process as dynamic and flexible and referred to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and his view of drawing as a way that combined the use of language with writing. The study was conducted in a middle-class neighborhood in western Canada using group discussions and individual interviews to study the feelings of children towards reading and writing through their drawings. The goal of the

researchers was to demonstrate the interactive nature of literacy and how children use drawings to reflect their realities. They stated that literacy narratives are within Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development where students make meaningful connections through collaborating with one another. The researchers concluded that drawing is an effective tool that encourages children to bring their lives into the school setting and into the classroom. Children bring their literacy narratives to school and use these to make sense of reading and writing tasks – and drawing helps kids to express that.

Another longitudinal study (Coates and Coates, 2006) centered on two to five- olds living in the UK. The researchers viewed utterances by pre-school children as a reflection of their thought process during drawing. They felt that social interaction with peers and teachers was an important part of the drawing process, and related their study to Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences and the conceptual thinking that guides children through drawing. The researchers stated the importance of not separating or isolating drawing from what it can accomplish as an important tool of literacy. Drawing allows children to express the linguistic skills they possess. The dual elements of talking with drawing combined with the influence of peers allow children to practice verbal constructs. In this way, teachers can help children make better connections to background experiences when they allow language to accompany the drawing process. In a study that was conducted in Sao Paulo, Brazil (Colello, 2007) researchers discussed how children naturally associate images with writing because drawing is a strategy they are familiar with from very early. They relate their findings to how Vygotsky regarded drawing as a predecessor of writing. Drawing is viewed as a real written language that can enrich our understanding of our students and revise instructional practices. The researchers see drawing as a strong resource of language which is set aside because of school pressure to give priority to writing. They state that

drawing helps children to remember what they were constructing in the writing process, and it is a helpful tool throughout the entire writing task as opposed to just being used in the end. The author felt that more pedagogic value should be applied to the role of imagination in the drawing and writing process.

Use of Pre-writing Strategies to Improve Literacy Skills

Diaz (1995) stated in his study that two-thirds of the second graders in the Guam school chose drawing as their favorite pre-writing technique. Drawing and imagery strategies were the favorites of both the students and their teachers. The teachers felt that the students preferred drawing and imagery over dialogue with them about their writing. The teachers in this study instructed their students in three different pre-writing strategies, i.e. imagery, dialogue, and drawing. The students were taught each strategy through literature and modeling. The students expressed this during the observations and interviews conducted with the study. The second graders had comments such as, “I like drawing because the pictures is in front of me and it helps me see, remember and write my story”; “drawing helps me to think and write”; “drawing helps me to concentrate and to express my ideas”; and “I like to draw”. The teachers completed questionnaires about their preferences. The general agreement of the staff was that the dialogue strategy that they had used had many disadvantages, such as student being intimidated by the tape recorders, costs of tapes, and assistance needed to record the students’ responses by other adults. The pre-writing stage that was the focus of these teachers is sometimes the most neglected part of the writing process, but the staff in this study found drawing to be very beneficial to the writing of their second graders.

Writing is also a critical part of the literacy instruction that all of our students receive daily. Students that are good readers will be better writers as well as students that struggle to

read will struggle with writing. Bitter (2009) studied the value of a balanced literacy approach and its affect on improving student outcomes. The researchers observed classrooms for two years and also interviewed the teachers about their literacy instruction and professional development. The study included primarily high-poverty school that had a large percentage of ELL students. The observations were for 90 minutes using a qualitative recording system of teacher-student interactions. There is a positive effect between writing instruction and reading achievement and teachers need to continue to integrate writing and reading for their overall literacy ability to improve. Students and teachers need to be active participants in the learning process with integration of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills all being essential to improving students' literacy skills. Higher level questioning is a practice that was found to be associated with growth in both reading and writing while engaging the students in their learning.

There has been research on the relationship of drawing and writing in relation to generating ideas; however, it is also important to look at how drawing can increase the length and quality of the students' work. Generally, students who have used drawing strategies before writing will produce more words, longer sentences and more idea units (Norris, 1998). The third grade students who relied on their drawings stated that it assisted them in staying focused on their story. The data from this study showed that when reviewing three different stories they wrote, using the drawing consistently improved the length and quality of the writing samples. The students were given 30 minutes to draw a picture and write a story about a topic they chose. Each story was evaluated by three judges and used a modified composition score. Utilizing writing and drawing together can be used as a way to motivate students to write and enjoy it. Encouraging students to write and draw will enhance their literacy skills as well.

The goal of literacy instruction is to help students learn to read and write and to become lifelong readers and writers (Raninski, 2004). When educators nurture these lifelong skills, the students come to realize that reading and writing are more than a set of independent skills, but a way to make their life better overall. In a balanced approach, one element influences the other parts of the curriculum and that correlation is what they studied. A study from the U.S. Department of Education (1996) found that students who like to read and write will read and write more, and consequently develop fluency as readers and writers. A good reader writes a lot and a good writer reads a lot. When reading and writing instruction are taught with equal importance, the total literacy level of the student is enhanced. Our ultimate goal of literacy should be to encourage our students to be lifelong readers and writers. This can be achieved through a balanced literacy program that promotes reading, writing, speaking and listening.

When we look at the Big 5 of reading that were the emphasis of the report from the National Reading Panel, we see that phonological awareness, alphabetic knowledge, and word reading will show significant growth in primary classrooms with direct writing instruction (D'on Jones, 2010). The students in this study were divided into two groups and received instruction using interactive writing and writing workshop. The results showed equal effectiveness in relation to promoting their early reading skills. Writing is an integral part of language and students need direct instruction in writing to build their language skills. Teachers may feel that time spent on writing is time taken away from reading; however, this study showed that writing is very important to do in kindergarten and then continue throughout their education. Writing instruction promotes key skills imperative for our students to have in order to communicate.

Using Comics to Improve Overall Literacy Skills of Struggling Students

Bitz (2004) the problem in his research to be that students who live in urban areas and have poor health, are involved with crime and struggle with poverty, also tend to have problems with literacy. “The Comic Book Project was designed to explore the social context of literacy, from a reading and writing perspective and an artistic perspective (Bitz, 2004). The central research question was: “Is there a link between using the arts to help improve students’ literacy?” More specifically Bitz questioned, “Can children with limited English proficiency make literacy connections through pictorial representations?” and “Will children who are not performing well in English or who are struggling in academic classes stay engaged in a project if it involves an extensive reading and writing component?” (Bitz, 2004). The author completed the project with 733 urban children at 33 after-school sites in New York City. Instructors from the Teachers College at Columbia University trained the 46 after school volunteers in a two-hour session. The author also worked tightly with artists and designers from Dark Horse Comics who specialize in comic book design and publishing (Bitz, 2004). The author identified that many of the students seemed to make progress in the area of literacy, especially writing. The project had the most positive results with children who were limited in English. The instructors found that using the pictures helped them produce better quality work and more writing than they had produced the whole school year. All students who participated gained a better understanding of the writing process and were able to notice the importance of following the process in their everyday writing. Further analysis led to the findings that the project did help the students meet the state standards.

In addition, Ranker has found that past research has defined the link between popular media and literacy activities. Due to the fact that a connection has been found that media sources are viewed as resources to help improve literacy many schools are trying to incorporate the

media sources. However, it has been unexplored if the media sources that are viewed as resources in helping improve literacy to students who only speak English can also be used as resources to English-language learners. The essential question of the research was “Does using comic books to teach lessons about text helps young English-language learners with reading and writing?” (Ranker, 2007) An additional question that the author presented was “Will the fictional comics that contain violence have a negative effect on the children’s character?” After research Ranker concluded that if comics are used solely for literary purpose a connection can not be found linking to a child acting out with violence (Ranker 2007). The students who participated in the research were from a first grade bilingual classroom. All of them spoke Spanish as their first language and the majority of their parents originated from Guatemala, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. In the classroom their teacher allowed them to speak their native language but delivered the instruction in English. The author identifies that using well-known comics as read-alouds with English Language learners can improve their comprehension strategies. The read-alouds also helped them develop an understanding of dialogue in writing and reading. At the same time as providing this visual support, comics gave the students in Mrs. Stephens classroom interesting, motivating reading material that she used to engage them in learning various aspects of reading processes—as well as opportunities to write, think, and discuss texts as they learn new literacy practices (Ranker, 2007).

Using comics strips helped improve writing and social skills of a second grade girl who fell extremely low with verbal skills continually has conflicts with her peers. Playground problems occurred on a daily basis due to the lack of social skills the child had. Another problem the child suffered from was the disability of autism. No specific research question was raised but it can be implied that the question is “Does writing a social story help guide the

writing of a child who struggles with language expression?” The author quoted Gray saying that a social story is a formatted narrative that guides the writing of a child or adolescent who has difficulty with language expression, especially those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD; Gray, 2003). A second grade student with autism was the variable in the research. Anyone who worked with her throughout the day was trained in how to use comic strip correctly. The student was trained with comic strips for several months until social problems decreased and her writing skills increased with using the comic strips first. Throughout the process the autistic child began to identify the problem, name her feelings and illustrate and write them in comic strip form. She struggled to produce the correct solution of the problem throughout the research period but had a reduction of negative social experiences on the playground and in the classroom. The student also showed less frustration and anger with writing due to the fact of using comic strip conversation to help her plan her stories out before writing.

Most of the research reported focused mostly on white indigenous students living in Canada, Iceland, or the UK – with the exception one study that was done in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The latter focused on the strong connection between writing and drawing, while the others discussed the dual relationship between narrative and the drawing product – with less focus on the actual writing product. The researchers studied children’s responses to specific topics – for example, how they felt about starting a new school; how they felt about reading or writing; or if there was a specific theme that children were drawn to depending on their age group. While some of the research discussed the role of drawing as a meaning-making strategy, it was limited to children using drawings to express their feelings towards starting school within a variety of social contexts. One study was limited to students who showed a willingness to draw and focused on scribbles attached to and within the drawings, as well as common themes – as

opposed to the construction of a written story. Also, limited research studies have been done with proficient writers using comics to help improve their writing skills. One study completed showed the progress of students who struggled with literacy due to the fact of living in poverty. Another researcher studied using comics with students who had limited English speaking skills and struggled in the area of writing. This research paper seeks to explore a more concrete connection between drawing and constructing parts of a story in the elementary school level. This includes not just the dual relationship of drawing and narrative but examines how this relates to the steps children make in writing.

Part 3: Methodology

Rationale for Methodology

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore social and human problems. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 2008). We have chosen the qualitative research method because we are drawn to a design that helps us to explore the personal reactions of participants in an interactive way where we become involved. Our research covers a diversity of components in relation to the use of visual imagery to support literacy in the writing process. We set out to explore the use of drawing as an effective pre-writing and during-writing strategy and the social context of literacy that incorporates media sources to teach struggling students. A study like this requires high people/person contact, interpretive and exploratory questions, and a narrative format versus a scientific study. It also requires attention to detail and contact with subjects for an extended amount of time. A qualitative study produces more in-depth,

comprehensive information (Key, 1997). Qualitative research methodology helps us to achieve these goals and motivates an audience that includes teachers to explore multi-faceted issues that affect literacy.

Qualitative research is explorative where researchers get a chance to obtain a deeper understanding of the issue by encouraging participants to share their perspectives. The depth of understanding and description required from participants in qualitative research usually involves the exploration of a topic or issue in depth, with emphasis on seeking information from the people who are experiencing or are involved in the issue. (Law, 1998) Findings are expressed in words and not data or numerical figures. Qualitative researchers get that chance to explore broader meanings (inductive) because we get can focus on the experiences of our participants because the number is on a smaller scale. The researchers get the opportunity to experience personal or narrative stories – and to study a small group that share common characteristics in their natural setting (ethnographic). This makes the research findings more relevant because the setting or environment plays an important part in the actions and views of the participants. This also influences the extent to which the past experiences of the researchers blends in with those of their subjects. A qualitative research allows researchers the chance to express their passion about the issue they are studying so they can invite their audience to connect with the importance of studying this issue. The researchers in qualitative research are seen as primary instruments through the interviews and observations (Key, 1997). The participants, researchers, and audience interact in trying to find common patterns or perspectives. The metaphor of a dance has been used in relation to qualitative studies because of the need for constant flexibility and the key role of interpretation and meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The warm-up phase is when you identify the question, the workout is when you are gathering data and readjusting the design,

and finally the cool down is when you analyze the data collected. Looking at a qualitative design in relation to a dance suggests the importance of both science and art in this type of study.

Past research has stated that children become better writers when they are given the chance to connect to past experiences. Drawing and response to visual imagery depends on the personal perspectives of participants and researchers and a qualitative research offers that naturalistic approach. If we want to encourage children to share the stories they want to tell, we have to become involved participants to enter that personal world they have within – and we have to work on creative tools that would draw that willingness from them to share the rich sources of their imagination. Qualitative research allows the researchers to understand the subjects and to also learn from them in the process.

Type of Design

We are using a case study design – which would allow us a chance to conduct “in the field” observing and gathering of documents among individuals (Creswell, 2008). We are using this design because we are focusing research on two small groups of students. Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research (Soy, 1997). The study will be conducted within an elementary school where researchers will ask open-ended and broad questions and use samples of work from drawings and stories by participants (Creswell, 2008). A case study allows the perspectives of the participants and the researchers to shape the study. A case study is inductive because it is not setting out to test a hypothesis. A case study design gives the researchers leeway to uncover meanings and connections that the participants attach to the project. This design allows for a smaller and more intimate context where we have that opportunity to look for patterns in the reactions or responses of our students. This will

benefit our research project because we are not looking to justify the research problem but to explain why we need to explore the topic further. The researcher must collect and store multiple sources of evidence comprehensively and systematically, in formats that can be referenced and sorted so that converging lines of inquiry and patterns can be uncovered (Soy, 1997). The researchers are participant observers and the subjective views of the participants are incorporated in the study.

Site and Participants

The researchers will conduct their studies with two small groups of students. One group of first graders will first demonstrate how drawing helps students add details throughout the pre-writing and writing process. Researchers will then explore the interest level of these students to learn more about this topic through other literature. Researchers will set out to demonstrate the connection between reading and writing – and drawing as a means to propel that writing process. Another group of second grade ELL students will then participate in using comic strips to aid them in the writing process. Researchers will determine interest level of students as well as improvement the final writing product. The goal of the researchers is to discuss the relationship and interdependence of reading, writing, and visual imagery in creating a balanced approach to literacy.

One site is an elementary school where one of the researchers is employed as an ELL teacher. The second site is an elementary school where another researcher is employed an elementary first grade teacher. Teachers have gained permission from the principal and parents of the students for all three researchers to conduct observations. Participants of the first group consist of students from a first grade classroom that is engaged in a writing unit. Participants of the second groups consists of two second grade ELL students. The ELL students are recent

newcomers from Togo who are now grasping the concept of writing. They have been in the United States for several months. The first grade students that participate in the research will be average ability students who are involved in the writing unit in the grade level classroom. The researcher will be the general education classroom teacher. The teacher will be the most suitable researcher because she will be able to observe the child throughout the whole process. The researchers will observe and record student responses throughout the whole process.

Data Collection

Our data will be collected through student writing samples, drawings created by the students throughout the writing process, information gathered through observations of the students during the writing process, and information gathered through student and teacher surveys. The drawing samples will consist of drawings done by students using a three-part format of the beginning, middle, and end of a story and the drawings that students construct on comic strip templates. The writing samples will be evaluated in terms of amount of information that is used in the comic strips or incorporated from the drawings that the students created. The higher the interest, the more students will utilize the drawings they create to enhance or add to their writing. Through observations, we will look for positive interaction between the students and teachers in developing their drawings and stories and record some of the verbal interaction to collate later to develop common trends/occurrences. The students will participate in an interview at the completion of the three weeks so that researchers can gain a better understanding of how drawing helped the students develop their writing projects and if the projects persuaded them to read other books to learn more about their writing topics.

Interview Questions for Writing

1. Which drawing is your favorite?

2. Did this drawing help you to write your story?
3. Do you think you would like to draw every time you write a story?
4. How did the drawing help you to write the story?
5. Did you like talking to us about your drawings?
6. Did talking about your drawings help you to remember what you wanted to write?
7. Did you like writing about snow day?

Interview Questions for Reading

1. Would you like to learn more about snow day?
2. Would you like to read a book about a snow day?

Data Analysis

We will use one common topic, snow day, for students to write about and use in the comic strip maker. The teacher will record themes and conversations the students have throughout the data collection process. Each student will be interviewed with the same questions at the end of the process to discover if they enjoyed learning about the topic they wrote on. They will also complete an interview to see if they would like to read and learn more about the topic. The data analysis will therefore be done during our observations. The goal is to discuss themes and patterns related to our topic.

We will organize our data into various sections. There is a large body of information to be collected and organization is a key element in qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2008). One section will consist of drawings done by the first grade group, which will be then be divided into subsections of drawings that relate to each part of the story (beginning,

middle, and end). The purpose of this is to present a specific folder to each student and ask them to indicate which drawing was their favorite and which one helped them to remember what they wanted to write. Their finished stories will also be included in this folder. The answers to these survey questions will be attached to this file. A similar file will be created for the ELL group and their creation of comic strips and writing samples. A separate file will be made that will document student responses to whether or not they would like to read more material relevant to their writing topic.

One important file will be notes from the researchers that record the conversations between the students and participant researchers during the drawing process. The goal is to explore how visual imagery benefits a balanced literacy approach that incorporates all four language skills – writing, reading, listening, and speaking. It is therefore important that the researchers record these interactions made by each student so they can demonstrate common patterns of responses. These will be investigated through a hand analysis because we are analyzing a small database (Creswell, 2008) and the drawings reflect a personal and subjective quality that would require a hands-on approach without using a software program. We will use a coded transcript for the survey interviews – where we will have sufficient space to record the perspectives of the researchers to answers given by participants. Researchers will compare filed notes to locate and develop themes that relate to our topic. We will work together to build a portrait of those we are researching – including the setting and the activities they are engaged in (Creswell, 2008). A qualitative study such as this benefits from including major and minor themes and exploring multiple perspectives that help to build a multi-faceted approach to what we are researching (Creswell, 2008). The focus is on the use of visual imagery and researchers will also be using comparison tables and other visual displays to support their narrative about the

findings. We will engage in member checking of our perspectives of data and its accuracy – and triangulation of the data through corroborating material that we have researched through other articles and the views of teachers in the school who have used the strategies we are investigating. A supplementary file will therefore incorporate the views of teachers in regards to the use of visual imagery in writing projects.

Timeline

The group of first grade students will receive instruction for two weeks during writer's workshop. The classroom teacher will read or discuss a story to the class about the writing topic and the students will then receive writing prompts. During the writing project the students will work through the writing process utilizing visualizing/drawing techniques during the prewriting, editing, and final copy stages. The writing project would take approximately five sessions to complete. Our total time is estimated at two weeks.

The second group of ELL students will receive guided instruction for one week. The ELL teacher will introduce the meaning and vocabulary of a snow day. She will model the use of comic strips during this first week. The students will begin the project during the second week. There will be four writing sessions in the second week. Researchers will ask the same interview questions to this second group.

Interview Questions for Drawing Pictures

Student

Name of Interviewer: _____ Place: _____
Date of Interview: _____ Time: _____
Name of individual being interviewed: _____

I have had so much fun looking at your drawings and reading your story. We drew some pictures before writing to see if it made it easier for you to write your story. I also worked with other students to see if drawing pictures helped them to write their story. I think you did an amazing job! Now that we are finished with your writing project I am going to ask you a few questions, which will only take use about 5 minutes.

1. Which drawing is your favorite?
2. Did this drawing help you to write your story? ____Yes ____No
3. Do you think you would like to draw every time you write a story? ____Yes ____No
4. How did the drawing help you to write the story?
5. Did you like talking to us about your drawings?
6. Did talking about your drawings help you to remember what you wanted to write?
____Yes ____No
7. Did you like writing about snow day? ____Yes ____No

Thank you for sharing your stories and drawings with me. You have done a wonderful job. I think that you have learned some things that you can use to help you when you write.

Interview Questions for drawing comic strips

Student

Name of Interviewer: _____ Place: _____

Date of Interview: _____ Time: _____
Name of individual being interviewed: _____

I have had so much fun looking at your drawings in the comic strip and reading your story. We drew some pictures before writing to see if it made it easier for you to write your story. I also worked with other students to see if drawing pictures helped them to write their comic strip. I think you did an amazing job! Now that we are finished with your writing project I am going to ask you a few questions, which will only take use about 5 minutes.

1. Which comic strip box is your favorite?
2. Did this drawing help you to write the words of your characters? ____Yes ____No
3. Do you think you would like to draw comic strips every time you write a story?
____Yes ____No
4. How did the drawing help you to write the words the characters were saying?
5. Did you like talking to us about your comic strip?
6. Did talking about your drawings help you to remember what you wanted to write?
____Yes ____No
7. Did you like writing about snow day? ____Yes ____No

Thank you for sharing your stories and drawing with me. You have done a wonderful job. I think that you have learned some things that you can use to help you when you write.

Interview Questions for Reading

Student

Name of Interviewer: _____ Place: _____
Date of Interview: _____ Time: _____
Name of individual being interviewed: _____

I enjoyed watching you draw your pictures and I loved reading the stories you wrote. I know that we talked about Snow Day before writing and we read stories and shared personal experiences about what we know. I will be asking these same questions to the other students I

worked with! I am just curious to see if you want to find out more about this topic by reading other fiction or non-fiction books. Now I am going to ask you a few questions, which will only take use about 5 minutes.

1. Would you like to learn more about snow day?
2. Would you like to read a book about a snow day?
3. Here are some non-fiction books related to weather and snow and things that we can do during the winter time. Would you choose to read any of these? -----Yes -----No
4. Here are some fiction books about kids enjoying snow days or doing fun things in the winter time. Would you choose to read any of these? -----Yes -----No
5. Why do you think you would like to read these books? (Why not)

Thank you for so much for sharing your drawings and writing with me! You have done a wonderful job. I hope that you have learned some things that you can use to help you when you write.

Interview Questions for Reading

Teacher

Name of Interviewer:_____ Place:_____

Date of Interview: _____ Time:_____

Name of individual being interviewed: _____

Position: _____

We know that many students struggle with writing. We are researching the use of visual imagery to help improve writing skills. We worked with five students in a writing project that incorporated the use of drawings and comic strips to determine if they were able to improve their writing. The data will be used for school purposes only. The students' classroom teacher,

principal and parents will have access to the data. This interview will take no longer than 15 minutes.

1. Have you used visual imagery in writing activities in the past? ____Yes ____No
2. Did you use drawings, comic strips, or both?
____Drawings ____Comic Strips ____Both
3. What other visual imagery tools have you used in the past?
4. Have you found these tools to be successful? ____Yes ____No
5. Will you use these tools again in writing assignments? ____Yes ____No
6. Do you plan to use these strategies in a few, most, or all of your writing activities?
7. Do you think these tools encouraged your students to read more about the topic they were writing?

Thank you for participating in this research project. All of your responses will be kept between schools personnel who work with the students that were researched. Your time and hard work has been of great benefit to the students.

Parent Permission Letter

Date _____

Dear Parent:

We are from the _____ school district and we would like to include your child, along with about 4 of his or her classmates, in a research project on _____. If your child takes part in this project, three weeks of your child's regular writing class will be spent learning about tools to improve his or her writing.

Your child's participation in this project is completely voluntary. In addition to your permission, your child will also be asked if he or she would like to take part in this project. You are free to withdraw your permission for your child's participation at any time and for any reason without penalty. These decisions will have no affect on your future relationship with the school or your child's status or grades there.

The information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of your child's school record. Any sharing or publication of the research results will not identify any of the participants by name.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you **do or do not** want your child to participate in this project and return this note to your child's teacher before _____. Please keep the second copy of this form for your records.

We look forward to working with your child. We think that our research will be enjoyable for the children who participate and will help them to learn about tools to improve his or her writing.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact us using the information below. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in research involving human subjects, please feel free to contact the _____.

Please keep the attached copy of this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Researchers' names-----

Researchers' signatures-----

Phone Numbers-----

I do/do not (circle one) give permission for my child _____ (name of child) to participate in the research project described above.

(Print) Parent's name

Parent's signature

Date

Letter to Principal

Date

Dear Principal:

We would like to include 5 of your students in a research project on_____. If the students take part in this project, three weeks of the students regular writing class will be spent learning about tools to improve his or her writing.

The students' participation in this project is completely voluntary. In addition to your permission, the students will also be asked if they would like to take part in this project. The information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of the students' school records. Any sharing or publication of the research results will not identify any of the participants by name.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you **do or do not** want the students in your building to participate in this project and return this note before _____. Please keep the second copy of this form for your records.

We look forward to working with the students. We think that our research will be enjoyable for the children who participate and will help them to learn about tools to improve his or her writing.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact us using the information below. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in research involving human subjects, please feel free to contact us.

Please keep the attached copy of this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Researchers' Names

Signatures

Phone Number

Phone Number

I do/do not (circle one) give permission for _____ (name of child) to participate in the research project described above.

(Print) Principal's name

Principal's signature

Date

Classroom Observation Protocol

PRE OBSERVATION DATA

Teacher _____

Date _____

School _____

Grade/Level _____

Observer _____

Length of Observation _____

Time _____

Role of Observer _____

(Fill this out prior to observing classes.)

Class period or time of class:

Topic or topics:

Placement of class or lesson within the unit of study:

Intended outcomes:

Materials:

How students will be assessed (for this lesson):

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Teacher:

Date:

(Fill this out as you are observing classes.)

First Activity/Task: Content; nature of activity, what students are doing, what teacher is doing; interactions.

Second Activity/Task: Content; nature of activity, what students are doing, what teacher is doing; interactions.

Third Activity/Task: Content; nature of activity, what students are doing, what teacher is doing; interactions.

Additional Activity/Task:

OTHER OBSERVATIONAL DATA

Teacher:

Date:

(Fill this out as you are observing classes.)

1 - Description of the classroom:

2 - Teaching aids/materials:

3 - Assessment strategies used:

4 - Time not devoted to teaching and nature of non-academic or procedural activity (e.g., management, announcements, discipline); description of non-instructional event:

STUDENT DATA

Teacher:

Date:

(Fill this out during/after the classroom observation.)

1 - Number and gender of students; number of minorities/majority:

2 - Describe the content of a student's writing product for the class.

REFLECTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Teacher:

Date:

(Fill this out as soon as possible after the classroom visit.)

1 - Overall, what happened during the classroom observation (e.g., were the students engaged in the lesson?)

2 - What didn't happen (e.g., students didn't grasp the idea of the lesson)?

3 - Alternative ways instructor might have handled the lesson/question/situation:

4 - Characterize students and their attitudes toward the subject matter and the teacher:

5 - Notable non-verbal behavior:

6 - Surprises/concerns especially related to the program goals (e.g., the teacher didn't appear to be using the science immersion method):

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